Crime and Subversion in the Later Fiction of Wilkie Collins

By Lisa Gay Mathews

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds: School of English

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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With Thanks

To Alan Steele for supervising my work.

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Abstract

Although some good work on Collins is now beginning to emerge, complex and central elements in his fiction require fuller exploration. More consideration is due to the development of Collins's thinking and fictional techniques in the lesser-known novels, since out of a total of thirty-four published works most have received scant attention from scholars. This is particularly true of the later fiction. It is to work of the later period (1870-1889) that I devote the fullest consideration, whilst giving due attention to the novels of the 1860s which are usually regarded as Collins's major novels.

Collins perceived that established discourses on criminality, deviance, femininity and morality functioned as mechanisms with which the dominant masculine and middle-class hegemony attempted to confirm and maintain its power. His later fiction reveals the anxieties of masculine and middle-class narrator-figures. In his novels written in the 1860s Collins explored narrative and sub-narrative. He developed the technique of using the accounts of various characters to challenge the perspective of the narrator-figure and created the persona of an omniscient narrator whose response to his creations reveals his own anxieties.

The novels of Collins's later period develop such techniques to explore masculine apprehension at the changes occurring in late-Victorian society in which women and the working-classes were gaining greater freedom and middle-class dominance was threatened. Although narrators overtly argue the validity of standard discourses, their views are subverted by a level of sub-textual meaning at which the inadequacy of the narrators and their ideologies is revealed. Sub-textual meaning in the novels reveals tensions and anomalies within ideas of criminality, the Victorian ideal of womanhood, medical discourses and the idea of the gentleman and his counterpart, the knight errant figure. Collins's later fiction presents itself as an impressive attempt to explore the ideological and social tensions of rapidly changing late-Victorian England.

Contents

Chapter One: Introduction. Wilkie Collins: The Subversive Power of Narrative and the Victorian Social Order Page 1.

Chapter Two: Novels of the 1860s
Section (i) The Woman in White Page 25.
(ii) No Name Page 41.
(iii) Armadale Page 54.
(iv) The Moonstone Page 70.

Chapter Three: Novels of the 1870s
Section (i) Crime in the Fiction of the 1870s Page 88.
(ii) Man and Wife Page 108.
(iii) Poor Miss Finch Page 122.
(iv) The New Magdalen Page 140.
(v) Miss or Mrs? Page 149.
(vi) The Frozen Deep and Other Stories Page 162.
(vii) The Law and the Lady Page 183.
(viii) The Two Destinies Page 200.
(ix) The Haunted Hotel Page 212.
(x) The Fallen Leaves Page 223.

Chapter Four: Novels of the 1880s
Section (i) Crime in the fiction of the 1880s Page 234.
(ii) Jezebel's Daughter Page 253.
(iii) The Black Robe Page 269.
(iv) Heart and Science Page 281.
(v) "I Say No" Page 295.
(vi) The Evil Genius Page 307.
(vii) The Guilty River Page 321.
(viii) Little Novels Page 330.
(ix) The Legacy of Cain Page 337.
(x) Blind Love Page 353.

Chapter Five: Enthralling Terrors: Violent Crime and Degeneration. Page 367.

Bibliography Page 382.

Chapter One: Introduction. Wilkie Collins: The Subversive Power of Narrative and the Victorian Social Order

(i)

Wilkie Collins: the Subversive Power of Narrative and the Victorian Social Order

The large body of fiction by Wilkie Collins has often been perceived in terms of a structured image of the author's life. The novels of the 1850s are generally seen as embodying juvenile promise, those of the 1860s as a period of maturity and those after 1870 as the product of decaying mental and physical powers. It is significant that explanations for the assumed decline tend to emphasise biographical evidence rather than close analysis of particular texts. Alethea Hayter in Opium and the Romantic Imagination (1969) and William M. Clarke in The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins (1988) perceive the alleged decline of Collins's fiction as the result of drug addiction, while his biographer Robinson stresses that he became increasingly ill while writing the later fiction.

Even critics who focus more centrally on Collins's writings rather than his health seem to find biographical evidence more supportive of their arguments than textual analysis. J.I.M. Stewart's article in The Times Literary Supplement of 6th September 1974 asserts that the decisive event was the death of Dickens. This argument ignores the anomaly that Collins's novels

of the 1860s were sometimes heavily criticised by Dickens, particularly The Moonstone which has been highly praised by modern critics but which Collins's supposed mentor considered a failure. Critical studies which provide excellent analysis of the novels up to 1870 sometimes rely on evidence which strains credulity when dealing with the later fiction. Having put forward an impressive argument accompanied by close textual analysis of the novels of the 1860s to suggest that Collins was intimately concerned with his relationship with his readers, Sue Lonoff's study Wilkie Collins and his Victorian Readers (1982) offers quite unconvincing reasons for what she considers to be the failure of The Legacy of Cain (1888). She concludes that Collins must have been "suffering from incipient senility"[1], finds his dedication of the novel to his mistress's daughter Harriet significant and claims that this and the fact that Harriet was working as his secretary offer proof of "his growing isolation from the public."[2]

The development of the later fiction may be best explained through analysis of the novels rather than the circumstances of Collins's life. Tensions and anomalies exist in the work of excellent critics, anomalies which begin to grapple with the problem presented by Collins's later fiction. Lonoff notes an apparent contradiction between Collins's working methods and the later fiction: "despite his research, an air of the improbable

pervades much of his work."[3] Similarly, her dismissal of The Legacy of Cain as the product of senility is followed by the admission that "a glance at his working notes for the novel suggests that he was as painstaking as ever in his methods of construction."(4)

I wish to argue that the key to an explanation of the later fiction lies in the complex function of narrative and sub-narrative in Collins's fiction. In Basil (1852) and The Woman in White (1860) Collins moved away from the omniscient narration of his more immature fiction into a more subjective moral world. The device of using various narratives and sub-narratives allowed Collins to begin to explore complex ideas. Basil and The Woman in White suggest that narrative cannot simply depict reality in an objective way since it reflects and is an expression of the mind of its creator. Although Collins created for himself a public persona in which he appeared as a rather bluff, simple man who held that "the primary object of a work of fiction should be to tell a story"[5] the mature fiction contains various levels of narrative meaning. In The Woman in White the novel's sub-text provides another "story" which expresses the psychological inadequacy of the socially under-privileged Hartright. The novel's closure expresses the narrator's fantasies.

No Name (1862) was an equally significant development for Collins. In this novel he further explored the complex relationship between the narrator and his fiction. According to Victorian orthodoxy, the omniscient narrator was a device for expressing established values. In No Name the figure of the omniscient narrator undergoes psychological crisis, as also does the central character. The narrator of No Name begins by exploring his own sexuality. Magdalen Vanstone is a figure of fantasy more sensual and intriguing than the standard Victorian ideal of passive womanhood. The narrator's anxiety and disgust at the implications of his own sexuality are revealed through the development of a plot in which Magdalen becomes an increasingly threatening figure. He takes refuge from anxiety in a simplistic closure which re-asserts standard Victorian values. A sub-text operates beneath the surface narrative of No Name in which the narrator is a central character in a psychological drama and in which the overt assertion of moral norms reveals the vulnerability of the narrator who is dependent upon them.

In his later fiction Collins attempted to use the idea of narrative as a means of revealing the anxieties of various narrators in order to express his belief in the decay and degeneration of Victorian society. The narratives of the later fiction explore men's inability to come to terms with social change. Masculine characters find that their cultural legacy has

stagnated and is no longer able to offer psychological security. For instance, in The Fallen Leaves (1879) Amelius Goldenheart finds his belief in Christian Socialism undermined by his sexual desires. In The Two Destinies George Germaine's belief in neo-medieval ideology induces him to attempt to commit murder. The violence, improbability, deformity and simplistic morality often seen by critics as serious faults of the later fiction are devices which illustrate the disturbed state of the late-Victorian mind.

In his study of Gissing Adrian Poole notes that "deep and complex changes of consciousness"[6] characterised the late Victorian experience:

> Gissing and the other late Victorians share in a specific historical consciousness, the key to which is the sense of an unprecedented intransigence in the terms of the opposition between the inner, personal and subjective, and the outer, public and objective. In political, social, and economic spheres, the move towards corporation reflected a general sense of the massing of forces, the taking of sides in a world of decreasing options and manoeuvrability. (7)

Michael Wheeler concurs with Poole's assessment in his analysis of late Victorian fiction in English Fiction of the Victorian Period (1830-1890) (1985) and notes that the response of some late Victorian writers to a limiting social environment was "a turning inward, away from the outer physical world and towards

the human psyche and its powers."[8] Collins's later fiction explores this subject. However, subjectivity provides no escape from social tensions. Exploration of the psychology of narrator-figures reveals that they experience anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy. They prove unable to adapt to social change.

U.C. Knoepflmacher comments that in the novella A Rogue's Life (1879) the "rogue" of the title, Frank Softly, "shares his creator's delight in puncturing the pretensions of conventional society"[9] and that "Collins delightedly enters into Frank's shady activities."[10] The comic vivacity of A Rogue's Life, revised from a serial which appeared in Household Words in 1856, is more characteristic of early Collins, but the pleasure at dismantling social convention noted by Knoepflmacher informs the more pessimistic vision of the later fiction. The later novels subvert ideologies which informed and characterised standard Victorian thinking. Established discourses are revealed as constructs by narratives which ostensibly uphold them. Victorian men prove unable to create narratives which legitimise the existing hegemony.

Nicholas Rance in Wilkie Collins and Other Sensation Novelists: Walking the Moral Hospital (1991) dismisses the later fiction as poor in quality and uses Collins's case as a paradigm of the decline of the sensation novel. However, although Rance is

correct in saying that the later fiction expresses a sense that "great things can't happen"[11] he is wrong to imply, as he does in saying that "the Collins of the later fiction rails against contemporary life"[12], that Collins has lost fictional control and is expressing his own inability to cope with life. Ironically, Rance's misconception proceeds from an accurate assessment of the later fiction as an expression of psychic inadequacy. Anxieties explored in the later fiction are, however, not simply those of the author himself. Collins's fiction operates in a complex manner using narrative and sub-narrative voices to explore psychic response to a changing England.

Collins perceived that a construct of normality was vital to the maintenance of the established social order in Victorian England. The Victorian age was characterised by the growth of scientific and social enquiry. Such enquiries provided the opportunity for discourses on subjects such as health, race, biology, criminology, sexuality and femininity to represent normality as the general experience of the middle-class and hence to legitimise their dominance.

Collins began his writing career at a time when social, moral and medical analysis of the changes wrought by rapid urban growth had created an established discourse of crime as

inextricably associated with the notion of class. In Nineteenth-Century Crime: Prevention and Punishment (1972) J.J Tobias notes:

> One central fact dominated Nineteenth-Century writing about crime - contemporaries were convinced of the existence of a separate criminal class, different in its ideas and behaviour from the honest poor. (13)

The prevalence of this notion was an expression of Victorian class-consciousness: the idea of crime was a mechanism which allowed the middle-class hegemony to marginalise fears of its own mutability. Crime and those who perpetrated it were envisaged within the framework of an orthodox discourse expressing the existence of a threat to the established order posed by a criminal underclass. Descriptions of this "criminal class" and its mode of life, however, often elided into a description of the urban poor generally. Anthea Trodd's Domestic Crime in the Victorian Novel (1989) notes that the difference between the criminal and the impoverished was "often imperceptible to the middle-class eye."[(14)] A contributor to the Edinburgh Review of 1852 described the criminal as an outsider to the established norms of domestic life:

> A thief has no home; solitude is unendurable;
> he cannot, if he would, associate with honest people,
> so that it is a necessity to him to frequent places
> where such as himself are perfectly well-known to the
> peculiar circle in which he moves. (15)

The criminal is represented as excluded by his nature from the normalising influence of the ideal suggested to standard Victorian thinkers by the home. He therefore lives in cramped conditions and an underclass is formed. However, in Victorian England such experiences were common among the urban poor generally due to an acute housing crisis in most major cities. Thomas Wright's The Great Unwashed, by the Journeyman Engineer (1868) details the housing problems faced by a well-paid artisan and includes a description of the grossly overcrowded court in which he was forced to lodge. Similarly, D. Rumbelow's study of the London Police I Spy Blue (1971) explains the problems faced by police officers in finding acceptable lodgings. The ideal of the home as "a retreat - a peaceful haven to return to after work"[16] was not attainable for the urban artisan who generally lodged in a crowded court or in tenements known as "rookeries". The failure of the disadvantaged to achieve the domestic ideal facilitated the association of poverty with criminality.

Victorian orthodoxy incorporated criminality into a mechanism of social control through a discourse which suggested that the criminal was a primitive type less developed than normal people. Social Darwinists claimed that acquired

characteristics could be inherited and therefore a process of biological degeneration (of which crime was envisaged as one of the symptoms) could take place when primitive types procreated. Herbert Spencer claimed that such procreation led to "a deliberate storing-up of miseries for future generations. There is no greater curse to prosperity than of bequeathing them an increasing population of imbeciles and idlers and criminals."[17] Those who procreate are guilty of a "deliberate" accretion of misery for future generations. Procreation itself becomes a crime when performed by those designated primitive or degenerate. Thomas Beames, in his description of urban poverty The Rookeries of London: Past, Present and Prospective (1849) argued that in a rookery "a future generation of thieves is there hatched from the viper's egg, who shall one day astonish London by their monstrous birth."[18] In Beames's description the poor forced to live in cramped conditions become identified with criminals in whom procreation can result only in increased deformity and deviance. The poor will consequently become "monstrous".

The middle-class hegemony assumed the role of a moral police force charged with the responsibility of ordering the most personal aspects of the lives of those designated less developed or mal-developed. The idea of degeneration justified and explained middle-class superiority and power over those

classes lower in the social scale whose habits of life rendered them less advanced and therefore more susceptible to the promptings of savage criminal tendencies. Victorian descriptions of the situation of the urban working-class often represented them as biologically inferior or sub-human. Parallels with animals are common in Victorian descriptions of the urban poor, while G. A. Walker, a doctor writing in The Lancet, claimed that poor areas were places where "our fellow-creatures vegetate, like fungi, not live like men."[19] The Report of Commissioners into the State of Large Towns (1844) described the urban poor as degenerating physically and morally:

> In the filthy and crowded streets of our large towns and cities you see human faces retrograding; sinking down to the level of the brute tribes; and you find manners approaching to the degradation. (20)

Victorian writers on urban social conditions were undoubtedly motivated by concern for the plight of the working-class. However, their narratives tended to depict their social inferiors as biologically inferior, degenerate or criminal, creating an implied image of the middle-class as morally and physically healthy and untroubled by deviant tendencies and thereby legitimising its authority. A. Susan Williams asserts in The Rich Man and the Diseased Poor in Early Victorian Literature

(1987) that representation of the underprivileged as morally diseased "served to invalidate their complaints"[21] and claims that

> The very insistence on the incapacity of the poor, indeed, can be seen more as an expression of the ruling classes' own feelings of weakness and vulnerability than as an accurate portrayal of reality; for it would not have been necessary if they had been confident in their ability to maintain the status quo. (22)

Collins's fiction subverts established discourses by associating crime and violence with middle-class life. Ozias Midwinter, haunted by the idea of his own murderous potential in Armadale (1866); Germaine, the alienated and spiritually bereft narrator of The Two Destinies who plans to murder his mistress; the Reverend Mr Gracedieu, the failed patriarch of The Legacy of Cain (1889) who becomes obsessed with the idea of his dead wife as an adulteress and plans to kill the man he believes was her lover; and Lewis Romayne in The Black Robe (1881) who, troubled by remorse at having shot a man dead, abandons his life as an English gentleman and retreats into a Catholic church which offers him no comfort - each experiences violence, deviance, guilt or alienation. Such figures exhibit the feelings of inadequacy which A. Susan Williams perceives as subtextually expressed within Victorian accounts of the "criminal" classes.

The hegemony was not only middle-class but masculine. Joan N. Burstyn argues in Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood (1980) that ideas of female biological and intellectual inferiority were orthodox throughout the nineteenth century despite a steadily growing movement in favour of female emancipation. As late as 1871 Charles Darwin claimed in The Descent of Man that women occupied an intermediate position in development between the child and the man. Women's biological inferiority was considered to render them suitable for a domestic role. Since women were considered intellectually inferior to men, it was therefore supposed that they were less able to cope successfully with complex situations which arose at work or in social life. Frederick Harrison's article "The Emancipation of Women" (1891) illustrates this view. Harrison argues that women are best suited to the domestic environment where they can be protected from the challenges of post-industrial society. Women's emotional qualities, represented as the inverse of intellectual ones, are best suited to the home:

> In body, in mind, in feeling, in character, women are by nature designed to play a different part from men. And all these differences combine to point to a part personal not general, domestic not public, working by direct contact not by remote suggestion, through the imagination more than through the reason, by the heart more than by the head ... and all this works best in the home. That is to say, the sphere in which women act at their highest is the Family, and the side where they are strongest is Affection. The sphere where men act at

> their highest is in public, in industry, in the service of the state. (23)

In the late Victorian period, however, orthodoxy found itself under pressure. The movement supporting female emancipation, particularly with regard to educational opportunities, was growing in strength. Established medical discourses depicting women as too frail to undergo the rigours of higher education were confounded by the establishment of University colleges for women. Girton college and Newnham college were founded at Cambridge in 1869 and 1871 respectively. Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville colleges were founded at Oxford in 1879.

The growth of empirical social science research also proved extremely challenging to the Victorian ideal of womanhood. Women whose lives did not conform to this ideal were often depicted as biologically inferior or mentally or physically unhealthy. Social researchers revealed the existence of women, "deviant" according to orthodox thinking, whose lives clearly did not exemplify the expected pattern of unhappiness, degeneration and death. William Acton's widely read survey, <u>Prostitution Considered in its Moral Social and Sanitary Aspects in London and Other Large Cities</u> (1857/1870) detailed cases of prostitutes who evidently led prosperous and happy lives, including some who had made socially advantageous marriages.

Established notions of femininity were fundamental to discourses which legitimised the middle-class hegemony. Such ideologies excluded women from authority and idealised them as beings whom the existing social order was designed to protect. Female emancipation consequently induced fears that the structure of society was being undermined. Frederick Harrison expresses a sense of urgency when he argues against female emancipation:

> We are only seeking to assert a paramount law of human nature. We are defending the principle of the womanliness of women against the anarchic asserters of the manliness of woman ... In the name of mercy let us all do our best with the practical dilemmas society throws us. But let us not attempt to cure them by pulling society down from its foundations and uprooting the very first ideas of the social order. (24)

Harrison's emphatic expression of such traditional ideas reveals his fear and distress at the extent to which he finds them challenged. Like the masculine narrator-figures of Collins's fiction, his fear of "anarchic" elements renders him dependent on his discourse as a buttress against imminent change. He therefore feels the need to associate his views with a concept of "nature" in order to suggest that his own discourse is as fundamentally ordered and enduring. Harrison's emphatic assertions deny the anxiety he feels. In Collins's best fiction form is used by the failing masculine hegemony as a structure with which to attempt to maintain itself. In The Woman in White (1860), Jezebel's Daughter (1880) and The Legacy of Cain (1889) the action is

framed within a dominant masculine perspective. Representation of women within Collins's fiction must therefore be seen in terms of an attempt by masculine narrator-figures to maintain an established concept of femininity in the face of social change.

The treatment of female sexuality and deviance in the later fiction of Wilkie Collins reflects a changing moral climate. Female transgression is depicted in a highly complex way. Although deviant according to orthodox standards, the lives of Collins's protagonists do not illustrate a simplistic model of degeneration. Many of Collins's deviant women are extremely vital characters, some pursue brilliant careers, some successfully flout social convention and challenge masculine authority. Collins uses such figures to subvert the ideas of those who used a model of degeneration to explain deviance according to their own ideology. Collins's deviant women do not conform to Herbert Spencer's model of the process of degeneration. However, their behaviour reflects his claims that vigorous self-help and adaptation to circumstances would result in personal progress.

Social Darwinism informed the thinking of individuals such as Harrison who argued that the existing hegemony reflected universal scientific or natural laws. Greta Jones notes that "the search for a social theory was, for the vast majority of Nineteenth-Century sociologists, a search for a "natural"

underpinning to the social order and in addition for a theory of the individual's obligation to respect that order."[25] Social Darwinism legitimised the existing hegemony and justified the maintenance of the status quo:

> However many variations of social theory it has produced, social Darwinism implies that individuals are allotted places through their heredity or their moral choice. In the first case this means that the social places we occupy are inevitable; in the second, that we deserve them. This relationship between faculty and society can be discussed in a highly abstract way but the practical implications of it in social life do not lend themselves to a flexible view of, for example, the reasons for social hierarchy. These conservative implications emerged very quickly. (26)

Many of Collins's female characters challenge the conservative implications of social Darwinism. They possess qualities established by Spencer as important for individual and national development but are unwilling to accept their allotted place in society.

The idea that femininity was a state of inherent dependence was fundamental to social Darwinist claims of the fitness of the existing hegemony. Greta Jones explains that social Darwinists used the domestic sphere as a model with which the political and social structure of England could be justified:

> When it came to describing subordination the Victorians took much of their imagery from an area where subordination was legitimised - that of the family.

> Thus they intertwined the language of political and legal equality with that of the family to find a means of reconciling the fact of subordination with the precepts of a system which theoretically rejected it. Thus they talked in terms of dependence, of development, of benevolent and paternal supervision ... (27)

Collins subverts such thinking in two ways. The inadequacy and vulnerability of many masculine characters in Collins's later fiction renders the construct of paternal benevolence difficult to sustain. Collins's active and independent female protagonists are also highly subversive since the dependent wife or daughter was a key figure in the ideal family (seen as a microcosm of Victorian society). Female emancipation represented a challenge to the political power of the hegemony.

In order to confirm women as dependent beings, social Darwinists represented them as intellectually inferior. Elaine Showalter describes how such thinking served the masculine interest:

> Theories of biological sexual difference generated by Darwin and his disciples gave the full weight of scientific confirmation to narrow Victorian ideals of femininity. Female intellectual inferiority could be understood as the result of reproductive specialization, and the "womanly" traits of self-sacrifice and service so convenient for the comfort of a patriarchal society could be defended in evolutionary terms as essential for the survival and improvement of the race. (28)

Women in the late-Victorian period increasingly began to create their own discourses on feminine opportunities and duties. Women like Miss Buss and Miss Beale who were pioneers in the education of girls argued that a career as a teacher was an extension of woman's "natural" domestic duty to guide her children. They asserted that a civilising education would make women into better wives. Emily Davies campaigned to have university examinations opened to women. Josephine Butler publicised the fate of prostitutes and contested Frederic Harrison's view that women should, in their own interests, be prevented from working. She pointed out that his humanism left destitute women no other resource but prostitution.

Collins's women create narratives and discourses which challenge established ideologies. His most powerful creations such as Helena Gracedieu, change the society in which they live. The narrator of <u>The Legacy of Cain</u> reads from an American newspaper which describes Helena's exploits:

> We hail in her the great intellect which asserts the superiority of woman over man. In the first French Revolution, the attempt made by men to found a rational religion met with only temporary success. It was reserved for the mightier spirit of woman to lay the foundations more firmly, and to dedicate one of the noblest edifices in this city to the Worship of Pure Reason. (29)

Although she is banished from England, Helena's subversive voice cannot be silenced. It invades the narrator's world through the medium of the newspapers.

Masculine narratives are in conflict with feminine sub-narratives in many of the best novels of Collins's later period. The Law and the Lady (1875) is formed by the narratives of Valeria Macallan, the crippled egoist Miserrimus Dexter and the lawyer Playmore. Each puts forward a solution to an unsolved murder. Each character attempts to assert dominance and authority by defining others within their own narratives. Conflict between masculine and feminine narratives reflects changes occurring in late-Victorian society in which women were increasingly demanding and obtaining the same privileges that were offered to men. In The Legacy of Cain (1889) the narrative of Helena Gracedieu competes with masculine discourses and narratives which express a conventional idea of femininity.

Representation of masculinity also offered a means to re-affirm standard discourses. The masculine narrators of the later fiction reveal their awareness that traditional figures of masculine authority such as doctors, fathers and priests were finding their position undermined as women gained greater independence. It therefore becomes important for narrators to idealise masculinity. The narrators of the later fiction attempt

to legitimise the existing hegemony by stressing the superiority of men over women.

The figure of the gentleman (and his more idealised counterpart, the knight errant, which became popular with the revival of medievalism) appear to the narrators of the later fiction to represent ideological mechanisms with which to re-invigorate the established hegemony. They are revealed to be inadequate. Germaine in The Two Destinies finds that his life gains new meaning after he discovers neo-medieval ideology and begins to see himself as a knight errant figure. However, this idea proves unhelpful when Germaine's mistress refuses to accept a passive role and be rescued by him. Similarly in The Fallen Leaves (1879) the Christian Socialist chivalry of Amelius Goldenheart proves problematic when he faces the challenge of his sexual attraction to a prostitute.

Although Collins's later fiction represents an impressive attempt to explore the problematic nature of the late Victorian age, the novels are not invariably completely successful. Man and Wife (1870) follows a pattern common in the mature fiction. The narrative persona is initially overtly and extensively critical of the Victorian social order but retreats into repression and conventionalisation of femininity when he becomes threatened by the development of his own narrative.

Although an interesting exploration of social ideologies, Man and Wife is not as successful as the majority of the later novels since the anxiety of the narrator-figure is not adequately explored, a circumstance which has undoubtedly contributed to critical confusion of the reformist narrative voice with Collins's own.

The New Magdalen (1873) is similarly limited by its failure to portray psychological complexity. It is an attempt to express a male fantasy unworkable in Victorian society. Its figures are stereotypical in order to illustrate the implausible nature of the fantasy. This unfortunately makes the fiction rather uninteresting and leaves the reader uninvolved. Although The New Magdalen exposes the fragility of and tensions within masculine ideas and fantasies concerning femininity, it does not explore psychic crisis as do Collins's most successful novels. The best fiction of Collins's later period was that in which he depicted problematic aspects of late-Victorian psychology.

I hope in my thesis to show that Collins's later fiction operates in a highly complex manner and in the context of ideological tension. His novels reflect the changing nature of late-Victorian England and explore the attempts of the orthodox hegemony to maintain itself. The best of Collins's fiction

exposes masculine attempts to order a changing world with outmoded ideologies as ineffectual.

Footnotes

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23. Frederick Harrison, "The Emancipation of Women", Fortnightly Review LXCVIII (October 1891) pp. 448-449.
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29. The Legacy of Cain, Chatto, London, 1889, p. 322.

Chapter Two: Novels of the 1860s

(ii)

The Woman in White: objectivity subverted.

In The Woman in White Collins makes complex use of multiple narrative voices. Walter Hartright is both a narrator and an editor-figure, contributing a preamble and two narratives which frame the sub-narratives of other characters. These sub-narratives are highly varied in character. The closure of Hartright's first narrative is followed by a series of accounts of events occurring whilst he was abroad. Hartright describes his narrative as arising from his memories of past events. By contrast, Marian Halcombe's contribution is in the form of her diary, a document detailing her immediate response to events long past when Hartright collates the narrative elements which form The Woman in White.

Further narrative complexity is provided by Marian's collapse into illness which allows Fosco to read and supply an addendum to Marian's words. The contributions of Mrs Michelson, Hesther Pinhorn and Frederick Fairlie are the products of reflection on past events provided in response to a request from Hartright. Mrs Michelson's account is a business-like provision of salient information. Hesther Pinhorn's is similar but grudging and defensive in tone. Fairlie's self-concerned and digressive contribution is a highly contrasting

narrative. It also reveals important facts about the disappearance of Laura Glyde. Hartright's narratives also contain contrasting sub-narrative voices. Some are unsolicited, such as Anne Catherick's letter describing her dream of a nightmare future for the wife of Sir Percival Glyde and the narrative provided by the tombstone which tells Hartright that Laura is dead. Others, like Mrs Catherick's explanation of the mystery surrounding her daughter and Fosco's forced confession, are the result of pressure exerted on others by Hartright. There is also considerable variation in the form of the various sub-narratives and eye-witness accounts. Mrs Catherick's narrative is verbal, converted into the written word through the intervention of Hartright. Other narratives appear in the form of documents, such as Marian's diary, Anne Catherick's letter and Fosco's signed confession.

The form of The Woman in White, Walter Hartright claims in the preamble, is a quest for justice. The focus of the narrative, will, he says be the achievements of Laura Fairlie and himself in this respect: "This is the story of what a woman's patience can endure, and of what a man's resolution can achieve."(1) Hartright expresses an idea of passive femininity and protective and active masculinity which conform to established Victorian ideas of gender roles. The narrative, however, will subvert Hartright's discourse as it explores the problematic nature of Victorian concepts of femininity.

Hartright argues that his narrative is a reliable reflection of life. It will be an unbiased account of events, he claims, because it will not be dominated by the perspective of a single narrator. In a manner comparable to the statements of witnesses in legal cases, each character will say what he knows and then, "when his experience fails, he will retire from the position of narrator; and his task will be continued, from the point at which he has left it off, by other persons who can speak to the circumstances under notice from their own knowledge, just as clearly and positively as he has spoken before them."(2)

Hartright's idea of an objective text with a direct and unambiguous relationship to life is subverted by the development of The Woman in White. The narrative proves to be an expression of Hartright's subjective views. As editor, selector of material and overall narrator he is always in control of the text. U.C. Knoepflmacher, in his essay entitled "The Counterworld of Victorian fiction and The Woman in White", notes that with the development of the novel the reader becomes increasingly involved in a sense of subjectivity which subverts Hartright's claims for the objectivity of the narrative. Knoepflmacher says: "We become engaged in the narrative, not as impartial and objective judges but as subjective participants in a mystery - a mystery based on the irrational suspicions of the same figure who has posed in the "Preamble" as a rational accuser before a rational court of law."(3) The objectivity

Hartright claims for the text is a construct. The narrative is increasingly characterised by subjectivity and ambiguity.

The novel explores the implications of Victorian notions of mental, sexual and ideological normality. Meeting Anne produces on Hartright a strong impression of uncertainty and ambiguity. He cannot be sure of her mental stability, her purpose or the true nature of her relations with Sir Percival Glyde. The asylum keeper is a contrasting figure who expresses standard ideas with certainty. He is in no doubt of his conviction that Anne should be restrained. The sense of uncertainty and ambiguity stimulated by his meeting with Anne leaves Hartright doubting orthodoxy as he ponders whether she might have been falsely certified a lunatic.

Experiences at Limmeridge revive Hartright's doubts. The narrative begins to elide with Anne Catherick's perspective as Hartright finds himself questioning Sir Percival Glyde's suitability as a husband for Laura Fairlie. A letter from Anne induces Hartright to believe that Sir Percival's urbane manner hides criminal tendencies. The physical similiarity of Laura and Anne Catherick allows a parallel between the asylum and marriage to operate. As Jenny Bourne-Taylor's In the Secret Theatre of Home (1988) shows, "moral management" of the mentally disordered (a system which encouraged inmates to perform domestic tasks and exhibit rational self-control), established by Samuel Tuke in his asylum for the insane near York in

1786, is suggested by the representation of womens' domestic position in The Woman in White. Anne recalls Mrs Sherwin in Basil whose appearance associates nervous mental disorder with the suffering she endures in the domestic environment:

> Her pale, sickly, moist-looking skin; her large, mild, watery, light-blue eyes; the restless timidity of her expression; the mixture of useless hesitation and involuntary rapidity in every one of her actions - all furnished the same significant betrayal of a life of incessant fear and restraint; of a disposition full of modest generosities and meek sympathies, which had been crushed down past rousing to self-assertion, past ever seeing the light. (4)

Anne is a more assertive figure. Like Mrs Sherwin, her blanched appearance and mental disorder suggest the loss of identity which results from the oppression of women in Victorian England. However, she is also able to create her own narrative of this experience. She conveys images of masculine oppression in her speech and letters. That vision now begins to extend its influence over the narrative.

Hartright's prefatory claims for the objectivity of the narrative are subverted as Anne Catherick's vision increasingly dominates the novel. Hartright's preface claims that each character's narrative is based on unambiguous truth. A witness will "speak to the circumstances under notice from their own knowledge"[5]. However, he begins increasingly to doubt whether what he knows represents the entire

truth and, although he has no proof of the veracity of Anne Catherick's narrative, begins increasingly to accept its implications. Anne's contributions suggest that narrative expresses subjective experience, rather than objective fact.

Marian Halcombe's narrative intensifies this process. Harvey Peter Sucksmith has noted that the relationship of Laura and Marian is a psychomachia. He states that the discussion in which Marian argues that they must take action to protect themselves

> illustrates both the dissociation of feminine personality, during the nineteenth century into passive and active aspects and their complementary nature. Within the social and psychological patterns, here, a psychodrama is being enacted in which the anima and the shadow side of woman are brought into co-operation. (6)

Sucksmith perceives the importance of the idea of a "shadow" side of the self. This concept is important in the best of Collins's early fiction such as "The Dead Hand" (1858), in which the carefree narrator encounters his troubled illegitimate stepbrother who represents suppressed parts of himself. Similarly, in "The Lady of Glenwith Grange" (1858) two sisters symbolise pleasure loving and dutiful aspects of the psychology of one woman. In <u>The Woman in White</u>, this device is integrated into the novel's structure. Marian's rebellion and her role as narrator contribute to the novel's shift towards Anne Catherick's perspective. Marian expresses distrust of the masculine hegemony verbally to Laura. Similarly, her diary describes the

domestic life of Blackwater Park as repressive, unloving and potentially dangerous.

Marian's verbal warning to Laura, like Anne Catherick's letters and statements, expresses anxiety about male misuse of power. Like Anne's, Marian's fears are expressed in abstract and subjective terms. Although neither Glyde nor his mentor, Count Fosco, behave badly towards Marian or Laura in the early part of the novel, Marian's narrative depicts them as deviant and dangerous, preparing the reader for later descriptions of their crimes. Marian can offer Laura no clear prediction of Glyde's future actions but the very incompleteness of her vision becomes a cause for concern: "It is impossible to say what violent measures he may take next, unless we make the most of our opportunities while we have them."(7)

Marian's loss of narrative control occurs after she eavesdrops on a conversation between Glyde and Fosco and consequently learns of their plans. This escapade symbolises the growth of insight into masculine motivation. She subsequently becomes ill and her narrative breaks off. It is finished by Fosco. Marian's expression of discontent with orthodoxy and her increasing understanding of mechanisms with which men maintain their own power was becoming highly subversive. The masculine hegemony in the person of Fosco and through him Hartright as "editor" and ultimately Collins as novelist, re-appropriates the narrative.

Narrative control passes to Mr. Fairlie who, Marian hoped, would fulfil his role as Laura's guardian by offering her protection. Fairlie suggests the inadequacy of patriarchal society. He acquies S in Fosco's plans in order that he may himself suffer the minimum of inconvenience. The nature of the domestic environment plays a significant part in this process. Fairlie presides over a household characterised by the qualities of repose, refuge, tranquillity and passivity. According to standard Victorian discourses these were highly positive aspects of home life, creating a contrasting environment to the active sphere of work. However, in The Woman in White they are revealed as factors which dangerously weaken the family as an institution. The seclusion of the domestic environment, both at Limmeridge and Blackwater, makes communication between Marian and Fairlie difficult, a circumstance which enables him to detach himself from the crisis. His paramount concern to preserve domestic and personal tranquillity at all costs makes Fairlie unfitted to address the challenging problems Marian forces on his attention.

A superficial reading of the text may suggest that Fairlie's invalid status represents the degeneration of patriarchy but the full meaning of the text is more complex. There is no evidence that Fairlie genuinely suffers from any illness: the "nerves"[8] he complains of allow him to claim the privileges of an invalid. Collins seems to intend an illuminating contrast with "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839). Roderick Usher's physical debilitation, his neurosis and the

collapse of his house and lineage are intimately related to one another to create a pattern of decline which pervades the entire story. By contrast, Fairlie's illness is a device which separates him from the world around him. While Usher's illness symbolises his culpability in the entombment of his sister, Fairlie's nerves provide him with an excuse for failing to acknowledge any responsibility in the suppression of Laura. Of his acquiesence to Fosco he says "What was I to do? I was not strong enough to quarrel with him."[9] Illness, which symbolises psychological crisis in "The Fall of the House of Usher", is used by Fairlie to construct an ideology which denies the immediacy of the crisis and exempts him from taking action. Patriarchy is not presented as degenerating, but rather as constructing for itself an image of degeneration in order to evade responsibility.

The narratives of Mrs Michelson, the housekeeper at Blackwater, and Esther Pinhorn, Fosco's servant, explain the apparent illness and death of Laura. With Hartright's re-appropriation of the narrative comes a further shift towards the perspective of Anne Catherick, conveyed by his experience at Laura's grave. As Hartright kneels at the tomb he sees two women approach. One he recognises as Marian, the other raises her veil to reveal that she is Laura. The meeting parallels that of Hartright and Anne Catherick on the lonely road. Again Hartright finds himself challenging standard Victorian thinking. He learns that Fosco substituted Anne Catherick for Laura, passing off the dying Anne as Lady Glyde and incarcerating Laura in an asylum.

This convergence of identity signals the dominance of Anne Catherick's perspective. Hartright felt previously drawn to Anne's vision of Glyde as a dangerous and deviant figure who would cause Laura suffering. That vision now returns and dominates the text. In depicting Laura through his narrative as eliding with the figure of Anne Catherick Hartright communicates to the reader his impression of the dominant masculine hegemony as deviant, dangerous and repressive towards women.

Hartright's vision subverts standard Victorian discourses in several ways. The aim of his narrative becomes the subversion of the popular image of the bereaved husband as an object of pity and the exposure of what Hartright perceives to be the reality hidden beneath surface appearances. Fictional form parallels his efforts. Central plot elements are submerged within individual eye-witness accounts, their relationship to one another becoming only completely clear with the culmination of Hartright's detective work. The reader's attention is directed towards a sub-text which gradually reveals itself.

Hartright's narrative of his detective activities enables him to re-interpret the world around him. Although he originally stresses the objectivity of the narrative, The Woman in White becomes increasingly dominated by a subjective and aberrant social vision. Hartright's role as detective/narrator increases the ambiguity of this later part of the novel. Hartright has been traumatised by losing Laura to Glyde. His narrative of Fosco's Nemesis may be seen as a fantasy in which

Hartright represents the world as he feels it ought to be. In Poe's "Ligeia" (1838), a husband, in the presence of the corpse of his second wife, indulges his obsession with her predecessor: he describes how he gives himself up "to passionate waking visions of Ligeia."[10] His intense desire results in her appearance in the form of the animated corpse of his second wife. Hartright's second narrative in The Woman in White may be seen as a comparable revivification of the woman he lost within a narrative with which he can experience triumph over his social superiors.

Glyde embodies the social power of the Victorian hegemony, Fosco its cultural power. Glyde holds an eminent social position but has no refinements of character. Like the aristocrat who marries Rose in the early short story "Sister Rose" (1856) and subsequently abandons her to be executed by Robespierre, he proves morally unworthy of his high social position. Glyde is disposed of relatively early in the narrative when his illegitimate birth is revealed and he dies in a fire. Hartright's narrative suggests that the system which confers status according to heredity is threatened by internal conflict.

The elimination of Fosco proves more difficult, suggesting that cultural constructs of superiority are more difficult to subvert than those based upon a concept of heredity. Because Fosco possesses "a knowledge of books in every language, and an experience of society in half the capitals of Europe, which would make him the prominent

personage of any assembly in the civilised world"[11], he is an impressive figure who finds it easy to influence others to act according to his plans. He is therefore able to manipulate Glyde, Madame Fosco, Mrs Michelson and Fairlie. His effect on Marian Halcombe suggests that this charismatic power has a sexual quality. Expressed in the sub-text of Marian's narrative is the covert sexual attraction she feels towards the Count. Fosco, who acknowledges his desire for Marian, exerts a power over her which cannot simply be defined as attraction or repulsion but rather suggests the inadequacy of such simplistic concepts to express sexual feelings. Hartright claims that he is motivated to expose Glyde's criminality by his concern to protect and serve Laura. He suggests that he is not motivated by sexual desire for her, and represents his domestic life with Laura and Marian as asexual. The defeat and death of the Count symbolises Hartright's denial of his sexuality.

Fosco's confession is a device with which Hartright attempts to prove the objectivity of The Woman in White. However, the overt explanation of the central crime is subverted by the ambiguity of Fosco's narrative. Fosco's confession is part of Hartright's own narrative, which seems to express his desires rather than objective truth. Fosco's death may also be seen in these terms. Although Hartright states that he plays no part in the final Nemesis which overtakes Fosco, his contradictory acknowledgement of his part in it betrays his concealed desire for revenge upon his enemy:

> Other vengeance than mine had followed that fated man from the theatre to his own door; from his own door to his refuge in Paris. Other vengeance than mine had called him to the day of reckoning, and had exacted from him the penalty of his life. The moment when I had pointed him out to Pesca, at the theatre, in the hearing of that stranger by our side, who was looking for him, too - was the moment that sealed his doom. (12)

Fosco is killed by the revolutionary secret society of which he was once a member. Although Hartright distances himself from the act by denoting it "other vengeance than mine", the following lines show that it was Hartright who "sealed his [Fosco's] doom" by pointing him out in the presence of a member of the secret society.

The involvement of Pesca in the demise of Fosco suggests further ambiguity. Pesca is Hartright's friend, a fellow impecunious tutor to middle-class families. An Italian political refugee, he is socially and financially disadvantaged. He appears at the start of The Woman in White as a comical figure, kind-hearted but incapable. The transformation of Pesca from comic buffoon to member of a politically subversive secret society with the power to bring life or death to other men is a change which parallels the revolution which the Brotherhood aim to bring about. It is a transformation like that of Hartright from powerless minion to a man with the power to destroy his enemies and take the place of his social superiors. Pesca and Hartright are parallel figures within a narrative which expresses the desire of the disadvantaged to dispossess their social superiors.

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It is not the concept of justice, as Hartright suggests, but that of revenge which explains the death of Fosco. His death at the hands of the secret society he betrayed does not suggest the existence of a just world order. Fosco's murder is the result of the actions of self-interested parties whom his actions have offended. Fosco's crimes stimulate his murder. This sub-text exposes Hartright's attempt to use the concept of Nemesis to disguise his own desires and to justify his actions.

Hartright has assimilated the perspective of Anne Catherick into his thinking. He has also, through his narrative, created a structure which allows him to come to terms with, and envisage himself as playing a positive role in a savage, amoral world. The narrative explores the gradual destruction of Hartright's acceptance of standard discourses and hints at the new social order he foresees as a result. The idea of the immanence of a new social order becomes more openly expressed during the closure of The Woman in White. The impetus towards social change and the subversion of the class structure, sub-textually expressed within Hartright's narrative of the pursuit of Glyde and Fosco and more overtly represented by the emblematic death of the Count, is fully expressed in the final lines of the novel which reveal that Hartright has sired the heir to the estate of Limmeridge. Collins uses a device often used by Charles Reade in order to highlight the most sensational aspects of a narrative. The subversive nature of the closure of The Woman in White in which the son of a poor

drawing-master will inherit a rich estate is underlined by the capitals and italics of "*the Heir of Limmeridge*"[13]. Hartright emerges as a triumphant version of the clerk Mannion in Basil. Mannion finds that the aristocratic Basil has become en gaged to Margaret Sherwin, whom he is also in love with. He attempts to elope with her but the plan fails, he is attacked by Basil and Margaret dies. Mannion determines to revenge himself but whilst he is pursuing Basil he falls from a cliff and dies. Hartright, by contrast, marries Laura and brings about the death of his aristocratic rival. It is significant that in the earlier novel it is Basil, not Mannion, who is the editor-figure who ultimately controls the text. Mannion's lack of social power is paralleled by his lack of narrative power. Hartright is a more threatening figure to the middle-class hegemony since he is able to create and control narratives which express his desires and legitimise his behaviour.

The Woman in White is not an objective representation of reality, as Hartright's preamble claims. A sub-text evolves beneath the surface narrative which increasingly moves away from objectivity and detachment towards an expression of Hartright's own concept of a new social order. Fictional form explores the complex and subjective nature of individual experience and the attempt to express it.

Footnotes

1. The Woman in White, Oxford, 1987, p. 1.
2. Ibid., p. 1.
3. U.C. Knoepflmacher, "The Counterworld of Victorian fiction and

The Woman in White" in Jerome H. Buckley, The Worlds of Victorian Fiction, Harvard U.P., 1975. p.362.

4. Basil, Dover, New York, 1980, p.75.
5. The Woman in White", op. cit., p.1.
6. opcit, p.614.
7. op.cit., p.274.
8. op cit., p.319.
9. op cit, p.322.
10. Edgar Allan Poe, Tales of Mystery and Imagination, Chatto, 1909, p.71.
11. The Woman in White, p.199.
12. Ibid., pp.580-81.
13. Ibid., p 584.

No Name (1863): anxieties of an omniscient narrator.

No Name is an account by an omniscient narrator punctuated by letters and by the diary of Captain Wragge. The early part of the omniscient narrative describes events surrounding the death of the parents of Norah and Magdalen Vanstone. The narrative then focuses on the experiences of Magdalen. Her response to the trauma of parental death, newly discovered illegitimacy and eviction from home in favour of legal heirs is determination to regain her financial inheritance at all costs. She runs away to become an actress, an experience which enables her, with the help of the swindler Wragge, to trick the new heir, Noel Vanstone, into marrying her. Wragge's diary is a sub-narrative in which he details the progress and eventual failure of Magdalen's plans which are foiled by Vanstone's housekeeper Mrs Lecount. The omniscient narrator resumes the story and depicts Magdalen's power to influence others and to shape her own life as declining rapidly. After an unsuccessful attempt to steal documents relating to her inheritance Magdalen becomes ill and contemplates suicide. Contrition, recovery and marriage to Mr. Kirke, who befriends her when she is ill, follow. Magdalen and Norah subsequently find that their legacy is restored to them. The will left by Magdalen's husband on his death is disputed and divided amongst his next of kin who are Magdalen, Norah and her new husband, George.

In the preface to <u>No Name</u> Collins stresses structural differences between his new novel and its predecessor, <u>The Woman in White</u>. He says:

> The only secret contained in this book is revealed midway in the first volume. From that point, all the main events of the story are purposely foreshadowed, before they take place- my present design being to rouse the reader's interest in following the train of circumstances by which these foreseen events are brought about. (1)

Collins's prefatorial statements, like his fiction, express sub-textual meaning. His statement that no secrets will be kept from the reader makes an oblique reference to the Victorian convention of the omniscient narrator. This allowed novelists to make use of a broad perspective generally accepted as reflecting "reality". Collins suggests that such realism is a construct. Phrases such as "purposely foreshadowed", "my present design" and "foreseen events" suggest that the "reality" presented to the reader by the novel is a technical creation.

Fiction is a mechanism with which an author asserts his views:

> There is no need for me to add more to these few prefatory words than is here written. What I might otherwise have wished to say in this place, I have endeavoured to make the book itself say for me. (2)

The preface suggests that narrative reveals the psychology of

its creator who uses fiction to express his own ideas. No Name expands and explores this idea. The omniscient narrator is a persona whose insecurities expose the fragility of the hegemony of which he is a part.

In her study of Victorian sensation fiction entitled The Maniac in the Cellar (1980) Winifred Hughes says that "the key to Magdalen's character is her exuberant vitality."[3] Like the heroine of "Anne Rodway" (1858) who tracks down the man who brought about the death of her friend and the housemaid in "The Black Cottage" (1858) who successfully defends her home against burglars, Magdalen refuses to accept the disadvantaged situation in which she finds herself and uses her talents in order to bring about change. She is also a parallel figure to the heroines of some sensation novels whose transgressions were associated with sexuality. (Mary Braddon's novel Aurora Floyd about a banker's daughter who conceals past bigamy was published in 1863.) Until her collapse into illness she dominates the action of the novel with an energy described by the narrator in specifically sexual terms. She "bloomed naturally and irresistibly"(4) and possesses "a seductive serpentine suppleness"[5] combined with "enticing gaiety."[6]

Virginia Blain's comments on this subject in her introduction to No Name suggest that she perceives that Magdalen is seen primarily in terms of her future sexual relations: "Far less sexually reticent than

Dickens, Collins presents Magdalen Vanstone to his readers in terms of unmistakable promise."[7] However, Blain does not fully explore the complexity of the narrative. It is not simply Collins who "presents" her to the reader but the figure of the omniscient narrator. The novel's representation of Magdalen explores the narrator's sexuality.

The complex role of the narrator allows a structure of sub-textual meaning to operate. Blain notes that the overt moral message of the novel, what she calls "the superimposed black and white simplicities"[8] is a structure used by Collins to veil a subversive view of deviant femininity as vital, understandable and admirable. The image of the narrator as moralist obscures his role as subverter of established norms. The narrator's role is further complicated by his involvement with his fictional creations. Representation of Magdalen in terms of her ability to gratify masculine sexuality parallels the preface by acknowledging the opportunity for self-indulgence offered by the process of creating fiction. The production of female characters allows the writer to create female characters who are figures of fantasy.

Magdalen's determination to regain her inheritance is a product of characteristic energy which is placed by the narrator in a specifically sexual context. By contrast Norah is dutiful and submissive in the face of tragedy, qualities which illustrate her conformity to standard discourses on ideal femininity. Overtly the

narrative voice establishes her reaction to personal tragedy as correct and Magdalen's as unacceptable. However, this is subverted by sub-textual meaning. Norah's appearance compares unfavourably with that of her mother. The narrator is concerned that this may be evidence of biological degeneration:

> If we dare to look closely enough, may we not observe that the moral force of character and the higher intellectual capacities in parents seem often to wear out mysteriously in the course of transmission to children? In these days of insidious nervous exhaustion and subtly-spreading nervous malady, is it not possible that the same rule may apply, less rarely than we are willing to admit, to the bodily gifts as well? (9)

The tentative tone of the passage suggests that the narrator is aware that this is a problematic issue. Although Norah conforms to moral norms she is physically inadequate. Allusion to the failure of "bodily gifts" recalls the sexual promise of Magdalen and places Norah's inadequacy in a specifically sexual context. Norah is likely to pass on the physical weakness which makes her sexually unattractive to her children. The narrator also hints that although Norah's behaviour conforms to orthodox Victorian morality she is inherently inferior in terms of moral development. He suggests that the physical degeneration evident in her appearance is accompanied by a decline in "the moral force of character and the higher intellectual capacities". In The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture (1978) Bruce Haley notes that Victorian medical and psychological discourses expressed a belief that "health is a state of functional and structural wholeness."[10] Mental

health was seen as a consequence of physical health. Physical health was believed to determine mentality and morality:

> Victorian intellectuals insisted on the reality of a spiritual life higher than that of the body, but in one way or another they all thought physiologically: they adopted the well-knit body as their model for the well-formed mind, and the mind-body harmony as their model for spiritual health, the harmony of the self with external principles of health and order. Total health or wholeness - *mens sana in corpore sano* - was a dominant concept for the Victorians, as important in shaping thought about human growth and conduct as nature was to the Romantics. (11)

The narrator uses the figures of Norah and Magdalen to subvert discourses which associated established morality with health. Norah conforms to conventions of correct moral behaviour but Magdalen possesses a superior physical constitution. The narrator suggests that Norah lacks "wholeness". Conformity to standard ideology limits her development. He notes that moral and mental characteristics evident in parents may not be passed on to their children and wonders if the same might not be true of physical heredity. He tentatively advocates a greater degree of perception and a new way of looking at the subject of health and its concomitant of sexuality. The Victorian reader must "dare to look closely enough" and be "willing to admit" to the truth. The notion that the ideal Victorian woman lacked "wholeness" explores tensions between Victorian discourses of health and femininity. In Myths of Sexuality (1988) Lynda Snead shows that an established discourse operated through Victorian art and literature which represented middle-class femininity in terms of illness. Ideas

of women as inherently passive and domestic were being increasingly challenged by economic realities which forced large numbers of women of the less affluent classes to go out to work in laundries, factories, theatres and shops. Middle-class women were consequently represented as invalids or troubled by minor ailments. Their physical frailty signalled their unsuitability for work and, consequently their "respectability". Sick women were passive and dependent on men such as husbands or doctors. The narrator of No Name perceives this tension between discourses of health and of femininity and explores the complexity of sexual issues in this context.

The development of the novel expresses the narrator's sexual desires. The early stages of the relationship which develops between Magdalen and Wragge represents femininity in terms of masculine wish-fulfilment. Wragge is initially depicted as dominant. He approaches Magdalen in York and creates a narrative of their future in which he will offer her remunerative work. This encounter has sexual connotations. Magdalen's name associates her with the figure of the "fallen woman". Wragge will later present Magdalen to Vanstone as a potential sexual partner. The novel's sub-text suggests that Magdalen is a prostitute and Wragge is the pimp who controls her. Introducing Magdalen to his wife allows Wragge to argue that it is appropriate for men to dominate women. Mrs Wragge is weak and frail, "a well-trained child"(12) completely controlled by her husband. Wragge's dominance at

this stage is further illustrated by his control of the narrative of No Name which is continued in the form of his diary.

Tensions soon become apparent within this masculine fantasy. Magdalen is sexually attractive because of her independence and energy. Mrs Wragge is correspondingly unattractive. Submissive women are easy to control but are sexually unattractive. The narrator's awareness of this tension is suggested by Wragge's growing anxiety, expressed in his diary, about Magdalen's independence and intelligence. The balance of power in their relationship alters as Magdalen becomes increasingly dominant. This process suggests the narrator's acknowledgement of the paradoxical nature of his sexuality. The fantasy of dominating a passive sexual partner conflicts with his desire for Magdalen. Through Wragge the narrator expresses his fear that a sexual relationship with a strong and powerful woman, although an attractive prospect, would disempower him.

The narrator's psychological equilibrium becomes critically disturbed. The development of Magdalen's plans becomes the focus for the narrator's understanding that women use sexual relationships to meet their own needs. As the narrator's idea of Magdalen changes, the figure of Mrs Lecount allows him to explore his anxieties. Lecount's purposes in manipulating Vanstone for financial gain parallel Magdalen's own. Lecount is described, both by Magdalen and by the narrator, as a low form of biological life. The narrator states that

she suppresses beneath her respectable behaviour "a low-lived longing in her elegant finger-nails to set them in her master's face."(13) Her pet toads symbolise her behaviour to Vanstone: "she twined herself in and out of every weakness in his character, as the frogs and efts twined themselves in and out of the rock-work of her Aquarium."(14) Magdalen compares Lecount to the toads: "I wonder whose blood runs coldest," she said, "yours, you little monster, or Mrs Lecount's? I wonder which is the slimiest, her heart or your back?"(15)

The image of the toad is also associated with Noel Vanstone. When Vanstone smiles "the skin at his temples crumpled itself up into a nest of wicked little wrinkles"(16), an action which recalls the movements of the toads: "the speckled skin under the toad's mouth mysteriously wrinkled itself."(17) Vanstone's similarity to a reptilian form of life reflects the narrator-figure's self-disgust at the sexual desire he feels for Magdalen. This process now reaches a crisis in which the narrator feels compelled to deny Vanstone's sexual desires through the collapse of his marriage plans.

This development towards psychological trauma on the part of the narrator-figure is expressed through the psychology of Magdalen, his creation. This process is placed specifically within the context of a decline in her power to create narrative. Magdalen's dramatic ability provides her with the impetus to recover her lost fortune. Her dramatic talent permits her to present narratives in a form which are

accepted by others as reality. Her decline is the result of failure to convince others of the truth of her narratives. Vanstone, enlightened by Lecount, perceives that Magdalen is not the woman she claimed to be and resolves to disinherit her.

During her relationship with Wragge Magdalen begins to feel herself to be involved in a corruption common to all women in Victorian society. In a process which parallels the narrator's identification with Wragge and Vanstone she ceases to depict herself as a woman who will use her exceptional acting talents to gain what is rightfully hers and begins to consider herself in a similar position to many middle-class women who make loveless marriages for financial gain. She no longer sees herself as possessing a special role and purpose in life and begins to lose her sense of individuality. This is represented by her changing attitude to Mrs Wragge, who symbolises the psychological condition of women who accept masculine dominance: "instead of appearing to weary of Mrs Wragge's society, she had patiently, almost eagerly, associated herself with her companion's one absorbing pursuit. She who had chafed and fretted in past days, under the monotony of her life in the freedom of Coombe-Raven, now accepted without a murmur, the monotony of life at Mrs Wragge's work-table."[18] This process reaches a critical stage after the collapse of Magdalen's relationship with Vanstone. Impulses towards self-destruction reveal that her sense of personal identity is all but destroyed. Like Mrs Sherwin in <u>Basil</u> and Anne Catherick and

Laura Glyde in The Woman in White, her identity is eroded by masculine oppression. She expresses her belief that she is valueless and characterless by attempting suicide. By allowing chance to decide whether or not she should kill herself Magdalen acknowledges that her life has no purpose. Her psychological condition is an expression of and a parallel to that of the narrator.

The narrator resolves this crisis by introducing a simplistic moral structure with which to order the complexities which have emerged through the development of his narrative. He is thereby able to re-establish standard discourses. Closure removes from Magdalen those aspects of her personality which made her deviant and dangerous. Her illness and contrition signify her passivity and conformity. The purging of Magdalen also allows the narrator to deny aspects of his own psychology which were revealed by the development of his narrative. The narrator represents himself as morally rehabiliatated in the figure of Kirke. In the middle part of No Name Magdalen and the narrator-figure both come to perceive themselves as physically, mentally and sexually unhealthy. The closure of the narrative equates healthy sexuality with conformity to received Victorian discourses.

Magdalen's conventional illness associates health with received morality. In Victorian fiction recovery after an illness was a metaphor for moral development. (Dickens's Our Mutual Friend, in which Eugene Wrayburn's moral rehabilitation occurs after a long

illness, was published in 1865.) The narrator consequently depicts Magdalen in conventional terms rather than as a sexual and independent being. He suggests that she is biologically frail and dependent. As Hughes notes, "It is telling that Magdalen's final conversion, or at least reclamation from her life of deceit, is preceded by an ebbing of vitality and near-fatal illness"(19). Magdalen's illness is a mechanism with which to deny the complexities explored earlier in the novel since it places her within an established construct of middle-class femininity as dependent, frail and respectable.

No Name uses the convention of the omniscient narrator in a highly complex way. Although overtly expressing received discourses, the narrative sub-textually reveals the preoccupations of its creator. It expresses his sexual desires, anxieties and the psychological devices with which he attempts to reconcile sexual desire with orthodox discourses.

Footnotes

1. No Name, Oxford, 1986, preface.
2. Ibid., preface.
3. Winifred Hughes.: The Maniac in the Cellar - Sensation Novels of the 1860s, Princeton U.P., 1980, p.151.
4. No Name, p.6.
5. Ibid., p.6.
6. Ibid., p.6.
7. Virginia Blain, op. cit., p.xx.
8. Ibid., p.xxi.
9. No Name, p.4.
10. Bruce Haley, The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture, Harvard U.P., 1978, p.20.
11. Ibid., p.4.
12. No Name, p.147.
13. Ibid., p.275.

14. Ibid., p. 275.
15. Ibid., p. 203.
16. Ibid., p. 203.
17. Ibid., p. 205.
18. Ibid., p. 298.
19. Winifred Hughes, The Maniac in the Cellar, p. 151.

(iv)

Armadale (1866): health, sexuality and violence.

Armadale is constructed in the form of an omniscient narrative punctuated by letters and later by the diary of Miss Gwilt. A prologue to the main action of the novel is provided by the narrator's description of events in the spa town of Wildbad many years before the main action. The elder Armadale describes how he was tricked by a man who usurped his identity, eloped with the woman who was to be his wife and stole his fortune. Armadale then tells how he took revenge by leaving his usurper to drown. The main narrative focuses on the development of the friendship between the sons of murderer and victim. The murderer's son, who has lived as a gypsy and calls himself Ozias Midwinter, arrives ill and destitute, to work as an usher in the vicinity of the estate belonging to Allan Armadale, son of the murdered man. They become friends despite initial opposition from the Reverend Mr Brock, Armadale's advisor.

Miss Gwilt, who aided the deception of Midwinter's father whilst a child, returns to Armadale's estate in the hope of gaining a fortune by marrying him. Her plan fails but she develops a genuine attraction to Midwinter, whom she marries. Their relationship soon deteriorates and Miss Gwilt determines to profit from Midwinter's real name by passing herself off as the widow of Allan Armadale and claiming part

of his fortune. Armadale and Midwinter are lured to a sanatorium owned by Miss Gwilt's accomplice, Dr. Downward. The plan to kill Armadale with poisoned air is foiled when Midwinter exchanges rooms with him. Miss Gwilt revives Midwinter and takes her own life. The circumstances of her death are suppressed from the public.

Miss Gwilt is the main sub-narrator of Armadale. Her diary replaces the omniscient narrative voice at one point, as do the letters of Brock describing his attempts to trace her and her own correspondence with Mrs. Oldershaw. Other characters also create sub-narratives within the omniscient narrative. The elder Armadale's account of the murder he committed, Midwinter's tale of his unhappy youth, Allan Armadale's verbal account of his dream, Midwinter's shaping of Allan's account into a document, Dr. Hawbury's interpretation of that document and the descriptions of the girlhood of Miss Gwilt provided by Brock and the lawyer Pedgift function as sub-narratives within the omniscient narrative voice.

The sub-narratives of Armadale vary in character. Miss Gwilt's diary and Allan Armadale's description of his dream are spontaneous responses to events which are centrally concerned with exploring emotion and sensation. Other sub-narratives provide analyses of events in the recent or distant past. They explain human life rather than explore it. They associate events and position them within a time sequence in such a way as to provide reasons for human behaviour. The

elder Armadale's memories of injustice resulting in crime, Hawbury's interpretation of Allan's dream as the product of everyday experiences, Midwinter's relation of the circumstances leading up to his lonely arrival on Allan's estate and Brock and Pedgift's histories of Miss Gwilt represent human motivation as readily understood when perceived as the result of other events. This contrasts with the narratives of Gwilt and Allan Armadale. They do not seek to depict events in terms of an all-embracing explanation. They explore without overtly explaining the irrational and apparently unfathomable aspects of the psyche.

Health is a central theme in Armadale. The novel begins in the spa town of Wildbad and ends in a sanatorium. The omniscient narrative voice represents Wildbad as an idyllic place. It is spring as the novel opens and the first invalids of the season are awaited. The landscape is beautiful, the town pretty and there is an atmosphere of harmony and happiness which is Arcadian and all-embracing: "It was midday, the sun shone bright and warm; and all the little world of Wildbad was alive and merry in the genial spring time."(1)

In this apparently ideal society health is a profitable commodity. The narrative voice describes Wildbad as alive with commerce:

> Below, on the walk by the stream side, the booths of the little bazaar that had opened punctually with the opening season, showed all their glittering trinkets, and fluttered

> in the balmy air their splendour of many-coloured flags. Longingly, here, the children looked at the show, patiently the sun-burnt lasses plied their knitting as they paced the walk ... (2)

The town depends for its livelihood on convincing the sick who visit the spa of the possibility of regaining health. The narrative voice creates a social vision of a community in which medicine is optimistically presented as able to defeat illness and in so doing contribute to the wealth of society as a whole. Medicine and capitalism operate in harmony. Wildbad is a society dominated by an ethic uniting care and capitalism.

However, this idyllic representation of Wildbad begins to be subverted. The reader becomes aware that the invalids have not yet arrived. With the arrival of the first invalids, Armadale and the Scotsman who writes down his confession, the narrative's vision of care and prosperity begins to be subverted in favour of a darker perspective. Armadale's deathbed confession is a sub-narrative expanding the novel's frontiers on negative behaviour and replacing the atmosphere of recuperation with the image of a moral form of degeneration which is passed on as a hereditary disease.

The narrative of the elder Armadale expresses a neo-medical discourse which contrasts with the image of recuperation and care presented by the town of Wildbad. Armadale endorses an established discourse in the study of heredity. He recalls the claims of the

doctor Benedict Augustine Morel who claimed in Traité des Maladies Mentales (1860) that negative moral traits were both readily inheritable and inextricably associated with bodily decay. Morel argued that a family line might die out through an accumulation of vice. In his narrative Armadale recalls the central character of the earlier short story "Mad Monkton" (1856) who tells of his conviction that his family line is threatened with extinction and who is haunted by the ghost of his reprobate uncle, an image of inheritable vice. Armadale, himself suffering from a paralysing disease, views his own crime as determining the structure and limiting the potential of his son's life. In this way the sense that disease may be defeated, evinced at the start of the novel by the idyllic picture of Wildbad, is displaced by a more complex and disturbing perspective. Armadale's narrative emphasises disease as actively deteriorating man's moral and physical nature.

The elder Armadale envisages the individual as irrevocably bound by the past. He says:

> "I see the vices which have contaminated the father, descending, and contaminating the child; I see the shame which has disgraced the father's name descending and disgracing the child's. I look in on myself - and I see my crime, ripening again for the future in the selfsame circumstance which first sowed the seeds of it in the past; and descending, in inherited Contamination of Evil, from me to my son." (3)

Armadale tells his sleeping son that "the only hope I have left for

you hangs on a great doubt whether we are, or are not, the masters of our own destinies."[4] The novel begins to explore the ambiguities of social Darwinist thinking. Although Herbert Spencer claimed that the striving individual played a highly significant part in society and by shaping his own future added to national progress, he also acknowledged the dangers of a negative heredity. Social Darwinist thinking is revealed to create an ambivalent image of man as an independent improver of his environment who is yet controlled and restricted by his biological inheritance.

In a similar way the development of Armadale is placed within the context of the complex power of narrative over human life. Armadale creates a narrative explaining his own dark view of the way the moral universe is ordered which he intends will influence Midwinter. On a sub-textual level, Armadale's confession suggests that happiness for Midwinter will be possible only if he can order his life and escape from the determining power of his father's dark narrative vision.

Armadale's confession also carries further sub-textual meaning. His injunctions to his son to "avoid the man who bears the same name as your own"[5] and to "Never let the two Allan Armadales meet in this world: never never"[6] expresses the need to repress the inner self. The elder Armadale suggests that the submerged psyche harbours dangerous and criminal tendencies. It is "the devil at my elbow".[7] The separation of the two Armadales represents the denial and

repression of parts of the self. The elder Armadale's fear that the fact of their meeting would stimulate more crime represents anxiety at human psychic potential. It is significant that this is the narrative of a father-figure. To break away from this repressive narrative is to break away from the psychic constraints of an older generation.

Other figures of parental authority create parallel discourses of restraint. Although unaware of Midwinter's identity, Brock identifies him as unhealthy and liable to prove a negative influence on Allan. Brock's response on seeing Midwinter suggests a connection between ill health and moral deviance:

> If this man was honest, his eyes showed a singular perversity in looking away and denying it. Possibly they were affected in some degree by a nervous restlessness in his organization, which appeared to pervade every fibre in his lean, lithe body. The rector's healthy Anglo-Saxon flesh crept responsively at every casual movement of the usher's supple brown fingers, and every passing distortion of the usher's haggard yellow face. "God forgive me!" thought Mr. Brock, with his mind running on Allan and Allan's mother, "I wish I could see my way to turning Ozias Midwinter adrift in the world again!" (8)

Brock attempts to convince himself that the biological inadequacy he perceives in Midwinter must be connected with a parallel moral inadequacy. The rector wonders whether the movement of Midwinter's eyes reflects dishonesty or illness. Brock's response to Midwinter's "haggard yellow face" is to fear the effect the usher will have on Allan's future.

The perspective of Brock and that of the narrator come very close to one another at this point. The narrator confirms Brock's physical superiority to Midwinter, a superiority which is more fundamental than the fact that Midwinter has an infection and Brock does not. By using the phrase "healthy Anglo-Saxon flesh" the narrator establishes Brock as biologically superior to the "gypsy" Midwinter. In the later novel Heart and Science (1883), Benjulia is disparaged on account of his "gypsy" origins. Midwinter's illness becomes evidence of genetic weakness. Brock's fear of Midwinter's influence on Armadale's future is represented as fear of contagion, both moral and physical. In this way the narrative has moved further from the idyllic perspective on health evinced at the start of the novel. The elder Armadale's narrative argued for the existence of moral degeneration within a hereditary family line. In Brock's meeting with Midwinter moral deviance is even more threatening. Deviance is now represented as contagion. Brock fears that Midwinter's negative tendencies will affect those around him in a parallel manner to an infectious disease.

The meeting of Armadale and Midwinter and their determined attempt to remain friends dramatises a process of self-discovery. The relationship of Armadale and Midwinter recalls Basil in which the impoverished clerk Mannion symbolises violent, repressed aspects of the aristocratic Basil. However, Basil attempts to elude Mannion whereas Armadale befriends Midwinter. This suggests Armadale/Midwinter's determination to understand himself. This process

is not without its tensions, however. Midwinter's fears for the future, the appearance of the boat in which Armadale's father died and Armadale's disturbed dream are reminders of the presence of potential violence.

This process is complicated by the presence of Miss Gwilt. Armadale's mother's fragmented version of events surrounding the theft of the elder Armadale's inheritance and the murder of his namesake emphasises the need for restrictions to be placed on Allan's future experiences: "Never let his Namesake come near him! Never let that Woman find him out!"(9) Sexual relationships stimulate dangerous psychic discovery.

Miss Gwilt's narratives initially enter the text in the fragmentary form of letters. Later her diary forms the main narrative of the novel. Like Marian Halcombe in The Woman in White, she possesses the power to create narrative which reflects her independence. She is a powerful figure sexually and mentally. Her psychic strength is reflected in her ability to create narratives which become increasingly fundamental to structure and meaning in Armadale. As she becomes an increasingly important figure in the development of the plot a parallel process operates in which she gains increasing control over the narrative form of the novel. Miss Gwilt structures her life and disregards the determining influence of established Victorian morality.

The power of narrative is intimately related to the question of determinism. Miss Gwilt's power over narrative reflects her determination not to be bound by established discourses. She expresses her own views through her narratives. Her relationship to the past is different from that of the other characters. Unlike Armadale/Midwinter she is not confounded by the influence of the past on her life. To Miss Gwilt the past offers potential with which she may shape the future. Her ability to create narrative reflects her powers of adaptation. She does not attempt to circumscribe events within a discourse which represents them as evidence of universal structures such as fate or scientific laws as masculine characters tend to. The elder Armadale's deathbed narrative, Midwinter's and Dr. Hawbury's interpretation of Allan Armadale's dreams all function in this way. Masculine narratives attempt to be all-embracing and to explain everything. Armadale says of the doctor's narrative supporting his "rational theory of dreams"(10) in which Armadale's visions represent trivial events of previous days "Wonderful! not a point missed anywhere from beginning to end! ... What a thing science is!"(11)

The nature of Miss Gwilt's narrative power parallels that displayed by Allan Armadale's subconscious mind through his dream. Armadale's amiable personality is revealed as possessing more disturbing depths through his dream. Similarly Miss Gwilt's narratives reveal herself. This occurs first on a relatively superficial level in her letters and later with greater intensity in her diary. Her

spontaneous rendering of her feelings subverts masculine discourses. On a sub-textual level Miss Gwilt's narratives explore the influence of heredity on moral behaviour. Her narrative interprets the question in specifically sexual terms and reveals the nature of masculine sexuality. Miss Gwilt's diary explains how the Victorian ideal of femininity is a construct which bears no relationship to women's true natures. She depicts Miss Milroy as a schemer who merely presents an image to society of compliant and conventional femininity. Miss Gwilt's narratives detailing the attraction she holds for Midwinter also show that although men represent themselves as attracted to the conventional woman, in fact, deviant femininity has a powerful sexual attraction for them.

Like Magdalen Vanstone in No Name, Miss Gwilt represents those aspects of femininity which men find attractive but disturbing. Sexually attractive and experienced, she conjoins the 'fallen woman', one of the most persistent figures in Victorian art and literature, and the Jael-figure of a dangerous, man-destroyer. However, she differs fundamentally from both these stereotypes. She is set apart by her motivation. John R. Reed notes that Jael-figures and fallen women "are generally motivated by pride or passion."[12] Midwinter is both attracted and repelled by her independence, strength and sexuality.

Gwilt's crimes are represented within the context of questions of health and sexuality. Her acquaintances Mrs Oldershaw and Doctor Downward represent a further development in the novel's preoccupation with health and hygiene. Oldershaw's business is to use chemicals and potions to give decayed women the appearance of youth and beauty and to hide the marks of disease. During the prologue to the main action of Armadale, the spa of Wildbad was an environment which suggested that medical treatment could overcome disease. In the later part of the novel medicine is no longer associated with the ability to arrest physical decay. Instead science is represented as a means of making money by hiding disease. The idyll of the narrator's first vision of Wildbad in which commercialism and medicine were seen to complement one another is now corrupted.

The association of medicine and corruption reaches its apotheosis in Miss Gwilt's final criminal act, which is presided over by the figure of Doctor Downward. Its location in a sanatorium for those whose nerves have been damaged by the stresses of the rapidly changing Victorian world recalls the opening of the novel in Wildbad and relates Gwilt's crime to the theme of health and hygiene. Downward's connections with Mrs Oldershaw indicate a level of sub-textual meaning in which the sanatorium symbolises a brothel.

This level of meaning reflects contemporary anxiety. Widespread opposition to the Contagious Diseases Acts regulating prostitution expressed fears that doctors, guardians of national hygiene, were maintaining prostitution by keeping prostitutes free from disease in order that men might safely avail themselves of their services. In the close of Armadale the guardians of moral and physical hygiene, such as Downward, are represented as promotors of extra-marital sexual behaviour. The poisonous air with which Gwilt attempts to murder Armadale symbolises the transmission of veneral disease. The presence of Armadale/Midwinter in the sanatorium/brothel sub-textually expresses covert masculine desires. Gwilt's narrative describing Armadale's comfort and Midwinter's disquiet at their presence in the sanatorium/brothel reveals that men are both attracted to and fearful of prostitutes.

The domestic environment of the sanatorium allows Gwilt's narrative to comment upon the psychological effects of marriage. As in The Woman in White, a health-promoting institution offers a parallel with the Victorian home. Downward claims that his sanatorium trains women to conform to society's strictures and ideals. He offers "moral treatment"[13] such as encouraging decorous behaviour and listening to "sacred music."[14] However, this image of conformity hides the attempt to poison Armadale. Gwilt's crime becomes an expression of violence and sexuality repressed within the apparently docile and conformist women who inhabit the sanatorium. Armadale/Midwinter is the

focus of Gwilt's violent and sexual desires. Gwilt's description of her crime subverts established discourses of marriage as an idealised and sentimental attachment. Occur@nces in the sanatorium dramatise the psychological experiences of Gwilt and her husband, representing marital relationships as troubled by repressed sexuality, violence ahd guilt. Her narrative is highly threatening to the masculine hegemony and must be suppressed.

The narrator uses the closure of No Name to deny the subversive meanings of Miss Gwilt's narrative. It is incorporated within a larger structure in which she is described by masculine characters as a deviant and blameworthy figure. As in No Name the tensions explored in the novel are overturned in favour of established morality. The disturbing association between sexuality and deviance is simply displaced onto Miss Gwilt. A sub-textual level of meaning suggests that this retreat into simplistic morality reveals the inability of the masculine hegemony to accept or explain complex psychological experiences.

Footnotes

1. Armadale, Chatto, 1975, p. 1.
2. Ibid., p. 11.
3. Ibid., p. 33.
4. Ibid., p. 34.
5. Ibid., p. 34.
6. Ibid., p. 34.
7. Ibid., p. 31.
8. Ibid., p. 47.
9. Ibid., p. 54.
10. Ibid., p. 121.
11. Ibid., p. 121.

12. John R. Reed, Victorian Conventions, Ohio U.P., 1975. p.61.
13. Armadale, p.528.
14. Ibid., p.526.

(v)

The Moonstone (1868): subversive voices; narrative authority, sexuality and deviance.

The form of The Moonstone takes the form of a series of individual narratives prefaced by an eye-witness account of the removal of the jewel of the title from an Indian palace by John Herncastle; the whole is edited by Franklin Blake, suitor to Rachel Verinder. He makes no narrative contribution himself and the reader is aware from comments made by sub-narrators that he has solicited their contributions and laid down certain conditions concerning the form and content of their narratives.

The main part of The Moonstone is framed by the two narratives of Gabriel Betteredge, a trusted servant in the family from whom the gem is stolen. These are in turn framed by a prologue and an afterword. Whilst the accounts of the sub-narrators Miss Clack, Ezra Jennings and Betteredge are concerned with the fate of the jewel in England, the prologue and afterword describe its progress in India. The prologue and afterword are themselves of a contrasting character, although both are in the form of letters. Herncastle details his memory of events long past and provides a new version of well-known events while Murthwaite describes a recently witnessed ceremony which provides those to whom he is writing with new information on the fate of the

stone. Prologue and afterword parallel the sub-narratives of Miss Clack, Betteredge and Blake since they also are informed by the desire to impart certain information to others for a specific purpose.

All these narratives contrast with the contribution of Ezra Jennings which is in the form of a diary. Whilst the other sub-narrators remember past events in relation to Blake's specific request for information, Jennings's contribution is a spontaneous response to events intended as a private document. There are also other sub-narrative contributions within the accounts of the main sub-narrators, some verbal and others documentary. Cuff's verbal interpretations of events punctuate the narratives of Betteredge and Blake. Betteredge's narrative also contains Rosanna Spearman's letter and his daughter's verbal description of the Hindus and her own explanation of events.

The plot of The Moonstone can be briefly summarised as follows. The Moonstone is stolen from the possession of Rachel, to whom it is bequeathed. Suspicion falls on a party of Hindu Indians but Sergeant Cuff suggests that Rachel herself purloined it for financial reasons. Ezra Jennings, an unconventional doctor, demonstrates to Blake that he removed the stone from Rachel's cabinet whilst unknowingly under the influence of opium before collapsing into sleep. The fate of the stone and the guilt of the apparently exemplary Godfrey Ablewhite, who needed money desperately in order to maintain an expensive mistress, are revealed through the efforts of Sergeant Cuff. Ablewhite

is discovered murdered by the Indians whilst disguised as a sailor. The narrative of Mr Murthwaite, an orientalist, describes his sighting of the vanished stone during a Hindu religious ceremony.

The first two narratives, the family paper detailing Herncastle's theft of the stone and the ensuing contribution of Gabriel Betteredge, a servant of the Verinder household, create a discourse of narrative as fundamental to moral order. The anonymous author of the family document perceives his narrative as a mechanism through which moral worth may be ascertained:

> The reserve which I have hitherto maintained in this matter has been misinterpreted by members of my family whose good opinion I cannot consent to forfeit. I request them to suspend their decision until they have read my narrative. (1)

Betteredge's account begins with a quotation from Robinson Crusoe, a novel which seems to him to make sense of the world: "I have found it my friend in need in all the necessities of this mortal life."[2] Blake envisages a parallel use for the collection of narratives which form The Moonstone. They will be "a record of the facts to which those who come after us can appeal."[3] Both figures recall Hartright in The Woman in White who argues that his narrative has a direct relationship with reality. The development of The Moonstone is placed within the context of a discourse of narrative as fundamental to the establishment of coherent social and moral systems.

This discourse is, however, increasingly subverted by Betteredge's narrative which tends to suggest that language does not convey truth. Detailing his reaction to Blake's request that he contribute an account of events surrounding the theft of the stone Betteredge tells the reader:

> I beg to inform you that I did what you would probably have done in my place. I modestly declared myself to be quite unequal to the task imposed upon me - and I privately felt, all the time, that I was quite clever enough to perform it, if I only gave my own abilities a fair chance. (4)

Betteredge's statement expresses the difficulty and complexity involved in interpreting the statements of others. Philip O'Neill notes in Wilkie Collins: Women, Property and Propriety (1988) the presence of many inconsistent and irrational assertions in Betteredge's narrative and perceives that although it overtly declares the truth of the ideology expressed within Robinson Crusoe, "what is at stake is the validity of philosophical premise and the ability to provide interpretations of our world."(5)

Betteredge's discourse of narrative as an upholder of a normative moral system is further challenged when the theft of the Moonstone brings the influence of Sergeant Cuff's alternative narratives to bear on the lives of Betteredge and the other members of the Verinder household. Cuff expresses his idea of events which operates in conflict with the established norms of country-house life when he

represents Rachel as the thief of her own diamond. The idea that crime was perpetrated only by members of disadvantaged social classes protects Rachel from Cuff's investigations. Her refusal to permit him to examine the contents of her wardrobe is regarded as a legitimate expression of a genteel right to privacy. By contrast, the secretiveness of Rosanna Spearman, the housemaid, who has previously been imprisoned for theft, is perceived as a negative trait. Betteredge describes her as "a little close poor soul about herself and her doings."(6)

Cuff describes events in which Rosanna and Rachel collude in an attempt to dispose of a nightgown stained on the night of the theft by wet paint in Rachel's room. He thereby asserts a contrasting discourse on the relationship between social class and crime and subverts standard notions of femininity. Cuff's description of collusion between respectable lady and criminal servant denies the validity of an ideology which suggested that genteel and working-class women were profoundly different. Lady Verinder, Betteredge and others consider Rosanna's crime unremarkable considering her upbringing among the poverty-stricken urban working-class, whilst Rachel's social position is deemed to be proof of her honesty. Cuff rejects this idea, perceiving both women in terms of failings he believes to be common feminine traits. The existence of a connection between Rachel and Rosanna subverts ideas of social difference and is therefore seen by Betteredge as profoundly disturbing: "It was not pleasant to find

these very different persons and things linking themselves together in this way."[7]

The relatively new concept of policing allowed the less privileged classes of Victorian England to develop a degree of authority over their social superiors. The Metropolitan Police force offered an opportunity for members of the less privileged classes to rise within its ranks. Policing thus gave working class people power over their social superiors. Anthea Trodd notes in Domestic Crime in the Victorian Novel (1989) that the concept of policing the middle-class home was deeply disturbing to the dominant classes. Lady Verinder considers that Rachel's middle-class upbringing renders her incapable of committing crime. Cuff subverts this idea by stressing the importance of financial concerns to the middle-classes. Cuff argues that Rachel's need for money overcame her values.

Rachel responds initially to her mother's warning that the Moonstone's cabinet has no lock by saying "is this an hotel?"[8] She suggests that domestic values have become debased through the influence of Cuff's commercially based perspective. This prefigures The Haunted Hotel (1879) in which the former home of Lord Montbarry and Countess Narona is converted into a hotel. The transformation of a home into a commercial venture is suggestive of events which occurred within it. The financially motivated murder of Montbarry is paralleled by the changing role of the palace from domestic building to money-

making venture. Cuff's narrative suggests that Rachel was motivated by commercial needs. He perceives the Moonstone as a commercial property and therefore creates a discourse of the power of money to corrupt middle-class values.

The removal of Cuff from the Verinder household and the parallel removal of his narrative from the form of The Moonstone suppress material subversive to the interests of the dominant class. Cuff's narrative is threatening to Blake, the editor of the text, since he is himself a member of the middle-class. Miss Clack's ensuing narrative consequently denies Cuff's power to subvert middle-class values by depicting the vulnerability of the class of which he is a member. Miss Clack constructs a stereotypical image of the working-classes. She depicts working-class people as inferior, in need of middle-class charity and incapable of achieving the middle-class ideal of the happy home. They are therefore no longer threatening to her own class. However, although Miss Clack eulogises Godfrey Ablewhite and the values he appears to uphold, she unintentionally reveals his hypocrisy and thus subverts discourses she vehmently endorses.

Miss Clack conforms to middle-class values. She describes herself as having "had habits of order and regularity instilled into me at a very early age."(9) In order to deny Cuff's allegation that crime is an unremarkable aspect of middle-class life Miss Clack attempts to establish Rachel as deviant. She therefore criticises her

independence and the "absence of all ladylike restraint in her language and manner"[10] She suggests that Rachel is morally and biologically inferior:

> For my own part, knowing Rachel's spirit to have been essentially unregenerate from her childhood upwards, I was prepared for whatever my aunt could tell me on the subject of her daughter. It might have gone on from bad to worse till it ended in Murder; and I should still have said to myself, The natural result! oh, dear, dear, the natural result! (11)

A further level of sub-textual meaning also operates within the narrative of Miss Clack. Since The Moonstone is a narrative ultimately controlled by Blake, the inclusion of her contribution may be seen as an attempt to divert blame for the disappearance of the stone away from Rachel and onto Ablewhite, Blake's rival as a suitor. It also justifies Blake's choice of Rachel as a sexual partner. Standard notions of femininity are subverted since it is the comical and sexually unattractive figure of Miss Clack who conforms to and upholds them. Revelations of Ablewhite's duplicity and explanations of Rachel's behaviour express Blake's fantasies. Blake's claims (recalling those of Betteredge concerning Robinson Crusoe) that the narratives which form The Moonstone are "genuine documents"[12], with authority to explain events, are subverted as the novel increasingly expresses his own subjective world-view.

Blake's narrative and that of Ezra Jennings follow. Both describe a process of self-discovery for Blake. Jennings's experiments reveal that Blake purloined the Moonstone from Rachel's cabinet whilst unknowingly under the influence of opium given him by Mr. Candy. The relationship of the two men symbolises Blake's exploration of suppressed aspects of his psychology. Anthea Trodd notes in her introduction to The Moonstone that Blake is "one of the book's successes in equivocation."[13] His moral position is problematic:

> He is addicted, but only, respectably, to tobacco. He steals but only under the influence of drugs. He leaves one girl hysterical in her bedroom and another drowning in the Shivering Sands, but none of this reflects on him. (14)

The relationship of Blake and Jennings recalls the early short story "The Dead Hand" (1858) in which an encounter with his sick half-brother has a profound impact upon a cheerful young man. The young man spends the night in an inn with what he believes to be a corpse, later discovering that it is his half-brother who has been left for dead. Revival of the apparently dead brother is a metaphor for discovery of the repressed parts of the self. Blake also recalls Allan Armadale, whose life changes dramatically after he encounters Midwinter, who is socially disadvantaged and physically ill. Meetings between popular, healthy young men and ailing social outsiders symbolise discovery of the repressed part of the self. Blake is active, healthy, open and exuberant. Jennings calls him a representative of "the sunny side of human life."[15] Jennings is withdrawn, ill, self-conscious

and generally disliked. He symbolises aspects of Blake which are disturbing and unattractive.

Opium associates theft of the jewel with the Orient. In Orientalism (1978) Edward Said notes that the East has long been a metaphor for sensuality in Western thinking: "the Orient seems still to suggest not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, deep generative energies ..."[16] The image of the Orient suggested by opium is associated with the Moonstone as a representation of femininity. The moon was a conventional signifier of femininity. The Orient was also regarded as essentially feminine. Said notes that the East was often depicted as feminine in order to stress its difference from the masculine-dominated West. Orientalist discourses provide a picture of a "passive, seminal, feminine, even silent and supine East"[17] which contrasted with a masculine, active and progressive West. He also notes that many Western writers inspired by romantic themes tended to associate the Orient with figures of feminine power:

> ... such female figures as Cleopatra, Salome, and Isis have a special significance; and it was by no means accidental that in their work on the Orient, as well as in their visits to it, they pre-eminently valorized and enhanced female types of this legendary, richly suggestive, and associative sort. (18)

Cuff's narrative depicted the Moonstone in monetary terms as an object of value which could be sold to raise money. The diamond is

connected by Jennings with experience which cannot be explained by orthodox knowledge. Imagery of sensuality and femininity suggests that Blake's theft of the stone symbolises sexual intercourse. Rachel's deceit is also re-evaluated. Cuff considered her to be motivated by financial pressures. Jennings states that she was motivated by a desire to protect Blake. Rachel's destruction of Blake's besmirched nightgown symbolises suppression of the knowledge that he has had sexual intercourse with her. The connection between Rachel and Rosanna deduced by Cuff is shown to be valid. However, it is sexuality which emerges as the fundamental link between them. Cuff correctly perceived that Rosanna was in love with Blake, but assumed Rachel's motivation to be monetary gain. Jennings's narrative establishes that both women were motivated by sexual feeling for Blake.

The nature of Blake's transgression is complex. Jennings's experiment reveals that he was motivated by concern about the safety of the jewel. Blake's act and its consequences symbolise the politics of sexual relationships. His theft of the stone expresses his belief that by appropriating Rachel to himself as his sexual property he protects her from the attentions of others. In his opium-induced ramblings he says of the stone which represents her sexuality; "anybody might take it."(19) The experiment illustrates the problematic nature of mens attitudes to women. Ideological structures which designate men as protectors of women obscure the reality of sexual relations which disadvantage women. The novel's sub-text

suggests that after Jennings's experiment Blake perceives that by seeing himself as Rachel's protector he has legitimised his own sexual pleasure and defined femininity as an essentially inferior state. His theft of the jewel is a metaphor for the oppression of women through ideology.

Jennings's narrative represents the established form of sexual relations in Victorian England as a mechanism for the oppression of feminine identity. Blake denies Rachel's experience of her femininity in favour of his own idea of her as helpless and inadequate, an attitude which is suggested by the transference of her jewel into his own keeping for safety. Similarly, Rosanna's suicide in the Shivering Sands because of her love for Blake symbolises the destruction of womens personal identity in sexual relationships. Jennings's experiment reveals to Blake that he has created discourses of femininity which have denied Rachel's "otherness". She has been reduced by the masculine narratives of Cuff and Blake to something readily understandable and her actions have been explained and ordered in conformity with masculine discourses on femininity.

Jennings's experiment reveals to Blake that despite the prevalence of established discourses of femininity as knowable and inferior, he represses his knowledge that women are powerful, essentially unknown beings. Although Blake's self-discovery creates new hope for his renewed relationship with Rachel, this level

of meaning is itself subverted. The death of Jennings symbolises Blake's subsequent denial of repressed parts of himself. He suppresses the lessons learnt from self-exploration once he has resumed his relationship with Rachel.

Jennings's narrative also shows that men construct and arrange circumstances in order to ensure that a discourse will be believed. It is revealed that Mr. Candy acted as an agent provocateur in order to illustrate to Blake the truth of his discourse on opium. Jennings tells Blake that Candy drugged him "as a practical refutation of the opinions which you had expressed to him at the birthday dinner."[20] The return of Cuff further explores this idea. Cuff and his methods are now radically different from his last appearance. He engages vigorously in proactive police work which was curtailed in his former investigations. He is a parallel figure to Candy, actively manipulating events to test or prove the truth of his own discourses.

These developments explore a fundamental difference between the detective-figure who achieves insight through critical analysis of the evidence to which he has access, and the detective-figure who tests those theories by placing individuals in challenging situations. Dupin, Poe's detective-figure, restricts himself to purely cognitive detective work. In "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) and "The Purloined Letter" (1844) an examination of a room suffices for Dupin to solve crimes. In "The Mystery of Marie Roget" (1842) he forms his

conclusion after reading various accounts of a murder case. Dupin creates narrative but does not entrap, or actively pursue criminals. Cuff does not merely interpret events, but also instigates them. By instigating them he is able to obtain proofs which legitimise his discourses. Cuff's vigorous police work is paralleled by Blake's use of narrative. The narrative of The Moonstone allows Blake to create for the reader events which justify his beliefs and actions.

Blake's editorship of The Moonstone may be seen as an exercise in wish-fulfilment. Having explored his psychological and relationship problems to his own satisfaction through the development of the novel, Blake justifies his social success through Cuff's investigations which establish Ablewhite as the guilty party. Blake controls Cuff through the device of narrative just as Lady Verinder controls him financially (by paying his wages) in his first investigation of the loss of the stone.

As in The Woman In White, the denouement of The Moonstone expresses the fantasies of the editor-figure. The unmasking of Ablewhite is a double triumph for Blake. His rival for Rachel's affections is dead and the main guilt of the theft of the stone is fixed on him. The closure of Hartright's narrative describes the defeat of his enemies and his own rise in social status. Similarly, Blake's narrative expresses the ambiguity of his moral position. Like, Hartright, who distances himself from his part in the death of Fosco

by describing it as brought about by an abstract force of justice, Blake uses his narrative to evade his feelings of guilt at enjoying the death and degradation of Ablewhite. Blake transfers his own pleasure onto the boy Gooseberry and depicts himself as punishing the boy for experiencing them: "there was something so hideous in the boy's enjoyment of the horror of the scene, that I took him by the two shoulders and put him out of the room."(21) In this way Blake is able to deal with his guilt at taking pleasure in the death of his rival. By depicting himself in this role he also suggests that his narrative is an objective representation of events since he denies the pleasure he derives from it.

The closure of The Moonstone enables Blake to re-order his world. Cuff re-asserts his original vision of the jewel as a "marketable commodity."(22) Cuff's new investigation is, however, considerably less challenging to the Victorian hegemony since he does not suggest that crime occurs within the middle-class home. Cuff and his agents pursue their investigations in public settings such as banks, eating-houses, public-houses and public streets. Deviance is located within the hostile public sphere into which men must enter in order to support themselves and their dependents financially. Cuff explains Ablewhite's motivation in such terms: "The Moonstone stood between him and ruin. He put the Moonstone into his pocket."(23) The problematic vision of sexuality and its influence explored by Jennings is denied by Cuff's commercial perspective. Ablewhite's

sexuality is exposed by Cuff's investigations as Blake's was by Jennings's experiments. However, Cuff describes Ablewhite as troubled by the financial burden of keeping a mistress rather than by the relationship itself.

Gabriel Betteredge's short contribution to the collection of narratives which form the novel's closure argues that the domestic environment contrasts positively with the public, financial world exposed by Cuff's narrative. The wedding of Rachel and Blake and the conception of their child are events offered by Betteredge as proof of his original argument that established authorities can explain and order life. Reading a section of Robinson Crusoe in which Crusoe's marriage is followed by the birth of a child, Betteredge perceives this as a miraculous prefiguring of events in Blake's life and asks him "Now, sir, do you believe in Robinson Crusoe?"(24) Blake replies that he is convinced at last. The Moonstone has proved to be a spiritual odyssey for Blake in which his faith in established discourses has been challenged and has survived. Betteredge perceives Robinson Crusoe as proof of the fitness of the domestic values of Victorian England which he feels have not been undermined by the challenging narratives of Cuff and Jennings.

Blake is able to concur with Betteredge's moral system because the challenging voices which exposed the problematic nature of his psychology, sexuality and social position have been silenced. Jennings

is dead, Cuff in retirement. Rachel makes no narrative contribution to the novel's closure, nor does she appear in Betteredge's account of events. The masculine hegemony, in the persons of Blake and Betteredge, regains control of the narrative. Womens experiences are dismissed as unimportant. Betteredge notes that Crusoe describes his wife's next actions after the birth of her child. Betteredge asserts: "What Robinson Crusoe's wife did, or did not do, "then", I felt no desire to discover ..."(25) Similarly, Rachel becomes a minor, voiceless figure in Betteredge's final narrative; the complex subjects of femininity and sexuality are thereby evaded.

The final words of Betteredge's contribution assert that The Moonstone is closed:

> ... when I write of *Robinson Crusoe*, by the Lord it's serious - and I request you to take it accordingly! When this is said, all is said. Ladies and gentlemen, I make my bow, and shut up the story. (26)

Betteredge links closure with the reliability of the values he believes to be expressed in Robinson Crusoe. Since a stable moral system has now been established, The Moonstone, a narrative of the problematic, can now be closed. However, the epilogue in which statements by Cuff, a sea-captain and Murthwaite describe the progress of the diamond subverts Betteredge's ideological certainties. Murthwaite's sub-narrative denies established values by giving expression to a new perspective on the Moonstone. Betteredge's final

contribution is characterised by moral certainty, Murthwaite's by doubt. The diamond becomes a "sacred gem"(27) of spiritual value. It symbolises the problematic and the unknown. Murthwaite's final words which close The Moonstone suggest that Victorian moral certainty is the product of ignorance. Although received Victorian thought denies problematic issues, what is unknown continues to exist and fulfil itself in terms of a universal order. Murthwaite says of the diamond:

> You have lost sight of it in England, and (if I know anything of this people) you have lost sight of it for ever. So the years pass, and repeat each other; so the same events revolve in the cycles of time. What will be the next adventures of the Moonstone? Who can tell? (28)

Murthwaite's view of history disputes standard ideas of progress and suggests that no narrative can provide a definitive explanation of the problematic. No-one can determine the fate of the diamond. It is, however, certain that the human dilemmas which it symbolises will recur "in the cycles of time".

The collection of narratives which form The Moonstone explores problematic aspects of the psychology of Franklin Blake. The development of the novel explores Blake's search for an explanation of events which will enable him to accept standard discourses. The sub-narratives of Betteredge, Cuff, Miss Clack and Jennings reveal the problematic nature of Blake's response to orthodox discourses. Although on one level of meaning the text suggests that Jennings's

experiments culminate in self-knowledge for Blake followed by consequent domestic happiness, a deeper sub-text operates to suggest that ideological difficulties have not been resolved but simply denied.

Footnotes

1. The Moonstone (1868), Oxford, 1987, p. 1.
2. Ibid., p. 9.
3. Ibid., p. 7.
4. Ibid., p. 8.
5. Philip O'Neill, Wilkie Collins: Women, Property and Propriety, Macmillan, 1988. p. 12
6. The Moonstone, p. 141.
7. Ibid., p. 147.
8. Ibid., p. 85.
9. Ibid., p. 214.
10. Ibid., p. 224.
11. Ibid., p. 225.
12. Ibid., p. 216.
13. Anthea Trodd, op. cit., p. xix.
14. Ibid., p. xix.
15. The Moonstone, p. 422.
16. Edward Said: Orientalism, Penguin, 1991, p. 188.
17. Ibid., p. 138.
18. Ibid., p. 180.
19. The Moonstone, p. 472.
20. Ibid., p. 427.
21. Ibid., p. 497.
22. Ibid., p. 510.
23. Ibid., p. 507.
24. Ibid., p. 515.
25. Ibid., p. 514.
26. Ibid., p. 515.
27. Ibid., p. 522.
28. Ibid., p. 522.

Chapter Three: Novels of the 1870s

(i)

Crime in the Novels of the 1870s

The decade from 1870 to 1880 was a time of extensive social reform in England. Changes in the nature and availability of education both reflected and helped to increase the growing power of women and the working-classes. The 1870 Education Act ensured that education was no longer a privilege of the middle and upper classes by making elementary education both free and compulsory. Support grew for better education for upper and middle-class women. Between 1869 and 1879 four University colleges were established for women at Oxford and Cambridge. The growth of education had a significant effect upon the literary world, opening wider markets for fiction as literacy increased.

Educational reform reflected changes in the balance of power in society as a whole. The labour movement was becoming increasingly important as legislation gave more power to the working classes. The 1867 Parliamentary Reform Act widened the franchise in the boroughs to include all householders who paid rates and had been resident for one year and to all lodgers who paid ten pounds or more in rent annually. This section of the act effectively ensured the enfranchisement of the more prosperous section of the working-class in the towns and almost

doubled the size of the electorate. In 1875 the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act legalized picketing and established the principle that a trade combination might perform any action which was not punishable if performed by an individual. In 1875 the Artisans' Dwellings Act, the Sale of Food and Drugs Act and The Public Health Act sought to improve conditions for the working classes, who could now show their gratitude through the use of their vote, by regulating the letting of accomodation, the sale of foodstuffs and the provision of sanitary services.

In the 1870s social Darwinism began to have widespread effect on Victorian social policy. Darwin's theory of evolution, explained in On the Origin of Species (1859), had, by the 1870s, become a subject of scientific and intellectual debate. Highly publicised encounters between church leaders and supporters of Darwin in the 1860s ensured that his theory of evolution came to be generally perceived as a direct challenge to the church and a symbol of the power of Victorian science. In this context it became important for theorists in many fields of science and social research to establish the practical importance of Darwin's theory in order to legitimise their own arguments and social status.

The theory of evolution was rapidly applied to almost every aspect of cultural and social life, a movement which came to be known as social Darwinism. Although Darwin tended to avoid the question in

the years immediately following the publication of On the Origin of Species, by the 1870s he claimed that the theory of evolution could be applied to human society. In The Descent of Man (1871) he argued that man was the result of natural selection which had left him highly specialised and intelligent and therefore most fitted to dominate life on earth. Women and the savage races were, he claimed, mentally, physically and morally inferior to white masculinity. Such inferiority explained masculine dominance within Victorian society and the power of the British Empire abroad.

Social Darwinism was highly influential in large institutions which, since the 1830s, had been increasingly used in social policy initiatives. The inhabitants of workhouses, lunatic asylums and prisons were viewed as examples of atavism or degeneration. Their failure to prosper in Victorian society was perceived as evidence that they were inferior beings who were unable to adapt to their environment. Anti-physiological methods of treatment such as the system of "moral management" developed by the Tuke family were increasingly superseded. The mentally disadvantaged were no longer considered susceptible to the influence of kindness and reason. They were no longer viewed in terms of their similarity to and empathy with the sane. They were perceived as beings whose potential was limited by their genetic inheritance and were increasingly pathologised as the development of the public asylum system ensured that trained medical staff began to replace laymen in the care of the insane. The building

of institutions such as the infirmary, the prison, the public asylum and the workhouse ensured that medicine rose in status as a profession since doctors began to gain a major role in policing members of society who were judged biologically inferior, including the unemployed and elderly infirm in the workhouses, the insane in the asylums and the sick.

The abnormality and biological inferiority of the mentally disadvantaged was increasingly stressed as fear of hereditary insanity grew. The asylums came to be a method of social control which maintained a construct of ideal femininity. While the majority of inmates in the expensive private asylums were male, women were in the majority in the new public asylums which mostly cared for those who were paupers or could not afford private treatment. Female criminal or sexual deviance was often viewed as evidence of atavism. Such women were often incarcerated on the grounds that immorality was evidence of insanity.

Victorian social policy in the 1870s was, in part, a genuine attempt by the socially advantaged to alleviate the sufferings of those they considered less fortunate than themselves. However, it also reveals the determination of those within the hegemony to preserve their power. Since the better off working-classes were gaining political rights it became important to the middle-classes to classify and identify the residuum who were excluded from power in order to

establish the limits of social change. One of the most enduring and wide-spread Victorian ideas was the concept of the difference between the deserving and the undeserving poor. The deserving poor were morally decent. They deserved help because they had fallen into poverty due to adverse circumstances, not because of their own depravity. They might rise to gain a measure of political power should their circumstances change for the better. The undeserving poor should never be granted political power because their moral inferiority ensured that they would never be capable of exercising the vote properly. The institutions of social policy, the asylums, workhouses and prisons, allowed the undeserving residuum to be identified, categorised, contained and subjected to the particular regime of treatment alleged to be most appropriate for them. These institutions were an architectural assertion of the idea that not all the working-classes were sufficiently responsible to possess the vote.

Far-reaching social change was paralleled by economic change in Europe. The 1870s saw the beginning of the decline in Britian's commercial power which was to culminate in the Great Depression of the 1880s. The rapid expansion of industry which had characterised the early Victorian period could not be sustained. The durability of the machinery of the early industrial revolution contributed to stagnation. British industrialists were no longer the entrepreneurs of Europe. They were not implementing new technology at the rate of their competitors because the old machines were still working adequately.

This apparent economy ensured that Britain began to lose its position of dominance in European and American markets for the production of consumer goods. It became increasingly important, both to protect markets in the far East and for reasons of national prestige, to ensure that the British empire was maintained. Therefore various Army reforms were introduced in the 1870s which were intended to reinforce and maintain Imperial power.

Collins's novels explore the ideological implications of social change. Crime is a device with which Collins comments on attitudes to social change. In the fiction of the 1870s crime operates both as a signifier of, and a metaphor for, social struggle. The dominant theme which emerges from the fiction of this period is the changing role of women in Victorian society. Female criminality reflects women's attempts to gain authority and freedom. In these novels crime is sometimes a means with which women take power and change their lives. It is a response to a social situation which provides women with no legitimate redress. In Man and Wife (1870) Hester Dethridge explains how she killed her husband because the law provided her with no legitimate means to escape from him despite his brutality. In The New Magdalen (1873), Mercy Merrick, a reformed prostitute, fraudulently impersonates another woman because she knows that she will never, otherwise, be considered socially acceptable. In "A Mad Marriage" Mary Cameron helps her lover escape from the asylum where he is detained

because she has tried every legal means to prove his sanity and been unsuccessful.

Collins's best fiction of this period uses complex sub-plots in order to explore the relationship between ideas of female criminality and social change. Criminality is associated with other forms of feminine independence and self-expression which masculine narrators find threatening. In "The Dream-Woman" (1874) Raven's and Rigobert's narratives depict Raven's wife, Alicia, as a murderess. Raven claims that the breakdown of their relationship was due to Alicia's wickedness, which, he suggests, was proof that she was more demon than woman. The overall narrator, Percy Fairbank, also attempts to suggest that she may have been a creature of supernatural origin. By denying Alicia's humanity masculine narrators imply that women are incapable of behaving as she did. However, a sub-text emerges in which the relationship of Raven and Alicia breaks down because of his fear of her sexuality. In Raven's mind sexuality becomes inextricably associated with deviance. He convinces himself that Alicia will attempt to kill him and treats her accordingly. Raven's case explores ambivalent masculine attitudes to women. Men are intrigued by and attracted to female sexuality but find that such feelings conflict with accepted discourses which insisted that normal women were non-sexual beings. The sub-text of the story exposes the inadequacy of the Victorian ideal of womanhood and identifies it as a stimulus to crime.

The novels of the 1870s explore the idea that deviant women are sexually attractive. In The Haunted Hotel the men in Wybrow's club disparage the Countess as an immoral woman and protest that Montbarry must be a fool to prefer her to Agnes. However, the narrator comments that none of these men would have been able to resist the Countess's sexual power. The Countess's representation of herself as a "deviant" woman contributes to her sexual charisma. For instance, Dr Wybrow, having heard her account of the seduction of Montbarry, succumbs to an impulse "utterly unworthy of him, and at the same time utterly irresistible"(1) to have the Countess followed in order to discover her identity. In "The Dream Woman" Raven is attracted to Alicia because he knows she is a "fallen woman". The narrator of The New Magdalen is attracted to his own creation, the prostitute Mercy Merrick. The fiction of the 1870s shows that women who profit from their sexuality are illicitly attractive to men.

In "The Dream Woman" the idea of female criminality becomes dangerous to the hegemony. The contributions of masculine narrators sub-textually reveal that standard notions of female deviance stimulate crime. A correlation between events in Raven's household and domestic life in general is constructed through the development of a parallel between Raven and Fairbanks, the narrator, who is ostensibly happily married. Attempts are consequently made to depict Alicia as a supernatural being in order to deny this sub-text.

The Haunted Hotel makes complex use of different levels of sub-textual meaning. The main interest of the novel concerns whether the play written by the Countess Narona describing a woman's part in the killing of her husband reflects the reality that she murdered her own spouse, Lord Montbarry. Despite the discovery of part of a corpse the masculine authorities deny that there is any possibility that Montbarry can have been murdered. However, it is suggested that men are threatened by the Countess's narrative and therefore dismiss it as sensational fiction. The Countess writes a play which is highly subversive of masculine authority. The crime it describes is a threat to the existing hegemony. Social Darwinist discourses depicted women as inferior beings who were inherently closer than men to humanity's ancestors. The novel exploits such fears by suggesting that, since women are vulnerable to atavistic tendencies, feminine challenges to masculine authority might take the form of violent crime.

Male characters in The Haunted Hotel describe the Countess as deviant because they find her use of her sexuality to meet her own needs disturbing. The Countess becomes an even more threatening figure when she begins to create her own discourse on female deviance. The events of her play illustrate the ability of women to bring about the collapse of the masculine hegemony, represented by Montbarry. The masculine characters of The Haunted Hotel are subsequently placed in a paradoxical situation. Men become forced to argue that the Countess is not so deviant as she suggests (they insist that she was incapable of

murder) in order to deny the validity of the discourse she constructs. Womens ability to create discourses on deviance which are threatening to the hegemony is also a central theme in The Law and the Lady (1875). Valeria Macallan describes her investigation of the mystery surrounding the death of her husband's first wife. As her narrative develops she suggests that men are fallible and psychologically frail. Her narrative also expresses sub-textually her ability to come to terms with the unpleasant aspects of life from which the Victorian ideal of womanhood had previously protected her. Her search for the truth about the death of Sara Macallan symbolises her desire to uncover knowledge which received ideologies obscure. Her subversive narrative is countered by that of the lawyer Playmore which reinforces standard discourses.

In the novels of the 1870s Collins uses crime as a device with which to explore mens' anxieties about the psychological and social emancipation of women. For instance, in the sub-text of of The Haunted Hotel normal and deviant femininity converge. A parallel is established between the Countess and the apparently conventional figure of Agnes. Like the Countess, Agnes believes that a supernatural power orders the universe, an idea mocked by men. Agnes and the Countess dismiss received opinion and try to understand the supernatural. Their interest in the unknown expresses their determination to challenge established dicourses. Their ideological emancipation is reflected in their lifestyles. Agnes and the Countess

are disturbing to men because they are independent. Both live alone for much of the novel. The Countess is not dependent on her husband nor on her brother, Baron Rivar, whom she outlives. She determines to support herself financially by writing plays. Agnes's ability to live alone is disturbing both to her suitor, Henry Westwick, and to her other relatives who persuade her to marry Henry. Both women see a ghostly severed head in Agnes's room. This sub-textual parallel allows the Countess's script to represent Agnes's desire to free herself from masculine authority. Similarly, in Man and Wife the figure of the murderess Hester Dethridge represents the repressed part of Anne Silvester. Hester's discovery of violent tendencies (directed against men) within herself symbolises the psychological emancipation of women in the 1870s. As she plans the murder she begins to escape from repression, discovering and expressing her desires which are symbolised by the "double" which seems to appear to her:

> The Thing stole out dark and shadowy in the pleasant sunlight. At first I saw only the dim figure of a woman. After a little it began to get plainer, brightening from within outward - brightening, brightening, brightening, till it set before me the vision of MY OWN SELF repeated as if I was standing before a glass - the double of myself, looking at me with my own eyes ... it said to me, with my own voice, "Kill him." (2)

Hester's vision of a double represents her psychological growth. She comes to understand that the social order in Victorian England does not allow her to be herself. The murder of her husband is a metaphor for her desire to displace the masculine hegemony.

In the novels of the 1870s Collins seeks fictional devices with which to explore masculine psychology and its response to social change. In Poor Miss Finch (1872) a female narrator expresses her ideas about masculine psychology through a device which Collins had previously used in Armadale. Twin brothers symbolise different aspects of the same personality. The Law and the Lady is Collins's most successful examination of masculine psychology in the novels of the 1870s. The plot of the detective story is a device with which the psychology of the "gentleman" is examined. As in Armadale and Poor Miss Finch, two characters represent aspects of the same person. Valeria Macallan discovers that her husband has married her under the false name of Woodville in order to hide the fact that he was suspected of murdering his first wife. Valeria begins to perceive that Macallan, whom she previously idealised as a perfect gentleman, is fallible and psychologically weak. This process of discovery is continued on a sub-textual level when she encounters the cripple Miserrimus Dexter. Dexter's physical deformities, sexual appetites and egotism expose that which is suppressed within Macallan. Dexter's criminal act in hiding the letter which he knows will reveal that he played a part in bringing about the death of Sara Macallan forms a parallel with the denial of his own inadequacies. As in The Haunted Hotel, crime is used as a metaphor for power relations between the sexes in Victorian society. Dexter's act reveals that the masculine hegemony suppresses truth and denies women education in order to perpetuate itself.

In The Two Destinies (1876) Germaine's picaresque narrative charts his development towards psychological breakdown. The barren landscape of the declining Dutch cities which were once great commercial powers symbolises both Germaine's psychological degeneration and the economic and cultural decay of England. Masculine protagonists and narrators in Collins's fiction escape from the reality of their own vulnerability by retreating into fantasy. For instance, Miserrimus Dexter's imagination allows him to escape from himself: "I play the parts of all the heroes who ever lived. I feel their characters. I merge myself in their individualities. For the time being I am the man I fancy myself to be."(3) Constructing narrative is a means of sustaining fantasy. Just as Goldenheart in The Fallen Leaves (1879) retreats from the complexity of social relationships in London into his "perfect little retreat"(4) with a fantasy-woman, the reformed prostitute Simple Sally, masculine narrators use their narratives to deny the implications of social change. For instance, the narrator-figure of The Haunted Hotel closes the narrative by representing Agnes, who has challenged established discourses and lived an independent life, as a passive, domestic figure.

Masculine psychology reflects the weakness of the Victorian hegemony. The hegemony, rather than the underclass, as standard discourses suggested, is shown to be degenerate. The mental weakness which Valeria discovers in Macallan/Dexter suggests the fragility of

the hegemony he represents. His fallibility parallels that of the law. Other novels explore and exploit contemporary anxieties concerning deviance and degeneration. In Man and Wife degenerate and barbaric tendencies are found within the aristocratic class. "Miss or Mrs?" explores anxiety that social mobility (a consequence of industrialisation) might enable rich but untitled people to contaminate aristocratic blood. In The Two Destinies Germaine is weak and neurotic. His description of the Dutch cities suggests commercial decay which was beginning to affect England in the 1870s.

The idea of the progressive power of science played an essential part in maintaining and reinforcing assumptions that the existing hegemony was fit to dominate society. Scientific achievements seemed practical proof of mens' ability to understand, improve and control their environment. The 1870s was a time in which science began to influence social policy as never before. The development of social Darwinism ensured that theories which informed science, played a dominant role in creating ideologies which determined how people were treated both in institutions and outside them. Collins's novels of the 1870s depict Victorian science in an unfavourable light.

In Poor Miss Finch Madame Pratolungo and Lucilla question the theories and methods of the surgeon Gross. The sub-text of the novel establishes Gross's medical practice as a metaphor for ideologies

which depicted women as passive and capable of gaining only a small degree of independence with masculine help and guidance. Gross's treatment involves convincing Lucilla that Nugent, whom she sees on first regaining her eyesight, is actually the deformed brother Oscar whom she loves. Gross's deception is not overtly designated as criminal. However, it parallels the self-interested fraud perpetrated by Nugent when he convinces Lucilla to elope with him. Ideologies of passive femininity are exposed as a construct with which the hegemony maintains a fiction of ideal masculinity and thereby ensures its own dominance. In The Haunted Hotel the recently acquired prestige of doctors is similarly subverted. The Countess arrives to be examined by Wybrow, an eminent doctor, but he proves unable to establish what is wrong with her. Instead, she creates a discourse which states that her condition is determined by supernatural forces. This discourse gradually begins to dominate the development of the novel.

Political change in England ensured that the social status of the better-off working classes increased throughout the 1870s. Middle-class families, enriched by commerce, were able to marry into the landed gentry. Social mobility is an important theme in the novels of the 1870s. Collins explores sexual deviance, social mobility and the changing role of women and suggests the ambiguity of Victorian attitudes to these issues. Sexually deviant women were socially ostracised, yet they were also figures of great interest and appeal. Prostitution was considered a social evil but was also regarded as

inevitable since it provided an outlet for mens' strong sexual drives which could not be legitimately satisfied. The prostitute was therefore a figure of sexual fantasy. The "fallen woman" was a similarly ambivalent figure. In Victorian art, she was represented as a decorative object of pity. Collins's novels reflect this ambivalence by depicting sexually deviant women as socially successful. In The New Magdalen a prostitute becomes the companion of Lady Janet Roy and marries her nephew. In Man and Wife the "fallen woman", Anne Silvester, rises from a position of poor relation to become head of a noble family by marrying Sir Patrick Lundie. He comes to admire her courage at the hands of the brutal husband she was forced to marry as a result of pre-marital sexual relations. Sexual deviance is, indirectly, the means of her social advancement.

In The Two Destinies and The Fallen Leaves (1879) masculine characters are attracted to sexually deviant women. The sub-texts of the novels suggest that Victorian stereotypes of "deviance" are a cause of corruption because they deny natural human appetites. The economy presents a parallel situation. In The Fallen Leaves Goldenheart criticises the adulteration of foodstuffs exported to the Empire and suggests that this corruption will ensure the rise of Christian socialism. In this way capitalism becomes associated with crime. Capitalism is exposed as a system which denies human relationships in order to maximise financial profits. Farnaby's sale of his child is an example of this. The degeneration of England

parallels its ideological bankruptcy in The Two Destinies. The masculine abuse of power becomes a crime. In The Fallen Leaves and The Two Destinies crime is a metaphor for ideological systems which empower the masculine, middle-class hegemony and oppress other members of society.

Collins perceived the revival of medievalism in Victorian art and literature as an attempt to deny threatening changes consequent on industrialism. Medievalism looked fondly back to a time when relationships between classes were not based on the cash nexus but on feudal authority. Medieval England was envisaged as a static society in which social and geographical mobility, disturbing aspects of post-industrial society, did not occur. The migration of large groups of working-class men and women to the towns and cities in search of work seemed to the Victorians to increase potential for social disorder and revolution. Social mobility was more insidiously subversive. Industrialisation ensured that new forms of wealth emerged in Victorian society. The socially privileged, particularly the aristocracy, were fearful that this new wealth would enable the morally and socially inferior to enter the hegemony. Medievalism wistfully recalled a time when the inferior classes had been content with their lot and an ethic of benevolent paternalism legitimised the dominance of the genteel. Pre-industrial England was envisaged as a place of Arcadian simplicity in which the ownership of land determined social status.

In The Two Destinies medievalism is exposed as an attempt to re-define femininity in accordance with the standard Victorian ideal of womanhood, which was beginning to be challenged by the 1870s. Germaine meets Miss Dunross who recalls enchantress figures from medieval literature and who lives a passive existence, the angel of her father's house. Germaine cannot simply accept the ideologies she endorses, however. Like Goldenheart in The Fallen Leaves, Germaine is troubled yet attracted by the sexuality of Mary, a "fallen woman". He therefore adapts medievalist ideology in order to legitimise his own desires. He conceives of himself as a knight errant figure and determines that his role must be to save the "fallen woman" by marrying her. However, neo-medievalist ideology proves inadequate because Mary is not sufficiently passive. She refuses to allow him to save her and absconds, after which Germaine undergoes a psychological crisis. He re-adapts medievalist ideology and envisages himself as a warrior-knight. The figures of the lady saved by the knight and the demon or monster against which he battles converge in Germaine's mind as he sets out to murder Mary. The association of neo-medievalism and crime exposes such ideologies as mechanisms of repression.

The sub-text of "Miss or Mrs?" exposes the knight errant ideal as a device with which the aristocratic classes hide their determination to maintain their powerful position and to exclude those who have recently aquired wealth from marrying into their class. Launcelot Linzie depicts himself as a knight errant figure in order to justify

his clandestine marriage with the woman who is engaged to his rival. In The Two Destinies the inadequacy of neo-medievalist ideology is a stimulus to crime. Germaine undergoes psychic crisis which brings him dangerously close to committing murder when he finds the ethic of the knight errant to be unworkable in Victorian society. In The Fallen Leaves Collins deals specifically with Christian Socialism, a particular form of the knight errant ideal. Christian Socialists were opposed to the capitalist ethos and looked back to the paternalism they believed existed in medieval England. Collins exposes the response of Christian Socialism to human sexuality as inadequate. Goldenheart's relationship with a young prostitute suggests a sub-textual level of meaning in which he is forced to perceive problematic aspects of his ethical position.

The novels of the 1870s use the theme of crime as a device with which to explore reactions to changes occurring in Victorian society. The changing social role of middle-class women emerges as the central theme. Violent crime plays a dual role in the sub-texts of the novels. The theme of crime is used to explore fears that feminine challenges to the hegemony might take the form of crime and also as a metaphor for changes occurring in fields such as education and employment. Masculine narrators attempt to deny disturbing aspects of social change and to assert received discourses on gender roles.

Footnotes

1. The Haunted Hotel (1879), Dover, New York, 1982, p. 10.
2. Man and Wife (1870) Dover, New York, 1983, p. 226.
3. The Law and the Lady (1875), Chatto, London, 1892, p. 200.
4. The Fallen Leaves (1879), Chatto, London, 1890, p. 256.

(ii)

Man and Wife (1870): an ethic of barbarism; the social implications of the cult of the body.

Man and Wife is an account by an omniscient narrator exploring the sexual relationship of Anne Silvester and the popular athlete Geoffrey Delamayne. Following a prologue in which Anne's mother, legally abandoned by her husband who discovers their marriage to be technically invalid, prays that her daughter will not end as a "fallen woman", the main body of the narrative begins at a point in time when Anne has become pregnant and requests that Delamayne marry her. Delamayne attempts to trick Anne into a marriage under Scottish law with his friend Arnold Brinkworth. With the help of the eminent lawyer Sir Patrick Lundie the marriage is established as void and Anne does succeed in forcing Delamayne to marry her under English law. The omniscient narrative is punctuated by sub-narratives which reveal and explore men's oppression of women. Anne provides a verbal account of Delamayne's brutality. Her maid Hester Dethridge's written statement of events culminating in the murder of her husband argues that men behave violently to their wives and justifies a merciless feminine response. Delamayne reads Hester's account and determines to use the same method to kill Anne. At the moment when Delamayne intends to suffocate Anne he is struck down by a fit, enabling Hester to strangle him. Anne marries Lundie and Hester is confined in an asylum.

In his preface to the first edition Collins described Man and Wife as significantly different from his earlier fiction:

> The story here offered to the reader differs in one important respect from the stories which have preceded it by the same hand. This time the fiction is founded on facts, and aspires to afford what help it may towards hastening the reform of certain abuses which have been too long suffered to exist among us unchecked. (1)

A critical tradition beginning with Swinburne has identified the emergence of a propagandist attitude as the most significant factor in a general decline in the quality of Collins's later fiction. Robinson says: "With Man and Wife comes a shift of emphasis. Not only is the purpose clearly stated, but reiterated on every other page. The reformer has here won the upper hand over the novelist."[2] Lonoff argues that the social vision of Man and Wife is essentially trivial: "Wheras No Name deals with the legal and social position of illegitimate children, and The Woman in White with a woman's legal and marital identity, Man and Wife deals with organized athletics and the peculiar marriage laws of Scotland."[3]

Man and Wife deals with considerably more than the two topics Lonoff recognises. The preface to Man and Wife is not a guide to the novel. It is a device with which Collins protected himself from contemporary criticisms of immorality. It has sometimes been recognised by critics that Collins's statements about his fiction were not always truthful: Lonoff notes that although Collins claimed to

have carefully revised The Moonstone in the Preface to the 1871 edition, "aside from reapportioning a couple of long chapters and changing a few words here and there, the book remained unaltered."[4] By describing the themes of Scottish marriage law and the barbarism of the civilised athlete in terms of anomalies within Victorian society, the overt text of the Preface masks the breadth of the novel's criticism of the Victorian social order.

In Man and Wife marriage law and the cult of athleticism are portrayed as mechanisms with which a decaying masculine hegemony maintains itself. Although the preface overtly identifies Delamayne with a small fashionable trend, it also suggests that his behaviour is one aspect of a prevalent social problem:

> Public attention has been directed by hundreds of other writers to the dirty Rough in fustian. If the present writer had confined himself within those limits, he would have carried all his readers with him. [5]

Man and Wife does not restrict its criticism of Victorian society to particular sub-cultures. Delamayne's behaviour is paralleled by that of "the dirty Rough". Delamayne is a representative of a form of cultural degeneration which is found within the dominant classes.

Delamayne is a parallel figure to the popular, athletic and carefree Allan Armadale in Armadale. However, unlike Alan, he possesses degenerate tendencies. The surface composure of his

manner masks the violent energy of a savage. As the novel progresses his brutal qualities are increasingly revealed. The form which this development takes is through a series of confrontations with Anne Silvester. In the first, in which Anne insists that Delamayne marry her, he is a composed figure "in full possession of himself."[6] By the 1870s it was a well-established idea that self-restraint was an indicator of mental health and civilised behaviour. The healthy individual controlled those tendencies which were the redundant legacy of a lower evolutionary state. A doctor quoted in John Bucknill and Daniel Tuke's A Manual of Psychological Medicine (1874) claims that the cause of hysteria was "want of will-power"[7] and "undue prominence of feeling uncontrolled by intellect."[8] Delamayne progressively loses self-control. Anne describes his reaction on seeing her when she is the only obstacle to another, more advantageous marriage:

> The bare sight of me seemed to throw him instantly into a state of frenzy. He - it is impossible for me to repeat the language that he used: it is bad enough to have heard it ... The change in him was so frightful - even to me, well as I thought I knew him in his fits of passion - I tremble when I think of it." (9)

Delamayne's loss of self-control is associated with his gradual regression to savagery:

> The savage element in humanity - let the modern optimists who doubt its existence look at any uncultivated man (no matter how muscular) or woman, (no matter how beautiful), or

> child (no matter how young) - began to show itself furtively in his eyes, to utter itself furtively in his voice. (10)

The text plays on the root meaning of the word "culture", which is to develop or nurture. Civilisation should be a condition in which the individual is nurtured and his savage state improved upon. Delamayne's savagery is the result of a society which has failed to develop him from his natural state:

> Was he to blame for the manner in which he looked at her and spoke to her? Not he! What had there been in the training of his life (at school or at college) to soften and subdue the savage element in him? About as much as there had been in the training of his ancestors (without the school or the college) five hundred years since. (11)

Victorian society is exposed as responsible for Delamayne's criminal tendencies. The narrator echoes Matthew Arnold who asserted in Culture and Anarchy (1869) that English civilisation was threatened by the growth of savagery from within. Delamayne is a product of a public school education. J.A. Mangan has admirably argued that the public schools played a central part in the evolution of an influential ideology which tended to define sport as a better form of character-building than an academic education in Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology (1981). The narrative voice of Collins's novel offers his view that the source of Delamayne's savagery lies in

his education at "school or college" where "the present rage for muscular exercises"[12] has actively encouraged barbarism.

Doctor Skey argues that over-exercise of the muscles and neglect of other important organic functions must inevitably result in physical decay. He stresses the idea of "wholeness" crucial to Victorian medical thinking. Bruce Haley provides a definition of the accepted Victorian idea of health in The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture:

> Health is a state of constitutional growth and development in which the bodily systems and mental faculties interoperate harmoniously under the direct motive power of vital energy or the indirect motive power of the moral will, or both. Its signs are, subjectively recognized, a sense of wholeness and unencumbered capability, and, externally recognized, the production of useful, creative labour. All of this is said more simply in *mens sana in corpore sano.* (13)

Skey's view of Delamayne as essentially unhealthy exposes tensions between the notion that sport was morally educational and established medical discourses. By developing the body at the expense of the mind the cult of athleticism is destructive of the wholeness of the healthy organism.

The idea of "wholeness" forms the basis of Sir Patrick Lundie's attack on the cult of the body. Lundie envisages sport as a physical

representation of the competitive ideology expressed in neo-Darwinist discourses:

> The essential principle of his rowing and racing (a harmless principle enough, if you can be sure of applying it to rowing and racing only) has taught him to take every advantage of another man that his superior strength and superior cunning can suggest. There has been nothing in his training to soften the barbarous hardness in his heart, and to enlighten the barbarous darkness in his mind. Temptation finds this man defenceless, when temptation passes his way. I don't care who he is, or how high he stands accidentally in the social scale - he is, to all moral intents and purposes, an animal, and nothing more. If my happiness stands in his way - and he can do it with impunity to himself - he will trample down my life. (14)

Lundie's speech places Delamayne's crimes within the context of neo-Darwinist social thinking. Lundie explores the consequences of the adoption of a philosophy, which, perceiving the struggle for survival as progressive, encourages the development of savage tendencies. He argues that since the human organism is a whole in which physical, mental, moral and spiritual tendencies are inextricably linked, the competitive spirit cannot be kept within limits delineated by sport.

Lundie's discourse subverts assumptions that the aggression inherent in the idea of competitive sport may be kept within established limits. The ethic of competitive sport suggested that English manhood was healthy, active and disciplined. It became to the Victorians a justification for authority, political, social and imperial. J.A. Mangan provides an excellent study of this aspect of

Victorian life in The Games Ethic and Imperialism (1986). He shrewdly notes that the cult of competitive sport was highly expedient for an imperial power consolidating its authority over subject-races:

> Educational aims, valued so highly at other times and in other contexts, such as the development of an enquiring mind, independence of thought and the questioning of established orthodoxies, were unacceptable in an environment of primitive backwardness. (15)

Man and Wife explores the social consequences of adopting such an expedient ethic. This cult of the body was dependent on the assumption that the British male was self-disciplined. His aggression was laudable because contained within accepted boundaries. Delamayne's criminality exposes the failure of the masculine hegemony to contain and control the energies of the body and raises the question of its fitness to retain authority. The narrative voice depicts the cult of the physique as spreading beyond the boundaries laid down for it through its effect on women. Delamayne's physical prowess makes him a figure of idealised sexual attractiveness to Anne:

> She had seen him, the hero of the River-race, the first and fore-most man in a trial of strength and skill which had roused the enthusiasm of all England. She had seen him, the central object of the interest of a nation, the idol of the popular worship and the popular applause. His were the arms whose muscles were celebrated in the newspapers. He was first among the heroes hailed by ten thousand roaring throats as the pride and flower of England. A woman, in an atmosphere of red-hot enthusiasm, witnesses the apotheosis of Physical Strength. Is it reasonable - is it just - to expect her to ask herself, in cold blood, what (morally and intellectually) is all this worth? and that, when the man who is the object of the apotheosis, notices

> her, is presented to her, finds her to his taste, and singles her out from the rest? No. While humanity is humanity, the woman is not utterly without excuse. (16)

The narrative voice suggests that the ideology of English heroism and superiority maintained and confirmed by sport operates as an idealisation of masculinity which has inevitable sexual consequences. Patriotism and sexuality converge. Delamayne is "the pride and flower of England" and generates "red-hot enthusiasm". Anne's sexual feelings are stimulated by the hero-worship. She accepts the established image of Delamayne, an idealisation of him which is essentially sexual in character. It is therefore inevitable that Anne will respond to his advances since her relations with Delamayne take place in a sexually heightened cultural milieu. The narrator here explores his awareness that Victorian society idealised male physical prowess yet refused to admit the normality of the female sexuality it consequently encouraged. Female sexuality is an example of the failure of the cult of the body to contain the energies it stimulates within generally accepted limits.

The idea of female physical energies exceeding established limits becomes a source of growing anxiety to the narrator-figure. Hester Dethridge's documentary confession emerges as an alternative sub-narrative expressing discontent at masculine authority and the possibility of rebellion. This level of meaning is conveyed through a sub-textual relationship between Hester and Anne. Hester represents

the repressed part of Anne. The narrator of Man and Wife depicts Anne in terms of the Victorian ideal of womanhood. At the closure of the novel Anne is represented as conforming to established discourses on femininity which depicted feminine heroism in terms of the ability to endure suffering passively. One of her new relatives says that she "has borne her hard lot nobly."(17) Hester symbolises the aggressive part of Anne's nature suppressed beneath this passive exterior.

Hester's confession expresses Anne's repressed feelings concerning her union with Delamayne. Hester recalls Sarah Leeson, the slow-witted servant in The Dead Secret (1857) who is charged by her mistress on the latter's death bed never to reveal that Sarah's own child has ben passed off as her mistress's daughter. However, Hester is a far more disturbing figure than Sarah. Sarah is motivated by her concern for her daughter and her memory of her mistress's death-bed injunctions. The secret she keeps concerning the circumstances of her daughter's birth proves dangerous to no-one. Hester's crime is motivated by self-interest. Like Marian Halcombe in The Woman in White and Miss Gwilt in Armadale, the threat she represents to the masculine hegemony is expressed in her narrative. Her diary is a secret which proves dangerous. Hester's confession depicts marriage as a structure which legitimises and perpetuates masculine misuse of power. Told by a lawyer that her husband may be punished for beating her, Hester replies that whatever the law overtly states the inflexible marriage laws ensure that her husband will always be able to dominate her life:

> As to the prison, while he's in it, whats to become of me, with my money spent by him, and my possessions gone; and when he's out of it, what's to become of me again, with a husband whom I have been the means of punishing, and who comes home to his wife knowing it. (18)

It is impossible for a woman to free herself from her husband's authority. Hester is therefore able to justify murdering him. Anne is in a parallel situation. Like Sir Percival Glyde in The Woman in White, Delamayne intends to use the seclusion of the domestic environment to rid himself of his unwanted wife. Although he is without Glyde's sophisticated plan to exonerate himself, Delamyne is aware that it is legally impossible for Anne to free herself from his authority and he is therefore unconcerned that Sir Patrick Lundie is aware of his motives. Whilst Anne remains passive, decorous and enduring, Hester's narrative expresses her secret desire to murder her violent and repressive husband.

Delamayne's response to Hester's written confession recalls Fosco's treatment of Marian Halcombe's diary in The Woman in White. Delamayne's reading of Hester's private writings is a crime which, like Fosco's perusal of Marian's journal, makes the criminal act which is the main focus of the novel considerably easier. Fosco is able to forestall Marian's plans to protect Laura. Delamayne gleans the knowledge which he hopes will enable him to murder Anne undetected. The acts of both characters have sexual connotations. Fosco penetrates Marian's narrative with his own comments. Delamayne uses information

from Hester's written account to penetrate the wall next to Anne Silvester's bed, a metaphor for marital rape.

Reading Marian's narrative allows Fosco to defeat her attempt to prevent the incarceration of Laura. Delamayne at first appears to be in a parallel position. He fails, however, because the process of biological degeneration at work within him induces him to collapse at a vital moment. His death at Hester's hands expresses the narrator's belief that the decay of the masculine hegemony will allow women to achieve a dangerous degree of power.

Hester's sub-narrative reveals the existence of qualities within Hester/Anne which make her highly threatening to the existing hegemony and hence to the narrator. The narrator uses the closure of the novel as a device with which to resolve the dilemmas facing him. He falls back upon a double standard of which he was initially critical. Male violence is represented in terms of a cultural failure which ignores the wholeness of the organism. Female violence is considerably more threatening. It does not represent a malaise within the Victorian hegemony but rather a challenge and a threat to the existing order. It is an issue which cannot be faced openly by the narrator. Hester is consequently incarcerated within an asylum. Her violent tendencies may be represented as symptoms of mental illness.

Elaine Showalter notes that the Victorians tended to perceive female insanity as a state in which woman began to deviate from her role as the dependent and inferior companion of man. Mental breakdown "would come when women defied their "nature," attempted to compete with men instead of serving them, or sought alternatives or even additions to their maternal functions."[19] Hester's assassination of her husband is the apotheosis of such self-seeking behaviour. She is therefore conveniently defined as insane. The incarceration of Hester is a metaphor for the suppression and denial of Anne's negative tendencies. However, Hester's survival indicates that the narrator cannot entirely banish his knowledge of feminine violent tendencies. Hester remains a threatening image of female potential.

Man and Wife uses sub-textual meaning to subvert established discourses which argued the existence of a correlation between sporting prowess and national and imperial stability. The standard Victorian concept of health is represented as in tension with the ideology of athleticism and its attendant justification of existing power-structures. Ideas of masculine and feminine physical health are exposed as constructs designed to maintain a double standard which legitimises masculine violence and sexuality while repressing their feminine counterparts.

Footnotes

1. Man and Wife, Dover, 1983, preface.
2. Kenneth Robinson, Wilkie Collins, a Biography, Bodley Head,

London, 1951, p. 240

3. Sue Lonoff, Wilkie Collins and his Victorian Readers, A. M. S. Press, New York, 1982. p. 54.
4. Ibid., p. 22.
5. Man and Wife, preface.
6. Ibid., p. 33.
7. John Bucknill and Daniel Tuke, A Manual of Psychological Medicine, Churchill, London, 1874. p. 151.
8. Ibid., p. 151.
9. Man and Wife, p. 181.
10. Ibid., p. 33.
11. Ibid., p. 33.
12. Ibid., p. 86.
13. Bruce Haley, The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture, Harvard U. P. 1978, p. 26.
14. Man and Wife, p. 17.
15. J. A. Mangan, The Games Ethic and Imperialism, Viking, London, 1986, p. 117.
16. Man and Wife, p. 31.
17. Ibid., p. 239.
18. Ibid., p. 220.
19. Elaine Showalter, The Female Malady, Virago, 1987, p. 123.

(iii)

Poor Miss Finch (1872): the masculine psyche and the challenge of female emancipation.

Poor Miss Finch is the narrative of Madame Pratolungo, widow of an exiled French revolutionary, later punctuated by the diary of Lucilla Finch. Lucilla's contribution is framed within Madame Pratolungo's account and commented on by her in a footnote. The two women provide contrasting narratives. Madame Pratolungo recalls events long past while Lucilla's sub-narrative in the form of her diary details her spontaneous response to events. Madame Pratolungo describes the actions and emotions of the various characters in a detached, analytical and philosophical manner. Lucilla's diary is characterised by its emotional tone and unquestioning acceptance of events.

Madame Pratolungo occupies the position of companion to Lucilla, a blind girl who lives with her unscrupulous father and disordered step-family. Lucilla becomes enamoured of Oscar Dubourg, a new arrival in a nearby village. Oscar takes medication to combat fits. However, a side-effect of the drug is a deformity of the complexion in which the skin turns dark blue. Oscar's twin brother Nugent invites Herr Gross, an eminent oculist, to examine Lucilla. He suggests that an operation might cure her blindness. Lucilla regains her sight and her friends

and family, with the exception of Madame Pratolungo, advocate that she be deluded into thinking that Nugent is Oscar in order to protect her from distress whilst recovering from her operation. Madame Pratolungo's fears are realised when Nugent induces Lucilla to elope with him in the belief that he is Oscar. Lucilla's sight begins to deteriorate culminating in blindness. Oscar finds the courage to explain matters to her. They are married and Nugent leaves on an expedition to the Arctic. Soon after the couple receive news of his death.

As in Basil, in which Sherwin's pristine but characterless house reflects his cultural bankruptcy, the physical state of the home reveals the limited nature of the lives of those who dwell within it. The architectural arrangement of Lucilla's home symbolises the alternatives for women who conformed to the conventions of Victorian society. Lucilla lives in peace and calm in one half of the rectory while her father, step-mother and their boisterous children inhabit the other. As a single woman Lucilla's life is passive and purposeless. Her blindness is an image of the physical and mental limitations placed on her. Her surname reinforces the image. She lives in "a cage of Finches"(1), confined and repressed by the restrictions of her environment.

According to established Victorian ideas marriage offered a pleasant alternative to Lucilla's lonely life. Standard Victorian

discourses stated that marriage was fulfilling for women, suggesting an idealised and sentimentalised view of woman's role as man's helpmate. However, the figure of Mrs Finch, disorganised, dirty and unable to manage her children exploits growing concern in late Victorian England that young women brought up in an atmosphere of leisure and peace were unfitted for the demands of homemaking. In The Victorian Home (1977) Jenni Calder argues that

> By the middle of the nineteenth century it was generally agreed that the skills of home-making were a vital accomplishment of the married woman. Yet, as this was being warmly asserted, by novelists, by social commentators, by journalists, it became clear that it was a function for which most women were extraordinarily ill-equipped. There was little in a woman's education to prepare her for the realities of housekeeping, the demands of domestic economy, the management of servants, the care of children, the cultivation of taste. (2)

Anxiety was exacerbated by the increasing tendency of Victorian women to create their own discourses on domesticity. Idealised descriptions of marriage, such as Coventry Patmore's domestic poetry collected in The Angel in the House (1854), was often written by men. Feminine views on the matter were expressed in the advice manuals and women's magazines which were produced in increasing numbers throughout the Victorian period. Women often argued that the task of bringing up a family was messy and physically demanding. In How I Managed My Children From Infancy to Marriage (1865) Mrs Eliza Warren explains that received ideas do not reflect the experience of matrimony. Women are led to believe that marriage will protect them from the

cares and problems of the world but find that it presents them with daunting challenges and hard work:

> Matrimony to a young girl often presents the fairest prospects of earthly happiness: "it is the desired haven where she would be." As a wife she imagines herself free to do as she pleases, without control, and she fancies that marriage emancipates her from all wearisome home duties. A month of wedded life dispels these illusions. Similar employments are hers to take up, but to them is added a great responsibility; and if a practical observant education fitting her for wifehood has not been attained, "all her life is passed in shallows and in miseries." (3)

Mrs Warren describes her experiences as a mother in terms of a series of practical problems which must be dealt with. Madame Pratolungo's description of Mrs Finch creates a parallel image of the mother's role as physically demanding. Unlike Mrs Warren, Mrs Finch has no practical plans with which to surmount her domestic difficulties. She is beginning to be ground down by the "shallows and miseries" identified by Mrs Warren. Madame Pratolungo's narrative describes her as undergoing a process of decline whereby her identity is gradually effaced. This is evident from her appearance:

> I made my best curtsey, and found myself confronting a large, light-haired, languid, lymphatic lady - who had evidently been amusing herself by walking up and down the room, at the moment when I appeared. If there can be such a thing as a damp woman - this was one. There was a humid shine on her colourless white face, and an overflow of water in her pale blue eyes. Her hair was not dressed; and her lace cap was all on one side. The upper part of her was clothed in a loose jacket of blue merino; the lower part was robed in a dimity dressing gown of doubtful white ... Never completely dressed; never completely dry ... (4)

Mrs Finch is represented as losing her physical and mental identity and turning to water. She is "damp", there is a "humid shine" on her face and an "overflow of water" in her eyes. As with Laura Glyde in The Woman in White and Mrs Sherwin in Basil, her clothing and lack of colour suggest the erosion of identity, a debilitating effect of conventional domestic life. Madame Pratolungo represents herself as capable in a domestic environment. She is practical and possesses the understanding of young women's emotional turmoil argued by Eliza Warren to be important for a mother. Madame Pratolungo's narrative is a radical alternative to the domestic advice manual in which the shortcomings of the Victorian home are exposed and greater independence for women is argued to be necessary for domestic improvement.

Lucilla's friendship with Madame Pratolungo symbolises the emergence of radical tendencies within her as she seeks a self-fulfiling alternative to Victorian domestic norms. Madame Pratolungo represents the rebellious and independent part of Lucilla. Her narrative expresses the notion that women must actively change their lives through adaptation to circumstances. Lucilla's new determination to change her life is first seen when the presence of Oscar Dubourg in the neighbouring village offers her an opportunity to exercise free choice by actively courting him.

Madame Pratolungo considers life to be a series of individual moral choices. She declares: "I believe in nothing which encourages people to despair of themselves."(5) Placed in a difficult position by Gross's strictures that Lucilla remain in ignorance of Oscar's identity and finding her views in favour of honesty opposed by everyone else, Madame Pratolungo draws strength from her ability to make a decision and act on it:

> The one comfort I had that night, was in feeling that, on these two points, my mind was made up. There was a stimulant in my sense of my own resolution which strengthened me to make my excuses to Lucilla, without betraying the grief that tortured me when I found myself in her presence again. (6)

This passage suggests that self-reliance is a source of strength in a chaotic world. Self-reliance enables Madame Pratolungo to act decisively and thereby control her life. Madame Pratolungo's thinking is a highly subversive version of the ideology of Samuel Smiles, author of the widely accepted doctrine of self-help. The idea of self-help generally operated as a discourse justifying the established hegemony and denying the need for social reform. In Victorian England, Smiles argued, an individual could substantially improve his lot through thrift, hard work and self-discipline. Therefore the best means of helping the disadvantaged was to encourage self-reliance. Madame Pratolungo's narrative re-works this established masculine discourse in order to represent self-help as a means of defying and

subverting the existing hegemony. Madame Pratolungo defines her own morality and acts accordingly despite the opinions of others.

Just as Lucilla and Madame Pratolungo represent two sides of the same woman, Oscar's relationship with his twin brother Nugent is a psychomachia. Like Marian Halcombe and Laura Glyde in The Woman in White and Allan Armadale and Ozias Midwinter in Armadale, Nugent and Oscar represent the socially acceptable and socially inadequate aspects of the self. When Madame Pratolungo visits Oscar she discovers that Nugent is absent furthering his career. Oscar's retired and isolated life indicates that he symbolises the repressed part of Oscar/Nugent. Oscar represents feelings of anxiety Oscar/Nugent seeks to deny. Oscar's neurotic response to the trial for murder at which he was found innocent reveals his fear of society. He tells Madame Pratolungo that what he fears most is that he will be stigmatised by public opinion: "Have you been put in the pillory of the newspapers? Has the photograph proclaimed your infamous notoriety in all the shop-windows? ... Oh, the public! ... the horrible public!"(7) According to Madame Pratolungo mental and moral health is a state of independence from received opinion. She consequently perceives Oscar as in "an unhealthy state of mind"(8). She urges self-reliance. In order to achieve this Oscar/Nugent must first come to terms with the complexities of his psychology.

Oscar's hero-worship of Nugent is a process of self-suppression. He asserts that "Nugent is a hero! Nugent is a genius!"(9) and correspondingly represents himself as a cipher. He is "amazed at the bare idea of his opposing any assertion of his will to the assertion of his brother's will"(10) and justifies Nugent's decision to leave him in terms which deny his own identity: "Could I let such a man stagnate here - for no better purpose than to keep me company? What does it matter about my feeling lonely? Who am I?(11) The reactions of Lucilla and Madame Pratolungo to Oscar create a feminine discourse on masculinity which challenges established ideology. Lucilla's sexual attraction to Oscar and Madame Pratolungo's attempts to encourage him to be self-reliant suggest that according to the feminine perspective of Poor Miss Finch it is aspects of masculinity which are generally repressed which are most attractive to women. Lucilla encourages Oscar to marry her and Madame Pratolungo encourages him to assert himself. These events sub-textually express Lucilla/Pratolungo's desire that repressed aspects of Oscar's personality be acknowledged.

This situation stimulates mental crisis in which Oscar/Nugent attempts to deny the validity of this challenging feminine discourse. Psychological crisis is symbolised by Oscar's collapse into illness and the consequent deformity of his complexion. Oscar/Nugent denies the need to assert the submerged part of himself. Nugent therefore becomes increasingly important to the development of the novel since he represents the surface personality Oscar/Nugent now attempts to re-

assert. The blue colour of Oscar's skin symbolises his inadequacy while Nugent's impersonation of his brother after Lucilla regains her sight is a metaphor for the ascendency of the surface personality.

In this middle part of Poor Miss Finch Madame Pratolungo's narrative explores the challenges offered to her own perspective by masculine discourses. The operation to restore Lucilla's sight symbolises the physical and mental emancipation of women. It is significant that Oscar fears that her vision will lead to rejection of him on account of his complexion. This fear suggests masculine anxiety that the liberation of women would allow them to see that men are flawed and vulnerable creatures. Such knowledge might encourage womens' emotional independence.

Madame Pratolungo uses the figure of Gross to assess the limited opportunities for women which began to emerge in late Victorian England. Madame Pratolungo's narrative suggests that limited reform offered by the masculine hegemony is inadequate. Gross's method to effect a cure recommends an operation followed by a process of calm confinement and lessons in which he will train Lucilla to see. Significantly, the pace of change is too slow for Lucilla, who becomes frustrated with the delay. Gross claims that her sight is lost again because she has used her eyes more often than he considered appropriate during her convalescent period. The conflict between Gross and Lucilla suggests that women who desire social change are

frustrated by the slow developments the masculine establishment are prepared to allow.

Madame Pratolungo opposes the plan to keep Lucilla ignorant of Oscar's disfigurement. This symbolises her opposition to the limited form of emancipation offered by the masculine hegemony. Madame Pratolungo's negative reactions to Gross's plans suggest that limited emancipation is a device which maintains a fiction of the weakened masculine hegemony as strong, competent and anti-oppressive. Madame Pratolungo perceives that the vision offered to Lucilla by Gross is an illusion because the recovery of her sight results in her becoming less able to distinguish Oscar and Nugent. Whilst blind Lucilla is able to sense when particular people are near her but loses this ability when she regains her sight. Lucilla succumbs to pressure from Nugent to elope because a fiction has been maintained that he is Oscar. In the same way, Collins suggests, the limited emancipation offered by the existing hegemony constrains women further.

Like Fosco in The Woman in White who boasts of his power to destroy the abilities of a genius through the use of chemicals, Gross believes that life is a combination of scientific laws and effects. Both he and Fosco perceive man as an organism employing various bodily functions. The figure of Nugent explores the implications of acceptance of a scientific perspective on human relationships. Social Darwinism offered a mechanism with which social relations could be

analysed in terms of biological functioning. Nugent's behaviour echoes the ideas of those who re-interpreted Darwin in order to advocate discourses of social progress. Herbert Spencer's arguments that social struggle between individuals would result in positive adaptation are recalled by Nugent's ability to adapt quickly to circumstances in order to win Lucilla. In The Origin of Species Darwin argued that in animals a natural process of sexual competition operated to ensure that the most able and vigorous males mated:

> Sexual selection by always allowing the victor to breed might surely give indomitable courage, length to the spur, and strength to the wing to strike in the spurred leg, as well as the brutal cock-fighter, who knows well that he can improve his breed through careful selection of the best cocks. (12)

Nugent's success is a parallel process of sexual selection. He tells Madame Pratolungo that his actions are determined by powerful biological impulses rather than moral choices, which she considers to be the prime motivator of human behaviour:

> There are men who could understand me and pity me. No woman could do it. The best and cleverest among you don't know what love is as a man feels it. It isn't the frenzy with you that it is with us. It acknowledges restraints in a woman - it bursts through everything in a man. It robs him of his intelligence, his honour, his self-respect - it levels him with the brutes - it debases him into idiocy - it lashes him into madness. I tell you I am not accountable for my own actions. (13)

The "frenzy" Nugent describes is sexual desire. His confession to Pratolungo reveals the sub-text of ideologies of biological determinism. If human beings are perceived as a collection of biological functions, then they must be primarily motivated by sensual drives. Nugent acknowledges that such drives overcome the influences of intelligence and morality.

Madame Pratolungo's view that individuals are able to determine their own futures is challenged by biological determinism. She consequently represents Nugent as biologically inferior and deviant and thereby discredits discourses of scientific determinism and also recieved ideas of masculine supremacy. Nugent condemns himself with a speech which transposes established ideas of women's emotional vulnerability onto men. Standard discourses suggested that women were potentially more likely to fall short of the standards of civilized behaviour due to innate emotional susceptibility. However, Nugent's sub-narrative argues that men are more susceptible than women to the influence of their passions. It is women who, according to Nugent, possess self-control. In them emotion "acknowledges restraints." Nugent's views are in tension with standard Victorian ideas about masculinity, which was perceived to be a state of intellectual strength and self-control, the norm against which the inferiority of women and children was measured.

In this way Madame Pratolungo establishes vigorous and amoral competition as deviant and degenerate. Nugent possesses weaknesses traditionally perceived as feminine. Pratolungo exploits neo-Darwinist discourses which equated femininity with emotional vulnerability to suggest Nugent's inherent inferiority to other men. Lucilla's elopement with Nugent is therefore a form of sexual selection in which a parasitical and inferior life-form flourishes. Nugent does not win Lucilla because of superior vigour. He is rather parasitically dependent on his brother's inability to assert himself and reveal his true identity. The narrative suggests that discourses emphasising the importance of biological health and vigour mask the presence of moral degeneration and decay. Madame Pratolungo muses on the difference between Nugent's physical appearance and his moral nature: "A man provided with nerves vigorously constituted, is provided with a constitutional health and hardihood which express themselves brightly in his manners, and lead us to a mistaken impression that his nature is what it appears to be on the surface."(14) Like Delamayne in Man and Wife, Nugent's apparent physical health belies his immoral nature.

Finch is a parallel figure whose degeneration is more easily perceived. He is vocally impressive but his eloquent speeches on morals and values hide the fact that he is ineffective paternally. His pastoral solicitude for Oscar masks financial greed. Finch's impressive voice belies the reality of physical decay; "so miserably

lean that he looked the living picture of starvation ... he was in very truth - Voice, and nothing else."[15] He can no more create wealth than Nugent can find his own sexual mate but is parasitically dependent on Oscar's financial gifts.

This attack on the established masculine hegemony is radical and far-reaching. It consequently results in psychological crisis for Lucilla/Pratolungo. The collapse of the friendship of Madame Pratolungo and Lucilla is the result of Lucilla's trust and Madame Pratolungo's mistrust of their masculine companions. Madame Pratolungo's loss of narrative control in favour of Lucilla's diary represents the temporary dominance of the conformist side of Lucilla/Pratolungo. Collins here re-works a device used in Armadale and The Woman in White in which women's diaries subvert masculine narrative. In Poor Miss Finch, the private experience of the female diarist becomes a complex mechanism of self-suppression and self-revelation. The diary reveals that Lucilla/Pratolungo seeks a refuge from anxiety by placing implicit trust in Nugent. Lucilla argues in defence of this attitude. The conflict between herself and Lucilla which is followed by Madame Pratolungo relinquishing the narrative symbolises Lucilla/Pratolungo's suppression of her desire for independence. The diary operates as a means of validating Nugent's perspective. Lucilla concurs with his views on the necessity of elopement. She also accepts as truth his view of Madame Pratolungo as a schemer who slandered him in order to help Oscar. However, at the

same time the diary also exposes Nugent's duplicity and the weakness of his arguments. Lucilla begins to express doubt and disappointment as a result of Nugent's behaviour. This development suggests that Lucilla/Pratolungo's withdrawal into the private world of the diarist does not enable her to convince herself of the validity of suppressing her individuality entirely and acceding completely to the demands of her future husband. Lucilla reveals to herself in her diary her inability to accept unequivocally an idealised image of her lover.

The closure of Poor Miss Finch is also the result of mental crisis and re-assessment. The return of Madame Pratolungo as narrator symbolises Lucilla/Pratolungo's acceptance that maturity is a process of individual moral activity rather than conformity to masculine discourses. Oscar undergoes a parallel experience. He overcomes his fear in order to be true to himself. His sub-narrative in which he reveals his identity to Lucilla shows the re-emergence of the side of the Oscar/Nugent personality which had been repressed through fear of appearing inadequate to an intellectually emancipated Lucilla. The return of Madame Pratolungo into the family circle serves as a reminder of the limited independence which Oscar/Nugent will allow his wife.

Lucilla/Pratolungo does not ach ve full independence. Lucilla remains blind, a symbol of the limitations placed on her. Her situation provides a degree of fulfilment. She says "My life lives in

my love. And my love lives in my blindness."[16] Lucilla acknowledges the importance to her of sexual love. Pratolungo's narrative has described men in terms which make it impossible for Lucilla/Pratolungo to see Oscar/Nugent as an idealised lover. In order to maintain a construct of romantic love women must consent to limit and deny their understanding of masculinity. Lucilla's limited perception preserves an image of Oscar/Nugent which is sexually appealing.

The possibility of radical future change is suggested by the figure of Jicks, Lucilla's half-sister. Jicks is famous amongst the community in which she lives for her independence and self-reliance. The villagers acknowledge that she has "a will of her own and a way of her own"[17]. Madame Pratolungo's narrative suggests that she will grow to be a formidable woman who will challenge accepted ideology. This is symbolised by the alternative language she creates. She prefigures Zo, the illiterate child who challenges the scientific perspective of Dr. Benjulia in the later novel Heart and Science.

Madame Pratolungo is also threatening to the masculine hegemony. She is a parallel figure to the exiled revolutionary Professor Pesca in The Woman in White. Like Pesca, she is an eccentric and comic figure who finds little support for her radical ideologies among middle-class English society. However, in The Woman in White Pesca is revealed to be instrumental in bringing about the death of Fosco. This development is echoed in the closing lines of Poor Miss Finch, in

which Madame Pratolungo argues that the socialist system she calls the "Pratolungo Programme" will soon be adopted in England. On a surface level of meaning Madame Pratolungo is a comic figure whose assertions appear ridiculous. However, the sub-textual message of Poor Miss Finch suggests that her views represent a significant challenge to the existing social order.

Poor Miss Finch is a complex novel. Although the figure of Lucilla Finch suggests that women's primary interests are love and marriage, Madame Pratolungo symbolises radical tendencies towards emancipation suppressed within Lucilla. A parallel level of meaning operates in the relationship of Oscar and Nugent Dubourg which exposes the weakness of the masculine hegemony. Madame Pratolungo/Lucilla possesses and maintains narrative authority. Fictional form thus parallels and proves the sub-textual message of the novel.

Footnotes

1. Poor Miss Finch, Chatto, 1913, p. 9.
2. Jenni Calder, The Victorian Home, Batsford, London, 1977, p. 102.
3. Eliza Warren, How I Managed My Children from Infancy to Marriage, Houlston & Wright, London, 1865, p. 1.
4. Poor Miss Finch, p. 11.
5. Ibid., pp. 265-266.
6. Ibid., p. 200.
7. Ibid., p. 41.
8. Ibid., p. 49.
9. Ibid., p. 151.
10. Ibid., p. 147.
11. Ibid., p. 51.
12. Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species (1859), Penguin, 1984, p. 136.
13. Poor Miss Finch, p. 410.

14. Ibid., p. 216.
15. Ibid., p. 208.
16. Ibid., p. 477.
17. Ibid., p. 278.

The New Magdalen (1873): the "fallen woman" and masculine fantasy.

The New Magdalen takes the form of an omniscient narrative punctuated by the verbal sub-narratives of Mercy Merrick. Whilst working as a nurse in France, during the Franco-Prussian War, Mercy, a reformed prostitute whose past prevents her from following any respectable occupation in English society, determines to adopt the identity of Grace Roseberry, a young English girl whom she believes killed by a shell. Mercy assumes her new identity, becoming the companion of Lady Janet Roy and accepting a proposal of marriage from Horace Holmcroft. On encountering Julian Gray, the young clergyman who knew her as a prostitute, she questions her moral position and eventually decides to reveal her identity. Lady Janet suggests that Mercy maintain her false identity and allow Grace's claims to be interpreted as evidence of insanity. Mercy declines and Holmcroft refuses to marry her when he finds that she is not Grace. Gray, impressed by her moral strength, marries Mercy and they emigrate to America.

The title of this novel recalls Magdalen Vanstone, the protagonist of No Name. The New Magdalen is a parallel representation of femininity which explores the contradictory desires of the narrator-figure. Mercy's past is only vaguely alluded to. The

reader is told very few details of her life before she was reformed. Although she says that she has known poverty, the circumstances of her birth are uncertain and her manner is invariably decorous and cultivated. The vagueness of Mercy's experience among the working-classes and her gentility of manner suggests that to the narrator-figure she represents the covertly attractive figure of the middle-class "fallen woman" rather than the working-class prostitute. The "fallen woman" was one of the most enduring stereotypes of womanhood in Victorian literature, art and social commentary. Lynda Snead has noted in Myths of Sexuality (1988) that an established discourse established a model of the life of the "fallen woman" in which she was represented as inevitably descending into moral decay, ill health, prostitution and suicide. She also notes that the figure of the "fallen woman" could be depicted in this way because she was significantly less disturbing than the professional prostitute motivated by financial need. The "fallen woman" could still be represented within a structure which stressed her lack of independence and her emotional and physical vulnerability:

> The fallen woman mobilized none of the connotations of power and independence; her deviancy did not involve money and thus, to a certain degree, she retained her femininity, that is, she remained powerless and dependent. (1)

The reformed Magdalen is a figure of fantasy, dangerously attractive on account of her past yet a figure of ideal virtue in the present. Mercy is such a fantasy-woman, passive and virtuous yet

sexually experienced. Her representation in the novel, however, suggests that the fantasy-figure is shadowed by the more disturbing figure of the professional prostitute. This more threatening image of transgressive sexuality is suggested by Mercy's hint that financial need induced her to become a prostitute. She recalls the time when she was "a hard-working girl, fainting at my needle for want of food."(2)

Through the figures of Grace and Mercy the novel explores the psychology of the generally externalised figure of the "fallen woman". Grace represents the parts of the female personality which the masculine hegemony perceived as acceptable and Mercy as those which it characterised as deviant. However, the figure of Mercy Merrick reveals that the Magdalen was sexually attractive to men. Grace and Mercy are contrasted in a manner which recalls the unfavourable comparison of Norah Vanstone to her sister Magdalen in No Name. At the start of the novel the narrator suggests that Magdalen is growing towards maturity full of physical vitality. By contrast, Norah appears the product of biological degeneration. According to established Victorian discourses, women who conformed to established codes of behaviour were biologically superior to those who violated them. However, Mercy, like Magdalen, is described as innately superior in both physical and moral terms:

> Pale and sad, her expression and her manner both eloquently suggestive of suppressed suffering and sorrow, there was an innate nobility in the carriage of this woman's head, an

> innate grandeur in the gaze of her large grey eyes, and in the lines of her finely-proportioned face. (3)

Grace is mentally and physically inferior. The narrator describes her "littleness of heart and mind"[4] which is reflected in her appearance:

> Grace Roseberry, seated in her chair, little and lean, with her dull, white complexion, with her hard threatening face, with her shrunken figure clad in its plain and poor black garments, looked like a being of a lower sphere compared with Mercy Merrick. (5)

The narrator suggests that there is no correspondence between social constructs of legitimacy and moral or biological superiority. Victorian values are structures which maintain the established social order. They do not reflect the operation of universal scientific laws.

The superiority of Mercy to Grace is associated with sexuality. The narrator makes use of a biological perspective in order to subvert established discourses. He suggests that the most useful qualities of an organism are sexual ones because the prime function of an organism is to mate and reproduce. It is therefore significant that Mercy's sexual experience outlaws her from Victorian society since it reveals the inadequacy of established morality. The narrator suggests that orthodox discourses depict sexuality, which is essential for the survival of the species, as deviant.

Mercy's inherent superiority suggests the narrator's fantasy of a sexually active woman who is also an idealised figure. Established discourses associated the life of the "fallen woman" or prostitute with disease and decay. The narrator-figure rejects such distressing imagery by representing Mercy as a superior example of physical and mental health. She is sexually experienced yet is also saintly. She is not associated with the imagery of degeneration which often accompanied representations of illicit sexuality. She is a fantasy figure, a representation of transgressive feminine sexuality devoid of the negative associations of "deviance".

Mercy's situation is a metaphor for the failure of Victorian society to acknowledge the complexity of sexuality. The existence of Mercy Merrick beneath the surface identity of Grace Roseberry suggests that "respectable" women repress their sexuality. Like Miss Gwilt in Armadale, Mercy argues that the Victorian ideal of womanhood is a construct. Miss Gwilt identifies conformity as a device beneath which women hide their true motivation. Mercy, whose apparent identity conceals her past, dismisses the issue of dissimulation as irrelevant in the face of acute needs. She establishes feminine virtue as dependent on inexperience. Established ideology locates superiority in women who have never experienced hardship:

> "It sickens me," she [Mercy] thought to herself, to hear of the virtues of women who have never been tempted! Where is the merit of having lived reputably when your life is one course of prosperity and enjoyment?" (6)

The sub-text of Mercy's argument is that all women have the potential to transgress accepted codes of behaviour. "Respectable women" possess the same tendencies as their unacceptable counterparts, tendencies which are dormant until stimulated by experience. Mercy argues that the stimulus to prostitution is generally financial. Established ideology identified female sexual transgression, particularly that of the "fallen woman", as the result of biological inferiority which left women physically and emotionally unstable. Mercy's speech establishes lack of "prosperity" as the decisive temptation, further associating her with the disturbing figure of the professional prostitute.

In The New Magdalen the narrator-figure attempts to explore the relationship between his surface personality and his sexuality. Gray and Holmcroft suggest different aspects of masculine psychology. Holmcroft's appearance reveals that he perceives life in simplistic terms according to the established norms of his own culture. His face evidences "the signs indicative of a moral nature deficient in largeness and breadth - of a mind easily accessible to strong prejudices, and obstinate in maintaining those prejudices in the face of conviction itself"(7). Gray represents the "largeness and breadth" lacking in Holmcroft. He is able to associate with and understand outcasts from Victorian normality, and he is representative of the moral independence suppressed beneath Holmcroft's conformity to Victorian norms.

Gray's relationships with "fallen women", and with Mercy in particular, confirm that his emancipation from established Victorian morality is sexual in character. Gray encourages Mercy to be honest about her past. This symbolises his attempt to convince her to be open about her sexuality. He induces her to reject the established idea of femininity represented by Lady Janet. Lady Janet accepts standard notions of passive femininity. She therefore finds Grace a disturbing figure since she is assertive and, like Magdalen Vanstone in No Name, intends to win back her rightful inheritance. Lady Janet's intention to incarcerate her in an asylum expresses her belief that women should repress their ambitions and desires. Lady Janet assumes that Mercy will do nothing to change her situation and will repress the sexuality implied by her hidden identity. Mercy's public revelation of her identity reveals her as a being with needs, both sexual and financial. Gray's relationship with Mercy expresses the narrator's covert desire for sexual freedom which is denied him in his relations with women.

The relationship of Mercy and Gray is too subversive to be acceptable to Victorian orthodoxy. They leave England to begin a new life in America. The novel's closure reveals the narrator's awareness that his sexual fantasy would prove impossible to realise. The New Magdalen ends by acknowledging that Victorian society will not approve of Mercy and Gray's relationship. They cease to be the central interest of the narrative. The stilted, tableau-like and emblematic

of the fiction suggests the impossibility of realising the image it creates.

The closure of the novel leaves the reader with a sense that Victorian society has lost positive potential. It suggests that the form of Victorian society is too inflexible to accept sexual freedom and honesty. According to standard Victorian thinking Mercy and Julian's inadequacy is evidenced by their inability to conform to prevalent conceptions of normality. Julian perceives that conventional thinking will judge their emigration as adding more to the list of society's failures. However, Victorian society is presented as decaying. The values of the older generation represented by Lady Janet are being eroded. The younger people at her ball are hypocritical and false, representing "civilised human nature in its basest conceivable aspect."[8]

The narrative voice of The New Magdalen explores a masculine fantasy of deviant yet conformist femininity. However, the fantasy of escape from the restrictions of Victorian sexual codes is revealed to be heavily dependent on the imagery and ideology of established discourses. The narrator-figure consequently finds it increasingly difficult to express his fantasy. The focus of the novel becomes the restrictive and decaying nature of Victorian society.

The New Magdalen illustrates the limitations of the masculine fantasy it explores. However, although successful in this respect, it remains one of Collins's least effective novels. The stilted and tableau-like nature of the narrative creates a sense of artificiality which, although defensible as an expression of unattainable fantasy, remains too reminiscent of the stage play from which it was adapted. It is essentially a series of entrances, exits and speeches rather than an integrated work of fiction. Although the novel fulfils Collins's ideological purpose, the characters do not possess the vitality and complexity of living beings so characteristic of his best fiction.

Footnotes

1. Lynda Snead, Myths of Sexuality, Blackwell, Oxford, 1988, p.96.
2. The New Magdalen (1873), Chatto, 1875, p.15.
3. Ibid., p.7.
4. Ibid., p.216.
5. Ibid., pp.215-216.
6. Ibid., p.79.
7. Ibid., p.67.
8. Ibid., p.402.

Miss Or Mrs? (1873): narrative and authority: narrative as a means of establishing psychic abnormality.

The volume Miss or Mrs? (1873) comprises two novellas "Miss or Mrs?" and "A Mad Marriage" and two shorter stories "Blow up with the Brig" and "The Fatal Cradle". Miss or Mrs? is interesting for its exploration of the integral role played by narrative in creating constructs of personal identity, a central idea in the later fiction.

"Miss or Mrs?" concerns conflict between Richard Turlington and Launcelot Linzie, suitors to Natalie Graybrooke. It is an omniscient narrative which focuses on Linzie's intention to ensure that his verbal sub-narrative of his rival's brutality is generally believed. Turlington is an attractive suitor in the eyes of Natalie's father, Sir Joseph, because he appears to be in comfortable financial circumstances and is accepted by society as a gentleman. He is, however, heavily in debt and in need of a large dowry to satisfy his creditors. Natalie and Linzie marry secretly and live as single people but Turlington discovers that they are married and plans revenge. Whilst the Graybrooke family are guests in his house Turlington arranges for his former employee Thomas Wildfang to attack Sir Joseph. Linzie arrives to discover that Turlington has absented himself leaving the injured Sir Joseph, Natalie and her mother locked inside the house. Linzie breaks in to rescue them. Turlington returns and

prepares to shoot him, accidentally discharging the gun and killing himself. The circumstances of his death are suppressed.

The development of "Miss or Mrs?" increasingly reveals the existence of repressed savagery beneath Turlington's surface personality. Like the pirate in "Blow up with the Brig" who is described as "snake-like"[1] and a "mongrel"[2], Turlington is identified by the narrative voice as a less sophisticated form of biological life than civilised humanity. His eyes have "a furtive glare in them like the glare in the eyes of a wild beast."[3] and he is "invariably brutal"[4] to his crew.

The figure of Turlington exploits tensions within Victorian psychological discourses. Greta Jones notes in Social Darwinism and English Thought (1980) that Victorian psychologists who asserted the biological superiority of men of their own culture did so by identifying redundant savage tendencies which progressive evolution had rendered purposeless:

> Psychologists like Romanes looked for similarities in mental structure between man and animals. In a similar fashion to embryology, psychology treated the mental development of a human child as a recapitulation of the general stages of the race's psychological evolution. They looked for the early psychological forms which had survived frequently finding these in the mental character of the "savage" races. In the survival of "instinct" in contemporary man, they felt they had discovered a redundant historical structure alongside more sophisticated mental apparatus. Finally many saw mental collapse as a form of psychological atavism - a throw-back to the primitive mental state, just as many natural historians believed that the domesticated animal would

> reproduce characteristics of his more primitive ancestors when set free in the wild. (5)

Although scientists asserted that brutality within civilised man was an outmoded evolutionary structure, such an ideology itself invoked the possibility of degeneration. It suggested that brutal tendencies in apparently civilised men might induce sudden regression to savagery. Like Hartright in The Woman in White, Linzie uses narrative as a mechanism with which to justify his role as suitor to the woman he loves. He creates a narrative of the past which reveals the existence of a brutal sub-identity beneath Turlington's surface personality. His concealment of his past points to the repression of his savage nature:

> There is, morally, no doubt that Turlington and the sea captain who cast the foreign sailor overboard to drown, are one and the same man. Legally, the matter is beset by difficulties; Turlington having destroyed all provable connection between his present self and his past life. (6)

Linzie's attempt to establish Turlington as deviant is inextricably associated with narrative authority. Linzie must find a way to establish his narrative of Turlington's past as reliable. Linzie's only possibility of validating his narrative is to bring Turlington's repressed savagery to the surface. He must initiate a process of mental collapse in his rival. Linzie's quest to discover the whereabouts of the violent and uncouth Wildfang symbolises his attempt to stimulate the primitive part of Turlington.

Turlington increasingly betrays atavistic tendencies as his surface personality breaks down. On hearing that Natalie's dowry will not be as large as expected he responds by

> ... concealing his face in shadow from the scrutiny of the two men on either side of him. The continuous moral irritation of his unhappy courtship - a courtship which had never advanced beyond the frigid familiarity of kissing Natalie's hand in the presence of others - had physically deteriorated him. Even his hardy nerves began to feel the long strain of suspicion that had been laid unremittingly on them for weeks past. His power of self-control - he knew it himself - was not to be relied on. He could hide his face: he could no longer command it. (7)

Conformity to sexually repressive codes of behaviour precipitates the breakdown of Turlington's surface personality. His adherence to conventions of correct behaviour during courtship has caused a "moral irritation" which "physically deteriorated him." Repression of innate savgery results in physical degeneration for Turlington. Civilised behavioural norms, structures generally perceived as expressing and confirming the difference between primitive and sophisticated man, are identified as a stimulus to atavism. From this point the savage aspect of Turlington increasingly determines his actions. The renewal of his acquaintence with Wildfang symbolises the rise to his surface personality of repressed brutal tendencies.

During the violent crisis of "Miss or Mrs?" Turlington and Linzie create conflicting discourses which represent one another as deviant. Linzie portrays himself as a rescuer and Turlington as a murderer, a

perspective supported by the narrator. Linzie's Christian name and his actions in protecting his mistress associate him with the knight errant, an important figure to many Victorian artists and writers who were attracted to medieval themes. In his study of the Nineteenth-Century revival of chivalry entitled The Return to Camelot (1981) Mark Girouard notes that the concept of knightly virtue was a means of legitimising the activities of the existing hegemony:

> The eighteenth century had believed in a ruling class which ruled by right of ownership of property; it was hoped that this property-owning class would acquire sufficient of the right moral qualities to make them good rulers, but property, not moral qualities, was the basis of their rule. The aim of the revival of the chivalric tradition was to produce a ruling class which deserved to rule because it possessed the moral qualities necessary to rulers. Gentlemen were to run the country because they were morally superior. (8)

The imagery of knight errantry legitimises Linzie's vendetta against Turlington. Linzie's quest forms a parallel to the traditional monster-slaying of the knight errant. He is therefore able to suggest that the seeking out of Wildfang is a battle against evil rather than a matter of self-interest.

In Past and Present (1843) Carlyle invokes the figure of a moral knight errant and suggests that "Man is created to fight ... now with Necessity, with Barrenness Scarcity, with Puddles, Bogs, tangled Forests, unkempt Cotton; now also with the hallucinations of his poor fellow men."(9) Carlyle's idea of the moral knight exposes problematic

aspects of Linzie's apparent chivalry. Carlyle's knight attempts to abolish suffering, including the psychological states which cause or legitimise it, the "hallucinations" of modern man. Linzie's behaviour, however, is informed by his desire to stimulate psychological crisis in his rival. Linzie's Christian name, Launcelot, also has negative connotations. To many Victorians, including Tennyson, the figure of Lancelot suggested guilt. In the Idylls of the King (1859) it is Launcelot's adultery with Guinevere which initiates events which culminate in the destruction of Arthur and his achievements. Although he is described in positive terms, a sub-textual level of meaning in "Miss or Mrs?" establishes Linzie as the source of deviance. Like his namesake Lancelot, his self-seeking activities result in social disorder and stimulate dangerous passions in others.

Turlington uses problematic aspects of Linzie's position to construct a narrative which denies him the role of knight errant. Turlington appropriates standard discourses of the domestic environment as idealised retreat in order to foreground Linzie's self-interest. According to Turlington, Linzie is not a knight errant figure rescuing his lady-love from a monster but a self-seeker who invades another's home. Turlington depicts himself as the protector of the domestic environment and its values when he shouts through the door to Linzie: "I have got a revolver with me, and I have a right to fire on a man who has broken into my house!"[(10)] He recalls the heroine of the earlier short story "The Black Cottage" (1858), who

feels justified in attacking two would-be burglars and is rewarded for doing so. Like her, Turlington knows that in Victorian England protection of the home legitimizes violence. Turlington's appropriation of standard values allows him to maintain the construct of himself as socially acceptable by creating a narrative which establishes Linzie as "deviant".

The accident which results in Turlington's death suggests the self-destructive nature of his personality and the values he holds. It recalls "Blow up with the Brig", in which the narrator, a seaman remembering events long past, experiences the full horror of his enemy's savagery symbolised by a gradually burning candle. He knows that when the flame reaches a certain point gunpowder will be ignited. The gun which explodes in Turlington's face is also emblematic of brutality. It symbolises the self-destructive nature of the process of regression which he has experienced.

The savage potential of the "gentleman" is an idea subversive of the interests of the masculine hegemony. A narrative of Turlington's death which depicts him as genteel and respectable is therefore constructed. The newspaper report which closes the novella mourns "the sudden death of the lamented managing partner, Mr. Turlington, by the accidental discharge of a revolver which he was examining."(11) The firm of which Turlington was a partner represents the existing hegemony. Although Turlington's death has caused "some temporary

derangement in the machinery of the business"[12], the dominant order will survive: "the well-known house of Messers. Bulpit Brothers has an interest in the business, and will carry it on until further notice."[13] Discourses of deviance and degeneration are exposed as mechanisms with which interested parties protect or promote themselves.

"A Mad Marriage" is the narrative of Mary Brading, explaining her reasons for eloping with Roland Cameron, a man certified insane. It is in the form of a letter. Cameron is also a sub-narrator. Mary's narrative contains his verbal account of circumstances surrounding his confinement in an asylum. When Mary meets Cameron he explains that he is obliged to return to his boarding-house by nine o'clock each evening. He later reveals that he is really resident in an asylum for the insane. Cameron's sub-narrative of his confinement echoes Reade's Hard Cash (1863) in exposing the asylum as an institution of social control which is an extension of paternal authority. Cameron is incarcerated after an avowal of love for the family governess:

> Was it an act of insanity for the son of a gentleman, with great expectations before him, to propose marriage to a nursery governess? I declare as Heaven is my witness, I know of no other act of mine which could justify my father, and justify the doctors, in placing me under restraint. (14)

Psychological medicine is exposed as a mechanism used to prevent the individual from deviating from social norms. The characterisation of Cameron as "deviant" denies him power he might otherwise possess to

subvert the values of the existing hegemony. He is powerless because his every action is interpreted in terms of an established discourse of mental illness. He feels unable to contest his imprisonment, "knowing that resistance would be interpreted, in his case, as a new outbreak of madness."[15]

Mary challenges established medical discourses by representing Cameron as sane and identifying repression as the source of subversive behaviour. Cameron's sub-narrative describes his attachment to the governess as an inevitable reaction to his upbringing. Like Turlington in "Miss or Mrs?", Cameron's "deviance" is a response to social control. His education is designed to ensure conformity but its repressive nature leaves him emotionally vulnerable:

> My father detested anything that was strongly marked, anything out of the ordinary way, in the characters and habits of the persons about him. He himself lived (as the phrase is) by line and rule; and he determined to make his son follow his example. I was subjected to severe discipline at school, and I was carefully watched afterwards at college. Looking back on my early life, I can see no traces of happiness, I can find no tokens of sympathy. (16)

Cameron begins a relationship with the governess because he has no other outlet for his repressed emotions than his relationship with her. He is "so hungry for a little sympathy, so weary of my friendless life."[17]

The inflexibility of the judicial and medical professions stimulate a parallel response in Mary. Initially, she and her family attempt to liberate Cameron through legal means. The failure of this plan stimulates more radical rebellion. Mary becomes a female knight errant, a parallel figure to Linzie, who rescues her lover from confinement. She helps Cameron to escape from the asylum and they flee to the United States. Mary's narrative represents Victorian society as passively responsible for deviant behaviour due to the inflexibility of received discourses of psychic normality. Victorian psychiatry took no account of other discourses which conflicted with its views. The lawyers acting for Mary assert the standard idea of the therapeutic power of the domestic environment. They raise the question "whether better results might not be expected from placing him under the care of a wife who loved him, and whom he loved, than from shutting him up in an asylum."[18] The inflexibility of the established hegemony stimulates Mary to help Cameron escape illegally.

"The Fatal Cradle" is a parallel comic narrative of social ordering. The narrator-figure is a man describing events he believes to have occurred around the time of his own birth. He tells how he was one of two male babies born at the same time on a ship. One child was the offspring of a carpenter, the other of Mr Smallchild, a man of independent fortune. The midwife becomes confused about the identity of the babies and chaos ensues as passengers and crew debate various methods of assigning each child a parent. The captain decides that the

heaviest child must belong to the tallest father and apportions the children in this way.

The narrator, consigned as a child to the carpenter, depicts his own situation from the point of view of lost chance. He argues that an arbitrary system was adopted to keep order and produces evidence of heredity which disputes that perceived by the captain: "I may be tall like the carpenter - but I have the Smallchild eyes, hair and expression notwithstanding."[19] However, the reader is aware that the narrator's perspective is prejudiced by the fact that he is in impecunious circumstances. His argument in favour of his right to a hereditary fortune expresses a fantasy in which he is empowered. The narrator's system for establishing the identity of the children appears to be as arbitrary as the captain's. The reader is aware that the narrator is unlikely to have any memory of these events and he gives no details of his sources. "The Fatal Cradle" reveals that no discourse is entirely objective. Narrative expresses the desires of the narrator.

Mary's narrative explores this problem. Cameron's narrative in which he claims to be sane is given no legal hearing. The narratives of established figures in society are not questioned. Mary argues that all discourses are subjective because they are the narratives of interested parties:

> His next of kin and his heirs-at-law (who are left out of the fortune) look with covetous eyes at the money, and determine to get the management and the ultimate possession of it. Assisted by a doctor, whose honesty and capacity must be taken on trust, these interested persons, in this nineteenth century of progress, can lawfully imprison their relative for life, in a country which calls itself free, and which declares that its justice is equally administered to all alike. (20)

Although Mary argues that Cameron is able to live an independent life outside the asylum, her narrative suggests that she represents a new form of authority in his life. It is Mary who encourages Cameron to believe that his situation is not hopeless, motivates her family to appeal against the verdict of insanity and masterminds his escape. Fictional form is a means through which Mary exerts her authority over Cameron. She incorporates his narrative into her own validating and explaining it. Cameron remains a figure expressed and limited by the discourses of others. He escapes the ordering power of narratives of relatives and doctors, yet his own narratives are contained, ordered and interpreted by Mary. Feminine narrative authority has usurped that of the masculine hegemony.

The stories which comprise <u>Miss or Mrs?</u> show that narrative enables discourses to be created or subverted. Established discourses of psychological normality are exposed as subjective narratives reflecting the desires, needs and prejudices of their creators.

Footnotes

1. Miss or Mrs? (1873), Chatto, London, 1909, p. 190.
2. Ibid., p. 189.
3. Ibid., pp. 21-22.
4. Ibid., p. 52.
5. Greta Jones, Social Darwinism and English Thought, Harvester, New York, 1980, pp. 21-22.
6. Miss or Mrs?, p. 107.
7. Ibid., pp. 110-11.
8. Mark Girouard, The Return to Camelot, Yale U.P., 1981, pp. 260-61.
9. Thomas Carlyle, Past and Present, Bk III Ch X. Quoted in Mark Girouard, op. cit., p. 142.
10. Miss or Mrs?, p. 172.
11. Ibid., pp. 176-7.
12. Ibid., p. 177.
13. Ibid., p. 177.
14. Ibid., p. 275.
15. Ibid., p. 286.
16. Ibid., p. 273.
17. Ibid., p. 274.
18. Ibid., p. 289.
19. Ibid., pp. 251-52.
20. Ibid., pp. 297-98.

(v)

The Frozen Deep and Other Stories (1874): the divided self; crisis and aftermath.

The form of "The Frozen Deep" bears a close relationship to the play from which it was adapted. The action is presented as a series of "scenes". Although weakened by limitations consequent on this structure, "The Frozen Deep" is a significant exploration of a central idea in the later fiction. Its main theme is the attempt of Victorian man to re-order his world in the aftermath of psychological crisis. "John Jago's Ghost" and "The Dream-Woman", two of the best of Collins's short stories, also explore this theme.

"The Frozen Deep" is an omniscient narrative depicting events before and during a Polar expedition. Clara Burnham is a sub-narrator. She contributes a verbal description of events occurring in the Arctic which is based on a supernatural vision. "The Frozen Deep" is the story of two rivals in love who find themselves members of an Arctic expedition. Like Armadale and Midwinter in Armadale and Oscar and Nugent in Poor Miss Finch, Richard Wardour and Frank Andersley symbolise contrasting aspects of one individual. Wardour represents the antisocial, selfish part of the self. He perceives life in terms of his own desires and expects others to acquiesce in his pursuit of them. His proposal to Clara Burnham takes no account of

her wishes. He tells her: "I am going to the African coast. If I live, I shall come back promoted; and we both know what will happen then."[1] Andersley's most significant characteristic is his willingness to help or please others. He represents the socially attuned elements of the self. He is the man "they all liked."[2]

The events of "The Frozen Deep" are a metaphor for the results of self-restraint. The two-year Arctic voyage is the same length as the engagement of Clara and Wardour/Ansersley. Long engagements were common in Victorian England. Marriages were often delayed until a potential husband could assure the parents that his wife would be well provided for. Christopher Wood notes in Victorian Panorama (1976) that "Long engagements of course imposed a strain on everyone, and resulted in dispute, bitterness, jilting and breaking-off."[3] The conflict between Wardour and Andersley hints at the psychological consequences of sustained sexual repression. Wardour is a parallel figure to Turlington in "Miss or Mrs?". Like him, Wardour becomes violent as a result of sexual repression.

The explorers soon find themselves divorced from their own culture. The narrator-figure prefaces his description of their adventures with the words "Goodbye to England! Goodbye to inhabited and civilised regions of the earth!"[4] The frozen wastes of the Arctic form an appropriate setting for psychic alienation. Wardour expresses his sense of "the heartache gnawing me at home and the winds

of the icy north whistling around me here"[5] as parallel hardships. The "awful silence of the polar desert"[6] and the "ice-locked"[7] state of the Expedition are images of isolation. The attempt to find help which leaves Wardour and Andersley stranded is an intensification of this process. Their situation "alone on the Frozen Deep"[8] reflects the alienation of Wardour/Andersley as he faces mental crisis.

Rescue symbolises social re-integration in the aftermath of psychic crisis. A sense of anxiety at this prospect begins to permeate the narrative as the first of the explorers are rescued. John Want, cook on the Arctic expedition, expresses his reservations about the world outside the North Pole:

> I could be just as cheerful as ever, sir, if I was sent back again. I hope I'm thankful; but I don't like to hear the North Pole run down in such a fishy place as this. It was very dry and snowy at the North Pole - and it's very damp and sandy here. Do you never miss your bone soup, sir? (9)

Although characterised by Crayford and the narrator as an ungrateful grumbler, Want is a subversive voice. His views augment sub-textual meaning in the closure of "The Frozen Deep".

The central focus of conflict between competing voices is the figure of Clara Burnham. The narrator depicts her as the stimulus to masculine deviance. Clara asserts herself by telling Wardour that

she does not love him and sees "a change which told her of the terrible passions she had let loose in him."[10] The narrator blames Clara for Wardour's actions. She is the subject of the active verb: it is she who has let passions loose in him. Sexuality, for the arousal of which women are to blame, is represented as the stimulus to savage tendencies. Clara's dispute with Wardour is a struggle for independence from masculine authority and from definition by masculine discourses such as those of the narrator and Wardour. Her desire to escape masculine dominance recalls Marian Halcombe in The Woman in White. Her supernatural visions in which she sees Wardour attempting to kill Andersley are alternative sub-narratives re-directing blame for his violent tendencies onto Wardour himself.

The closure of "The Frozen Deep" is an attempt to deny the power of Clara's sub-narratives. Wardour is represented as having overcome murderous temptations to save Andersley's life. With his rehabilitation and death, Wardour/Andersley rids himself of his antisocial and violent side. Crayford, an explorer, argues that he "has won the greatest of all conquests - the conquest of himself."[11] Although the closure of the story partially refutes Clara's subversive narratives, the old order in which men retained uncontested dominance appears to be passing away. Wardour is dying and Andersley lies ill, suggesting that the masculine hegemony is severely weakened. The unexpected arrival of Clara and Mrs Crayford aboard a ship called "The Amazon" symbolises female emancipation. Women are entering

areas initially represented as suitable only for men. Like Marian Halcombe in The Woman in White, who sees in her mind's eye Hartright's experiences abroad, Clara's supernatural visions are an expression of her desire to enter the masculine sphere of experience. Mrs Crayford wonders: "is Clara present in spirit, with our loved and lost ones in the lonely North?"[12] The arrival of "The Amazon" suggests that women are beginning to make this desire a reality.

The main body of "John Jago's Ghost" is the narrative of Philip Lefrank, an Englishman recalling events surrounding his visit to relatives in America. A short afterword closes the story. This is contributed by Collins in his persona as author. Lefrank travels to America for his health and finds a sour atmosphere at Meadowcroft Farm where a dispute is in progress between the owner and his sons, Ambrose and Silas. Tension is aggravated by the presence of John Jago, an employee who has taken over many of the brothers' former duties and tries to court Ambrose's fiancée, Naomi. When Jago disapears after a heated altercation it is assumed that the brothers have murdered him and they are arrested. Lefrank investigates the matter, discovering that Jago is alive and in hiding, thereby saving the brothers.

Lefrank represents himself as physically debilitated by his environment. He recalls how his doctor informed him that although he was suffering from "no organic disease"[13] his work as a barrister was having a negative biological effect:

> You have a fine constitution; you are a young man; but you cannot deliberately overwork your brain, and derange your nervous system much longer. (14)

Lefrank's narrative creates a discourse on the relationship of Victorian man to his environment. It is, he says, the conditions in which Victorian man operates which debilitate him rather than negative heredity. Lefrank represents himself as free from disease and as possessing the benefit of a fine physique. It is environment that has made him ill. The trip to America allows him to enter a different environment in the hope that he will thereby recuperate.

Lefrank believes that Meadowcroft's sons incubate hereditary biological qualities waiting "for time and circumstances to bring them to their full growth"(15). This recalls Lefrank's account of his health problems, suggesting that it is social environment rather than heredity which is decisive in shaping men's lives. It is "time and circumstance" which will direct Silas and Ambrose towards maturity. Lefrank's narrative expresses his ambivalent feelings about these issues. It is not certain that all the brothers' latent characteristics will prove to be positive ones. As the narrative develops it becomes increasingly clear that the rural environment can foster negative potential.

Lefrank finds that life on the farm does not possess the characteristics of a pastoral idyll. Its inhabitants appear to suffer

from a parallel form of physical decay to that which afflicts Lefrank. Meadowcroft is "a confirmed invalid, confined by chronic rheumatism to his chair"[16]. It seems to Lefrank that Miss Meadowcroft takes him to bed as if to his grave. She has "bony hands"[17] as if her flesh has faded away and an air of "ghostly solemnity"[18]. Similarly Jago is "singularly pale"[19]. His physical decay is also accompanied by the intense activity associated in standard Victorian medical discourses with rapid degeneration. Jago's face is "irradiated by a pair of wild glittering brown eyes"[20], the furtive movement of which seems to Lefrank to reveal their owner's instablity. Jago's hard work brings affluence to the farm but its moral and social life rapidly deteriorates as Ambrose and Silas become increasingly alienated from their father.

By contrast Naomi is a figure who possesses health and vitality. She is biologically sound. Lefrank describes her as "hearty"[21]. She also has a positive moral effect on life at the farm. Lefrank states that her behaviour acts as an "antidote"[22] to its strained atmosphere. Naomi is an active figure. She solves problems, takes part in Lefrank's detective work and, towards the close of the novella, saves Lefrank's life by forcing the gun fired at him by Jago into the air. Standard Victorian discourses represented women as inherently passive. Lefrank's portrait of Naomi suggests that healthy women are active and independent.

When Jago disappears after an altercation with the brothers, Naomi remains convinced of her lover Ambrose's innocence despite the fact that he and his brother are arrested and sign confessions admitting to the murder of their rival. She asks Lefrank to help her prove their innocence. He consequently begins detective work, initiating a narrative process whereby he re-assesses and re-constructs his portrait of the life of the farm. His detective work allows Lefrank's narrative to expose an alternative reality existing beneath appearances. Lefrank's discoveries expose the complex motivations of the novella's characters. Miss Meadowcroft is revealed to have an alternative life in which, compelled by her sexual obsession with Jago, she spies on other inhabitants of the farm. Jago is revealed not to be a victim but a man who staged his own murder to revenge himself on his rivals and Naomi discovers that she does not truly love Ambrose and agrees to marry Lefrank.

Although overtly explaining mysteries and clarifying events, Lefrank's detective work suggests that narrative is subjective, dependent on the psychology of its creator and therefore essentially unreliable. Ambrose's confession becomes a subjective narrative which casts doubt on established authority:

> Was the confession really the true statement of what had taken place? or had the sheriff and the governor, acting in the interests of the family name, persuaded Ambrose to try this desperate means of escaping the ignominy of death on the scaffold? (23)

Lefrank's narrative authority is subverted by his own discoveries. It becomes possible to interpret his narrative as a form of wish-fulfilment. His account of events may be interpreted as a fantasy in which a physically ailing man represents himself as a capable figure who makes sense of the world around him and looks forward to sexual fulfilment.

"John Jago's Ghost" is closed by a "note in conclusion"[24] in which Collins in his persona as author stresses that his story bears a close relationship to "a printed account of a trial which actually took place."[25] Although overtly expressing the factual basis of his story, the Collins-persona reveals his source as another narrative. The supposedly factual narrative is distanced from the events it purports to describe. It is a re-interpretation of an interpretation. The overt statements of the Collins persona are further subverted by his claim that "Anything which "looks like truth" is in nine cases out of ten, the invention of the author."[26] The assurance of the author-figure that his fiction reflects reality is one of many conflicting narratives.

"The Dream-Woman - A Mystery in Four Narratives" (1874) is composed of four sections: two written statements by Percy Fairbank, a gentleman traveller; the tale told to him by Francis Raven, an ostler and later servant of Fairbank; and the statement of Joseph Rigobert, a

servant of Fairbank. Fairbank is the overall narrator and editor. His statements frame the sub-narratives and he passes comment on the credibility of Raven's story. The various narratives contrast with one another. Fairbank's narrative concerns recent events which have roused his curiosity. Raven tells of events long past which prey on his mind. Although Fairbank writes of more immediate events he is considerably more detached from his narrative than Raven. Rigobert's narrative provides other contrasts. Rigobert's contribution is in response to a specific purpose. He hopes that his narrative will prevent him from being convicted of murder. He recalls recent events which have not affected him psychologically as the incidents of Raven's account have affected their narrator, but which he is aware could have a significant effect on his life if they are interpreted wrongly.

Fairbank tells of his meeting with Raven, who cries out in his sleep and is terrified of being alone at night. Raven describes how, when young, he dreamt that a woman would murder him. He told his mother of the dream. She superstitiously believed it to be an omen and made a careful note of the physical appearance of the Dream-Woman. He later meets Alicia Warlock, a destitute young woman contemplating suicide and marries her. His mother objects on seeing Alicia, explaining that she conforms in every particular to the Dream-Woman. Raven tells how they married but the relationship soon began to deteriorate as Alicia began drinking. Whilst Alicia is serving dinner Raven's mother manages to convince him that the bread-knife resembles

the weapon carried by the Dream-Woman. They secretly escape from the house while Alicia is in the kitchen. Raven returns to find the knife he believes will otherwise kill him, but Alicia hides it. Shortly afterwards Raven's mother dies. The drunken Alicia expresses her intention to attend the funeral. Raven responds by beating her and locking her in her room until the funeral is over. He tells how Alicia left him but returned in an attempt to kill him. Fairbank tells how he took Raven to France in the capacity of his groom. Rigobert's narrative tells how he met and invited to Fairbank's house a woman who answered the description of Alicia. Rigobert reports his discovery of Raven's body and his belief that Alicia was the murderer. A note added by Fairbank tells how Rigobert was tried for murder and found innocent.

"The Dream-Woman" develops themes first explored in The New Magdalen. It suggests that men are covertly attracted to the figure of the "fallen woman". The attempted suicide from which Raven saves Alicia associates her with the standard idea of the fate of the "fallen woman". However, Alicia's sexuality is in conflict with accepted discourses. Raven is attracted to her and therefore offers her the alternative option represented by marriage:

> She had been born and bred a lady. She had lost her station, her character, and her friends. Virtue shuddered at the sight of her; and Vice had got her for the rest of her days. Shocking and common, as I told you. It made no difference to me. I have said it already - I say it again - I was a man bewitched. Is there anything so very wonderful in that? Just remember who I was. Among the honest women in my own station

> in life, where could I have found the like of her? Could they walk as she walked? and look as she looked? When they gave me a kiss, did their lips linger over it as hers did? Had they her skin, her laugh, her foot, her hand, her touch? She never had a speck of dirt on her: I tell you her flesh was a perfume. When she embraced me, her arms folded round me like the wings of angels; and her smile covered me softly with its light like the sun in heaven. I leave you to laugh at me, or to cry over me, just as your temper may incline. I am not trying to excuse myself - I am trying to explain. You are gentlefolks; what dazzled and maddened me, is everyday experience to you. Fallen or not, angel or devil, it came to this - she was a lady; and I was a groom. (27)

Like Mercy Merrick Alicia is a figure who is attractive to men because she suggests both purity and blatant sexuality. Raven's comments reveal that the figure of the "fallen woman" is extremely attractive because of her close association with the middle-class ideal of femininity. The idea of "fallen" femininity presupposes an ideal state which has been corrupted or debased, and Raven represents Alicia as the conventional "angel" because her gentility and beauty suggest the feminine ideal. Alicia has no "speck of dirt on her". This signifies the superior class from which she has fallen, and it is her social class which makes Alicia so attractive to Raven: "she was a lady and I was a groom." She suggests both ideal femininity and the forbidden and dangerous figure of the sexually experienced woman.

Raven's story recalls the investigations of William Acton, whose <u>Prostitution Considered in its Moral, Social and Sanitary Aspects</u> (1870) revealed that many "fallen women" did not end as suicides as standard discourses suggested. Acton revealed that many went on to

make successful marriages. Raven's narrative suggests that the "fallen woman" is unlikely to end as a suicide because her sexual attractions enable her to find ways of inducing men to support her. Instead, her loss of status ensures that her new alliances will be among men of inferior social rank.

Despite Raven's and Rigobert's narratives, an alternative sub-narrative begins to emerge in which the source of marital dispute is identified as Raven's inability to distance himself from his mother and establish mature sexual relationships. The manner in which this sub-text operates recalls the earlier short story "Gabriel's Marriage" (1856). In this tale it is the realisation that his father is the man who attempted to murder a priest which is central to Gabriel's progress towards maturity as he comes to understand the complex relationship between good and evil tendencies. In "The Dream-Woman" this device of recognition operates in a reverse manner. It is through his identification of his wife with a murderess that Raven retreats away from maturity. It is significant that his mother's belief that Alicia is the Dream-Woman is contrasted with that of Raven's Aunt Chance, whose fortune-telling with a pack of cards induces her to encourage Raven's plans to marry. His aunt's name suggests that she believes that Raven should face the risks involved in matrimony while his mother depicts sexual relations as dangerous and essentially deviant. She encourages him to remain in the safe, non-sexual world of childhood.

Raven grudgingly admits that Alicia behaved with decorum when his mother visited their home: "the devil within her was tamed for the time."[28] Raven's mother argues that the knife with which Alicia cuts the bread is the murder-weapon of the dream, thereby denying Alicia's role as wife and re-defining her as a type of "deviant" femininity. Raven believes his mother and they secretly leave the house. Raven's acceptance of his mother's view of Alicia is associated with the collapse of his attempts to establish sexual relations with women. He says "you will understand what a broken man I was by this time, when I tell you I was afraid to sleep in the same room with her!"[29]

Raven becomes obsessed with the idea that his wife will kill him. The reliability of his narrative of Alicia's first attempt at murder is problematic because it is closely associated with the subjective world of dreams. Raven's first dream in which Alicia appears seems real to him. He consequently feels alienated from the innkeeper who attempts to convince him that it was not real. The "real" appearance of Alicia at his bedside is a similar experience. Subjective and objective states merge in the figure of the Dream-Woman/Alicia: "The Dream-Woman again? No! My wife. The living woman, with the face of the Dream - in the attitude of the Dream."[30]

Other characters describe those who believe in the dream as mentally disturbed. When Raven's mother reacts with horror on first meeting her, Alicia assumes that she is insane: "Mad!" she said to

herself, "and Francis never told me!"[31] Rigobert says of his fellow-servant Raven that "a lunatic asylum is the only proper place for him."[32] In this context Raven's narrative appears essentially unreliable. It may be seen as the product of a disturbed mind in which subjective and objective experience are not clearly differentiated.

Rigobert's narrative overtly legitimises Raven's account. However, it is itself subverted from within. As Rigobert stresses his own innocence and Alicia's guilt, an alternative interpretation of events emerges in which Rigobert is influenced by Alicia to murder Raven. Rigobert admits that he found Alicia attractive, and that he did tie up and gag Raven lest he awake the servants. Rigobert represents Alicia's words "I thought you had killed him."[33] as proof of her guilt but they augment the alternative sub-text in which Rigobert plays a part in the murder.

The sub-text re-directs established ideas of female deviance onto the men who find such women attractive, an idea highly threatening to the established hegemony. It becomes essential for Percy Fairbank, the editor-figure, to exonerate masculinity and re-define Alicia according to standard ideas of female "deviance". Rigobert's statement is followed by Fairbank's final narrative which asserts that the Frenchman was found not guilty and that Alicia must have been the murderess. Fairbank's belief in Alicia's guilt lacks definitive proof, however. She cannot be found anywhere near the scene of the crime. The

authorities are convinced that Alicia's life must conform to the standard idea of the fate of the "fallen woman". They attempt to establish that she drowned herself. Fairbank admits that there is little evidence to support this view:

> The investigations pursued on the morning when the crime was committed showed that the murderess, after leaving the stable, had taken the footpath which led to the river. The river was dragged without result. It remains doubtful to this day whether she died by drowning or not. (34)

Alicia does not conform to the established stereotype of "deviant" femininity. She is therefore a highly threatening figure. Fairbank must establish her as distinctly different from normal femininity in order to exonerate Raven from having stimulated her violence by ill-treatment. Fairbank takes refuge in the imagery of the supernatural to represent Alicia as unnatural. He is aware of the fragility of the argument, however. Although he places greater stress on the supernatural explanation, he cannot emphatically assert it at the expense of the idea that Alicia was human:

> So - beginning in mystery, ending in mystery - the Dream-Woman passes from your view. Ghost; demon; or living human creature - say for yourselves which she is. (35)

Fairbank's narrative, like those of Raven and Rigobert, overtly exonerates men from any blame for female "deviance" but sub-textually reveals the culpability of the masculine hegemony and the fragility of

its ideology. The stereotype of female "deviance" is exposed as a construct. The "fallen woman" is, as the title "The Dream-Woman" suggests, a product of subjective masculine thinking.

The subversive nature of this version of "The Dream-Woman" becomes more evident when contrasted with its earlier form which appeared in The Queen of Hearts (1858). It is considerably shorter and of contrasting narrative construction. The Queen of Hearts is the narrative of a man who has a young guest to entertain. He and his brothers amuse her by telling a story each evening. "The Dream-Woman" is the written narrative of the brother read aloud. He tells how while practising as a doctor he encountered an ostler who corresponds to Raven in the later version. This man's account of his past is a verbal sub-narrative within that of the doctor. In this version the Dream-Woman does not return. The story closes after the Raven-figure has told his tale and as he waits in dread for the Dream-Woman to return and attempt to kill him.

The change in status of the main narrator from doctor to gentleman traveller is significant. In the early version the reader's knowledge that the narrative is ultimately controlled by a doctor-narrator tends to deny some of the most threatening and subversive aspects of the text. The telling of the tale by a doctor tends to pathologise both the Raven-figure and the Dream-Woman. The reader is aware that doctors generally create discourses about those who are

biologically weak, malformed or mentally ill. It is therefore easy to regard either central character, or both, as psychologically disturbed and thereby to suggest that the events of "The Dream-Woman" bear little relation to domestic life generally. If the ostler is perceived as mentally disturbed the altercation with his wife can be dismissed as a small domestic incident he has magnified out of all proportion. Although doubt hangs over the closure of the story, which provides interesting suspense, the return of the Dream-Woman appears a distant and unlikely event. If the ostler's story is completely accepted, the threatening presence of violence within domestic life can be denied by pathologising the Dream-Woman as a psychopathic aberration from normal femininity.

Collins altered "The Dream-Woman" to disable this pathologising tendency. In the later version violence is more difficult to dissociate from domestic norms and, in contrast to the original version, invades the middle-class home. Fairbank is not a doctor but a middle-class gentleman. He becomes involved with the frightened ostler, and ultimately creates the narrative of his life because of his own interest, and that of his wife, in the man's story. Fairbank's willingness to humour the whims of his attractive, vivacious young wife creates a disturbing parallel with the ostler's infatuation with the Dream-Woman in the early stages of their relationship. This parallel is made increasingly threatening by the murder of the ostler within Fairbank's home.

The presence of the Raven-figure as a servant in Fairbank's house is also disturbing in this way. In the original version the story closes with the ostler unable to maintain a normal domestic existence because of his obsession with the idea of the Dream-Woman's return. Sleeping in stables and taking irregular employment where he can, his suffering remains an experience outside domestic norms. In the later version he dies whilst living and working within a middle-class domestic environment.

In the later version, although the surface narrative establishes Alicia as abnormal, a sub-text operates to suggest that her violence is the result of distinct social causes. Raven's narrative unwittingly reveals a chain of events which culminates in crime. Raven experiences an ambivalent response to Alicia. He is sexually attracted to her but is afraid of sex. He therefore sees Alicia as a wicked woman. She responds by conforming to this definition. He beats and imprisons her before his mother's funeral, an incident which induces her to commit violent crime. This pattern and the intrusion of violence into Fairbank's domestic world suggest that the Dream-Woman's crimes are the result of misdirected sexual tensions which could erupt within most homes. This sub-text is not fully expressed in the early version. The reliability of the ostler's narrative is subverted by the possibility that it may be the result of obsessive misogyny, but he remains an outsider whose experience is not relevant to or illustrative of domestic norms.

The early version of "The Dream-Woman" has proved the most enduring. It is still anthologised, particularly in collections of stories concerned with the supernatural. It is eminently suitable for this purpose. Its conciseness, the closure of the narrative with the ostler's fate unknown and its reliable doctor-narrator create a ghost story which is highly effective because it is credible and does not deny the possibility that the supernatural may not exist. By contrast, the supernatural element in the later version is made deliberately incredible in order to reveal the shortcomings of the masculine narrators and the hegemony they represent. Devices such as naming the Dream-Woman Alicia Warlock and Fairbank's overt comments concerning the possibility of ghostly origins reveal the desperation of masculine narrators to deny the existence of female criminality. The early version of "The Dream-Woman" operates as an effective ghost story but the later version is a more complex and interesting examination of the Victorian response to female criminality.

The Frozen Deep illustrates Collins's continuing preoccupation with fictional means to explore masculine psychological crisis. In "The Frozen Deep" and "The Dream-Woman" conflicts between characters explore precarious mental states in particular men and suggest a corresponding precariousness in the Victorian social order as a whole. In "John Jago's Ghost" Lefrank's optimistic post-crisis re-ordering of his world is subverted by an emergent discourse of narrative as subjective and unreliable.

Footnotes

1. The Frozen Deep (1874), Chatto, 1877, p. 21.
2. Ibid., p. 80.
3. Christopher Wood, Victorian Panorama, Faber, London, 1976, p. 80.
4. The Frozen Deep, p. 44.
5. Ibid., p. 65.
6. Ibid., p. 45.
7. Ibid., p. 44.
8. Ibid., p. 83.
9. Ibid., p. 110.
10. Ibid., p. 32.
11. Ibid., pp. 135-36.
12. Ibid., p. 92.
13. Ibid., p. 232.
14. Ibid., p. 238.
15. Ibid., p. 236.
16. Ibid., p. 243.
17. Ibid., p. 238.
18. Ibid., p. 239.
19. Ibid., p. 241.
20. Ibid., p. 267.
21. Ibid., p. 308.
22. Ibid., p. 322.
23. Ibid., p. 322.
24. Ibid., p. 322.
25. Ibid., pp. 182-183.
26. Ibid., p. 190.
27. Ibid., p. 192.
28. Ibid., pp. 194-195.
29. Ibid., p. 186.
30. Ibid., p. 210.
31. Ibid., p. 222.
32. Ibid., p. 308.
33. Ibid., p. 227.
34. Ibid., p. 226.
35. Ibid., p. 229.

(vii)

The Law and the Lady (1875): the collapse of the idol; a voyage into the psychology of the "gentleman".

The Law and the Lady uses the form of the detective story to explore the theme of female emancipation and its effect on masculine psychology. The overall narrator and editor-figure is Valeria Macallan who describes her recollection of past events. Her narrative is punctuated by a variety of sub-narratives, some verbal, others documentary. Included within these is her spontaneous response to events in the form of a letter from herself to her husband. Another sub-narrative is the written report of her husband's trial which she finds in Fitz-David's house. The report itself contains sub-narratives in the form of the evidence submitted to the court. Some of these narratives are verbal accounts by witnesses of their recollection of events. These oral narratives are contrasted with Macallan's contribution which is a documentary account in the form of his diary. The diary is a spontaneous response to events recorded each day. This contrasts with the accounts of the witnesses which are the products of recollection, consideration and reflection.

Reading the report of the trial has great significance for Valeria. It challenges her assumptions about her husband and about gender roles. This contrasts with the fragmentary verbal narrative of

Miserrimus Dexter which hints at the guilt of Helena Beauly, thereby allowing Valeria to fill in the gaps in his narrative in a manner satisfactory to herself in order to depict Helena as a murderess. This idea is challenged by the oral sub-narrative of a lady friend who provides an alternative explanation of Helena's apparently suspicious behaviour. Valeria's account is later punctuated by Dexter's letter in which he attempts to convince her of the truth of his implications. The verbal contribution of the lawyer, Playmore, is a contrasting sub-narrative. He seeks to define Dexter as physically and mentally degenerate. Playmore argues that Dexter will collapse and die as a result of his moral failure to reform his way of life. Dexter's letter attempts to convince Valeria of the truth of his views about the past. Playmore's account argues for the validity of his vision of the future. After Valeria surrenders her detective role to Playmore her narrative is punctuated by a letter from him describing how he has solved the mystery she was investigating. Playmore's letter contains a sub-narrative in the form of an enclosure. This is the suicide note of Macallan's wife which was found in a fragmented condition and has been reconstructed by Playmore's agent, the clerk Benjamin. Valeria's narrative closes the novel.

The main events of the plot may be summarised as follows. Finding that her husband Eustace has married her under the false name of Woodville, Valeria Macallan visits his friend Major Fitz-David in order to discover why. Fitz-David has been sworn to secrecy by

Macallan but intimates that a clue to the mystery may be found in the room in which he receives Valeria. From one of the Major's books she learns that Macallan was tried for the murder of his first wife, Sara. The narrative reveals that he was neither completely cleared nor found guilty. Because the case was tried in Scotland a verdict of "Not Proven" was available to the jury. Macallan separates himself from Valeria on discovering that she knows his secret. She determines to investigate the case herself in an attempt to clear his name despite opposition from friends and family. Valeria surmises that Helena Beauly, named in Macallan's diary as a woman he adored, may have murdered Sara. Valeria visits the crippled Miserrimus Dexter, a witness at Macallan's trial, in the hope that he can help her prove it. Dexter encourages this line of enquiry but Valeria discovers circumstances which prove Helena to be innocent. Dexter, obsessed by Valeria's physical resemblance to Sara, whom he admired, sexually assaults her. Valeria agrees that the lawyer Playmore should conclude the detective work she began. Playmore sends a letter to Valeria enclosed in which is a fragmented suicide note from Sara which has been pieced together by his clerk Benjamin. The note reveals that Sara was confirmed in her belief that Macallan did not love her by reading his diary, procured by Dexter in the hope that she would transfer her affections to him. The note reveals her intention to poison herself. Valeria and Macallan are reunited. Valeria informs him that she possesses a letter which, should he break the seal, would distress him. She also tells him that it offers a means of proving his

innocence. Macallan passes the letter to their baby son as a means of making a decision. The letter remains unopened as Valeria closes the narrative.

Valeria's quest for the hidden clue in Fitz-David's room is an emblem of the importance of submerged meaning in The Law and the Lady. The Major tells Valeria that the truth about Macallan's past is to be found within an object in his library. Valeria looks at the outside of the book and finds that it means nothing to her. It is only by looking inside that she discovers that Macallan was tried for murder. The concealed narrative Valeria uncovers does not simply reveal the truth, however. The Report of the trial is composed of a series of sub-narratives, each offering a different perspective on the death of Sara. Witnesses, Sara's correspondents, lawyers and judges each express their view of the events surrounding her death. Valeria's response to Dexter's narrative is a paradigm of the narrative technique of Collins's later novels. She is certain that apparently trivial details are evidence of concealed meaning:

> In alluding to Mrs Beauly, while he was giving his evidence, Mr. Dexter had spoken of her so slightingly - so rudely, I might almost say - as to suggest that he had some private reasons for disliking (perhaps for distrusting) this lady. Here, again, it might be of vital importance to me to see Mr. Dexter, and to clear up, if I could, what the dignity of the Court had passed over without notice. (1)

Valeria's interpretation of Dexter's narrative is a metaphor for the reading of The Law and the Lady. Valeria perceives Dexter's statements about Helena as indications of hidden meaning. In a parallel manner the novel's surface narrative both implies and veils sub-textual meaning subversive of established Victorian thinking.

Valeria's detective activity is a metaphor for the discovery of Macallan's inner self. Her situation represents the experience of most middle-class women whose intimacy with their husbands usually began after marriage. Although some engaged couples did form intimate relationships, among the affluent classes this was hampered by social conventions of formal courtship. Judith Rowbotham notes in her study of popular fiction for girls entitled Good Girls Make Good Wives (1989) that marital bliss was perceived as dependent upon female ability to recognise the stereotypical image of the "gentleman": "A good man, aiming for the title of gentleman, honoured and respected women, and treated them with gentle courtesy. Like girls, boys were expected to acquire a devotion to truth."(2)

The figure of Macallan exposes the psychological reality beneath such stereotypical behaviour. Although he appears to Valeria to be the epitome of the gentlemanly ideal, she discovers that his guilt about his past makes it impossible for him to be truthful. Unprepared to discover the complexities of Macallan's psychology, she is shocked to find that he is capable of deceit and vulgarity:

> It was all forced; it was all unnatural. He, the most delicate, the most refined of men - a gentleman in the highest sense of the word - was coarse and loud and vulgar! My heart sank under a sudden sense of misgiving which, with all my love for him, it was impossible to resist. (3)

Valeria is unprepared to discover that Macallan is psychologically vulnerable. Her idealised image of him as "the idol of my worship; the companion, guide, protector of my life"(4) is consequently undermined. This process is intensified by her reading of his diary:

> The most unpleasant pages in the whole Report of the trial were - to me - the pages which contained the extracts from my husband's diary. There were expressions here and there, which not only pained me, but which almost shook Eustace's position in my estimation. I think I would have given everything I possessed to have had the power of annihilating certain lines in that diary. (5)

The diary expresses thoughts which Macallan dare not publicly reveal. In The English Gentleman: The Rise and Fall of an Ideal (1982) Philip Mason indicates the importance to the Victorians of psychic repression as an indicator of gentlemanly status: "It was important not only to bear physical pain without squealing but also to repress all signs of emotion."(6) Valeria's reading of the Report of the trial precipitates the withdrawal of Macallan's affection because he knows that she has gained some insight into repressed aspects of his psychology. He can therefore no longer present himself to his wife as a "gentleman".

Valeria's use of her sexuality to gain information also induces Macallan to separate himself from her. Before visiting Fitz-David Valeria takes pains with her appearance and he agrees to see her only because she is "a fine woman"[7]. Valeria's discovery of Fitz-David's sexual secrets on examining his love-letters and keepsakes symbolises illicit sexual activity, a subject which Victorian moral codes made it difficult for Collins to explore on an overt narrative level. Valeria's language is suggestive of this level of sub-textual meaning. She refers to her make-up as "the odious deceit"[8] and expresses her willingness to go to any lengths to gain the information she wants: "Anything (I thought to myself, in the madness of that miserable time), so long as it helps me to win the Major's confidence!"[9]

Valeria's meeting with Fitz-David's mistress, Miss Hoighty, symbolises her realisation of the potential offered by her sexuality. Miss Hoighty tells Valeria that her relationship with Fitz-David is a matter of self-interest: "I've got my own interests to look after, and I don't know what may happen if I let other women come between him and me."[10] Valeria's relationship with Fitz-David operates in a parallel fashion. Her penetration of her host's secrets suggests a level of meaning in which she offers Fitz-David her sexual favours in return for information about Macallan. On a sub-textual level Macallan leaves Valeria not only because she has discovered the secret of his past but also because of her adultery with Fitz-David.

Valeria's reply to Macallan's letter of farewell argues that access to forbidden knowledge is fundamental to the independence she seeks. She rejects his view that an understanding of the crime for which he was tried can only divide them. Valeria stresses her competence to assimilate information from the masculine field of the law: "Are you surprised at the knowledge of the law which this writing betrays in an ignorant woman? I have been learning."(11) The law is one of those established discourses which allow the status quo to be maintained and consequently leave men and women in emotional bondage. Valeria's letter expresses her determination to oppose the hegemony thus created. She suggests that she and Macallan will sustain a relationship only when the inadequate existing hegemony allows women an active social role:

> What the law has failed to do for you, your wife must do for you. Do you remember what I said, when we were together in the back room at Major Fitz-David's house? I told you that the first thought that came to me, when I heard what the Scotch jury had done, was the thought of setting their vile verdict right. Well! Your letter has fixed this idea more firmly in my mind than ever. The only chance that I can see of winning you back to me, in the character of a penitent and loving husband, is to change that underhand Scotch Verdict of Not Proven, into an honest English Verdict of Not Guilty. (12)

The sub-textual message of Valeria's letter asserts that attempts to instill resignation into women will be met with defiance. However, the idea of woman as man's helpmate remains inextricably associated with Valeria's desire for independence. She perceives the intellectual and practical independence she desires as better enabling her to serve

her husband. Her detective work will, she believes, be a means of improving their relationship because it will enable her to re-create an idealised image of Macallan by proving him innocent of murder.

It becomes imperative for Valeria to transfer the deviance she perceives in Macallan onto another person. Jealousy inclines her to select Helena. Like Hartright in The Woman in White and Lefrank in "John Jago's Ghost", Valeria's narrative of her detective work allows her to express her fantasy. She endorses standard ideas of female sexuality as deviant and dangerous and blames Helena for the death of Macallan's wife. She depicts Helena as a woman whose sexuality induced her to commit crime. Valeria sets out to prove that Helena intended to secure her choice of husband by removing the obstacle presented by his wife. In this way she diverts blame away from Macallan and portrays her rival for his affection as a destructive and unattractive figure.

In her determination to prove Helena's guilt Valeria visits Miserrimus Dexter, who symbolises repressed aspects of Macallan. Dexter reveals the complexity and vulnerablity of masculine psychology. Although he initially appears an ideal type of masculinity, a closer look subverts this idea:

> I can only describe him as an unusually handsome man. A painter would have revelled in him as a model for St John. And a young girl, ignorant of what the oriental robe hid

> from view, would have said to herself the instant she looked at him, "Here is the hero of my dreams!" (13)

Valeria's comment on what lies beneath Dexter's robe alludes to his hidden deformity but also to the male sex organs. The figure of Dexter explores more fully the powerful sexual urges which Macallan's diary revealed to Valeria. It is, however, sexual desire which cannot be fulfilled. As Philip O'Neill notes in his discussion of the novel, Dexter is sexually incapable because of "his symbolic and literal lack of the phallus."(14) Dexter's deformity symbolises Macallan's repression of his sexuality. Mason asserts that to the Victorians sexual repression was a means of identifying the gentleman by differentiating him from lesser men: "This need to be distinguished from the people was surely the reason for the growth of prudishness ... Physical functions were something shared with the great mass of the people, so the privileged few who had to show they were different pretended that they did not exist."(15) Dexter recalls Turlington in "Miss or Mrs?" whose repressed sexual desires are expressed in the violence used against those who have thwarted him. Dexter has pseudo-violent fits in which he careers around in his wheelchair and identifies himself with powerful men, warning others of the dire consequences of disturbing him. Dexter's mental condition suggests the debilitating psychological consequences of conventional behaviour.

Valeria's narrative represents her detective work in terms of the standard discourse that a wife should serve her husband. Consequently,

despite her quest for independence, she remains dominated by masculine authority. This becomes evident through her relationship with Dexter. He perceives Valeria's willingness to establish Helena as a guilty party and creates a fictional account of the murder of Sara which Valeria accepts as reality because it confirms what she wishes to believe. Subjection of Valeria through the creation of narrative provides an outlet for some of Macallan/Dexter's frustrated sexual desires. Dexter's narrative is accompanied by bursts of repressed energy:

> Think of the situation. A woman with a hideous secret, hidden in her inmost soul: and another woman who knows of it - another woman who is bent, by fair means or foul, on dragging that secret into the light of day. What a struggle! What a plot for a novel! I am in a fever when I think of it. I am beside myself when I look into the future, and see Mrs Borgia-Beauly brought to her knees at last. Don't be alarmed! ... My brains are beginning to boil again in my head. I must take refuge in physical exercise. I must blow off the steam, or I shall explode in my pink jacket on the spot! (16)

Dexter's ecstasy is due to his realisation that Valeria's acceptance of his narrative gives him power over her and Helena. He revels in the idea of a woman "brought to her knees". Macallan/Dexter is aware that the power balance in his relationship with Valeria has altered significantly. Valeria approaches Dexter because she believes that he holds the key to the sub-text concealed in the Report of the trial. Macallan/Dexter deflects her investigation away from himself through a parallel process. He perceives the sub-text of Valeria's

narrative of Helena as a murderess, and that Valeria is fearful and jealous of her as a rival to Macallan's affections.

Macallan/Dexter's ability to perceive sub-textual meaning in Valeria's statements allows him to establish a pseudo-sexual relationship in which he is the dominant partner. When Valeria attempts to conceal from Dexter that she has uncovered evidence which contradicts his narrative of Helena as deviant, he prefaces his intention to re-convince her of its validity by telling her "I can read the unwritten part of your letter."(17) The dominance of Macallan/Dexter is symbolised by his relationship with his female servant, Ariel. Dexter describes Ariel as mentally incapable and dependent on his controlling influence: "I hold the key to that dormant intelligence."(18) Ariel's devotion to Dexter leaves her thralled and bitter towards all other women, whom she perceives as potential rivals. This mental limitation parallels Valeria's obsession with the idea of Helena as an immoral murderess. Dexter's sexual assault creates a crisis in the relationship, emphasising Valeria's passivity and Dexter's power.

As a response to the sexual assault Valeria allows Playmore to direct and interpret the detective discoveries which bring about the closure of the novel. Valeria realises that her relationship with Macallan/Dexter possesses disturbing aspects from which she must mentally withdraw. It proves impossible for Valeria to maintain an

idealised image of masculinity after the narrative of Helena's guilt collapses and she is sexually assaulted. Valeria surrenders authority to Playmore, the representative of the law, who takes over her detective work and creates various sub-narratives explaining events in terms of the ideology of the existing hegemony which Valeria initially intended to challenge. Valeria's situation recalls that of Marian Halcombe in The Woman in White who finds herself too ill to continue her narrative. Marian represents the assertive and unconventional part of the psyche of Laura/Marian. Her collapse into unconciousness and consequent loss of narrative control suggests that, like Valeria, Laura/Marian feels unable to assert herself because of what she has experienced. Fosco's entry into Marian's narrative also has sexual connotations. In both The Woman in White and The Law and the Lady the independent women are reduced to a state of dependence by sexual assault. The novels suggest that despite the new freedoms and privileges which women were gaining in late-Victorian society, sexuality remained a weapon with which men could subjugate and degrade them.

Playmore must deny the neurosis and "deviance" represented by Dexter in order to re-assert the established idea of the gentleman as a balanced and capable figure. He therefore argues that Dexter is physically and mentally degenerate in order to distance him from Macallan. Dexter is, he says, on the verge of physical and mental collapse:

> If he persists in his present way of life - or, in other words, if further mischief occurs to that sensitive nervous system his lapse into insanity must infallibly take place when the mischief has reached its culminating point. Without warning to himself or to others, the whole mental structure will give way; and, at a moment's notice, while he is acting as quietly or speaking as intelligently as at his best time, the man will drop (if I may use the expression) into madness or idiocy. In either case, when the catastrophe has happened, it is due only to his friends to add, that they can (as I believe) entertain no hope for his cure. The balance once lost, will be lost for life. (19)

Playmore implies that the degeneration which threatens Dexter's health is his own fault, the result of a lifestyle which does not conform to established norms. He has failed to maintain his health by indulging in "his present way of life." Aspects of Macallan's psychology symbolised by Dexter are depicted as the result of illness brought on by moral failure.

The fragmented manuscript written by Sara is a document which supports Playmore's view of Macallan. However, the surface narrative, which establishes his innocence is subverted by a level of sub-textual meaning which suggests that Sara's death was caused by a culpable loss of control on Macallan's part. This sub-text reveals the complexity of Macallan/Dexter's relationship with Sara. His sexual feelings have destructive results. Dexter, whose attempt to secure Sara's love is the stimulus to her suicide, symbolises sexual feelings. Sara's invalid status suggests that she cannot meet the sexual demands which Macallan/Dexter makes of her. Macallan's attraction to Helena Beauly is an outlet for unsatisfied sexual energy. The suicide of a

woman thus becomes the result of a process initiated by Macallan/Dexter's lack of self-control. He has allowed desires which, according to standard discourses, a gentleman was supposed to repress to affect his actions.

Playmore's letter, with its sub-narrative of Sara's confession, also sub-textually expresses Valeria's emotional dependence on Macallan's love. Valeria explains that she wishes the confession could be suppressed for Macallan's sake and "in mercy to the memory of his dear wife"[20] A degree of ambivalence is present here, since the narratives of Playmore and Sara reveal that she was not, in fact, dear to him. At this point in the narrative the figures of Sara and Valeria converge. Sara's confession, pieced together and prefaced by Playmore, illustrates the discourse on Valeria's relationship with her husband which he wishes her to accede to. Sara is an invalid who is unable to live without Macallan's love. Her narrative contains a sub-textual message that femininity is a state of emotional dependence and passivity. Valeria's desire to suppress Playmore's narrative suggests that she feels threatened by it. Although convinced by Playmore's discourse on psychology explaining the disturbing psychic tendencies represented by Dexter, Valeria remains disturbed by the established idea of passive femininity endorsed by Playmore. The surrendering of the letter to Valeria's son suggests that problematic aspects of Victorian sexual relationships are issues which will be left to a younger generation to explore.

The Law and the Lady is a psychic odyssey in which Valeria's idealised image of her husband gives way to an understanding of him as a complex and vulnerable being. Valeria attempts to create a narrative of events which will allow her to reassert an idealised image of Macallan by deflecting guilt onto Helena Beauly. Valeria begins to lose narrative power as she accepts Miserrimus Dexter's interpretation of events. The discovery that Dexter misled her confirms Valeria's growing belief that masculine discourses are flawed. The implications of her own discoveries prove threatening and she takes refuge in the established ideology represented by the law and its spokesman Playmore. Valeria becomes a passive figure as Playmore's detective work endorses repression as a moral responsibility and suggests that woemn are emotionally dependent upon men. The world-view which Playmore creates suggests that Valeria risks destroying her relationship with her husband if she attempts to understand him fully or to assert her independence. Although Valeria accepts the situation, the closure of the novel suggests that future generations will explore these problematic issues.

Footnotes

1. The Law and the Lady, Chatto, 1892, p. 15.
2. Judith Rowbotham, Good Girls Make Good Wives, Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, p. 48.
3. The Law and the Lady, p. 27.
4. Ibid., p. 29.
5. Ibid., pp. 166-167.
6. Philip Mason, The English Gentleman: The Rise and Fall of an Ideal, Deutsch, London, 1982, p. 147.
7. The Law and the Lady, p. 56.
8. Ibid., p. 53.
9. Ibid., p. 53.

10. Ibid., p. 89.
11. Ibid., p. 115.
12. Ibid., p. 115.
13. Ibid., p. 218.
14. Philip O'Neill, Wilkie Collins: Women, Property and Propriety, Macmillan, London, 1988, pp. 205-6.
15. Philip Mason, op. cit. p. 145.
16. The Law and the Lady, pp. 265-6.
17. Ibid., p. 278.
18. Ibid., p. 216.
19. Ibid., p. 290.
20. Ibid., p. 410.

(vii)

The Two Destinies (1876): social degeneration and the failure of neo-medieval ideology.

The Two Destinies is the narrative of an American who recalls a dinner party which he attended in London given by George Germaine. Although he is the overall narrator and editor-figure, the main body of the novel is formed by the written account of his life by George Germaine which is handed to the American to read. The American's contribution frames Germaine's written narrative, providing a brief foreword and an afterword which introduce and comment on the main body of the novel. The two narrators are highly contrasting figures. The American describes recent events from which he is largely detached. Germaine's account is a document written in the recent past by a man who had only just regained mental equilibrium. It recalls traumatic events which range in time from the very distant to the recent past.

Germaine's narrative also contains sub-narrative voices. Dame Dermody's Swedenborgian verbal description of the future contrasts with Germaine's narrative. While Germaine charts his response to events which appeared inexplicable and confusing, it purports to explain human life and is an ideological system which resolves his doubts. It is informed by a philosophy which perceives a pattern in

all events and purports to make sense of human life. Another sub-narrative is the letter from the Shetland doctor describing the death of Miss Dunross. This contrasts significantly with Dame Dermody's contribution. The letter depicts human life as characterised by suffering and waste, an experience after which death comes as a release. The doctor can perceive no spiritual purpose or meaning in Miss Dunross's life. The doctor's narrative of the recent past depicts human life as a battle against biological decay which is not informed by any universal moral order. Dame Dermody's narrative of the future suggests that human existence fulfils a spiritual purpose. Germaine's narrative is closed by the afterword provided by the American dinner-guest.

The main events of the novel may be briefly summarised as follows. The American tells Germaine that he is puzzled that all the wives of his fellow-guests provided excuses not to attend the dinner-party. Germaine produces a written account of his life prior to his marriage in order to explain why his wife is socially ostracised. This narrative forms the main body of the novel. The account describes the separation of Germaine and his childhood sweetheart Mary by Germaine's father. Later in life Germaine unknowingly meets Mary (who has become a "fallen woman") when he prevents her from committing suicide by drowning. She is unrecognisable to him because her physical appearance has changed and she has taken the name of the man whose mistress she was and calls herself Mrs Van Brandt. Germaine travels in the Shetland

Isles where he and his companions become lost in a mist and take shelter in the isolated home of Mr. Dunross. Detained there for some considerable time by an injury, Germaine tells the story of his life to Dunross's daughter. He remains drawn to the "fallen" Mary, despite ignorance of her identity and the strictures of Miss Dunross, who urges him to think only of his first sweetheart. Germaine finds Mary and intends to marry her. When she leaves him in order to save his reputation he suffers a nervous breakdown and travels to find her in order to kill himself and her. Mary recognises the green flag he has retained from childhood and realises that Germaine is her former sweetheart. Germaine overcomes his murderous intentions. The Two Destinies closes with a statement by the American that he considers that they were right to marry.

Germaine's narrative is initially dominated by the Swedenborgian philosophy of Mary's grandmother, Dame Dermody, who believes that life is predestined. She constructs a narrative in which Germaine and Mary are fated to be lifelong lovers. She also assures them that Germaine's father's attempts to control and order his environment will prove futile. He will, she says, be unable to prevent the operation of the supernatural forces which control the universe. He will only weaken himself by struggling against them. Germaine's father is told "you are a doomed man. I see the shadow of disaster, I see the seal of death, on your face."(1) Germaine's father represents the existing hegemony. His fate symbolises the decline of patriarchy.

Germaine describes his own life after the loss of Mary as partaking of the sense of decay suggested by Dame Dermody to be his father's fate. He finds it impossible to have faith in the existence of the supernatural and takes refuge in a destructive epicurianism. He describes his appearance as that of "a worn-out man more than double my age. I believed in nothing but what I could see, or taste, or feel. I lost all faith in humanity."[2] Mentally associating Mary with the idea of his spiritual regeneration, he feels that his life will have no meaning until he finds her. When Germaine meets the mature Mary, she cannot be reconciled with the image of ideal femininity which she had seemed to him to represent while adolescent. Germaine's failure to recognise her indicates his inability to perceive femininity as a complex state. The two Marys appear to be separate beings because he perceives women as either "ideal" or "fallen".

Germaine's visit to Mr Dunross's house introduces him to neo-medieval ideology. His accidental discovery of the house whilst lost in a mist on the Shetland Isles recalls the medieval literary convention of the traveller or knight beguiled into fairyland. Fairyland was often represented as a place surrounded in mist. There the knight would sometimes gain experience which would help him on his return to the ordinary world, as in the Middle English romance of <u>Sir Orfeo</u> in which the classical story of Orpheus is placed in a Celtic setting. In her analysis of the medieval ideal in Victorian literature entitled <u>A Dream of Order</u> (1971) Alice Chandler argues that

the medieval revival was primarily a response to the anxiety induced by rapid social change:

> The more the world changed, and the period of the medieval revival was an era of ever accelerating social transformation, the more the partly historical but basically mythical Middle Ages that had become a tradition in literature served to remind men of a Golden Age. The Middle Ages were idealised as a period of faith, order, joy, munificence, and creativity. Feudalism was seen as fatherhood, and the medieval world - to adopt Carlyle's phrase - was thought to be "godlike and my Father's." The Middle Ages became a metaphor for a specific social order and, somewhat more vaguely, for a metaphysically harmonious world view. (3)

Germaine's meeting with Mr. and Miss Dunross represents a growing interest in medievalism as an antidote to the sense of decay which he feels in himself and the disorder and suffering which he perceives in society. As descendants of an "ancient Northern lineage"[4] the Dunrosses represent a pre-industrial cultural alternative for Victorian England which Collins himself rejects.

Mr. Dunross and his daughter recall the fairy magicians and enchanters of medieval and neo-medieval literature. Dunross is the possessor of almost limitless knowledge. Known as "The Master of Books"[5], he is "generally believed to be one of the most learned men living."[6] Miss Dunross, "a shadow among shadows"[7] uses an ancient Welsh harp to charm a band of dancing cats, a spectacle Germaine describes as "weird, wild and ghostlike"[8]. Amongst the native Shetlanders both father and daughter are "worshipped as semi-divine

beings."[9] Victorian interest in fairy lore was prompted by the same combination of pride in the heritage of the past and anxiety about the industrial future which characterised the medieval revival generally. Carole Silver argues that "increased speculation on fairies and their lore was spurred first by nationalism and then by the threats of industrialism, urbanism, and materialism."[10] To the troubled Germaine his hosts represent a lost England, an understanding of which may serve to order his directionless life.

Miss Dunross induces Germaine to think of himself as a knight errant faithful to the memory of his ladylove. He agrees to her request that he always carry the flag which the younger Mary gave him. This recalls the convention of the champion who carries a keepsake from his lady. Miss Dunross urges Germaine to adopt the self-restraint which was fundamental to the Victorian idea of chivalry. He must "be patient"[11] and repress the sexual urges which attract him to the mature Mary.

Miss Dunross expresses an idea of femininity which conforms to established Victorian discourses. She associates feminine virtue with passivity, frailty and the absence of sexuality, preferring Germaine's memory of the young Mary (which suggests that she must have grown into "a frail and delicate woman"[12]) to his description of the mature Mary as possessing "health, strength and beauty"[13]. In the figure of Miss Dunross Collins explores the contradictory nature of the

Victorian ideal of femininity. Miss Dunross's domestic virtues suggest the ideal woman, "the guardian-angel of the house"[14]. The physical frailty of the respectable woman, evidence of her gentility, is magnified into a life-threatening illness and deformity which deny her a sexual life. Her conformity to established ideas of femininity destroy her health and sexuality. She is a parallel figure to the frail Laura Glyde in The Woman in White and the blind Lucilla Finch in Poor Miss Finch. The ill health of the ideal Victorian woman confines her within the domestic environment because she is too frail to leave it. Miss Dunross never leaves her home on account of the deformity which is a consequence of her illness. Similarly, Laura is confined in the asylum which symbolises the Victorian home, while Lucilla's blindness makes her dependent on the domestic environment with which she is familiar.

Germaine's vision of the mature Mary at the time when Miss Dunross attempts to make him promise to forget her symbolises his sexual desires. This recalls "The Dream-Woman", in which Raven's mother attempts to make him fearful of the sexually active Alicia. However, Germaine, who, unlike Raven, has progressed beyond the asexual world of childhood, (Raven's sexuality is criticised by his mother, Germaine's by a potential lover) acknowledges his sexuality. Although he leaves Dunross's house influenced by Miss Dunross's neo-medieval thinking, it is the mature Mary whom Germaine begins a quest to find and protect, an acknowledgement of his conviction that

"the senses have their share in all love between the sexes that is worthy of the name."[15]

Directed by the notion of himself as a knight errant figure, Germaine determines to help and protect Mary and to marry her whatever the opinion of society. Although she accepts his financial help, she refuses to marry him (on the grounds that it will destroy his social position) and absconds. Mary's flight induces crisis in Germaine because it undermines his idea of himself as a knight errant figure. The image of the crusading knight requires a passive woman in need of rescue. Mary's refusal to accede to his plans subverts the validity of Germaine's self-image. He is therefore no longer able to deny the sense of degeneration which he experienced before meeting Miss Dunross. Germaine represents himself as a purposeless being in a world without potential:

> Who would grieve for me, if my suicide was reported to-morrow? Of all living men, I had, perhaps, the smallest number of friends; the fewest duties to perform towards others; the least reason to hesitate at leaving a world which had no place in it for my ambition, no creature in it for my love. (16)

Germaine is described by the established medical authorites as decaying mentally and physically. His doctor claims that "his nerves have broken down; and his brain is necessarily affected by whatever affects his nerves"[17]. This diagnosis stimulates in Germaine feelings of self-doubt and alienation which aggravate his impulse

towards self-destruction. On the verge of drowning himself, a supernatural vision encourages him to seek Mary in Holland.

Germaine's disturbed psychological state results in violent behaviour. The idea of himself as a knight errant figure resurrects itself in a new form. Germaine becomes the knight as warrior. He becomes preoccupied with the idea of violence and creates purpose in his life through his intention to find Mary and kill both her and himself. Perversion of the neo-medieval ideal places his sense of involvement in a drift towards destruction within a pseudo-heroic structure.

The landscape through which Germaine travels is a counterpart of the degeneration he perceives in Victorian society and within himself. The towns of the Zider Zee are decaying and lifeless. Enkhuizen "might have been desolated by a pestilence, so empty and lifeless did it now appear."(18) Their history anticipates a possible future for England:

> For centuries their prosperity lasted, before the next in this mighty series of changes ripened and revealed itself. Isolated from the rest of the world, vain of themselves and their good fortune; careless of the march of progress in the nations round them, the inhabitants of the Zyder Zee cities sank into the fatal torpor of a secluded people. The few members of the population who still preserved the relics of their old energy emigrated; while the mass left behind witnessed resignedly the diminuition of their commerce and the decay of their institutions. As the years advanced to the nineteenth century, the population was reckoned by hundreds, where it had once been numbered by thousands. Trade disappeared, whole streets were left desolate. Harbours, once filled with shipping, were destroyed by the unresisted accumulation of sand. In our times, the decay of

> these once flourishing cities is so completely beyond remedy, that the next great change in contemplation is the draining of the now dangerous and useless tract of water, and the profitable cultivation of the reclaimed land by generations that are still to come. (19)

The community of the Zuider Zee, like Victorian England, became affluent and influential through overseas trade. This image of declining commercial power explores increasing anxiety at the state of international trade in late Victorian England as the favourable economic conditions which characterised the 1850s and 1860s began to deteriorate. The numbers of those who chose to emigrate steadily increased during the late Victorian period. Germaine's narrative parallels this trend with the loss of its most active citizens suffered by the community of the Zuider Zee. Through the parallel image of the Dutch cities England is seen as descending into a degenerate inactivity.

The future draining of the "useless tract of water" which was once the trading route which ensured the progress and prosperity of the cities suggests that the decay of Victorian society will be followed by new forms of social life and new kinds of prosperity. "Generations still to come" will find the reclaimed land "profitable." In the same way Germaine's walk around Enkhuizen leads him to discover that destruction of the quarter in which the wealthiest merchants live has led to the development of new forms of life. It is "a pasture-land of sweet-smelling grass."[20] Consequently, Germaine cannot comfort

himself by idealising the society of which he is a part by identifying its decline with the destruction of progress.

The tone of Germaine's narrative becomes increasingly melodramatic throughout his journey in Holland as he represents himself as a parallel figure to the villains of popular melodrama. The presence of Mary's child heightens this parallel. In the melodramas performed in the cheapest Victorian theatres, known as penny gaffs, heroines pursued by villains were often accompanied by children in order to heighten pathos. The reconciliation of Germaine and Mary also partakes of the moral simplicity of melodrama. The ease with which the violence is defused is unconvincing. Although Germaine overtly argues that his narrative illustrates the truth of Swedenborgian philosophy, the reader recognises that its moral values reflect the simplistic world of popular Victorian melodrama. The universal moral order which Germaine's narrative purports to evidence is exposed as the construct of a culturally bankrupt psyche.

The Two Destinies explores the retreat of the late Victorian mind from fears that Victorian society and its values were undergoing a process of degeneration. Germaine's narrative is an attempt to construct an ideology explaining his life and directing it towards positive ends. He imagines himself as a neo-medieval knight errant figure, an idea which fails him when Mary declines to accept the passive role which such a discourse demands of women. Germaine's

narrative takes refuge in the moral simplicities of melodrama. His inability to construct a narrative which expresses a convincing moral argument suggests the ideological bankruptcy of his age.

Footnotes

1. The Two Destinies, Chatto, London, 1913. p. 37.
2. Ibid., p. 50.
3. Alice Chandler, A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature, Nebraska U. P., 1971, p. 1.
4. The Two Destinies, p. 163.
5. Ibid., p. 163.
6. Ibid., p. 163.
7. Ibid., p. 178.
8. Ibid., p. 181.
9. Ibid., p. 164.
10. Carole Silver, "Fairies" in Sally Mitchell: A Victorian Encyclopedia, Yale U. P., 1989, p. 282.
11. The Two Destinies, p. 186.
12. Ibid., p. 188.
13. Ibid., p. 188.
14. Ibid., p. 183.
15. Ibid., p. 193.
16. Ibid., pp. 288-89.
17. Ibid., pp. 277-78.
18. Ibid., p. 305.
19. Ibid., pp. 301-2.
20. Ibid., p. 307.

(ix)

The Haunted Hotel (1879): "a greater clarity than daylight"; feminine supernatural narrative and the subversion of masculine authority.

The Haunted Hotel is an omniscient narrative, punctuated later by the manuscript of a play written by the Countess Narona. The Countess is also a sub-narrator within the omniscient narrative itself. Whilst in Wybrow's surgery she provides a verbal account of events preceding the main action of the novel which enables her to assure him of her belief that the supernatural will influence the future. The Countess's voice also intrudes into that of the omniscient narrator in the form of her play. It does not simply punctuate the main narrative as a whole entity but is interwoven with it. The omniscient narrative describes how Henry Westwick is presented with the play by the Countess and begins to read it. At this point the manuscript replaces the main narrative in correspondence with Westwick's reading. As Westwick interrupts his reading to attend to events in the hotel, the main narrative resumes. Westwick begins to read again and the manuscript again replaces the main narrative voice. The Countess's written sub-narrative is broken off again as Westwick's disgust at its contents induces him finally to abandon his reading. The play invades the main narrative again in fragmentary form when Henry's brother, Lord Montbarry, reads passages from it aloud. The omniscient narrator closes the story with a postcript which tells of

events shortly after the main action of the novel and suggests that the responsibility for explaining the mystery surrounding the apparently haunted hotel lies with the reader.

The main events of the novel may be briefly summarised as follows. The Countess explains to Doctor Wybrow that she believes her agitated mental state has its source in the certainty that Agnes Lockwood, who was jilted by the Countess's lover, Lord Montbarry, will have a fatal influence over her. Agnes feels that there remains a supernatural connection between herself and Montbarry, although his brother Henry Westwick disagrees and wishes to marry her himself. Montbarry's death is reported soon after his marriage. Agnes visits a new hotel in Venice, unaware that it was once the home of Montbarry, the Countess and her brother, the experimental chemist Baron Rivar.

Relatives of Montbarry staying at the hotel complain of offensive odours and the Countess and Agnes see a ghostly severed head. The Countess, who appears increasingly ill, claims that she is short of money and approaches Montbarry's playwright brother, Francis Westwick, in the hope that he will accept her work. When the Countess intimates that Agnes should investigate a fireplace in the hotel, Henry Westwick does so and finds a severed head concealed in a cavity within. He reads the Countess's play and becomes convinced that it describes the murder of Montbarry by herself and Rivar. The play suggests that the crime was undetected because doctors who pronounced Montbarry's death

to be due to natural causes were examining Ferrari, an ailing courier recommended to Montbarry by Agnes as a favour to his wife. The Countess dies and the discovery of the severed head is suppressed. Agnes marries Henry.

The opening of The Haunted Hotel suggests the importance of narrative in the use and maintenance of authority. The Countess visits Wybrow in order to gain an opinion on her health, but it is she who provides an explanation of her physical and mental condition by creating narratives of her past and future which depict Agnes as "ordained to have a fatal influence"(1) over her. The Countess's appearance recalls Miss Dunross in The Two Destinies who was dying of a wasting disease. Miss Dunross's conformity to established notions of femininity is reflected in her relationship with her doctor, whose advice she follows and who writes to Germaine explaining the circumstances of her death. Despite her appearance, the Countess's relationship with Wybrow reveals the challenge she presents to the Victorian idea of womanhood. The relationship of patient and doctor in Victorian England generally established femininity as the subject of masculine discourse. Londa Scheibinger argues that medical science was a mechanism used to define women as passive and exclude them from power:

> The "nature" and capacities of women were vigorously investigated by a scientific community from which women (and the feminine) were almost entirely absent. As a consequence women had little opportunity to employ the methods of science in order to revise or refute the emerging claims

> about the nature of women. As science gained social prestige in the course of the nineteenth century, those who could not base their arguments on scientific evidence were put at a severe disadvantage in social debate. Thus emerged a paradox central to the history of modern science: women (and what women value) have been largely excluded from science, and the results of science often have been used to justify their continued exclusion. (2)

Wybrow's unspoken assumption prior to examining the Countess is that she is suffering from mental incapacity: "Was the new patient only a hypochondriacal woman, whose malady was a disordered stomach and whose misfortune was a weak brain?"(3) This description recalls women in Collins's fiction whose unhappy domestic lives result in mentally debilitating nervous anxiety such as that of Mrs Sherwin in Basil, Laura Glyde in The Woman in White, Mrs Wragge in No Name and Hester Dethridge in Man and Wife. Collins's fiction depicts the mental weakness these characters suffer from as a result of the repressive Victorian domestic environment. Wybrow's discourse, however, recalls Playmore's comments on the mental collapse of Dexter in The Law and the Lady. In each case the sufferer of mental illness is considered to be at fault. Playmore argues that Dexter has become ill because of his unhealthy habits while Wybrow suggests that the Countess's condition is a result of causeless worry. Elaine Showalter sees the prevalence of the idea that women were prone to such psychosomatic disorders as an attempt to deny women independence:

> During the decades from 1870 to 1910, middle-class women were beginning to organize on behalf of higher education, entrance to the professions, and political rights. Simultaneously, the female nervous disorders of anorexia

> nervosa, hysteria, and neurasthenia became epidemic; and the Darwinian "nerve specialist" arose to dictate proper feminine behaviour outside the asylum as well as in, to differentiate treatments for "nervous" women of various class backgrounds, and to oppose women's efforts to change the conditions of their lives. (4)

The Countess paraphrases standard medical ideas but prefaces them with a challenging discourse suggesting that her malady might have a supernatural cause: "what am I - a demon who has seen the avenging angel? or only a poor mad woman, misled by the delusion of a deranged mind?"[5] The Countess's allusion to the supernatural implies that her case exceeds the limits of science. She goes on to suggest that Victorian psychiatry is a structure through which masculine authority is exercised rather than a means of exploring the problematic. In response to Wybrow's enquiry as to why she did not go to a doctor specialising in mental maladies, she says: "for the very reason that he is a specialist: he has the fatal habit of judging everybody by lines and rules of his own laying down. I come to you because my case is outside of all lines and rules"[6].

Wybrow experiences moral uncertainty after meeting the Countess. She subverts his sense of the world as governed by definable scientific laws. Her narrative of her part in the division of Montbarry and Agnes also depicts female sexuality as a powerful force. The Countess's sexuality has a notable effect on Wybrow. He is attracted to her and orders his servant to follow her home. In order to exorcise her subversive effect he represents her and himself in

terms of a narrative which establishes the Countess as exercising a noxious and corrupting influence:

> Had the woman left an infection of wickedness in the house, and had he caught it? What devil had possessed him to degrade himself in the eyes of his own servant? He had behaved infamously - he had asked an honest man, a man who had served him faithfully for years to turn spy! (7)

In this way Wybrow displaces sexual guilt onto the Countess. In the same way the narratives of the men in the doctor's club portraying the Countess as the disreputable and unattractive woman who "deluded"[8] Montbarry into marriage divert blame for jilting Agnes from Montbarry onto the Countess and deny her sexual power. The men at the club are thus enabled to repress their own attraction to "deviant" femininity. The narrative voice asserts that "the very members of the club whom the Countess (in spite of her personal disadvantages) could have most easily fascinated, if she had thought it worth her while, were the members who wondered most loudly at Montbarry's choice of a wife."[9]

It is not only the Countess who tends to subvert masculine authority. Initially Agnes thwarts the plans of the men who attempt to direct her life. She refuses to marry Henry Westwick or anyone else because she is sustained by her belief in a lasting bond between herself and Montbarry. Agnes tells Henry of her feelings about her former lover:

> But is the tie that once bound us, completely broken? Am I as entirely parted from the good and evil fortune of his life as if we had never met and never loved? What do you think, Henry? I can hardly believe it. (10)

The narrative voice represents Agnes's views as simplistic and essentially feminine. Describing Agnes's anger on discovering that Henry intends to make money out of the house in which his brother died the narrative voice asserts that Henry was incapable of understanding "this purely sentimental view of a plain matter of business."(11) The narrator attempts to evade the problematic question of Henry's moral incapacity by representing Agnes's vision as extremely limited. As a woman her perception is bounded by the experience of the domestic sphere which is dominated by the emotional life. She can only understand sentiment and is unable to comprehend the complex economic structures of the modern world. In this way the narrative voice attempts to limit and devalue the threatening feminine world-view which argues that structures exist in nature which Victorian science cannot explain.

As The Haunted Hotel develops, the supernatural vision of the Countess and Agnes begins to supplant apparent objective reality. As Jennifer Uglow notes in her introduction to The Virago Book of Victorian Ghost Stories (1988), the form of the ghost story tended to liberate feminine narrative since it explored the subjective and the psychic. Female authors benefited because "the tricks of the unreal allow them to move into that deeper realm, where dream has greater

clarity than light."[12] The Countess's narratives become fundamental to the structure of The Haunted Hotel. Plot developments are increasingly dominated by her belief in the existence of a supernatural connection between herself and Agnes. Various guests have paranormal experiences, culminating in the apparition of a ghostly severed head.

Although the majority of Victorian ghost stories were written by women, authors often used the device of a masculine narrator. Uglow notes that women's narratives were generally considered unreliable:

> A simple explanation lies in the demands of the form itself: to be believed ghost stories must be told by down-to-earth people whose reports we trust. The nineteenth century notoriously labelled women as "nervous", "hysterical", "over-emotional" - hence the solid businessman, the London barrister, the paterfamilias. (13)

As the narrative of The Haunted Hotel develops, this normative structure is subverted. Supernatural experiences are described by women whose narratives are placed in opposition to and increasingly subvert, the discourses of apparently reliable masculine figures. Although the new Lord Montbarry dismisses the Countess as a "crazy creature"[14], her narrative is endorsed by the experience of Agnes and other guests at the hotel. The discovery of Montbarry's severed head parallels the ghostly head seen by Agnes and the Countess and substantiates the narrative of violence and horror formed by the Countess's play. Women's narratives begin to direct Westwick's

actions as the supernatural experiences of Agnes and other guests induce him to investigate the truth of the Countess's statements.

The Countess's narrative converges with that of the novel as a whole as the script of her play replaces the voice of the omniscient narrator. The Countess's representation of the death of Montbarry subtextually expresses her belief in the weakness and future collapse of the existing masculine hegemony. The murder of Montbarry represents the destruction of masculine authority and privilege. Whilst he is alive the Countess is forced to acknowledge that the man she considers a "titled ruffian"(15) is "master in this house"(16). However, the murder not only reduces him to "a heap of ashes"(17) but converges his identity and that of his servant.

The existing hegemony must reassert itself by re-integrating the Countess's subversive words into a masculine narrative, thereby explaining and limiting them. The presence of the new Lord Montbarry serves to deny the validity of feminine narrative by resurrecting the figure of authority destroyed in the Countess's narrative. Montbarry denies the validity of the supernatural narratives, re-structuring them within the discourse of mental incapacity which Wybrow initially found to be challenged by the Countess. He says: "I declare them all to be sheer delusions!"(18) Montbarry represents feminine narratives as false and, by implication, asserts his own discourse to be stable

and authoritative. By telling Henry that "I believe Agnes will marry you"[19] he suggests that women will submit to masculine authority.

Although the narrator denies women's ability to destroy the established hegemony, he acknowledges that social change in late Victorian England is allowing women greater intellectual freedom. Agnes submits to masculine authority by marrying Henry and allowing him to conceal from her what he knows of Montbarry's death. However, the narrator concedes that many women no longer accept such intellectual constraints. Other men's wives "trained in the modern school of morals and manners"[20] find Agnes "rather an old-fashioned person."[21]

The Haunted Hotel explores the importance of narrative in the formation and maintenance of power. The Countess and Agnes create various supernatural narratives subversive of masculine authority. Initially these narratives argue the existence of structures in nature which masculine discourses cannot explain. They culminate in the realisation of the fragility and approaching collapse of the masculine hegemony.

Footnotes

1. The Haunted Hotel, Dover, New York, 1982, p. 8.
2. Londa Schiebinger, "Skeletons in the Closet" in Catherine Gallagher, The Making of the Modern Body, California U.P., 1987, p. 43.
3. The Haunted Hotel, p. 5.
4. Elaine Showalter, The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980, Virago, London, 1985, p. 18.
5. The Haunted Hotel, p. 9.
6. Ibid., p. 5.

7. Ibid., p. 10.
8. Ibid., p. 12.
9. Ibid., p. 13.
10. Ibid., p. 18.
11. Ibid., p. 53.
12. Jennifer Uglow, introduction, The Virago Book of Victorian Ghost Stories (Ed. Richard Dalby), Virago, London, 1988, p. xiv.
13. Ibid., p. xvi.
14. The Haunted Hotel, p. 123.
15. Ibid., p. 117.
16. Ibid., p. 117.
17. Ibid., p. 124.
18. Ibid., p. 125.

(x)

The Fallen Leaves (1879): Christian chivalry and the problem of femininity.

The Fallen Leaves is cast in the form of an omniscient narrative. The main narrative is prefaced by a prologue which describes incidents which occur many years before the main events of the novel. Amelius Goldenheart, the young American of English descent who is the central character, also creates a verbal sub-narrative within that of the omniscient narrator. The main body of the novel begins at a point in time after Goldenheart has been expelled from Tadmor, the Christian Socialist community in which he lived. He creates a verbal narrative of events surrounding his expulsion, which, while overtly praising the community, actually reveals its shortcomings.

The prologue describes the disappearance of an illegitimate girl shortly after birth. She is stolen and sold by her father, Farnaby, who afterwards ensures that he becomes indispensable to the child's mother whose father owns a profitable business. The main part of the novel begins by focusing on Goldenheart's description of his life at Tadmor whilst travelling aboard ship with his friend, Rufus Dingwell. He explains that he was expelled because he formed a romantic attachment to Miss Mellicent, a fellow member of the community. He returns to England and becomes engaged to Farnaby's niece, Regina.

Farnaby's unhappy wife, Emma, begs Goldenheart to find her lost child. Whilst helping a destitute prostitute called Simple Sally, Goldenheart perceives that she is Emma's daughter through recognition of a characteristic deformity of the foot. Farnaby leaves for Paris with Regina, terrified for the effect on his reputation of Emma's discovery that he sold their child. Sally is briefly reunited with her mother who is on her deathbed having taken poison. Goldenheart marries her and Regina marries Melton, Farnaby's secretary and business adviser.

Goldenheart recalls George Germaine in The Two Destinies who attempts to give meaning to his life by envisaging himself as a knight errant figure. Goldenheart is a Christian version of the knight errant. Girouard argues that the Christian Socialist movement was informed by neo-medieval ideology:

> The behaviour of the Christian Socialists can in fact reasonably be described as chivalrous. Not only did they come to the support of the underdog in causes which brought them no worldly rewards, gave them considerable unpopularity amongst most of their class, and in some cases lost them a great deal of money or actively harmed their careers: in addition most of them were alive to the concept of chivalry, and regularly used its metaphors. (1)

Although the Christian Socialist movement incorporated many different political opinions of varying degrees of radicalism, its members were united in their opposition to the commercial system as it operated in Victorian England. The concept of chivalry offered an idea of moral behaviour which looked back to a fundamentally paternalist

past in which feudal authority rather than the cash nexus formed the basis of relations between social classes. Influenced by Carlyle's attacks on Utilitarianism and laissez-faire economics, they perceived unregulated commerce and the rise in social status of those who profited from it as evidence of the decline of English society.

Goldenheart begins his quest to "regenerate society"[2] by giving lectures to promote his belief that Victorian society is undergoing a process of decay and degeneration. The commercial system is at the heart of the decaying process, devaluing everything affected by it. Goldenheart argues that those who consider the Victorian economy to be evidence of progress create a fiction in order to protect their own interests:

> You know what respectable names are associated, year after year, with the falsification of accounts, and the merciless ruin of thousands on thousands of victims. You know how our poor Indian customer finds his cotton-print dress a sham that falls to pieces; how the savage that deals honestly with us for his weapon finds his gun a delusion that bursts; how the half-starved needlewoman who buys her reel of thread finds printed on the label a false statement of the number of yards that she buys; you know that, in the markets of Europe, foreign goods are fast taking the place of English goods, because the foreigner is the more honest manufacturer of the two - and, lastly, you know, what is worse than all, that these cruel and wicked deceptions, and many more like them, are regarded, on the highest commercial authority, as "forms of competition" and justifiable proceedings in trade. Do you believe in the honourable accumulation of wealth by men who hold such opinions and perpetrate such impostures as these? I don't! Do you find any brighter and purer prospect when you look down from the man who deceives you and me on the great scale, to the man who deceives us on the small? I don't! Everything we eat, drink and wear is a more or less adulterated commodity; and that very adulteration is sold to us by the tradesmen at such outrageous prices, that we are

> obliged to protect ourselves on the Socialist principle, by setting up co-operative shops of our own. (3)

Farnaby is one of the "respectable names" referred to by Goldenheart. Having risen from humble beginnings and amassed a fortune in trade, he enjoys an "unblemished reputation ... built up by the self-seeking hypocrisy of a lifetime"(4). What Farnaby lacks, and Goldenheart possesses, is the generosity and courtesy towards those lower than himself in the social scale which was an important part of chivalric ideology.

The contrasting figures of Goldenheart and Farnaby reveal that in Victorian England the ideal of the gentleman has become debased. In The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel (1981) Robin Gilmour shows that "gentlemanliness" was not simply a question of wealth or social position but was an "interdependence of morals and manners"(5). Farnaby assumes the manner but lacks the values of a "gentleman". The conflict between Goldenheart and Farnaby parallels that between Turlington and Linzie in "Miss or Mrs?". Like Linzie, Goldenheart's name and his behaviour associate him with the figure of the most idealised version of the "gentleman", the knight errant. Like Turlington, Farnaby represents himself as a gentleman and is accepted as such by Victorian society. The status of "gentleman" enables him to conceal his crimes. Turlington's social position makes it difficult for Linzie to prove that he murdered a sailor. Similarly, Farnaby's gentlemanly status allows him to conceal the fact

that he sold his child. At the inquest on Emma's death his agent Melton deflects a question on marital relations in the Farnaby household by asserting that "Mr. Farnaby's high character and position in the commercial world spoke for themselves: the restraints of a gentleman guided him in his relations with his wife"(6). This statement conceals Farnaby's true motives. His silence is motivated by fear that the sale of his illegitimate child will be discovered. Farnaby's moral inadequacy is exposed by his failure to perceive that his secret is safe with Goldenheart, the true gentleman-figure. He is in "ignorance of the compassionate silence which an honourable man preserves when a woman's reputation is at his mercy"(7).

Farnaby is accepted as a gentleman because in late-Victorian England morality has become merely a perfunctory mechanism with which to acquire social credibility. Goldenheart claims that virtue has decayed into formality:

> We have too many forms in this country. The virtue of hospitality, for instance, seems to have become a form in England. In America, when a new acquaintence says "Come in and see me," he means it. When he says it here, in nine cases out of ten he looks unaffectedly astonished if you are fool enough to take him at his word. (8)

The morally degenerate, such as Farnaby, thus become successful. Public life consequently becomes "one wide field of corruption and abuse, and reveals a callous and shocking insensibility on the part of

the nation at large to the spectacle of its own demoralization and disgrace."[9]

Because the appearance of respectability is essential as a legitimizer of power in Victorian England, Farnaby is determined to sacrifice anything in order to achieve it. His child becomes a commodity sold to ensure that there are no obstacles to the comfortable life he desires: having disposed of the baby, he says: "Emma's reputation is safe enough now! When we are married, we mustn't have a love-child in the way of our prospects in life."[10] In this way corruption is revealed to have penetrated the family, traditionally regarded as a haven from the hardships of the commercial world. Nancy Fix Anderson argues that the family was idealised because the Victorians were acutely aware of the problematic nature of the world outside it:

> The institution of the family assumed new emotional importance in the nineteenth century as a retreat from the stress and turmoil of the industrial world. In a society rapidly transformed by industrialization and urbanization, the family was idealised, especially by the middle classes, as a centre of stability amidst instability and uncertainty. (11)

In The Fallen Leaves the family has been penetrated by the corruption which characterises the outside world. However, because the family played such an important role in Victorian ideas of normality and respectability, it becomes essential for Farnaby to construct a

model family. He therefore pretends to be on good terms with Emma, who despises him, and has Regina live with them in order to mask the childless state of the household. Farnaby is acutely aware of the fragility of the structure he has built up and consequently covets Goldenheart as a friend and suitor to Regina because the Goldenhearts are one of "the old families of England."[12] An alliance with a noble family will further legitimise his social position. Regina, like Sally, is a commodity whose disposal will gain Farnaby greater respectability.

Although Christian Socialism is represented by Goldenheart as the answer to England's social problems, his relationships with women undermine its ideology. Goldenheart's narrative of his life at Tadmor, although overtly praising the community, in reality reveals its shortcomings. Goldenheart has been exiled from Tadmor for kissing Miss Millicent. Although Goldenheart defends Christian socialism, his narrative shows that it cannot accommodate sexuality.

Goldenheart's relationship with Sally brings this problem more sharply into focus. Philip O'Neill perceives a level of sub-textual meaning beneath the novel's surface representation of Goldenheart's relationship with Sally. Commenting on Goldenheart's remembrance of Sally after having his proposal of marriage rejected by Regina, O'Neill rejects the view expressed by the narrative voice, that this was merely a matter of chance:

> It is not a matter of chance and it is clear that Goldenheart's desire for this angel with her childish questions is not altogether honourable. Why else does he fear a meeting with Dingwell, the forthright American who always speaks his mind? The chances are that Dingwell will see through the conventional mask which Goldenheart is adopting, the expedient use of Victorian moral rhetoric. (13)

Rejected by Regina, Goldenheart's thoughts turn to sex and he thinks longingly of Sally. Sally therefore becomes, as O'Neill notes, "a threat to his moral standing"(14), a temptation to extra-marital sex. Goldenheart consequently represents Sally as passive and sexless in order to deny the implications of his attraction to her. She is therefore described as "artless"(15), "patient"(16), and "childish"(17).

Goldenheart's attitude to Sally recalls that of the narrator of <u>The New Magdalen</u> to his creation Mercy Merrick. Both Goldenheart and the narrator of <u>The New Magdalen</u> are attracted to the figure of the prostitute because she is sexually experienced. However, in order to conform to Victorian moral codes, this covertly attractive sexuality must be denied. Consequently, Goldenheart and the narrator of the earlier novel represent the prositute as an ideal being. However, Goldenheart has less narrative power than the narrator of <u>The New Magdalen</u> and his relationship to the prostitute is more problematic. The narrator represents himself as detached from the fate of his creation. He is therefore at ease in depicting her body as mature, healthy and biologically superior to that of her rival

since he, as narrator-figure, is only covertly identified with her lover and can therefore represent himself as a detached observer. Goldenheart is not at ease describing Sally's body because he is aware that he hopes to gain sexual pleasure from it. He therefore suggests that she is child-like and not sexually mature in order to deny his own desires.

In order to fulfill his sexual desires and maintain his moral stance Goldenheart must marry Sally. He can only do so, however, if he can construct an ideology justifying his actions. Sally's profession makes representation of her as a worthy candidate for a respectable marriage unconvincing. As Lynda Snead notes, "the condition of dependency was believed to be a natural and gratifying component of respectable femininity"[18]. A prostitute had potential to gain the monetary independence from masculinity impossible for respectable women and was consequently an extremely threatening figure. Sally is described by both Goldenheart and the narrative voice in terms of the conventional ideal of womanhood: she is "a saint or an angel"[19], a description which becomes possible because she is passive and child-like to the point of imbecility. This creates tensions within the text. Goldenheart lost patience with Regina because she refused to think and act independently of her guardian Farnaby, yet he accepts a relationship with Sally who is a considerably more dependent figure.

Goldenheart is conscious that idealisation of Sally does not justify marrying her. It is significant that at this point in time Goldenheart chooses to accept Emma Farnaby's idea that her lost child might be found again. When she initially tells him of her lost daughter he is doubtful that she will ever be found and considers it a fantasy with which Mrs Farnaby copes with her unhappiness. He later allows her narrative to dominate his own perception of life in order to ach ve his own fantasy. The conviction that Sally is the Farnabys' baby offers him an ideological justification for re-integrating her into respectable society through marriage. Goldenheart is able to represent himself as a chivalrous figure, enabling a lady in distress to return to her rightful station in life. However, the improbable, fairy-tale revelation that Sally is Farnaby's daughter is revealed as a mechanism legitimising Goldenheart's sexual desires.

The Fallen Leaves explores the corruption of Victorian England. Goldenheart, a Christian knight errant figure, creates discourses detailing the forms this corruption takes. However, Goldenheart's ideas become a source of anxiety to himself and the narrator-figure when related to the question of women in Victorian society. The closure of the narrative therefore becomes increasingly simplistic and takes refuge in a conventional idea of femininity. The novel's sub-text reveals that simplistic closure reflects the inadequacy of established discourses.

Footnotes

1. Mark Girouard, The Return to Camelot, Yale U.P. 1978, p. 190.
2. The Fallen Leaves, Chatto, London, 1890, p. 286.
3. Ibid., pp. 155-56.
4. Ibid., p. 286.
5. Robin Gilmour, The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel, Allen, London, 1981, p. 12.
6. The Fallen Leaves, p. 283.
7. Ibid., p. 284.
8. Ibid., p. 71.
9. Ibid., p. 156.
10. Ibid., p. 3.
11. Sally Mitchell, A Victorian Encyclopedia, Yale U.P. 1989, p. 285.
12. The Fallen Leaves, p. 68.
13. Philip O'Neill, Wilkie Collins: Women, Property and Propriety, Macmillan, London, 1988, p. 66.
14. Ibid., p. 67.
15. The Fallen Leaves, p. 225.
16. Ibid., p. 225.
17. Ibid., p. 225.
18. Lynda Snead, Myths of Sexuality, Blackwell, Oxford, 1988, p. 29.
19. The Fallen Leaves, p. 186.

Chapter Four: Novels of the 1880s

(i)

Crime in the Novels of the 1880s

Influential Victorian ideologies were being heavily undermined by the 1880s. The economic crisis which began in the mid-1870s lasted until 1896. During the Great Depression, as it became known, sectors of the economy did continue to develop but at a much slower pace than before. The economy entered a phase of stagnation compared to the previous tremendous advance which had made Britain the first industrial nation. The enduring idea of a depression reflects a fundamental alteration in prevalent Victorian attitudes. Changes in the social order began to seem inevitable as the middle-classes contemplated the erosion of their economic and political power. Socialism began to be a significant force in British politics in the 1880s. Parliamentary reform had begun the empowerment of the working classes in the 1870s. The foundation of the Social Democratic Federation in 1881 was followed by the establishment of the Socialist League and the Fabian Society in 1884. These developments signified that the dynamic of the labour movement was gaining pace. Those who lived through the 1880s experienced a feeling of approaching crisis in which revolution semed imminent. Sporadic unemployment consequent on the downturn in the economy, combined with the labour movement's new awareness of its own power, induced strikes and rioting. In London shop windows were smashed and there were large

demonstrations. The later part of the century after 1885 produced some of the most intense unrest of the Victorian period. Irish Republicanism was a growing movement and the return of a Tory government increased Fenian terrorism in 1886. The mood of violence culminated on "Bloody Sunday" in 1887 when a large group of demonstrators clashed with police and the army in Trafalgar Square. Socialism's preoccupation with far-reaching social change augmented the apocalyptic mood which often characterises the closing years of a century.

The realisation that a new epoch was approaching was reflected throughout social and cultural life. A mood of aestheticism which mocked middle-class pretensions and which was to grow increasingly influential as the year 1900 approached began in the 1880s. People felt themselves to be in an era of change and expressed this by ascribing the epithet "new" to social, political and artistic developments. The rise of the idea of the "new woman" in the 1880s indicates that female independence, while still regarded as something of an oddity, was becoming more acceptable. (George Gissing's novel about female independence, The Odd Women, was published in 1893.) The reasons for this were partly economic. Women out-numbered and out-lived men. Increasing numbers of middle-class women began to earn their own livings as their families were forced to acknowledge that a suitable husband who could keep them in comfort might not be found. The movement to allow women high-status jobs was gaining support

and writers, artists and sociologists began to publicise the fact that many middle-class women were being exploited in low-income occupations such as governessing and needlework. Josephine Butler publicly contested the validity of the ideal of passive womanhood, claiming that refusal to allow women to work left those abandoned by their husbands or otherwise destitute no resource but prostitution.

The figure of the "new woman" provoked anxiety despite the fact that many of the occupations entered into by women were not a challenge to the established feminine ideal but a result of its influence. The pioneering women who became teachers, nurses or voluntary charity workers envisaged their employment as an extension of woman's domestic role. Florence Nightingale, Miss Amelia Beale, founder of the North London Collegiate School and Mary Carpenter, founder of the Ragged Schools Movement, all held conservative ideas on the question of female emancipation, believing that they were, like women who stayed at home, offering care, comfort and a positive moral example to others. The pervasiveness of the feminine ideal had played a significant part in the process which would culminate in its destruction.

Social Darwinism remained an influential ideology and was characterised by a new pessimism. The 1880s saw the birth of the new science of eugenics. Eugenics experts claimed to be able to produce a better human species by selective breeding and expressed pessimistic

ideas about those who who did not conform to the norms of Victorian society. Earlier in the nineteenth century Malthus had argued that the population of Britain would eventually exceed food supplies. His influence can be seen in the building of the workhouses which followed the 1832 Poor Law Ammendment Act and the lunatic asylums. Segregation of the sexes was an important aspect of life in these insitutions. Those who managed them hoped to prevent their inmates from breeding. The 1880s saw a new development of such thinking. The unemployed, insane and deviant were increasingly viewed as groups from whom no positive social contribution could be expected because of their negative heredity. It was considered desirable to restrict their ability to reproduce and therefore improve Victorian society as a whole. The rise of eugenics marked the retreat of more humanitarian attitudes to the disadvantaged. Early and mid-Victorian social policy makers had striven to reform criminals and the allegedly "feckless" unemployed and to cure the insane. By the 1880s the belief that negative biological heredity presented a significant threat to the survival of the race now created an ideological climate in which such efforts began to appear increasingly wasteful.

The period from 1880 to 1900 was also characterised by the expansion of imperial power. Between 1880 and the first World war in 1914 the western European states, America and Japan divided much of the rest of the world between themselves as colonies. Britain expanded most in this area, appropriating large parts of Africa and

consolidating its hold on India which had developed through the commercial power of the East India company. Imperialism provided an environment in which ideologies challenged by social change in England still appeared valid. Social Darwinist ideologies which identified white middle-class masculinity as physically and morally superior to other forms of humanity seemed less problematic among people of other races who could easily be dismissed as savages than in England. In the 1880s women and the socially disadvantaged were increasingly arguing against being designated inferior and their success was reflected in social change which worked to their advantage. For the middle-classes India and the colonies provided new career opportunites in an unproblematic environment. The expansion of imperial power could be represented as a civilising and Christianising mission, while the idea of imperial patriotism created an image of vicarious glory which could be used in order to manipulate the rebellious working-classes into loyalty.

Collins's novels of the 1880s are centrally concerned with the effects of social change on the middle-class home. The novels challenge the Victorian domestic ideal by depicting households which reflect the disarray in the outside world, rather than provide a retreat from it. Although critics have often identified Collins's supposed decline as a novelist as the result of an increasingly evangelising tendency which led him to campaign against social abuses, such topics are primarily examined in terms of their relationship to

power relations in the home. Heart and Science (1883) attracted criticism as an example of Collins's obsession with social abuses. However, vivisection is a metaphor for the quest for and abuse of power. Mrs Gallilee's scientific career is paralleled by her machinations to preserve her position of dominance in her home and prevent the marriage of her son. The figure of the vivisectionist, Doctor Benjulia, unable to reconcile the desire for self-aggrandisement which impells him to sacrifice others to his plans with his emotions, explores the psychological impact of the attempt to retain power on men in late-Victorian England.

In the novels of the 1870s Victorian men are often depicted as achievers outside the domestic sphere. Geoffrey Delamayne in Man and Wife is a champion athlete, Herr Gross in Poor Miss Finch a renowned doctor and Julian Gray in The New Magdalen a famous preacher. In The Fallen Leaves Goldenheart devotes his energies to an attempt to achieve social justice, Baron Rivar in The Haunted Hotel spends all his income on chemical experiments which he hopes will enable him to transform base metal into gold and the men in "The Frozen Deep" risk their lives in an expedition to reach the North Pole. The central interest of the novels of the 1870s is the extent to which masculine dominance is subverted. The deaths of Delamayne and Rivar, the failure of the Arctic expedition and of Gross's operation and the retirement of Gray and Goldenheart from missionary work and their retreat into domestic life reflects the decay of the masculine hegemony. The

domestic environment is the crucible in which the Victorian construct of masculine potency is examined and found to be inadequate. For instance, in Poor Miss Finch the failure of the operation which Gross performs parallels the inadequacy of Oscar/Nugent, while in Man and Wife and The Law and the Lady marriage enables Anne Sylvester and Valeria Macallan to discover the brutality and psychic trauma concealed beneath the surface personalities of men they had previously worshipped as heroes.

In the novels of the 1880s the decline of masculine power remains a central theme. However, subversion of constructs of masculine potency is no longer centrally dependent upon the contrast between the representation of Victorian man as powerful and capable achiever and the psychic inadequacy which is exposed in the domestic sphere. The expansion of woman's role outside the home is shown to be challenging the established power relations of the sexes. The majority of men's achievements outside the home are overshadowed by those of the women around them who are finding employment and other activities increasingly open to them.

Jezebel's Daughter (1880), although an account of events in the 1830s, depicts the changing role of women in the 1880s. The narrator, David Glenney, is an employee of his business-woman aunt, Mrs Wagner. His memoirs of a time in which the employment of middle-class women was a rare phenomenon serve to expose his anxieties concerning the

increasing independence of women in the 1880s: "After a lapse of half a century, my master's heresies of the year 1828 have become the orthodox principles of the year 1878."(1) Ovid Vere in Heart and Science (1883) is, despite his discoveries, less respected by the scientific community than his mother. Alban Morris in "I Say No" (1884) gives up his unexceptional career as a teacher in order to pursue Emily Brown. The church is the only career in which men retain dominance. Victorian religious groups, both Catholic and Protestant, remained firmly opposed to female emancipation. The priest Romayne in The Black Robe and the clergyman Mirabel in "I Say No" are the only male characters who have successful careers.

The Legacy of Cain (1889) is the most effective exploration of the decline of masculine power in the professional sphere. The older generation of men who have enjoyed successful careers is represented by the prison governor and Mr Gracedieu. The governor retires and Gracedieu becomes mentally disordered, while Phillip Dunboyne, representative of the younger generation of men, does not work and is concerned only with his domestic life. By contrast, Gracedieu's daughter, Helena, chafes at the limitations of her role in the domestic sphere and associates it with the development of criminal tendencies within herself. The closure of The Legacy of Cain, in which Helena founds a rational religion based on the principle of the superiority of women over men, illustrates the pervasiveness of female

emancipation and suggests that religious institutions will ultimately experience its effects.

Male figures in the novels of the 1880s are unable to develop successful careers because their energies are devoted to the attempt to maintain order in their own homes. The failed patriarch Mr Gracedieu, who becomes mentally disordered and unable to continue working for the church as he contemplates the collapse of his family, is one of Collins's most effective images of this. Parallel figures are Mr. Keller in Jezebel's Daughter, whose paternal authority is undermined by the influence of Madame Fontaine, Lewis Romayne in The Black Robe and Herbert Linley in The Evil Genius, both of whom abandon their families when they find themselves unable to resolve the difficulties presented by their domestic lives. These novels reflect the climate of social change which characterised the 1880s. Since the Victorians regarded the home as a microcosm of the rest of society, the failure of masculine power in the home was seen as an indicator of the approaching collapse of the existing hegemony.

The domestic crucible is a more volatile and dangerous environment than in the novels of the 1870s. Its problems are less easily contained. In the novels of the 1870s, especially Poor Miss Finch, The Law and the Lady, Man and Wife and The Two Destinies, although the limitations and horrors of life within the home are exposed, its position as the central insitution of Victorian life is not seriously

threatened. In Man and Wife Sir Patrick Lundie finds that he cannot protect Anne Sylvester from her husband. Generally eloquent and persuasive, Lundie finds that he is unable to counter Delamayne's argument that, however brutally he may behave, the authority conferred by his role in the domestic sphere cannot be challenged:

> "The law tells her to go with her husband," he said. "The law forbids you to part Man and Wife."
>
> True. Absolutely, undeniably true. The law sanctioned the sacrifice of her as unanswerably as it had sanctioned the sacrifice of her mother before her. (2)

Valeria Macallan uses her abilities in a manner which challenges the Victorian stereotype of femininity but only in order that she may re-establish herself in the traditional domestic role of wife and mother. Lucilla/Pratolungo's independent and unconventional characteristics are ultimately supressed when she comes to accept that the traditional role of domestic companion to a man is her only chance to achieve happiness in Victorian England. However, in the novels of the 1880s many masculine figures are unable to order their domestic lives and homes are broken up, as in Heart and Science, The Legacy of Cain, The Evil Genius (1886) and The Black Robe.

In the novels of the 1880s some women challenge the Victorian ideal of passive womanhood by finding alternatives to an unsatisfactory domestic life. Catherine Linley files for divorce in The Evil Genius while others such as Mrs Wagner in Jezebel's Daughter,

Mrs Gallilee in Heart and Science and Helena Gracedieu in The Legacy of Cain live independently of men and find fulfillment in careers. Collins also makes complex and ambivalent use of stereotypes. Figures such as the wicked woman or "Jezebel", the "fallen woman" and the "new woman" merge with one another and with the figure of the ideal woman. Syd in The Evil Genius is the Jezebel-figure alluded to in the title (the evil genius of the family who seduces the husband), a "fallen woman" and yet also a type of ideal femininity. She is a development of less successful figures in the fiction of the 1870s such as Mercy Merrick in The New Magdalen and Mary Van Brandt in The Two Destinies, who are both "fallen" and ideal women. Fusion of stereotypes reveals the inadequacy of standard representations of women. The boundaries between stereotypes cannot be maintained.

However, it is significant that stereotypes are not completely subverted. The most powerful women of the novels of the 1880s are different from many of their counterparts in the earlier fiction because they utilise rather than challenge stereotypes. In The Woman in White Hartright is struck by the way in which Marian defies the Victorian ideal of womanhood by appearing at once both masculine and feminine:

> Never was the old conventional maxim, that nature cannot err, more flatly contradicted - never was the fair promise of a lovely figure more strangely and startlingly belied by the face and head that crowned it ... To see such a face as this set on shoulders that a sculptor would have longed to

> model - to be charmed by the modest graces of action through which the symmetrical limbs betrayed their beauty when they moved, and then to be almost repelled by the masculine form and masculine look of the features in which the perfectly shaped figure ended - was to feel a sensation oddly akin to the helpless discomfort familiar to us all in sleep, when we recognise yet cannot reconcile the anomolies and contradictions of a dream. (3)

Valeria Macallan in The Law and the Lady also challenges the stereotype since she is both devoted wife and independent detective-figure. The device of using two figures to represent a woman such as Lucilla/Pratolungo in Poor Miss Finch and Agnes/Narona in The Haunted Hotel allows Collins to show that women are more complex than deviant or ideal stereotypes suggest.

In Collins's best fiction of the 1880s stereotypes of women are not only challenged but also affirmed as devices which empower women. In Jezebel's Daughter the stereotype of the "Jezebel" is used in a complex and ambivalent way. Glenney is initially critical of local people who have depicted Madame Fontaine as a "Jezebel-figure". He argues that her bad reputation is due to "the love of scandal at Wurzburg and the envy of Madame Fontaine's superior attractions felt among the ladies."[4] However, his narrative begins to reveal that she does conform to the stereotype. On the one hand this development represents the wish-fulfillment of Glenney who, writing at a time when women are achieving independence, uses his narrative to re-construct notions of femininity which identify activity and ambition in women as

evidence of deviance. He consequently depicts Madame Fontaine as evil and idealises the passive Minna.

However, as the narrative develops it begins to express Glenney's anxieties rather than provide the wish-fulfillment he desires. Although the title of the novel suggests that Minna will be the most important figure, Madame Fontaine increasingly dominates the narrative. Her closeness to the stereotype of the "Jezebel" ensures that she represents a greater threat to the masculine hegemony than parallel figures in the earlier fiction because she does not possess their psychological vulnerability. Unlike Miss Gwilt in Armadale and the Countess in The Haunted Hotel, her psychological torments do not result in a need for love or in illness. Her psychological experiences only serve to stimulate the ambition which dominates her character. Within the fiction the deviant stereotype becomes empowering, just as women in the 1880s found that the Victorian ideal of womanhood provided a justification for their involvement in caring professions. Consequently, Madame Fontaine depicts herself in terms of the stereotype in her diary, identifying her desires with those of a notorious female poisoner.

Helena Gracedieu in The Legacy of Cain is a parallel figure. She also uses her diary to explore the development of criminal tendencies within herself, producing a narrative in which she depicts herself as both Jezebel-figure and "new woman". Helena and Madame Fontaine are

developments of the figure of the Countess in The Haunted Hotel whose play depicts herself as a Jezebel-figure. The Countess's narrative functions as a challenge to masculine discourses which represent her as a mentally disordered and incapable person who exhibits "ignorant belief in herself."(5) Similarly, the narratives of Madame Fontaine and Helena subvert masculine constructs of femininity by employing stereotypes from such discourses in order to depict crime as a metaphor for the attack on the masculine hegemony.

Feminine deviance is a mechanism with which Collins both exploits and challenges fears of degeneration which characterised scientific thinking in the 1880s. In Heart and Science the masculine narrator attempts to perpetuate the ideal of femininity in the depiction of his women characters. This anomaly is exposed in the closure of the novel in which the heroine is weak and will never regain her strength. Her wedding is a rather unhappy affair whereas Mrs Gallilee, the deviant and criminal intellectual woman, is vital and happy and enjoys a flourishing career. Collins explores tensions between discourses of femininity and of eugenics. The Evil Genius reflects the challenge to established ideology posed by the social explorations of William Acton, who discovered that many prostitutes led happy and prosperous lives. His work appeared shocking and unrealistic to the Victorians when Prostitution Considered in its Moral Social and Sanitary Aspects was first published in 1857. However, by the 1880s it had been widely read and was beginning to be considered received wisdom. The challenge

to the idea of the "fallen woman" also subverted social Darwinist thinking, since her life was perceived as a model of the process of degeneration.

Stereotypical representation of the life of the "fallen woman" in art and literature depicted her as progressing from adultery to degradation and suicide. The model fate of the "fallen woman" rendered her less threatening because her death minimised and detracted from her ability to bear children. Eugenic theory suggested that sexual deviance was inheritable. Augustus Egg's painting Past and Present, a triptych which depicts an adulteress and her daughters, reflects fears of hereditary sexual deviance. In The Evil Genius a visitor to the home of Syd and Linley discovers that it is Linley who is undergoing physical decay while Syd remains vigorous. Syd does not consider committing suicide when she discovers that Linley no longer loves her. At the close of the novel Syd is living in the house of the social reformer Bennydeck. Their happy domestic existence suggests that Syd will marry him. Syd's devotion to Linley's child suggests that she will herself bear children. The "fallen woman" has become integrated into middle-class society.

The novel's closure explores and subverts late-Victorian fears of moral degeneration. The Evil Genius is the narrative of a masculine narrator-figure whose acceptance of established discourses is undermined by his sexual desires and by the development of his own

narrative. Like the narrators of The New Magdalen and No Name, he is attracted to the "fallen woman" who is his creation and he therefore depicts her as an admirable figure. It consequently becomes difficult for him to perceive Syd as deviant and degenerate. It is also evident that much of the blame for the break-up of the home rests with Linley. Such thinking is highly threatening to the masculine hegemony of which the narrator-figure is a part. Blame is therefore increasingly displaced onto other female figures within the novel. The development of narrative reveals that changes are occurring in Victorian society which make established ideas of feminine deviance difficult to sustain.

The Legacy of Cain makes complex and ambivalent use of social Darwinist thinking. On the one hand the development of the novel's plot as revealed in the Governor's narrative challenges eugenic theory as it becomes clear that criminal tendencies are not confined to Eunice, who is the daughter of a murderess, since Gracedieu attempts to kill the prison Governor and Helena tries to poison Dunboyne. However, the Governor's narrative also suggests that Helena's criminality may be the result of negative heredity since she resembles her spiteful mother and her behaviour parallels that of her father. This view is challenged by Helena's narrative which argues that the oppressive environment of the middle-class home is the cause of deviance. The competing voices of The Legacy of Cain create an atmosphere of uncertainty which reflects the mood of the 1880s. Two

professionals, the doctor and the Governor, debate eugenic issues at the start of the novel and each makes a prediction concerning Eunice's future. The failure of each prediction suggests that established discourses endorsed by the masculine hegemony are becoming outmoded.

Collins's last two novels, The Legacy of Cain and Blind Love (1890), reflect the atmosphere of antagonism and violence which characterised the closing years of the 1880s. The hegemony is depicted as dangerously weak and threatened by violence from those who desire reform. The hegemony is symbolised by two aristocratic relations, Norland and Mountjoy. The Fenians assassinate one and the other is left dangerously weak after having contracted an illness while visiting the bedside of a sick Fenian terrorist. Blind Love and The Legacy of Cain suggest that the hegemony's exclusion of others from legitimate power mechanisms ensures that change will be accompanied by violence. In Blind Love the disadvantage experienced by the Catholics in Ireland is paralleled by the experience of women. Norland does not confide in his wife, Iris, nor does he question his own actions. He refuses to listen to her concerns over his friendship with Vimpany, who encourages Norland to murder another man in order to pass the dead man off as Norland and thereby claim a large amount of life insurance. Norland acknowledges to Iris that he has taken part in a swindle but does not tell her of the murder. When she discovers that he has killed a man, she feels obliged to separate herself from him forever. The novel's sub-text suggests that if Norland had allowed

Iris to share his intellectual and emotional life she would have dissuaded him from committing murder and their final separation could have been averted. Just as the Fenians are unable to seek change through legitimate means, Iris is unable to avoid degradation in marriage with Norland and must therefore leave him. Similarly, in The Legacy of Cain Helena Gracedieu perceives no legitimate escape from her repressive life with her father except through marriage to Dunboyne. When this proves impossible she no longer has any incentive to conform to accepted moral codes and contemplates revenge through murdering Dunboyne, a symbolic attack upon the masculine hegemony. The novel's sub-text suggests that if opportunities for women are not widened, women will reject and subvert the existing social system and ultimately bring about its destruction. Crime is a metaphor for the increased empowerment of the disadvantaged.

In the novels of the 1880s Collins explores themes which reflect the preoccupations of a changing Victorian society. The novels of this later period do not lose the breadth of perspective and complexity which characterises Collins's best fiction. He does not, as many critics have suggested, allow himself to be limited by his concern about particular social problems. Social themes enable Collins to explore ideological changes which were occurring in late Victorian society. He is thereby able to explore new aspects of his most enduring theme, the role of women in a society in which the masculine hegemony is being increasingly subverted.

Footnotes

1. Jezebel's Daughter, Chatto, London, 1910, p. 5.
2. Man and Wife, Dover, New York, 1983, p. 200.
3. The Woman in White, Oxford, 1987, p. 25.
4. Jezebel's Daughter, p. 86.
5. The Haunted Hotel, Dover, New York, 1982, p. 83.

(ii)

Jezebel's Daughter (1880): female emancipation and masculine anxiety; the "Jezebel-figure" as a means of confirming standard discourses.

Jezebel's Daughter is the narrative of David Glenney, an employee and nephew of Mrs Wagner, who manages a business bequeathed her by her husband. Writing in the late 1870s, Glenney recalls events of the 1830s. Glenney's narrative is punctuated by the contributions of sub-narrators. The first of these is the voice of Mrs Wagner's dead husband expressed in the form of his will. The will describes how his wife was such an invaluable help to him in his business that she became the inevitable person to succeed him as head of the firm. Another documentary sub-narrative is created by the correspondence of Madame Fontaine which depicts her unhappy early life with her husband and explores her own violent potential. These sub-narratives address the question of female emancipation in very different ways. The will argues that women are capable beings and should therefore be allowed to enter the sphere of work. Madame Fontaine's letters explore the matter from an obverse perspective. They reveal that women trapped within the repressive domestic environment will seek criminal means to exercise power. Their gender denies them the exercise of power by legitimate means.

In the later part of Jezebel's Daughter a new section of the

novel marks a significant change in the quality of Glenney's narrative. Although he remains the narrator, he acknowledges that he was not present at the events described in this part of the novel. The early part of his narrative is formed by Glenney's recollections of his own experience and observations. Glenney suggests that the information provided in this section is reliable by telling the reader that it was gleaned from the statements of others who were present at the time. Like Hartright in The Woman in White, Glenney hopes to establish his narrative as an accurate reflection of reality by claiming it to be a collation of eye-witness accounts. However, Glenney's claim is unconvincing. Although confrontations between Madame Fontaine and characters such as Mrs Wagner and the doctor could reasonably have been described to Glenney on his return to Germany, it seems improbable that the most important plot-developments could have been explained by those who took part in them. Much of the plot-determining action in this section of the novel occurs when Madame Fontaine and Jack Straw, the lunatic, are acting alone or conversing with one another. Since Madame Fontaine falls ill and dies without regaining consciousness, she cannot have told Glenney of what happened. It would also be unrealistic to suggest that the simple-minded Jack would have been able to explain the complicated plot developments focusing on the supplanting of poison for medicine, particularly since it is his ignorance of Madame Fontaine's machinations which allows her plans to be thwarted. The reader is aware that the narrative Glenney represents as an accurate reflection

of reality must be dependent on assumption, supposition or wish-fulfilment.

This section of Glenney's account is punctuated by the verbal sub-narrative of Schwartz, the attendant of the "Deadhouse". Schwartz tells of a former Deadhouse attendant who killed himself and is supposed to haunt the vicinity. It expresses the ability of the past, in the shape of the dead attendant, to influence the present. Schwartz's ghostly narrative forces Madame Fontaine to realise that she cannot put her crimes behind her and go on to live a peaceful life with her daughter. It both stimulates and symbolises Madame Fontaine's psychic breakdown. Schwartz's tale both parallels and reveals the limitations of Glenney's narrative. Glenney's is also a narrative of the past but, unlike the attendant's, it cannot influence the future. Although Glenney may criticise independent women and praise passivity in his narrative about the past, the reader is aware that he is writing at a time when women were gaining independence through work and education. This section ends with the awakening of Mrs Wagner and the collapse of Madame Fontaine. A new section begins with Glenney's return to the town and the novel is closed.

The main plot developments of <u>Jezebel's Daughter</u> may be summarised as follows. Whilst in Germany Glenney encounters Minna, beloved of Fritz Keller, the son of Mrs Wagner's business partner. She lives with her mother Madame Fontaine, widow of a Professor of

medicine. Keller is opposed to the match on account of Madame Fontaine's bad reputation as a debtor. Madame Fontaine encourages the affections of Keller's friend Engelmann in order to present herself to Keller and influence him to agree to the marriage. When this plan fails, she uses poison from her dead husband's medicine chest to make Keller severely ill. She then nurses him to health again and he agrees to the marriage. Madame Fontaine's debts fall due before the date of the wedding. She hopes to placate her creditors until her daughter is safely married by stealing money from the firm. Mrs Wagner discovers Madame Fontaine's theft and gives her a small amount of time to pay back the money. Madame Fontaine poisons Mrs Wagner, who is pronounced dead and taken to the "Deadhouse" - where corpses are left for a few days as a safeguard should they prove merely comatose.

Madame Fontaine, gripped by guilt and fear, follows the corpse to the Deadhouse. There she finds Jack Straw, a lunatic and former servant of Madame Fontaine's husband whom Mrs Wagner has taken into her care. Straw is convinced that Mrs Wagner will awake. He has stolen poison from Madame Fontaine and secretly administered it to her, believing it to be miraculous medicine. The two poisons interact and the comatose Mrs Wagner awakes. Madame Fontaine drinks what she believes is wine in order to steady her nerves. It proves to be poison which she gave Straw in the hope of removing a witness to the existence of the medicine chest. Madame Fontaine dies and Glenney and

the local doctor agree to conceal her crimes and the circumstances of her death.

Although Madame Fontaine is denoted by Glenney the "Jezebel" of the title, the full meaning of the phrase is more problematic. As his narrative develops Glenney unwittingly reveals that this stereotype is inadequate to express the complex personalities of individual women. This process operates through a parallel between Madame Fontaine and Mrs Wagner. Mrs Wagner's passive manner belies her inner strength and tenacity:

> Under ordinary circumstances, she was a singularly gentle, unobtrusive creature. But let the occasion call for it, and the reserves of resoloution showed themselves in her instantly. In all my experience I have never met with such a firm woman, when she was once roused. (1)

Her husband's will is the stimulus which brings these submerged characteristics to the surface of Mrs Wagner's personality. This response recalls Valeria in The Law and the Lady whose reading of an account of her husband's trial for murder encourages her to begin detective work. The will creates a discourse legitimising the employment of women in a professional capacity:

> During my long illness, my dear wife has acted as my secretary and representative. She has made herself so throughly well acquainted with the system on which I have conducted my business, that she is the fittest person to succeed me. I not only prove the fullness of my trust in her and the sincerity of my gratitude towards her, but I really act in the best interests of the firm of which I am the head, when I hereby appoint my widow as my sole successor in

> the business, with all the powers and privileges appertaining thereto. (2)

The will is a sub-narrative which addresses the problematic question of women and work. In Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood (1980) Joan N. Burstyn notes that although standard Victorian discourses defined women as unsuitable for work, in fact, women of the lower and middle classes provided the workforce for many such poorly paid occupations as labour in textile factories, governessing and needlework. Discourses of femininity protected masculine interests by debarring women from remunerative work. Burstyn describes Victorian England as "a society that forbade women to train for professional occupations but welcomed them as cheap labour in unskilled ones"[3] and notes that the opposition of the opening of new fields to women "was particularly vehement when women demanded an end to their exclusion from high status jobs."[4] Mrs Wagner's husband acknowledges that all the evidence suggests that his wife has an aptitude for work and concludes that she is therefore entitled to the high status work brings. She will have "all the powers and privileges appertaining thereto."

The nature of Mrs Wagner's authority over her masculine employees is illustrated by her relationship with Jack Straw. Although Jack is seen as sub-normal in Glenney's narrative, a sub-textual level of meaning operates in which Jack dramatises the insecurities and inadequacies of other masculine characters. Straw's assertion that

"there was a time when my hands were the maddest things about me. They used to turn against me and tear my hair and flesh"(5) echoes Fritz's description of his mental state whilst apart from Minna: "My position is maddening; my head whirls when I think of it. If I go to Wurzburg, my father will never speak to me again. If I stay here I shall cut my throat."(6) Similarly, Jack's emotional dependency on Mrs Wagner appears extreme because expressed in simplistic and physical terms, as when he prostrates himself at her feet. However, his situation closely parallels that of Engelmann, who becomes so emotionally dependent on Madame Fontaine that he dies when she refuses to marry him. Mrs Wagner's entry into the locked room of the asylum in which Jack lives suggests her understanding of masculine thinking. The source of Mrs Wagner's power over Jack is her ability to understand his psychology. She gives him firm orders but also allows him small responsibilities, a situation which parallels Glenney's position.

Mrs Wagner sends Glenney abroad where he meets Madame Fontaine and Minna. This development of Glenney's narrative can be seen as a response to the anxiety caused by the figure of Mrs Wagner. As the novel develops, his narrative challenges the sub-narrative of the will by expressing anxiety at the prospect of women achieving authority, status and independence, as they increasingly did in late-Victorian England. Minna and her mother reaffirm established discourses of femininity challenged by the figure of Mrs Wagner. The passive, timid and attractive Minna is a type of the feminine ideal. Madame Fontaine

recalls standard notions of female deviance. In this way Glenney's narrative operates as a moral fable expressing the dangers inherent in allowing women to assert themselves. Glenney's narrative uses the figure of Madame Fontaine to suggest that powerful, independent femininity is dangerous.

However, although the novel's title asserts the importance of the idealised figure of Minna, it is Madame Fontaine who begins to dominate Glenney's recollection of past events. The narrative with which he hoped to limit femininity within established discourses begins to explore his own anxieties. Minna and her mother are both sexually attractive to Glenney and others, a circumstance which creates new complications for him in establishing his attitude to women. The narrative reveals Glenney's increasing concern at feminine sexual power. Mrs Wagner, initial focus of masculine anxiety, is represented as dominating others through self-assertion and intelligence, not sexuality. Glenney notes that Madame Fontaine has subjected Engelmann to her will through her sexuality: "Madame Fontaine knew perfectly well how to assert her authority over him - she gave him another of those tender looks which had already become the charm of his life"[7]. She is a parallel figure to Mrs Lecount in <u>No Name</u>, who is also both matronly and sexually powerful: "There are not many men who could have observed Mrs Lecount entirely from the Platonic point of view - lads in their teens would have found her irresistible ... this Venus of the autumn period of female life"[8].

Madame Fontaine exerts a similar power. Glenney feels himself affected by "the indescribable witchery of her manner."[9]

Masculine characters perceive Madame Fontaine in terms of the Victorian ideal of womanhood which associates physical beauty with passivity and virtue. Engelmann describes her in conventional terms as an "angel"[10]. At Keller's bedside she appears to Glenney as the epitome of the feminine ideal:

> She was the very ideal of the nurse with fine feelings and tender hands, contemplated by Doctor Dormann when I had last seen him. Any stranger looking into the room at that moment would have said, "What a charming picture! What a devoted wife!" (11)

The figure of Madame Fontaine reveals that the feminine ideal could sometimes empower women rather than render them passive. Masculine characters accede to Madame Fontaine's plans because she appears to them to be the perfect woman. Glenney's narrative expresses his anxiety at this covert form of power. He depicts Madame Fontaine as a dangerous being who is usurping masculine power and directing events in the domestic environment. He argues that she possesses a violent and deviant repressed nature which emerges in ever more dangerous form whenever her plans are thwarted: "the fierce passions hidden deep in the woman's nature"[12] are occasionally glimpsed beneath her surface personality. Glenney's description of Madame Fontaine recalls his comments about Mrs Wagner, whose inner reserves

of determination and fortitude emerge from beneath her apparently conventional surface personality.

Madame Fontaine's letters form a sub-narrative which expresses an alternative, yet parallel view of womens' experience. She writes to a friend of her unhappy marriage:

> The one consideration of my child is all that restrains me from leaving my husband, never to see him again. As it is, I must live a life of deceit, and feign respect and regard for a man I despise with my whole heart.
>
> Power - oh, if I had the power to make the fury that consumes me felt! The curse of our sex is its helplessness. Every day, Julie, the conviction grows on me that I shall end badly. Who among us knows the capacity for wickedness that lies dormant in our natures, until the fatal event comes and calls it forth. (13)

Because of her gender, Madame Fontaine has no legitimate method of structuring her life and she can only endure the unhappiness of her marriage and suppress her feelings. The violence described by Glenney as increasingly evident in Madame Fontaine's behaviour is revealed as the inevitable result of repressive social circumstances.

Madame Fontaine's correspondence illustrates her psychological development. She begins to understand the motivation of a murderess. Like Hester Dethridge in Man and Wife, whose written confession reveals that she has murdered the husband from whom she cannot otherwise escape, Madame Fontaine's written narrative depicts crime as

a means by which women can empower themselves and reject their passive role:

> The foolish people in Wurzburg are at a loss to find motives for some of the murders she committed, and try to get out of the difficulty by declaring that she must have been a homicidal maniac. This is not my explanation. I can understand the murderess becoming morally intoxicated with the sense of her own tremendous power. A mere human creature - only a woman, Julie! - armed with the means of secretly dealing death around her, wherever she goes - meeting with strangers who displease her, looking at them quietly, and saying to herself, "I doom you to die, before you are a day older" - is there no explanation, here, of some of Zwanziger's poisonings which are incomprehensible to commonplace minds. (14)

Madame Fontaine's letters explore the essential difference between the situation of Mrs Wagner and Madame Fontaine. They are placed in contrasting social situations of opportunity and disadvantage. Mrs Wagner's business provides her with a legitimate channel for exercising her authority, and she therefore has no need to exploit her sexuality. Glenney notes that "she never seemed to be conscious of her personal advantages."[15] Madame Fontaine has no means of influence other than her sexuality. In order to ensure the success of her schemes she ostensibly conforms to established discourses on femininity.

The relationship of Mrs Wagner and Madame Fontaine recalls that of Grace Roseberry and Mercy Merrick in The New Magdalen. Just as Mercy represents sexuality submerged beneath the surface personality of Grace, Madame Fontaine symbolises sexual and violent

tendencies repressed within Mrs Wagner. The relationship of Mrs Wagner/Madame Fontaine with Mina also creates a disturbing echo of that of Madame Pratolungo and Lucilla Finch in Poor Miss Finch. Mrs Wagner's independence and assertiveness and Madame Fontaine's devotion to Mina, who, like Lucilla, is an example of the type of the ideal woman, are characteristics which recall Madame Pratolungo. However, Mrs Wagner/Madame Fontaine is a far more disturbing figure than Pratolungo. Mrs Wagner has power and status, something Madame Pratolungo envisages but does not achieve. Similarly, although Madame Praotungo is assertive, she lacks the sexual power and violent tendencies of Madame Fontaine. The contrast between Madame Pratolungo and Mrs Wagner/Madame Fontaine reflects the degree to which women had empowered themselves by the 1880s. The independent woman is now far more threatening to the hegemony than in the earlier fiction.

Glenney's anxiety now reaches a critical point, as he can no longer maintain the construct of the difference between respectable and deviant femininity. The figures of Mrs Wagner and Madame Fontaine converge. The confrontation between the two women over Madame Fontaine's theft of money is a psychomachia in which surface and suppressed elements of one individual battle for supremacy. It recalls the discussion between Marian Halcombe and Laura Glyde in The Woman in White, in which Marian, representing the repressed, assertive part of the passive Laura, urges her to defy her husband in order to preserve her independence. The psychomachia is more disturbing in

Jezebel's Daughter, because the woman in question is no longer the victim of crime but the perpetrator of it. The result of the moral crisis symbolised by this confrontation is that "deviant" aspects of Mrs Wagner/Madame Fontaine's psychology become increasingly dominant. This is suggested by Mrs Wagner's agreement to Madame Fontaine's request that she conceal the theft for some time and later by Madame Fontaine's poisoning of Mrs Wagner.

The closing stages of *Jezebel's Daughter* subvert the influence of Madame Fontaine. Her repressed aggression increasingly surfaces, making her a sexually unattractive figure. She consequently loses her ability to influence men. Although the closure of *Jezebel's Daughter* seems overtly to condemn female "deviance", a further level of meaning subverts this idea. The novel's sub-text suggests that Glenney escapes moral complexity through fantasy. Glenney initially seems a detached observer. However, as the novel develops, Glenney's narrativebecomes increasingly subjective. The convergence of Glenney and Jack suggests that Glenney becomes overwhelmed by his anxieties about women and retreats into fantasy. After the departure of Glenney, Jack becomes central to the development of the plot. The most important plot developments, such as the movements of the poison and the events in the Deadhouse, are presented within Glenney's narrative according to his idea of how Jack perceived them. The perspective of the novel changes as the figures of Jack and Glenney converge.

The climactic scene in the Deadhouse precipitates a psychological crisis for Madame Fontaine in which her self-control breaks down. She is gripped by terror as she listens to narratives of ghosts and suicides told by Jack and Schwartz. These incidents are parts of a process of self-realisation for Madame Fontaine in which she accepts her "deviance" and guilt. The revival of Mrs Wagner suggests the psychological re-stabilisation of Mrs Wagner/Madame Fontaine. On awakening, she exhibits the characteristics of the ideal of passive femininity represented in standard discourses. Glenney's narrative describes her as passive and gentle:

> On the pale face the stillness of repose was barely ruffled yet. The eyes alone were conscious of returning life. They looked out on the room, softly surprised and perplexed - no more. They looked downwards: the lips trembled sweetly into a smile. (16)

From this point Mrs Wagner is never represented as an active figure. Although Glenney's narrative imparts the information that she has regained her health, she no longer plays an active role in the development of events. Her last significant appearance is as an invalid. The narrative also suggests that her intellect has been impaired. Mrs Wagner's intellect and perception gave her formidable powers over others. She now appears "surprised and perplexed". Glenney confirms this impression by his allusion to the absence of any other mental processes. Mrs Wagner presents "no more" response than

surprise. With Madame Fontaine dead and Mrs Wagner passive, established discourses of femininity are re-asserted.

Jezebel's Daughter uses the device of the narrator to explore masculine insecurities. Glenney's narrative is a response to a changing Victorian society in which women were gaining greater independence. His representation of Minna and Madame Fontaine re-asserts established ideas of femininity which were being challenged by social change in the 1880s. However, Glenney's narrative reveals the problematic nature of the constructs he intended to endorse. He responds by taking refuge in fantasy in order to assert a moral vision affirming established discourses. The novel's closure overtly argues that the existing masculine hegemony is no longer under threat. Sub-textually, the close of Glenney's narrative expresses his anxiety at the empowerment of women.

Jezebel's Daughter develops the idea of masculine psychic crisis brought to the fore in The Two Destinies, focusing more intensely on the theme of female deviance. Madame Fontaine is a development of the figure of Miss Gwilt in Armadale. Like Miss Gwilt, Madame Fontaine is a sexually and intellectually powerful criminal, and like Miss Gwilt, she must be destroyed in order to protect masculine peace of mind. However, Madame Fontaine is considerably more threatening than Miss Gwilt. Miss Gwilt sacrifices herself because of her love for Midwinter. Madame Fontaine is untroubled by feelings of affection for

the opposite sex. Although Collins was to suspend exploration of the figure of the murderess in his novels until 1888, Madame Fontaine marks a significant development in the evolution of Helena Gracedieu, the unemotional and intellectual murderess of The Legacy of Cain, one of Collins's most convincing and disturbing figures.

Footnotes

1. Jezebel's Daughter, Chatto, London, 1910, p. 4.
2. Ibid., p. 2.
3. Joan Burstyn, Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood, Croom Helm, New York, 1980, p. 127
4. Ibid., p. 129.
5. Jezebel's Daughter, p. 21.
6. Ibid., pp. 37-38.
7. Ibid., p. 78.
8. No Name, Oxford, 1986, pp. 200-201.
9. Jezebel's Daughter, p. 52.
10. Ibid., p. 61.
11. Ibid., p. 118.
12. Ibid., p. 76.
13. Ibid., p. 92.
14. Ibid., p. 96.
15. Ibid., p. 4.
16. Ibid., p. 96.

(iii)

The Black Robe (1881): masculine neurosis and the idea of paternalism.

The Black Robe is an omniscient narrative focusing on the mental vacillations of the central character, Lewis Romayne. It is prefaced by the narrative of his friend Major Hynd and interspersed with occasional letters. Hynd's narrative describes his memory of the traumatic events which induced Romayne's unhappy psychic condition. The letters of the Catholic priest Benwell and of the English clergyman who describes the death of Winterfield's first wife are, by contrast, spontaneous responses to events. The clergyman's narrative of the accidental death of Winterfield's low-born wife provides a contrast with the letters of Benwell. The clergyman writes to Winterfield as a service to the dying woman. Benwell's letters are an attempt to manipulate others in order to further his own plans. Benwell succeeds in incorporating the information he gathers from others into a further sub-narrative, his verbal portrait of Romayne's wife, Stella, as a "fallen woman".

Romayne is initially worldly and self-centred. His psychological state is significantly altered after he kills a French swindler in a duel. He becomes haunted by the ghostly voice of the man's adolescent brother. Romayne's friends encourage him to marry the beautiful Stella

Eyrecourt in the belief that this will normalise his mental state. However, marriage fails to eradicate the ghostly voice, while Romayne's scholarly interests and his friendship with Penrose, a young Roman Catholic who secretly intends to join the priesthood, leave Stella jealous. She asks Penrose to leave the household and Romayne becomes increasingly embittered against her.

Penrose has been ordered to visit Romayne by Father Benwell, a Catholic priest. Aware that Romayne's house, Vange Abbey, once belonged to the church, Benwell determines to profit from its owner's mental state by converting him to Catholicism, thereby ensuring the return of the property. After Penrose leaves Vange, Benwell determines to convert Romayne himself. In order to ensure that Romayne does not bequeathe Vange to an heir, Benwell encourages him to abandon his wife and become a priest. The priest uncovers proof that Stella was previously married. Other characters assert that she left her first husband, Winterfield, immediately after the service on discovering that he already had a wife whom he believed dead. Benwell casts doubt on this and Romayne becomes a monk. The brother of the man Romayne killed, whom Stella and Romayne have been helping financially, dies and Winterfield discovers that Benwell has been plotting aginst Stella. Romayne changes his will in favour of his son on his deathbed when Winterfield reveals how he was manipulated.

Romayne's haunting by the boy's voice is a manifestation of the guilt he feels at being a privileged member of a social structure within which others suffer. This is suggested by the circumstances preceding the duel and by Stella Eyrecourt's discovery of the boy and his family living in poverty. The experience of visiting a gambling saloon leaves Romayne, as it does the protagonist of the earlier short story "A Terribly Strange Bed" (1856), who is almost murdered in a Parisian gambling club, troubled by the existence of vice and crime and its power to affect his own life. Romayne is staying at a seaside resort to arrange an inheritance from a dying aunt when he visits a gambling den with a down-at-heel soldier whom he later kills. Gambling symbolises the force of chance which decides the individual's financial and social circumstances. To Romayne life is a matter of diversion and entertainment; but the appearance of the men and women in the gambling den reveals the presence of financial need and desperation influencing their conduct. The duel dramatises Romayne's realisation that a supply of wealth in society is finite and that the chance allocation of a fortune to himself denies life and happiness to others.

Romayne's experience subverts discourses which idealised marriage and domesticity. Stella is a loving wife but marriage fails to cure Romayne of the anxiety which troubles him. It rather increases his unhappiness having raised within him hopes of tranquillity which are subsequently disappointed. Stella's attempt to assert her conventional

role as moral guide to her husband precipitates the collapse of the marriage. She dismisses Penrose, thereby making Romayne increasingly resentful of her.

Marital disappointment is the stimulus which induces Romayne to become a convert. Catholicism provides him with a system of alternative values and structures which allow him to escape from domesticity. He claims: "If I became a Catholic, I might escape from the society of ladies."[1] The rift with Stella increases Romayne's growing distaste for the sensual aspects of life which culminates in his retreat into a monastery. Romayne's psychic state thus inclines him towards belief in Benwell's narrative of Stella's adultery since he has begun to displace his own guilt by locating blame for his unhappiness onto her. Accepting the validity of Benwell's narrative of Stella as a deceiver, to Romayne it appears a structure which explains all her actions and defines her as an adulteress. He tells himself: "She has deceived you in one thing; why not in another?"[2]

Loring and Benwell are parallel figures. Each creates a narrative version of the same events in Stella's life. Loring induces Stella to hide her previous marriage from Romayne through a narrative in which innocence is a justification for silence. He comments on the events surrounding Stella's marriage in terms which recall Victorian attacks on the immoral nature of sensation fiction: her past becomes "that miserable story"[3], the telling of which can have only negative

effects. Winifred Hughes notes that one reason why sensation novels appeared morally dangerous to the Victorians was their treatment of the heroine: "Although she is still the central figure, the sensational heroine begins to represent a moral ambivalence rather than a moral certainty."[4] A similar ambivalence pervades Loring's narrative of Stella's past. Although he overtly depicts Stella in terms of the certainty of her moral perfection, the events of her marriage remain potentially dangerous subject-matter, reference to which can only result in personal humiliation:

> If the fault was yours, even in the slightest degree, Romayne would have a right to be taken into your confidence. But, my dear child, we, who know the truth, know you to be a pure and innocent woman. You go to Romayne in every way worthy of him, and you know that he loves you. If you did tell him that miserable story, he could only pity you. Do you want to be pitied? (5)

Loring argues that any narrative created by Stella will have a negative effect, although he uses narrative to give authority to his own discourses. Loring's conduct exemplifies the exertions of the Victorian hegemony to ensure that women did not use the authorising power of narrative to express their views. In this way masculine discourses on sexuality might remain unchallenged. Loring's reaction exposes the problematic nature of standard Victorian ideas of femininity. It is essential to Loring's vision of Stella as an admirable woman that she is also "pure and innocent". To allow her to relate a narrative of sexual experience and scandal would be to admit that women have knowledge of "unfeminine" subjects. The

masculine hegemony represented by Lord Loring weakens the structures central to its power through its failure to allow women authority to express their own condition. Stella's failure to tell Romayne of her past is incorporated by Benwell into his own narrative as a proof of her guilt. Stella's failure to create a narrative about her past assists Benwell to divide husband and wife and bring about the collapse of their home.

Loring silences Stella, fearing that her narrative will possess some of the qualities of sensation fiction, thereby allowing Benwell to offer a far more dangerous one. Benwell is a more complex version of the Catholic priest in the earlier short story "The Yellow Mask" (1856) who attempts to trick an Italian nobleman into believing that he is haunted by the ghost of his dead wife in order to ensure that he never re-marries and, consequently, that he will not be influenced to give up his resolution to return certain lands to the church. Benwell also recalls a figure common in Victorian underground pornographic literature, the priest-seducer. The catalogues of Henry Spencer Ashbee, known as "Pisanus Fraxi", have been reproduced and edited by Peter Fryer in Forbidden Books of the Victorians (1970). They list great numbers of novels and short stories such as Atrocious Acts of Catholic Priests and The Crimes of the Clergy in which indignation against "popery" is a transparent excuse for describing the sexual adventures of Catholic priests. For instance, Sainfroid in The Amours of Sainfroid and Eulalia, seduces a respectable young girl. Their

victims were occasionally young men. Benwell is a more complex version of these figures. He is an intellectual seducer, bringing Romayne around to his way of thinking. He is also the creator of narrative, rather than simply the subject of it. His narrative about Stella's past operates in a similar manner to pornographic fiction. It creates for Romayne an image of Stella indulging in illicit sexual relations. Pornography becomes a means of exerting power over women. Stella is denied complexity and individuality by Benwell's narrative, and becomes simply a harlot, a stimulator of deviant lust. Pornography allows Romayne to resolve his hitherto problematic relationship with Stella. By establishing her as a focus for sexual disgust, he enables himself to abandon her.

The narrator sees the decay of Romayne's physical and moral constitution as stimulated by his rejection of standard English values and social structures. Romayne suffers from "wasted and irritable nerves"(6), a form of decay explicitly associated by the narrator with rejection of the domestic life and his Protestant heritage, both of which are symbolised by his house:

> His flesh had fallen away; his face had withered and whitened; he stooped like an old man. The change for the worse had been steadily proceeding from the time when he left Vange abbey. (7)

In the same way in which vitriolic attacks in Victorian pornography against the alleged vices of Catholicism often reveal the

sexual fantasies of pornographers and their audience, on a sub-textual level, the Catholic church attacked by the narrator-figure of The Black Robe symbolises the dominant Victorian hegemony of which he is a part. The paternalism of the Catholic Church symbolises ideological structures legitimising masculine dominance in Victorian England. Benwell wears a "paternal smile"[8] and acts as a father-figure to Romayne, offering him guidance and encouragement. The Pope talks of his "paternal anxiety"[9] concerning Romayne's health and a priest describes the work of a Jesuit Retreat as an example of "the paternal care of the church."[10] The activities of Benwell reveal paternalism to be a mechanism used to mask authoritarian methods of social control with benevolent appearances. Benwell's narrative about Stella's past parallels established discourses which defined female sexuality as deviant and unnatural.

Romayne's retreat into the Catholic church reflects his dependence on the idea of paternal authority to justify his treatment of Stella, but it does not resolve moral problems or remove his anxieties. Instead, he becomes more intensely concerned with the idea of his own guilt. Romayne's sermons become narratives re-enacting the events of the duel and acknowledging his complicity in events. Hynd's narrative referred to the sexual ambiguity of the mysterious voice: "Was it a woman? or was it a boy?"[11] Ambiguity is further suggested by fusion of the figures of the woman and the boy in Romayne's sermon. Winterfield visits the church where Romayne preaches and

listens as Romayne "described the retributive voices of the mother and brother of the murdered man ringing incessantly in the ears of the homicide."[12] These figures convey Romayne's realisation that, although his life in the Catholic church has been dominated by paternalist structures, he has failed in his role as a father and husband. The woman and the little boy are also suggestive of Stella and Romayne's son. Romayne's guilt at belonging to a privileged social group is now fused with a sense of paternal failure.

Romayne's deathbed crisis is a process of self-revelation in which he realises that paternalist ideology is a form of egotism. This moral crisis is suggested through the relationship of Romayne and Winterfield. Like Armadale and Midwinter in <u>Armadale</u>, Nugent and Oscar in <u>Poor Miss Finch</u>, Wardour and Andersley in "The Frozen Deep" and Macallen and Dexter in <u>The Law and the Lady</u>, Romayne and Winterfield represent contrasting aspects of one indivdual. Romayne's despairing cry that his involvement with the Catholic church was "all Vanity"[13] recalls Winterfield's words when, earlier in the novel, he attempts to convince Romayne that his guilt was a form of egotism. Winterfield hypothesises on the duel:

> If I did not mean to kill the man - if his death was my misfortune as well as his - and if (as frequently happens) I am nevertheless troubled by remorse, the true cause lies in my own inability fairly to realise my own motives - before I look to results. I am the ignorant victim of false remorse; and if I will only ask myself boldly what has blinded me to the true state of the case, I shall find the mischief due to

> that misdirected appreciation of my own importance which is nothing but egotism in disguise. (14)

Winterfield's identification of himself with Romayne's plight suggests that he represents the urbane and guilt-free part of Romayne. Romayne's acceptance of Winterfield's ideology signifies his acknowledgement of the existence within himself of sexual tendencies which he found disgusting in Stella. Psychic convergence of Romayne and Winterfield identifies Romayne with the deviant male in Benwell's narrative of Stella's past. The closure of the novel, in which Romayne's death is followed by the marriage of Winterfield and Stella, shows the aftermath of mental crisis, in which Romayne/Winterfield overcomes his negative psychic tendencies and resumes a life in conformity with Victorian behavioural norms.

The narrative voice of The Black Robe presents the revival of family values at the close of the novel as a positive development. Romayne's son is restored to the inherited home which Benwell intended to usurp and the novel closes with the structure of domestic life about to be restored by the marriage of Winterfield and Stella. A level of sub-textual meaning is present, however, in which the death of Romayne conveys the loss of the romantic and creative aspects of Romayne/Winterfield's identity. The intellectual and moral perspective of the characters has narrowed. The death of the brother of the French soldier, for whom Romayne and Stella felt concern and to whom they gave practical assistance, brings a change in the perspective of the

novel's central characters. Romayne's sense of social responsibility is associated with the guilt represented by the French child. From now on Romayne/Winterfield is to be merely the guardian of his own family. His future is dominated by Benwell's threat that he will return and attempt to influence Romayne's son. Winterfield asserts that "If he means any further mischief, I can tell him this - he will find Me in his way."[15] The death of Romayne ensures that larger social responsibilities are now outside the perspective of the novel, the closure of which focuses on trivial domestic incident such as the preparations for the wedding.

Beneath the overtly simple surface narrative of The Black Robe, with its clear moral choices, is a level of meaning which explores the ambiguity of Romayne's moral position. Romayne's experience of guilt after the duel is partly a symptom of guilt at membership of a privileged social group whose comfort depends on the repression and disadvantagement of others. Romayne is not an aberrant and mentally disturbed figure but a representation of the psychological state of privileged late Victorian man. Conversion to Catholicism is attempt to live by values which he feels have become degraded in Victorian society and to replace the decayed social structure he perceives around him with something wholly positive. However, it becomes clear that it is not possible to improve society in such a simplistic manner.

The Black Robe uses the device of the psychological development of Romayne to explore the fragility of the family as a normative structure in Victorian England. Romayne/Winterfield's mental state reveals his guilt at being a member of the privileged classes. Hoping that marriage will normalise his psychic state, he later evades his guilt by blaming his wife for the failure of their marriage. His entry into the Catholic church is attributed to his ideological attraction to a despotic paternalism which he perceives on his deathbed to be the result of egotism. The novel's closure suggests that he has rid himself of guilt and anxiety, but at the cost of the loss of a sense of social responsibility.

Footnotes

1. The Black Robe (1881): Chatto, London, 1892, p. 221.
2. Ibid., p. 253.
3. Ibid., p. 135.
4. Winifred Hughes, The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s, Princeton U.P., 1980, p. 151.
5. The Black Robe, p. 135.
6. Ibid., p. 155.
7. Ibid., p. 214.
8. Ibid., p. 300.
9. Ibid., p. 300.
10. Ibid., p. 235.
11. Ibid., p. 24.
12. Ibid., p. 301.
13. Ibid., p. 314.
14. Ibid., p. 209.
15. Ibid., p. 320.

(iv)

Heart and Science (1883): the pursuit of knowledge and the problem of femininity.

Heart and Science is an omniscient narrative punctuated by occasional sub-narrative voices. Mrs Gallilee's verbal description of events long past, is a sub-narrative which, she believes, proves, that Carmina is illegitimate. This narrative is interjected by disbelieving comments from the lawyer, Mr. Mool. The vindictive music teacher, Mr. Le Frank, contributes another sub-narrative. His letter to Mrs Gallilee describes events in the lodgings where Carmina has taken refuge. He spies on Carmina and her nurse Teresa in the hope of discovering damaging evidence of criminality or impropriety. This letter and Mrs Gallilee's narrative provide a contrast with the most important sub-narrative of the novel, Zo's brief letter to her brother begging him to return from America and look after Carmina, who is sick. The letter is only two lines long and is characterised by poor spelling and a total lack of punctuation. It conveys, however, the vital information which allows Ovid to save Carmina's life and is informed by Zo's life-affirming concern for others. By contrast, the narratives of Mrs Gallilee and Le Frank provide inaccurate information because they are informed by a vindictive desire to prove the worst about those they describe.

Unfavourable critical reactions to Heart and Science have often identified Collins's supposed role as a campaigner against social abuses as the source of the novel's weakness. It has been suggested that opposition to vivisection induced Collins to use Heart and Science as a vehicle for a simplistic attack on Victorian science, which is identified as antithetical to life-affirming sentiment. However, Heart and Science does not operate in this way. Although the title of this novel suggests a simple polarisation of values, a complex sub-text operates which enables the terms "heart" and "science" to form a dialectic rather than a simple opposition. Human qualities associated with the terms "heart" and "science" are revealed as part of a complex interrelationship which promotes and affirms life. Separation of the qualities of "heart" and "science" is exposed as an ideological construct designed to deny women independence.

The action develops around a series of domestic confrontations. A young half-Italian girl, Carmina, becomes the catalyst of domestic strife on coming to live in the house of her aunt Mrs Gallilee. Mutual love develops between Carmina and Mrs Gallilee's son, Ovid Vere, a young doctor. Mrs Gallilee is influenced by financial needs (consequent on her desire to be a successful hostess in scientific circles) to ensure that Vere remains unmarried. She hopes to use the governess, Miss Minerva (who is also in love with him) against Carmina. However, the two young women become friends. Whilst Ovid travels in America Mrs Gallilee attempts to destroy Carmina's

reputation. Information derived from a vivisectionist, Dr. Benjulia, who is conducting research into brain disease, casts doubt on Carmina's mother's moral character. Mrs Gallilee makes it known that Carmina is illegitimate. The girl collapses with shock and Benjulia allows her to remain ill in order to test his medical theories. After a confrontation with Teresa, Carmina's nurse, Mrs Gallilee suffers mental collapse. Ovid returns and cures Carmina with a process he learnt from a dying doctor whom he befriended. He then publishes a book on the cure of diseases of the brain. Benjulia, finding that Ovid has pre-empted him in his discoveries, commits suicide. Ovid and Carmina marry and Mrs Gallilee recovers and becomes a renowned hostess as she had desired.

The narrator suggests that a simplistic moral vision informs the plot of Heart and Science. The central focus of the surface narrative is centered on a simple choice for Ovid (whether or not he should use vivisection to advance his work). The narrator expresses the values associated with the concept of "heart" in conventional terms as emotion, sympathy and concern for others. However, a sub-textual level of meaning suggests a fuller significance of the word "heart". The heart is also a mechanism for maintaining biological life. Similarly, the term "science" also gains a wider meaning. The full meaning of "science" in the novel is not simply a process of experimentation or a particular field of study. The novel's sub-text returns to the root meaning of the word which suggests the pursuit of knowledge.

Zo's actions illustrate the connection between the two meanings. Like Jicks in Poor Miss Finch, she is a child who, although apparently ignorant and uneducatable, possesses a remarkable insight into human life. She is the conveyer of emotion which has life-saving power. It is Zo's concern for Carmina, expressed in a secret letter to Ovid, which induces him to return to England and save her life. Zo's actions enable the values of "heart" and those of "science" to become united. Her letter embodies both these values. It expresses emotion but also provides Ovid with vital knowledge. While her mother and sister devote themselves to rote-learning and suppress their emotions, Zo's letters express knowledge which is not divorced from values associated with the concept of "heart". By saving Carmina, Ovid ensures his own future happiness and furthers his reputation. The values associated with the terms "heart" and "science" are reflected in his medical knowledge which "benefits humanity"[1]. Actions informed by the concepts of "heart and "science" are shown to be part of one complete biological process, the purpose of which is to preserve life.

Benjulia is a social outsider. His name suggests a racial origin other than Anglo-Saxon. Established Victorian discourses represented Anglo-Saxon as the norm of moral and physical health. Benjulia is consequently perceived by jealous colleagues as biologically inferior: "Those enemies who called him the "living skeleton" said it revealed his gypsy origin."[2] Benjulia needs to prove his superiority to

others in order to fortify his social position and displace discourses of biological inferiority, directed against himself, onto others.

Benjulia recalls Gross, the doctor who treats Lucilla Finch in Poor Miss Finch. Both are materialistic. Whilst Madame Pratolungo regards the decision to deceive Lucilla on the subject of Oscar's identity as a difficult ethical issue, Gross sees no moral problems because he is concerned only with the success of his experiment. Similarly, Benjulia justifies vivisection in the belief that the knowledge gained from his experiments is more important. His uncompromising belief in the importance of knowledge informs Benjulia's discourses on the question of biological superiority. In The Descent of Man (1871) Darwin claimed that man possessed a "god-like intellect"[3] and envisaged his purpose as to seek "truth, as far as our reason permits us"[4] Benjulia echoes Darwin, arguing that "knowledge for its own sake is the one god I worship. Knowledge is its own justification and its own reward."[5] Benjulia informs his brother Lemuel that his experiments will enable him to establish his superiority to others. Deriding humanitarian motives, Benjulia asserts that he is working "for my own pride - for my own unutterable pleasure in beating other men - for the fame that will keep my name living hundreds of years hence"[6]. He justifies his ambition by representing knowledge as the measure of biological superiority:

> The old anatomist stole dead bodies for Knowledge. In that sacred cause, if I could steal a living man without being

> found out, I would tie him on my table, and grasp my grand discovery in days, instead of months. Where are you going? What? You're afraid to be in the same room with me? A man who can talk as I do, is a man who would stick at nothing? Is that the light in which you lower order of creatures look at us? Look a little higher - and you will see that a man that talks as I do is a man set above you by knowledge. (7)

However, Benjulia acknowledges the existence of contrary attitudes to vivisection within himself:

> Have I no feeling as you call it? My last experiments on a monkey horrified me. His cries of suffering, his gestures of entreaty, were like the cries and gestures of a child. I would have given the world to put him out of his misery. But I went on. In the glorious cause I went on. My hands turned cold - my heart ached - I thought of a child I sometimes play with - I suffered - I resisted - I went on. All for knowledge! (8)

Benjulia's sympathy for the monkey and his fondness for Zo are feelings overtly associated by the narrator with the idea of "heart". Benjulia's intellectualism provides the mechanism which allows him to repress such tendencies. Glorification of the intellect allows Benjulia to consider the monkey an inferior being and consequently to legitimise vivisection. Benjulia's relationship with his brother, Lemuel, who is untroubled by ambition and hopes to prevent Benjulia's experiments, symbolises this process. As in <u>The Black Robe</u>, in which Romayne's dialogue with Winterfield dramatises the tormented and self-divided nature of

Romayne/Winterfield, the meeting of Benjulia and Lemuel is a means of representing a moral crisis. Discussion between the brothers is a psychomachia in which repressed aspects of Benjulia/Lemuel struggle for dominance with the surface personality.

Benjulia's house symbolises psychic repression. The "low wall"(9) and "iron gate"(10) around the "barren"(11) garden reflect its owner's suppression of natural tendencies. The interior of the house gives a parallel impression:

> Ovid found himself in a room as barren as the field outside. There were the plastered walls, there was the bare floor, left exactly as the builders had left them when the house was finished ... There were no curtains on the window, and no pictures or prints on the drab-coloured walls. The empty grate showed its bleak black cavity undisguised, and the mantel-piece had nothing on it but the doctor's dirty and strong-smelling pipe. (12)

Like the suburb in Basil in which Sherwin's house is situated, Benjulia's dwelling is functional yet essentially incomplete. The failure of his house to provide the atmosphere generally associated with the concept of "home" parallels Benjulia's emotional failure.

Mrs Gallilee is described by the narrator as a parallel figure whose inadequacy is evident from the nature of her domestic life. However, while Benjulia is depicted in relatively complex terms, Mrs Gallilee is portrayed in a simplistic manner in conformity with

established scientific discourses on the nature of femininity. Standard discourses argued that femininity was a state of biological inferiority and depicted women as inherently unsuited to intellectual pursuits, thereby effectively denying them authority. Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur argue that women were defined by scientists "as unsuitable for intellectual labour (especially for science) and were thus unable to gain access to the dominant discourse of their subjugation."[13] Mrs Gallilee is a figure who confirms this discourse. She is an unsympathetic character, a failure in terms of the concepts of "heart" and consequently a failure in terms of her role as guardian of her family. Her intelligence and knowledge are associated with her incomprehension of human emotion, evidenced by her failure to understand Ovid:

> If she had not deliberately starved her imagination, and emptied her heart of any tenderness of feeling which it might once have once possessed, her son's odd behaviour would have interested instead of perplexing her. As it was, her scientific education left her as completely in the dark, where questions of sentiment were concerned, as if her experience of humanity, in its relation to love, had been experience in the cannibal islands. (14)

Mrs Gallilee's life and education are portrayed in terms of a simple polarised choice between the values of "heart" and those of "science". Benjulia is a complex figure whose emotions and ambitions are in conflict. Mrs Gallilee, however, is represented in absolute terms. Benjulia confesses to feeling for the subjects

of his vivisection, wheras Mrs Gallilee, although similarly motivated, has "emptied her heart of any tenderness of feeling".

The Victorian idea of femininity focused on, and was obsessively concerned with, the reproductive function. Mary Poovey, commenting on the prominence of the uterus in Victorian representations of the female body, argues that, according to orthodox thinking, "women, more than men, are governed and defined by their reproductive capacity."(15) The narrator of Heart and Science echoes the complaints of those, such as the physician Henry Maudsley, who opposed higher education for women by insisting that intellectual activity was damaging to the female reproductive processes. Mrs Gallilee's intellectual ambitions are associated with sexual failure. Her desire for education is the result of her failure to capture an impressive husband. When her sister marries a peer Mrs Gallilee's jealousy and sense of failure determine her to devote her energies to the study of science:

> From the horrid day when Susan became Lady Northlake, Maria became a serious woman. All her earthly interests centred now in the cultivation of her intellect. She started on that glorious career, which associated her with the march of science. (16)

Mrs Gallilee's motives suggest Darwin's theories of sexual selection. Her character is dominated by her reproductive function. Conscious that her sense of her own worth depends upon her ability

to attract a superior mate, she feels threatened by her sister's marriage. Her interest in education is a mechanism with which to divert feelings of inferiority caused by sexual failure.

It is necessary for the narrator to depict Mrs Gallilee in this way in order to maintain established constructs of femininity. Educated women were threatening figures because they challenged the idea that women were inherently biologically inferior. Londa Schiebinger notes that Victorian scientific writings often imply that "women have failed to reach full human maturity."[17] Scientists often paralleled women with children or members of primitive races. All of these were envisaged as occupying a place within a natural hierarchy inferior to caucasian masculinity, which represented the norm against which other groups could be measured. Such thinking implied that intellect in a woman was physically impossible. The ability to amass and evaluate large amounts of knowledge implied complex mental faculties which were supposed to be undeveloped in women.

The virulence of the narrator's attack on Mrs Gallilee suggests that she is an extremely threatening figure. Her lack of emotion is compared to that of a native of "the cannibal islands"[18] in order to deny her intellect and re-assert the established parallel between women and members of supposedly less developed races. In order that the surface narrative of Heart and Science may confirm the established idea of femininity, Mrs Gallilee's intellect must be broken down and

denied by representing her as the victim of temporary insanity. The determined and resourceful Mrs Gallilee becomes a passive and incapable figure whose "enfeebled mind"[19] leaves her with "not even reserves enough of energy to spare for the trifling effort of dressing to go out."[20]

The figures of Carmina and Miss Minerva suggest a parallel attempt to argue that education is a threat to femininity. The intellectual and educated Miss Minerva is represented as sexually unattractive and consequently without reproductive function, a situation which, according to the dominant masculine hegemony, is on a par with deformity or monstrosity. Carmina recalls that "even my kind dear father used to call ugly women the inexcusable mistakes of Nature."[21] The surface narrative of Heart and Science echoes those who responded to the challenge of demands for the education of women by arguing that education would have a negative biological effect by rendering women unattractive or sterile. Miss Minerva's failure to make Ovid love her operates as evidence of the negative biological effect of women's education, while Carmina, whose "childish readiness of wonder in the presence of new objects"[22] is evidence of the intellectual immaturity characteristic of the received idea of femininity, is represented as sufficiently sexually attractive to captivate the man she loves.

The closure of Heart and Science, however, suggests that the

narrator is aware of the problematic nature of the discourses he overtly endorses. Carmina's physical weakness signifies femininity but is inevitably also suggestive of physical and mental incapacity. Ovid explains that she will never be fully well:

> ... time had been lost which no skill and no devotion can regain. But the prospect has its bright side. Past events which might have cast their shadow over all her life to come, have left no trace in her memory. I will make her a happy woman. (23)

The narrator initially suggests that the undeveloped state of Carmina's intellect ensures her future happiness. This discourse is recalled in the closure of the narrative, but with more disturbing connotations. Carmina's lack of intellectual development has become magnified into mental incapacity. Her state of health reveals that she has fallen prey to the degeneration to which, according to standard Victorian thinking, woman's inherent inferiority left her particularly prone. The narrator's uncertainty on the question of femininity is evidenced by the muted quality of the wedding celebrations. "A little cloud of sadness"[24] seems to hang over the proceedings.

Established discourses of femininity are further challenged by the figure of Mrs Gallilee. She enjoys an alternative experience to that of Carmina. Having recovered her health she becomes respected in scientific circles. Although the narrator describes her scientific evenings in a tone of irony which suggests that they are a chaotic

waste of time, they possess a vitality and an atmosphere of enjoyment singularly absent from Carmina's wedding. Mrs Gallilee's words, which close the novel, recall Ovid's plans for Carmina: "At last, I'm a happy woman!"(26). However, while Carmina's future life will be characterised by illness, Mrs Gallilee will concern herself with the forces which maintain life. The lectures which form part of her evening entertainment focus on various aspects of "the mystery of life"(26). The narrator cannot deny the existence of educated women. They remain challenging figures.

Footnotes

1. Heart and Science, Sutton, Gloucester, 1990, p. 335.
2. Ibid., p. 64.
3. Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man (1871) in Darwin, Norton, New York, 1979, p. 208.
4. Charles Darwin, op. cit. p. 208.
5. Heart and Science, p. 179.
6. Ibid., p. 179.
7. Ibid., p. 179.
8. Ibid., pp. 179-80.
9. Ibid., p. 105.
10. Ibid., p. 105.
11. Ibid., p. 105.
12. Ibid., p. 107.
13. Catherine Gallagher, The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century, California U.P., 1987, p. ix.
14. Heart and Science, p. 31.
15. Mary Poovey, ""Scenes of an Indelicate Character": The Medical Treatment of Victorian Women" in Catherine Gallagher, The Making of the Modern Body, p. 145.
16. Heart and Science, p. 35.
17. Londa Schiebinger, "Skeletons in the Closet" in Catherine Gallagher, The Making of the Modern Body, p. 65.
18. Heart and Science, p. 31.
19. Ibid., p. 304.
20. Ibid., p. 304.
21. Ibid., p. 101.

22. Ibid., p. 14.
23. Ibid., p. 346.
24. Ibid., p. 346.
25. Ibid., p. 349.
26. Ibid., p. 348.

(v)

"I Say No": (1884) a schooling in dependence; subverting female emancipation.

"I Say No" is an omniscient narrative punctuated by sub-narrative voices. The first sub-narrative is formed by an article in an old copy of The Times which tells of the unsolved murder of Emily Brown's father in a country inn. The omniscient narrative is also punctuated by other narratives which provide alternative versions of the same story. These narratives contrast with the document in The Times which was written shortly after the event since they are the products of reflection on events many years distant in time. Mrs Rook delivers to Emily a verbal account of Brown's death as she lies on her own death-bed following an accident.

The final sub-narrative is Alban Morris's account of his conversation with Miss Jethro. This is the final narrative version of the events surrounding Brown's death, revealing that he was not, in fact, murdered but committed suicide. Morris's account contains its own sub-narratives. His account is punctuated by Miss Jethro's fractured verbal comments in response to his questions. Another sub-narrative is formed by Miss Jethro's letter to Brown shortly before his death which read "I say no", indicating that she was not prepared to become his mistress. These two narratives are in striking

contrast to one another. Miss Jethro's verbal narrative is essentially controlled by Morris. He directs and prompts her responses and the narrative thus created is directly useful to him in gaining Emily's affections. Miss Jethro's letter, by contrast, functions as a challenge to masculine manipulation which Morris must submerge within his own narrative in order to deny its subversive implications.

The main events of the novel may be summarised as follows. Emily Brown, a strong-minded orphan, leaves school to discover that her father's death many years before was not due to natural causes. Emily determines to investigate the matter after overhearing the fractured death-bed narrative of her Aunt Letitia. Letitia suggests that facts have been hidden from Emily. Alban Morris, her former drawing-master and admirer, hopes to save her the painful discovery that her father was found with his throat cut after staying the night at an inn. Emily desires to earn her own living and begins research for Sir Jervis Redwood, in the course of which she discovers a report of her father's death in an old copy of The Times. Emily reads of the activities of detectives in fact and fiction and becomes convinced of the impossibility of investigating the matter herself. Morris and her other suitor, the clergyman Mirabel, independently agree to find the murderer, each hoping that they will be rewarded by marrying Emily. Mirabel merely pretends to be investigating the matter. He knows himself to have been present in the inn on the night of Brown's death and to have been wanted by the police in connection with the

matter. Mrs Rook, former landlady of the inn and a servant of Sir Jervis, has an accident in the proximity of Mirabel's tower home and confesses to Emily on her deathbed that she found Brown dead and stole his wallet. Morris reveals that Emily's former teacher, Miss Jethro, was her father's mistress. His account of his interview with her reveals that Brown killed himself on reading the words "I say no" in a letter from her - an expression of her determination not to marry him. Emily agrees to marry Morris.

Miss Ladd's academy for girls illustrates the structures with which middle-class female experience was circumscribed in Victorian England. Represented by Miss Ladd as a benignly protective institution, a place offering "pupils the affectionate care to which they have been accustomed under the parents' roof"(1), the school operates as a mechanism of repression. Nothing is allowed to exist within it which is unacceptable or unsavoury. For her final year reading Emily selects the dagger scene from Macbeth but is refused permission to recite it on the grounds that it is "a man's soliloquy, and worse still, a murdering man's soliloquy"(2). The dagger-scene explores humanity's potential for violence and deviance, subject-matter which the established hegemony attempts to exclude from the feminine experience. Miss Ladd's expression of a parallel between her school and the domestic environment is significant. The academy does not simply illustrate the nature of women's education. It symbolises ideological structures which oppress women.

As Emily prepares to leave school, disturbing experiences begin to suggest that life is more complex than her education has led her to believe. She is puzzled to discover that Miss Jethro has been dismissed for using a false reference and ponders on her moral nature:

> Bad? or good? False; for she listened at the door. True; for she told me the tale of her own disgrace. A friend of my father; and she never knew that he had a daughter. Refined, accomplished, lady-like; and she stoops to use a false reference. Who is to reconcile such contradictions as these? (3)

Emily finds established ideas of feminine deviance and goodness inadequate to explain Miss Jethro. Parting with her best friend, Cecilia, is a similar experience. Emily expects to feel the sentiment which her education has led her to believe is the dominant experience of femininity. However, the jealousy of another pupil, Francine de Sor, leads her to experience other emotions and perceive the situation in a more complex way:

> Under all this bitterness- the first exhibition of Francine's temper, at its worst, which had taken place since she joined the school- Emily saw, or thought she saw, distress that was too proud, or too shy, to show itself ... Were there really longings for kindness and love under the surface of this girl's perverse nature? Or was there nothing to be hoped from a better knowledge of her?- in place of tender remembrances... perplexing and unwelcome thoughts which the more potent personality of Francine forced upon Emily's mind. (4)

The sentiment which Emily expects to feel is subverted by a sense of uncertainty and moral complexity. Return to her aunt precipitates a parallel crisis of knowledge. Letitia's death is a significant moment in the collapse of structures protecting Emily from discovering the circumstances of her father's death. Her aunt's deathbed ramblings reveal that what Emily has been taught to consider truth conceals hidden meaning, the existence of which she never before suspected.

Letitia's servant, Mrs Ellmother, who attempts to discourage Emily from discovering the circumstances of her father's death, represents established discourses of femininity. She is a parallel figure to Mrs Sherwin in Basil, Anne Catherick in The Woman in White, Mrs Wragge in No Name, Hester Dethridge in Man and Wife and Ariel in The Law and the Lady. She is passive, domestic and believes that Emily should remain in ignorance. The discourses which she embodies are falling into decline. Mrs Ellmother is described as possessing "the hospitable politeness of the old school."[5] Her appearance suggests physical decay. She has "cavernous eyes"[6] and the narrative voice asserts that "the first impression produced by her face was an impression of bones."[7] The decay of Mrs Ellmother also operates as an image of repression. She denies her own desires and perceives her purpose in life as to serve others. The repression of desire is confirmed by the suggestion that she barely maintains a physical presence.

The question of feminine intellectual and personal development creates tensions within the narrative. The narrator-figure expresses anxiety about the implications of female education through the figure of Mrs Rook. Mrs Rook achieves the erosion of established social structures. In contrast to Mrs Ellmother, her dominant characteristic is her ability to assert herself. She subverts discourses of social and sexual superiority through a process of self-assertion. Although a servant, she addresses her social superiors with what seems to Morris "audacious familiarity"[8]. Her descriptions of Sir Jervis Redwood's home place her on a parallel footing with her master: "I say our house; and why not when the management of it is all thrown on me."[9]

Emily's discovery of her father's murder becomes the focus of this anxiety and its psychic effects reveal the narrator's determination to represent women as passive and knowledge as consequently useless to them. Emily has been a figure of unconventional vitality reminiscent of Magdalen Vanstone in No Name. Now she is overcome by a psychic crisis in which she accepts herself as passive. Researching famous criminal cases in an attempt to discover the best means to begin detective work, Emily is left prostrate at the idea that her femininity makes the task impossible:

> The night passed, and dawn glimmered through the window - and still she opened book after book with sinking courage - still she gained nothing but the disheartening conviction of her inability to carry out her own plans. Almost every page that she turned over revealed the immovable obstacles set in her way by her sex and her age. Could she mix with the people, or visit the scenes, familiar to the experience of

> men (in fact and in fiction), who had traced the homicide to his hiding-place, and had marked him among his harmless fellow-creatures with the brand of Cain? No! A young girl following, or attempting to follow, that career, must reckon with insult and outrage - paying their abominable tribute to her youth and beauty, at every turn. What proportion would the men who might respect her bear to the men who might make her the object of advances, which it was hardly possible to imagine without shuddering. She crept exhausted to her bed, the most helpless, hopeless creature on the wide surface of the earth - a girl self-devoted to the task of a man. (10)

Emily begins to accept discourses sub-textually expressed within the literature of crime written by men and detailing the exploits of masculine police officers. She perceives herself in terms of standard ideas of femininity: passive, vulnerable and an object of sexual attention. Emily's sexuality becomes a structure confining her within a passive, domestic world. Her "commanding spirit"[11] is devastated when she comes to understand that the sexual impact of her gender renders the social sphere a threatening place.

Emily's mental state ensures that she will now turn to Morris and Mirabel for help, not only because she accepts that she is a passive being, but because her self-image is now dominated by an idea of herself as an object of sexual attraction. Although she had previously rejected Morris's offers of help and protection, she now allows him and Mirabel to work in her interest. Both men are knight errant figures who hope to win their lady by completing an allotted task. Girouard perceives such competition as a fundamental part of the chivalric ideal and notes its sexual connotations:

> Many knights dedicated themselves to the service of one particular woman, not necessarily or even usually their wives, and vied with each other in performing deeds of valour in her honour and under her inspiration. In its purest form courtly love, as this type of service came to be called, did not imply sexual relationships; but sex had a way of creeping in. (12)

The allusion to William Morris in Alban Morris's surname further identifies him with the Victorian medieval revival. William Morris's ideas of radical social progress were informed by an idyllic vision of a medieval England in which man lived in harmony with nature. Similarly, Alban Morris is an artist who attempts to emulate what he calls "Madam Nature"(13) and, like his namesake, is disillusioned with life in Victorian England.

Although described by the narrator as an admirable man, Alban Morris is an equivocal figure. Collins uses the figure of Morris to explore the way in which chivalric ideology oppressed women. In the writings of William Morris idealised femininity is depicted as passive. In the poem "Praise of My Lady" which forms part of The Defence of Guenevere (1858) the lady is depicted as "waiting for something"(14). Her movements are so slow that she seems barely alive. The veins in her arm "creep, dying languidly"(15) her "lids fall slow"(16) and tears are "lurking"(17) in her eyes. Morris's poem explores tensions in the neo-medieval ideal of womanhood. The lady's passivity makes her sexually attractive. However, the languid eroticism of the portrait suggests a more disturbing meaning.

The lady's passivity is also evidence of her wasted life. The "dying" veins and "faint lines"[18] on her face suggest that her youth and vitality are being eroded as she awaits her lover.

"I Say No" expresses similar thinking through the sub-textual operation of a parallel between Morris and Mirabel. Mirabel's name is suggestive of his function. He mirrors Morris, revealing aspects of the drawing-master's motivation unexpressed by the surface narrative. When Emily resides at Mirabel's tower home she encounters his sister, Mrs Devlin, "a prisoner in her room; wasted by disease"[19], a figure who recalls the lady of William Morris's poem. Her room is a place of sensuous luxury reminiscent of the surroundings of Pre-Raphaelite medieval beauties, but, like William Morris's lady, her life is merely a drift towards death:

> The ghastly appearance of her face was heightened by the furnishing of the room. This doomed woman, dying slowly day by day, delighted in bright colours and sumptuous materials. The paper on the walls, the curtains, the carpet presented the hues of the rainbow. She lay on a couch covered with purple silk, under draperies of green velvet to keep her warm. Rich lace hid her scanty hair, turning prematurely grey; brilliant rings glittered on her bony fingers. The room was a blaze of light from lamps and candles. Even the wine at her side that kept her alive, had been decanted into a bottle of lustrous Venetian glass. "My grave is open," she used to say; "and I want all these beautiful things to keep me from looking at it." (20)

Mrs Devlin's situation is a subversive comment on Emily's future married life with Morris/Mirabel. The domestic world is comfortable

and protective but offers a passive existence which will destroy Emily's vitality. Luxury is exposed as a device with which the masculine hegemony distracts women from the realisation that they are wasting their lives. The beautiful environment surrounding Mirabel's sister helps her to avoid confronting the reality of her own mortality.

Mirabel's detective-work is a parallel deception. Although he claims to be attempting to provide Emily with the knowledge she seeks, he creates a fiction of detective-activity which conceals his determination to obscure the truth. Mirabel's false detective-activity comments upon the activities of Morris, whose discoveries function in a parallel manner. Morris's narrative about the death of Emily's father furthers his own plans. His revelation that Miss Jethro and Brown were lovers represents Emily as the progeny of an illicit sexual union. No mention is made of Emily's natural mother in "I Say No". Miss Jethro is a mother-figure whose past suggests that Emily inherits the biological potential to become a "fallen woman". Through the figure of Miss Jethro Morris's narrative represents Emily's future as lonely and painful if she continues in her independent course and refuses to marry.

Morris's narrative suggests that Emily should accept standard discourses on femininity and become his wife. He reveals that Miss Jethro's refusal to marry Brown caused great suffering to him, herself

and his relatives. Marriage becomes a woman's duty. The intellectual independence symbolised in Miss Jethro's words to Brown which form the novel's title is a threat to society. Morris's narrative relating to his investigations has parallel results to Mirabel's descriptions of his detective-activity. Both manipulate Emily and further the narrator's desires.

This sub-textual parallel subverts the surface narrative's representation of Morris as a superior being to Mirabel. The novel's sub-text suggests that the married life he offers Emily will parallel the passive existence of Mirabel's sister. The death of Mrs Rook in an accident is an image for the destruction of the assertive part of Emily, while her confession establishes unequivocally the deviance of the independent woman. The closing lines of the novel suggest that Emily no longer plans to earn her own living. Emily has no voice at the close of the novel. She is awaited by Morris and Miss Ladd, representative of the restrictive ideology of femininity which Emily rebelled against early in the novel. The bell rings and Morris asserts that "Emily has come home."(22) Like Mrs Devlin and William Morris's lady, Emily is now a passive being in a domestic world.

Although the surface narrative of "I Say No" overtly details a young girl's development from ignorance to knowledge, a sub-text operates to reveal this process as a schooling in dependence. The knowledge offered by Morris is a re-articulation of established

discourses of femininity in response to the challenge of female education.

Footnotes

1. "I Say No" (1884), Chatto, London, 1899, p. 24.
2. Ibid., p. 16.
3. Ibid., pp. 38-39.
4. Ibid., p. 61.
5. Ibid., p. 60.
6. Ibid., pp. 60-61.
7. Ibid., p. 45.
8. Ibid., p. 48.
9. Ibid., p. 48.
10. Ibid., p. 258.
11. Ibid., p. 5.
12. Mark Girouard, The Return To Camelot, Yale U.P., 1981, pp. 38-39.
13. "I Say No", p. 19.
14. William Morris, The Defence of Guenevere (1858) in News from Nowhere and Selected Writings and Designs, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1962 (Ed Asa Briggs), p. 62.
15. Ibid., p. 64.
16. Ibid., p. 62.
17. Ibid., p. 62.
18. Ibid., p. 63.
19. "I Say No", p. 278.
20. Ibid., pp. 279-80.
21. Ibid., p. 320.

(vi)

<u>The Evil Genius</u> (1886): the fragility of the ideal of womanhood.

<u>The Evil Genius</u> takes the form of an omniscient narrative. The main body of the novel is preceded by a prologue which describes events which occur many years before those which are the concern of the main narrative. The narrative voice is varied on occasion by extracts from newspapers which are read by characters within the novel. The voice of the judge who presides at the divorce of Catherine and Herbert Linley enters the main narrative in the fragmentary form of quotations, extrapolated by the narrator, from the newspaper Mrs Presty is reading. The judge, who is condemnatory of Catherine, expresses standard Victorian views. A contrasting voice is that of the anonymous gossip columnist who delightedly speculates on the possibility of a marriage between Catherine and Bennydeck and thereby stimulates Linley's jealousy. Despite its contrasting tone, the contribution of the gossip columnist expresses parallel views to those of the judge. The judge castigates Catherine for her immature attitude which leads her to fail in her duty to save her marriage. Similarly, the gossip columnist depicts women as beings whose aim in life is to marry.

The prologue describes the trial of Captain Westerfield for the

theft of diamonds carried on his cargo ship. He is found guilty and dies. His wife, who has discovered from her husband the identity of the true thief, makes unsuccessful attempts to recover the jewels. Mrs Westerfield leaves for America, abandoning her daughter, Sydney, to an uncaring schoolmistress. The main narrative begins as Syd, now an attractive young woman, contemplates a better life than that of a teacher in her cruel aunt's school and advertises herself as a governess. She thereby comes to work in the home of Herbert Linley and his wife, Catherine. Syd's gratitude at Linley's determination to rescue her from the school develops, although she is initially unaware of it, into sexual love. Catherine's mother, the suspicious Mrs Presty, arranges for Syd and Linley to be locked outside the house together one summer night. They then declare their love for one another. Linley's wife, Catherine, discovers the situation and requests that Syd leave the house. Catherine allows Syd to return, however, when her daughter, who was devoted to her governess, becomes ill. Linley's passions are rekindled on seeing Syd and they elope together. Catherine successfully sues for a divorce but finds herself ostracised by respectable society. Linley finds his feelings for Syd begin to wane when Catherine is courted by the Christian social reformer, Captain Bennydeck. Bennydeck declines to marry Catherine when he discovers that she is divorced, since he believes that in the eyes of God she is still Linley's wife. Linley returns to Catherine and they remarry. Syd goes to work as Bennydeck's secretary and their happy domestic life suggests that they will eventually marry.

The figure of Syd exposes tensions within Victorian ideas of femininity. Joan N. Burstyn notes in Victorian Education and the ideal of Womanhood (1980) that the ideal woman was paradoxically envisaged as "both weaker and purer than men."(1) The idea that femininity was intrinsically a state of frailty created conflict with the notion that woman was the moral guardian of the domestic sphere. An article in the Saturday Review entitled "The British Mother Taking Alarm" (1871), argued that women

> do not calculate consequences, and they are reckless when they give way; hence they are to be kept straight only through their affections, the religious sentiment and a well-educated moral sense. (2)

The article reveals the contradictory nature of Victorian ideas about women. Women were considered to be incapable of exercising moral responsibility without intense supervision. However, as the figure of the "British Mother" invoked in the title suggests, women were also expected to play a central role in forming the moral quality of English life. Deborah Gorham argues in The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal (1976) that this paradox explains the idealisation of the figure of the dutiful daughter in Victorian art and fiction. The immaturity of the ideal woman was more easily transposed onto the figure of a daughter than onto a wife. Gorham sees the Victorian idea of woman as essentially self-contradictory:

> The idea of the adult woman who possesses "majestic childishness" reflects the contradictions that existed at

> the centre of the idealised vision of true womanhood. How convincing could an idealisation be that combined both childlike simplicity with the complex duties of wifehood and motherhood? Even at an overt, explicitly stated level, contradictions existed in the imagery of true womanhood, and beneath the surface, expressed through allusion, were the tensions inherent in the Victorian view of female sexuality. The ideal of feminine purity is explicitly asexual; how, then, could it be reconciled with the active sexuality that would inevitably be included in the duties of wife and mother? (3)

Orthodox discourses denied such complexity by focusing on an idealised image of home life. Idealisation of the domestic environment was a mechanism for legitimising silence about sexual subjects.

At the time of her involvement with Linley Syd is progressing from girlhood to womanhood. Like Lucilla in _Poor Miss Finch_, whose sexual feelings for Oscar are the stimuli which lead her to change her passive existence by actively courting him, Syd's awakening sexuality means that she no longer conforms to the Victorian ideal of passive womanhood. The sexual nature of her transgression allows Collins to explore tensions between images of immature and mature femininity and between moral and medical discourses on sexuality. Adultery was generally considered to be an example of sexual deviance. Syd and Linley's affair is, however, depicted in terms of conformity to established medical discourses. The commencement of sexual relations between them conforms to standard notions of normal sexual behaviour for men and young women. An article in the _Westminster Review_

defined sexuality as a natural attribute in men but as a dormant characteristic in young women:

> In men, in general, the sexual desire is inherent and spontaneous, and belongs to the condition of puberty. In the other sex, the desire is dormant, if not non-existent, till excited; always till excited by intercourse ... (4)

Linley's behaviour in the garden conforms to established ideas of sexual desire as an inherent aspect of masculinity. Female sexuality is again envisaged in terms of the woman's role as companion of man. Girls do not possess sexual feelings, wives are appropriately stimulated into them by the influence of their husbands. Syd, in conformity with standard discourses, is stimulated into sexuality when Linley kisses her. Although her action in responding to Linley transgresses codes of moral behaviour, Syd is represented in terms of standard ideas of female sexuality.

Syd possesses the moral and intellectual frailty which was perceived to be a fundamental aspect of femininity. She is reckless, lacking Catherine's self-control and, unlike Mrs Presty, does not calculate the consequences of her actions. However, mechanisms generally believed to control feminine behaviour augment her weakness. Her strict and moral education makes her more vulnerable to Linley's approaches because it leaves her starved of affection and therefore inordinately attached to him for his small kindnesses. Syd's feelings consequently create potentially dangerous situations rather

than providing her with the positive moral guidance envisaged in standard discourses. She recalls the standard devoted daughter-figure of sentimental fiction in her idealisation of Linley, who becomes to her the father-figure her youth has lacked.

Syd's conformity to the standard image of the immature girl makes her sexual fall problematic, tending to subvert established ideas of the difference between normal and deviant female sexuality. The relationship of Linley and Syd, although conforming to established ideas of healthy sexuality, is perceived as deviant according to standard moral discourses. The narrator-figure expresses his sense of the paradoxical nature of society's reaction to the relationship of Syd and Linley. However, although social organisation is represented as haphazard, the narrative voice is hesitant and ambiguous. It raises questions but does not distinctly condemn the values of the existing order:

> Is there something wrong in human nature? or something wrong in human laws? All that is best and noblest in us feels the influence of love - and the rules of society declare that an accident of position shall decide whether love is a virtue or a crime. (5)

The narrator escapes from indecision and anxiety by establishing female figures in his narrative as blameworthy. Blame for masculine transgression is increasingly displaced onto women by sub-narrative voices and by the narrator himself.

Standard Victorian discourses represented the home as a refuge from the complexities of the outside world. However, in the late-Victorian period, anxieties which conflicted with such idealistic thinking were beginning to be acknowledged. Carol Dyhouse notes in "Good Wives and Little Mothers" (1981) that the education of girls in late Victorian England reflected anxieties that the standard of homemaking was plummeting. Both the narrator and masculine sub-narrators express these anxieties, representing moral decay in the home as the fault of the wife. Established discourses depicted the Victorian wife as the moral guardian of the home and the values it represented. A husband's guilt could therefore be displaced onto the wife who had failed in her duty as moral guardian of the home by allowing him to be corrupted. When Linley finds his desire for Syd revived by her visit to his ailing daughter, the narrator locates blame for his sexual feelings with Catherine:

> He had struggled against his guilty passion - at what sacrifice of his own feelings no one knew but himself - and here was the temptation, at the very time when he was honourably resisting it, brought back to him by his wife! Her motive did unquestionably excuse, perhaps even sanction, what she had done; but this was an estimate of her conduct which commended itself to others. From his point of view - motive or no motive - he saw the old struggle against himself in danger of being renewed; he felt the ground that he had gained slipping from under him already. (6)

Linley behaves "honourably". It is Catherine whose conduct is perceived as the source of domestic strife. Similarly, Catherine is described by the judge in the divorce case as blameworthy for failing

in her moral duty as guardian of the home by allowing a potentially adulterous situation to arise. She has been "culpably indiscreet"[7], "culpably indelicate"[8] and has "provoked the catastrophe"[9]. The judge expresses her failure in terms which suggest that she has deviated from feminine biological norms: "Let me advise her to exercise more control over impulses which one might expect perhaps to find in a young girl, but which are neither natural nor excusable in a woman of her age."[10]

Catherine's situation explores tensions within standard Victorian ideas of femininity. Although women were envisaged as moral guardians of the home, female moral strength which opposed the wishes of father or husband was highly problematic since it tended to subvert masculine authority. Catherine remains strong, self-possessed and determined not to condone unacceptable behaviour in the face of the domestic crises which threaten her happiness. She tells Mrs Presty that "a wife in my position, who respects herself, restrains herself."[11] It is this self-possession which makes Catherine a disturbing figure to masculine characters in The Evil Genius and to the narrator-figure. Her discovery of Linley in a compromising position with Syd recalls the confrontation between Nugent and Madame Pratolungo in Poor Miss Finch, in which Nugent confesses his inability to master his feelings and Madame Pratolungo urges self-control. Like Pratolungo, Catherine maintains a "terrible self-possession"[12], rejecting the husband who has failed to adhere to her own high moral standards. Catherine's

failure to exhibit emotional vulnerability is, the narrator-figure implies, the factor which precipitates the break-up of the Linley family. He describes self-control as an unfortunate attribute in a woman:

> When it is of serious importance to a man to become acquainted with a woman's true nature - say, when he contemplates marriage - his one poor chance of arriving at a right conclusion is to find himself provoked by exasperating circumstances, and to fly into a passion. If the lady flies into a passion on her side, he may rely on it that her faults are more than balanced by her good qualities. If, on the other hand, she exhibits the most admirable self-control, and sets him an example which ought to make him ashamed of himself, he has seen a bad sign, and he will do well to remember it. (13)

Catherine's moral superiority to her husband is represented in terms of a failure in femininity. Feminine moral influence becomes problematic when in conflict with masculine desire. The harshness of the judge who reluctantly grants Catherine a divorce suggests that he is critical of her moral stance over the question of her husband's adultery. The Matrimonial Causes Act (1857) expressed the assumption in Victorian thinking that, although adultery was illegal, wives should accept that their husbands might take a mistress. The act stipulated that, although a husband could divorce his wife on the grounds that one act of adultery had taken place, a wife could divorce her husband only if he compounded adultery by introducing a mistress into the family home, seriously assaulting his wife or deserting her by running away with another woman.

Although Catherine's request for a divorce is within the scope of the law on account of Linley's desertion of her, she has transgressed by failing to be sufficiently lenient to her erring husband. Her high moral standards have led her to ignore the existence of a double standard of acceptable sexual behaviour in Victorian society which condemns adultery absolutely when committed by a woman but only partially when committed by a man. The novel's sub-text suggests that she has transgressed by expecting Linley's contrition to be followed by complete renunciation of his mistress. Her insistence that her husband choose between her or Syd is seen as making an impossible demand which ensures the break-up of the family.

Catherine's status as a divorced woman is perceived by Victorian society as "deviant" and immoral. Respectable families shun her. Bennydeck's belief that it would be impossible for him to marry her on account of her divorce is a result of his awareness that the ideal Victorian woman would not be able to cope well after separation from her husband. Bennydeck's religious views induce him to believe that a wife should remain inextricably involved with her first husband. Life with Bennydeck offers Catherine a re-constructed version of her domestic role in which the meaning of the word "home" is expanded. Bennydeck's "home" for "fallen women" would allow Catherine to extend the virtues of the domestic world into the wider sphere of work and social improvement. In late-Victorian England middle-class women were

becoming increasingly involved in voluntary social work. However, increased opportunities for women were threatening if the women became independent. Bennydeck's decision reflects this anxiety. Increased opportunities for women are acceptable if they affect only those women who will be guided by men. Bennydeck rejects Catherine because her independence makes the possibility that she would hold a position of responsibility appear threatening.

The post-crisis relationship of Syd and Linley expresses a parallel complexity of meaning. The idea that the consequences of deviation from the values of the domestic world inevitably involved decay and death was firmly established in late Victorian England. A standard formula existed in Victorian art and literature in which the "fallen woman" was represented as involved in a downward spiral which culminated in degradation and suicide. The narrator's anxiety at the development of his narrative is suggested by his representation of the relationship of Syd and Linley. The threatening nature of Syd's sexual vigour is illustrated by her continued vitality while the imagery of degeneration is transposed onto the male transgressor. An old friend who visits Linley is

> shocked by the change for the worse which he perceived in the fugitive master of Mount Morven. Linley's stout figure of former times had fallen away, as if he had suffered under long illness; his healthy colour had faded; he made an effort to assume the hearty manner that had once been natural to him, which was simply pitiable to see. (14)

Syd remains vigorous and her experience is explicitly disassociated by the narrative voice from the conventional fate of the "fallen woman". Syd discovers that Linley no longer loves her: "if she had been a few years older, Herbert Linley might never again have seen her a living creature. But she was too young to follow any train of repellent thought persistently to its end." (15) The narrator's argument that Syd's conduct is due to immaturity is subverted by a further level of meaning. Syd's youth suggests that she is a member of a younger generation which will come to reject established ideas and behavioural norms. The psychological strength of women, their ability to cope with difficult circumstances, is disturbing. Like Mercy Merrick in The New Magdalen and Alicia Raven in "The Dream-Woman", Syd is threatening because she does not conform to the stereotype of the "fallen woman" by committing suicide. It is significant that it is at this point that the relationship of Syd and Linley begins to break down. Syd is no longer dependent on Linley because her moral strength has been brought to the fore.

The progress of the narrative has exposed the problematic nature of Victorian discourses on femininity. The narrator begins to express his anxiety at the weakness of the masculine hegemony. He consequently diverts problematic and threatening aspects of femininity away from Syd and Catherine and centres them in the figure of Mrs Presty. He is thereby able to order his fictional world and to deny his anxieties.

Blame for Linley's actions is displaced onto Mrs Presty. The narrative increasingly establishes the source of Linley's transgression in her behaviour rather than his. The narrator depicts Mrs Presty's attempts to separate Catherine and Linley and to further Catherine's relationship with Bennydeck as destructive behaviour. The process becomes explicit when Catherine finally becomes angry with Mrs Presty, who has been criticising Syd, and identifies her with the idea of the "evil genius" of the family. Mrs Presty's advice and actions are represented as the mechanism which has broken up the home. The narrator initially questioned orthodox Victorian notions of femininity. He now makes use of these discourses in order to suggest that self-reliant women represent a threat to the established social order.

The Evil Genius is Collins's most explicit exploration of the problem of female sexuality. The figures of Catherine Linley and Sydney Westerfield parallel the ideal wife and daughter figures common in Victorian art and literature. The narrator at first responds to his own creations by acknowledging the tensions inherent in the Victorian ideal of femininity. The implications of the development of the narrative become increasingly disturbing to him. He evades problematic issues by re-asserting the norms of conventional domesticity of which he was initially critical.

Footnotes

1. Joan N. Burstyn, Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood, Croom Helm, New York, 1980, p. 10.
2. Saturday Review, vol 32, p. 5.
3. Deborah Gorham, The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal, Croom Helm, New York, 1982, pp. 6-7.
4. Westminster Review, vol 53, pp. 456-7.
5. The Evil Genius (1886): Chatto, London, 1907, p. 153.
6. Ibid., p. 101.
7. Ibid., p. 173.
8. Ibid., p. 173.
9. Ibid., p. 173.
10. Ibid., p. 173.
11. Ibid., p. 105.
12. Ibid., p. 133.
13. Ibid., p. 41.
14. Ibid., p. 179.
15. Ibid., p. 186.

(vii)

The Guilty River (1886): alienation and the submerged self.

The Guilty River is the narrative of Gerard Roylake, a young Englishman raised in Germany. Roylake describes a series of events which begin some years before the time of writing and which culminate in the recent past. A sub-narrative is provided by the diary of the unnamed deaf lodger. It is a spontaneous response to events long past when he gives it to Roylake to read.

Roylake's narrative begins at a point in time shortly after he has returned to his landed estate in England after the death of his father. He finds the society of his stepmother, Lady Roylake, and that of her friends uncongenial but becomes attracted to Cristel Toller, the daughter of a neighbouring miller. Cristel has another admirer, her father's deaf lodger, who gives Roylake his diary to read. Roylake feels sympathy on reading this narrative and attempts to befriend the man, who then tries to poison him. The lodger, inspired by an account of a criminal case he has been reading, plans to abduct Cristel. However, the miller, who has secretly read the same account, abducts her in order to protect her from the attentions of both

the lodger and Roylake. Some time later Roylake receives a letter from the dying lodger expressing his penitence. Roylake discovers the whereabouts of Cristel and marries her.

Roylake describes himself as an outsider to English society. He is "a stranger among my own country people, with the every-day habits and every-day pleasures of my youthful life left behind me."(1) He is dislocated from the German culture of his childhood; his narrative functions as an account of a transitional experience of alienation and re-integration into Victorian society.

Roylake's narrative exposes Victorian country-house society as an environment in which emotions and desires are repressed beneath a facade of gentility. He says of Lady Roylake's claim that she does not object to him smoking:

> If I suffocated my stepmother, her own polite equivocation would justify the act. She settled herself opposite to me in an arm-chair. The agonies that she must have suffered, in preventing her face from expressing emotions of disgust, I dare not attempt to imagine, even at this distance of time. (2)

When Lady Roylake expresses pleasure that Roylake appears to admire one of her friends, Roylake asserts that "I am strongly disposed to think that she had not allowed her feelings to express themselves so unreservedly since she was a girl."(3) Her

friends appear to him to possess similar qualities. He describes Lady Rachel Millbay as "a false woman"[4].

Roylake cannot assume the mannerisms he observes in his step-mother's friends because his upbringing has not exposed him to the influence of established ideologies of social behaviour which is Lady Roylake's cultural heritage. His response is to retreat into himself. His meeting with the deaf lodger is a metaphor for psychic discovery. The anonymous lodger is in a parallel position to Roylake. His deafness corresponds to Roylake's feelings of alienation. Roylake describes himself as "a stranger among my own country people"[5], while the lodger is a social outsider because of his deafness: "his pitiable infirmity seemed to place him beyond the pale of social intercourse."[6] The relationship of the two men recalls that of Oscar and Nugent in Poor Miss Finch. Oscar is a parallel figure to the lodger: his deformity represents the feelings of alienation which are suppressed beneath the surface personality of the confident and sociable Nugent. Similarly, the lodger's deafness symbolises the sense of social isolation submerged in Roylake.

Although Roylake has distanced himself from others, he is attracted by Cristel. He initially feels that he wishes to remain alienated from others because members of his own class appear essentially dishonest. He is sexually attracted to

Cristel, however, since she appears to be without affectation. Cristel reminds Roylake that he knew her as a very young child before he left for Germany, a circumstance which questions his sense of alienation by depicting the environment which appears alien to him as a significant part of his past. His attachment to Cristel encourages Roylake to re-integrate himself into English society on his own terms by marrying her and engaging her help in managing his estate.

Roylake is represented as troubled by contrary impulses. Cristel renews his interest in others although he remains drawn to the lodger, a circumstance which symbolises his desire to retreat into himself. The deaf man claims that the process of reading his narrative entails penetration of his surface personality. It is a means of "looking below the surface of me"[7]. The lodger's narrative also represents Roylake's penetration of his own surface personality. Like Glenney in Jezebel's Daughter, whose reading of Madame Fontaine's letters forces him to contemplate female criminality, Roylake finds that the reading of another's private document is a challenging and distressing experience. While Madame Fontaine's sub-narrative challenges Glenney by exposing the existence of deviance within women, Roylake is forced to acknowledge that he himself possesses criminal tendencies.

The lodger's written narrative reveals the emergence and growth of his sense of alienation. He describes his discovery of family antecedents as having produced a negative effect on his mental state. The illness which culminates in disability befalls him during a prolonged consideration of the dangerous potential which he believes his heredity to represent. It occurred "while I was still troubled by these doubts."[8] The isolation of deafness represents the alienation induced by consciousness of a criminal heredity.

It is his belief in this criminal heredity which stimulates the deaf man to explore his negative potential. It allows him to compensate for his feelings of alienation by depicting himself as a notorious criminal: "What a dangerous man I may yet prove to be!"[9] he enthuses after reading accounts of the acts of famous criminals. By imagining himself as the perpetrator of antisocial activities the lodger takes revenge on the society from which he feels alienated. Reading the narrative allows Roylake to understand the deaf man's motivation, and leads him to a growing awareness of the sources of his own negative tendencies. The lodger's narrative places Roylake's decision to marry Cristel in a new light. Roylake wishes to revenge himself on English society, from which he feels alienated, by offending conventions of social class.

For a short time Roylake and the deaf man understand and feel sympathy for one another. This suggests that Roylake temporarily comes to terms with the repressed parts of himself. However, mental stability proves difficult to maintain. Roylake's narrative exposes the decay of Victorian society, in which personal relationships are becoming corrupted. Toller's mill symbolises industry and commerce, and the miller himself represents the degeneration of Victorian England. Roylake's narrative describes him as "fallen away in the flesh."(10) He is compared to an enbalmed mummy:

> I dimly remembered him as old and small and withered. Advancing years had wasted him away, in the interval, until his white miller's clothes hung about him in empty folds. His fleshless face would have looked like the face of a mummy, but for the restless brightness of his little watchful black eyes. (11)

The mill is a parallel image of corruption. The industrial structures which initially made England rich and powerful are revealed to be decayed and debased. The old mill is described as "venerable"(12) but the extension built onto it appears "a hideous modern contrast to all that was left of its ancient neighbour."(13) The landscape around it is similarly decayed: "The neglected trees grew so close together that they were undermining their own lives, and poisoning each other."(14) The allusion to poison associates the trees with the lodger who attempts to poison Roylake. The trees symbolise the self-divided

nature of Roylake/the lodger and also represent relationships between individuals who are blighting each other's lives.

As Lady Roylake and the miller act to separate Roylake and Cristel, the lodger becomes violent in his desire to have her, forming a parallel with Roylake's psychological response to the thwarting of his plans. The river which flows into the mill parallels the psychological state of Roylake/the lodger with the decline of Victorian England. The lodger equates the river with his mental life: "I watch the flow of the stream, and it seems to associate itself with the flow of my thoughts."(15) As the lodger's intentions become murderous, the stream appears to take on his negative qualities, becoming the "guilty river" of the title. The power source provided by rivers was fundamental to the development of industry in Victorian England. Through the image of the "guilty river" industrial development becomes associated with crime, violence and coercion.

The closure of The Guilty River is simplistic. Roylake takes refuge from his anxieties in fantasy. His fictional world is re-ordered according to his desires. Initially Roylake's narrative explored the social opposition which threatens his marriage to Cristel. This opposition appeared to be insurmountable and Roylake seemed psychologically fragile. The closure of the novel

denies these problems. The removal of Lady Roylake from dominance in the house and her replacement by Cristel fulfils Roylake's fantasy and denies aspects of femininity he finds uncongenial. Like Hartright in The Woman in White, Roylake achieves power over those who have thwarted him through the closure of his narrative. The women of his own class are assertive and influential. By replacing them with Cristel, whom Roylake dominates and who is his social inferior, he can depict himself as a figure of authority. Closure also denies the violent tendencies Roylake discovered within himself. The death of the lodger suggests that Roylake has overcome his destructive impulses.

The Guilty River appears to be a paradigm of Collins's technique in the later fiction. The development of a sub-text which reveals the psychological fraility of the novel's narrator, closure which expresses the narrator's fantasy and the use of sub-narratives are structural devices common within the later fiction. However, these devices form a less complex relationship with one another than in Collins's more satisfying novels. A brief comparison with Jezebel's Daughter illustrates this. In Jezebel's Daughter sub-narratives challenge Glenney's opinions despite his attempts to deny their subversive implications. A sub-text is formed which exposes Glenney's anxieties and reveals his narrative to be a device with which he attempts to maintain outmoded ideologies. In The Guilty River the lodger symbolises

repressed aspects of Roylake's psychology. His diary expresses that which remains unsaid in Roylake's narrative. Sub-narrative becomes sub-text. It is evident from this comparison that what is lacking in The Guilty River is the conflict within narrative and between narratives which gives Collins's later fiction much of its interest. Roylake does not interact sufficiently with narrative. He does not battle with the implications of sub-narratives nor does he become threatened by the development of his own account as Glenney does. Both he and his narrative appear detached and without internal conflict. The other characters, with the exception of the lodger, are similarly uninteresting and unconvincing figures. They are static, unchanging and without complex psychology. The Guilty River is a fictional exercise which, despite its technical neatness, lacks the complexity which characterises the best of Collins's later fiction.

Footnotes

1. The Guilty River, Arrowsmith, London, 1886, p. 6.
2. Ibid., p. 92.
3. Ibid., p. 94.
4. Ibid., p. 92.
5. Ibid., p. 6.
6. Ibid., p. 19.
7. Ibid., p. 25.
8. Ibid., p. 35.
9. Ibid., p. 45.
10. Ibid., p. 53.
11. Ibid., p. 53.
12. Ibid., p. 9.
13. Ibid., p. 10.
14. Ibid., p. 9.
15. Ibid., p. 85.

(viii)

Little Novels (1887): narratives of complicity; personal responsibility in a complex moral world.

The stories in Little Novels assert the existence of connections between apparently disparate situations and individuals within Victorian society. The titles of the stories follow a standard formula which associates individuals in apparently contrasting social positions. "Mr Policeman and the Cook" and "Miss Mina and the Groom" are examples. Standard thinking on crime is revealed as inadequate because it locates deviance within particular sections of society. The stories reveal the existence of a common social responsibility for deviant behaviour.

Little Novels identifies self-repression as a standard Victorian experience. In such a cultural environment the idea of narrative becomes important as the form in which the self may be expressed. One of the most successful stories is "Miss Jeromette and the Clergyman", which exposes the sexual relationship of a clergyman and a "fallen woman". It is a narrative of psychological self-discovery. The clergyman narrates a story of events leading up to a crisis in his life. He tells of his relationship with Jeromette and how he left her when the time approached for him to take orders, finally revealing his

belief that one of his sermons induced Jeromette's new lover to kill her.

The clergyman expresses the moral certainty he experienced whilst he felt his fate separated him forever from that of Jeromette and the world of "sin" associated with her. He feels sure that "a Christian man may find his certain refuge from temptation in the safeguards of his religion"(1) and look forward to "the steady and certain gain which was the ultimate reward of his faith."(2) During his work as a priest he delivers a sermon which is a narrative expressing moral certainty in terms of the difference between Christians and others. It is this sermon which he believes to have induced the murder of Jeromette.

"Miss Jeromette and the Clergyman" suggests that narrative is complex, operating on various levels of meaning. The clergyman believes his sermon is a narrative illustrating positive Christian values. The supernatural vision he experiences presents it to him in a new light. He sees that to the young man it expressed the existence within himself of repressed violent tendencies and provided a model through which they might be carried out: "my sermon showed him his own deadly hatred towards her, reflected in the case of another man."(3)

This re-construction of narrative allows the clergyman to understand himself. He perceives the existence of a level of sub-

textual meaning in his narrative which expresses his own repressed tendencies. The actions of the young man form a sub-textual image of the clergyman's repressed tendencies. Jeromette is a reminder of the sexual needs which subvert the clergyman's discourse of pure Christian masculinity. The killing of Jeromette is a metaphor for the clergyman's attempt to deny his sexual desires. The young man symbolises the clergyman's repressed violent tendencies.

Morality complicates and confuses relationships in "Mr. Marmaduke and the Minister". This story is in the form of the narrative of a Scottish minister punctuated later by the verbal sub-narrative of his son-in-law, Marmaduke. The minister tells how he travelled to London to visit his daughter, Felicia, and found her distressed that her husband, Marmaduke, kept rooms in their house locked and was often absent at night. The minister tells how he initially assumed that Marmaduke was involved in debauchery of some kind, but discovered that he was a famous actor, a fact which he had so far successfully concealed. The locked rooms are revealed to be Marmaduke's costume wardrobes and his absences the nights when he acted in plays. The minister describes how Marmaduke explained that he was forced to deceive his wife because, although his behaviour and wealth ensured that they initially perceived him as a "gentleman", the minister's firm views about the immorality of acting would have induced him to forbid the marriage:

> Just remember how your father talked about theatres and actors, when I was at Caulkirk, and how you listened in dutiful agreement with him. Would he have consented to your marriage if he had known that I was one of the "spouting rogues", associated with the "painted Jezebels" of the playhouse? He would never have consented - and you yourself, my darling, would have trembled at the bare idea of marrying an actor. (4)

The minister is aware that Marmaduke is a caring, loyal and wealthy husband and is therefore forced to re-assess the inflexible moral position which categorises his son-in-law as deviant.

In Little Novels standard Victorian ideas are exposed as constructs which mask, rather than express truth. "Mr Policeman and the Cook" is the narrative of a policeman which is punctuated by the verbal contributions of a cook. She provides the policeman with an account of events on the night of her husband's murder which is designed to obscure her own guilt. She is a parallel figure to Mrs Yatman in the earlier short story "The Biter Bit". Mrs Yatman encourages the policeman who admires her to suspect her lodger of stealing her husband's valuables in order to conceal that she used tham to pay off her debts. The policeman-narrator of "Mr Policeman and the Cook" initially perceives the cook in terms of standard Victorian thinking on femininity. Various symptoms of female frailty such as fainting and crying reinforce the policeman's assumption that she is helpless. Finding her sexually attractive, he is encouraged to act as her protector, unaware that it was she who committed the murder. He describes himself as being tempted to commit an act of violence on

discovering that the cook murdered her husband: "If she and I met before time had helped me to control myself, I had a horrid fear that I might turn murderer next, and kill her then and there."[5] As guardian of the law the policeman is an embodiment of social stability, and as narrator he is guardian of the text and maintains its stability and authority. Mental breakdown threatens the narrative and the social order it reflects.

The stories in Little Novels represent personal happiness as dependent on the ability to perceive hidden meaning. Mina, in "Miss Mina and the Groom", makes a happy marriage because she perceives the inherent nobility of her future husband, the groom, who is revealed to be the illegitimate son of people of high rank. Mr. Percy in "Mr. Percy and the Prophet" forgives a man who tried to kill him because he perceives that he possessed good qualities which were strained by trying circumstances. "Miss Bertha and the Yankee" is highly reminiscent of "Miss or Mrs?". Although it is one of the better stories in Little Novels, it does not develop themes already explored in the earlier novella. It is an omniscient narrative punctuated by the contributions of Bertha and Varleigh, which are statements to a court of law. The statements are eye-witness accounts of circumstances surrounding Varleigh's attack on Stanwick as revenge for his success in courting Bertha. As the story progresses, Bertha becomes increasingly aware of the existence of a false surface personality "under which men hide what is selfish and savage in their natures from

the women whom it is their interest to deceive."[6] Bertha is courted by two apparently respectable men, Stanwick and the American, Varleigh. Social roles and definitions of class are exposed as unstable and unreliable. Stanwick's status as a "gentleman" ensures that he is not required to provide Bertha with a narrative of his life and experiences which might allow her to become acquainted with his true nature. His manner immediately establishes him as "respectable". He recalls Farnaby in The Fallen Leaves, whose status as a "gentleman" allows him to conceal his immorality.

The narratives of Bertha and Varleigh re-define Stanwick as deviant and thereby legitimise their own union. However, although the surface narrative of "Miss Bertha and the Yankee" suggests a contrast between Stanwick and Varleigh, on a deeper level Stanwick is an image of Varleigh's negative tendencies which he must repress before Bertha will consent to marry him. In this way both negative and positive characteristics are revealed within the "gentleman".

Little Novels does not reveal Collins at his best. Although some of the stories are entertaining or interesting, the early collections After Dark (1856) and The Queen of Hearts (1858) are far superior. The plots of the tales in Little Novels lack complexity, the characters are often disappointingly stereotypical and the collection lacks the connecting narrative which provides an added dimension of interest in The Queen of Hearts and, to a lesser extent, in After Dark. The

stories in Little Novels nevertheless connect closely with leading preoccupations in the most important of Collins's later writings. They reveal Victorian respectability to be a construct dependent on the ideological assumption of a considerable gulf between normality and deviance. Narratives which endorse standard discourses of respectability and morality are subverted by complex sub-texts or sub-narratives establishing connections between apparently disparate individuals and the co-existence of positive and negative characteristics within individuals.

Footnotes

1. Little Novels, Dover, New York, 1977, p. 90.
2. Ibid., p. 90.
3. Ibid., p. 97.
4. Ibid., p. 166.
5. Ibid., p. 243.
6. Ibid., pp. 206-7.

(ix)

The Legacy of Cain (1889): female emancipation and the decay of masculine authority.

The Legacy of Cain is the narrative of a retired prison Governor. In the first part of his narrative he recalls events which form a prologue to the main action of the novel. In this section of the novel he recalls the execution of a murderess and the disposal of her child. At this point the Governor's narrative breaks off and is replaced by excerpts from the diaries of Eunice and Helena Gracedieu. The diaries contrast with the Governor's narrative. They are not the products of reflection on past events but are spontaneous responses to events occurring on the days the entries were written and are private documents not intended for others to read.

The diary entries are followed by the resumption of the Governor's narrative. The events he now describes are much more recent to his memory. They occur eighteen years after those described in the prologue at a time when the Governor had retired from his post in the prison. His contribution is again punctuated by Helena's diary which describes her progress towards criminality. The Governor's narrative then resumes and the novel is closed. Sub-narrative voices also exist within the Governor's account. Eunice's verbal description of her dreams and Miss Jillgall's verbal account of Eunice's violence towards

her sister discuss female deviance. A contrasting sub-narrative is the newspaper article which describes the success of Helena in founding a rational religion. The verbal sub-narratives of Eunice and Miss Jillgall are less private than the diary entries as they are designed for one other person to hear. The newspaper article is, by contrast, intended for widespread publication. As the novel progresses sub-narratives depicting female deviance and criminality become increasingly more public. Although the Governor is the overall narrator and editor-figure, his narrative struggles to control and contain subversive sub-narrative voices which establish a relationship between female criminality and womens' desire for independence.

The main events of the novel may be briefly summarised as follows. Eunice is the daughter of a woman who murdered her husband. After Eunice is born Mr Gracedieu saves her from being adopted by the vindictive Miss Chance, her father's mistress. Gracedieu's wife later gives birth to Helena. Gracedieu determines that the circumstances of Eunice's birth should be supressed and the girls are brought up as sisters. Eunice visits London and her love for Phillip Dunboyne is reciprocated. When Dunboyne visits Eunice, Helena determines to take him from her sister. Dunboyne reciprocates her advances. The Governor is called to the house by Eunice's friend Miss Jillgall. The mentally ill Gracedieu subsequently tries to murder him, mistakenly believing that he is Helena's natural father. Eunice tells the Governor that she feels the presence of the spirit of her dead mother tempting her to

murder Helena. Helena attempts to murder Dunboyne when she finds that he has transferred his affections back to Eunice, who prevents her with violent threats. Eunice marries Dunboyne and Helena successfully founds a rational religion.

The prologue describes the death of the murderess and her determination that her child will be cared for after her death. As in Jezebel's Daughter, the murderess possesses maternal feelings. She thereby challenges stereotypes of womanhood since maternal care associates her with the Victorian ideal of womanhood. It therefore becomes important to representatives of the hegemony to establish the inherent deviance of the murderess. Consequently, the prison doctor creates a discourse of potential degeneration which stresses the biological abnormality of the murderess and claims that Eunice will display the same characteristics. He echoes thinkers such as the French doctor Benedict-Augustin Morel who claimed in his Traite des Maladies Mentales (1860) that each generation would receive a progressively heavier inheritance of any negative mental characteristic and Henry Drummond who, in Natural Law in the Spiritual World (1883), designated beggars as a human type which had reverted from domestication to a worthless feral form due to inherent retrogressive tendencies. The prison doctor constructs a narrative of Eunice's future in which negative heredity will dominate her actions:

> Judging by my observations and experience, that ill-fated baby's chance of inheriting the virtues of her parents is not to be compared with her chances of inheriting their

> vices; especially if she happens to take after her mother. There, the virtue is not conspicuous, and the vice is one enormous fact. When I think of the growth of that poisonous hereditary taint, which may come with time ... I see the smooth surface of the minister's domestic life with dangers lurking under it. (1)

Like the beggars in Drummond's article, Eunice's inherent degenerate tendencies are envisaged as antagonistic to domesticity and patriarchal authority.

In opposition to this view the Governor creates an alternative narrative of Eunice's future. He also incorporates neo-Darwinian discourses into his narrative but argues that environment will be the decisive factor in Eunice's development. Darwin had asserted in The Descent of Man (1871) that man was a "social animal"[2] in whom the "approbation and disapprobation of his fellows"[3] helped to develop a "moral sense"[4] The Governor asserts that Eunice will grow up in the positive environment of a clergyman's home where she will be influenced by the morality of those around her. She will "have every advantage that education can offer to her"[5] and will be accustomed from her earliest years to "restraining and purifying influences."[6]

The Governor argues that the environment of a middle-class home will contain criminal tendencies. It is significant that this discourse is that of a prison Governor and that the prologue is set in a prison. A parallel is created between the ideological control

exercised by a clergyman father and the physical limitation of the prison. The prison is a means whereby society controls criminal tendencies: it is an image of the power of masculine hegemony.

The Governor has retired by the time he writes the prologue. By suggesting that the work of the prison may be continued in the community the Governor implies that the ideals which informed his work will continue to be relevant to society. The prison symbolises ideologies of paternalism and passive femininity which had ensured the maintenance of the masculine hegemony but were becoming outmoded by the 1880s. The murderess represents female deviance. She is contained and ultimately destroyed by the prison, a metaphor for Victorian discourses on femininity which restricted women's behaviour. The Governor's narrative serves a parallel function to the prison. He attempts to confine subversive accounts of female criminality within his own narrative.

The presence of the vindictive Miss Chance reveals the limitations of the Governor's discourse on heredity and that of the doctor. Assertive and determined, she recalls Mrs Rook in "I Say No" and Mrs Presty in The Evil Genius. Each is active, independent and is scathing of masculine discourses. Miss Chance's name indicates her function within the narrative. She represents those aspects of human experience which cannot be considered as evidence of any discernible operation of scientific laws and are therefore described as chance.

The doctor is forced to acknowledge that chance is a factor: it intrudes into his scientific discourse. The Governor's narrative of the defeat and retirement of Miss Chance argues that scientific discourses can order and explain the world. His narrative asserts that the idea of chance is now outmoded. Factors which affect Eunice will not be random but the effect of quantifiable scientific laws.

Gracedieu represents the alternative world-view expressed by the Christian neo-chivalric ideal. He recalls Goldenheart in The Fallen Leaves and Germaine in The Two Destinies, who describe their decisions to marry "fallen women" as a means of protecting weak and vulnerable women. Like them, Gracedieu sees himself as a knight errant figure. He perceives Eunice's mother as a sinner in distress whom he must sacrifice his own comfort to help: "I know of no sacrifice in my power," he said fervently, "to which I would not rather submit, than let you die in the present dreadful state of your mind."[7] Gracedieu's chivalry is the last recourse of Eunice's mother since her position as a condemned criminal ensures her passivity. However, Gracedieu's ideological system begins to fail him and his peaceful home life to be disrupted as both Eunice and Gracedieu's own daughter Helena cease to be passive and begin to assert their independence as they approach maturity.

Helena and Eunice become independent through their ability to create narrative. When they approach maturity each is given a diary.

Narrative power leaves the Governor and passes to them in the form of these diaries. The reader would expect that, as editor and overall narrator of The Legacy of Cain, the Governor would have read the diaries. Masculine intrusion into the private writings of women is an important element in many of Collins's novels. However, the Governor has less power over Helena and Eunice than corresponding readers of womens' writings in the earlier fiction. Fosco, in The Woman in White, enters his comments within Marian Halcombe's diary. Although Marian's diary is a challenge to Fosco's power, his penetration of her private world provides him with psycho-sexual pleasure and allows him to forestall her plans to defeat him. Glenney, in Jezebel's Daughter, is less sure of his power than Fosco. His initial ill-concealed eagerness to peruse Madame Fontaine's correspondence soon gives way to defensiveness as he comments on Madame Fontaine's letters, dismissing the analysis of female criminality contained within them as the idle speculation of a bored wife who could have no real insight into the nature of crime. Fosco and Glenney are both threatened by the private writings of women. However, they assert their authority over the writer and their narrative by providing a commentary on them. The Governor's failure to do so is a device which suggests that changes have occurred since the writing of the earlier novels. Collins recognises that in the late 1880s women were creating their own discourses with less hindrance than ever before.

The Governor's contribution expresses the opinions of a member of the masculine hegemony. Helena's narrative offers a woman's perspective on the sources of human action paralleling the discourses created by the prison doctor and the Governor. Masculine narratives establish authority through their scientific content. Helena's narrative is overtly subjective. It is a rigorous examination of the self in the search for motive.

Helena is a type of the "new woman", one of the most significant late-Victorian images of womanhood. Helena determines her own unconventional future and scorns established thinking, even though she has received an education dominated by religious and moral teaching which some reformers argued would make women better wives and daughters. (Gissing's novel <u>In the Year of Jubilee</u>, which concerns a young woman who ultimately finds the relatively sophisticated education she has received unhelpful and limiting, was published in 1894.) Education does not instill into Helena the moral qualities envisaged by the Governor in his discourse on the positive effects of environment. Like Madame Fontaine in <u>Jezebel's Daughter</u>, she uses conformity to established norms of behaviour to disguise her violent tendencies. Helena describes how, during scripture class, "I may long to box the ears of the whole class, but it is my duty to keep a smiling face and to be a model of patience."[8] Her diary subverts the Governor's notion of the positive effects of environment by

establishing education as a significant factor in her development towards criminality.

Helena's narrative reveals that her education is a stimulus to her actions because it has encouraged her to consider herself superior to Eunice. Helena is a model pupil in her father's eyes because she appears to have responded to his teaching. She is consequently accustomed to regarding herself as the intellectual superior of Eunice, whom she describes as "my slow-minded sister"[9] and as "a charming girl, in spite of her mind."[10] Ironically, Helena's Christian education has developed her mind sufficiently to ensure that she perceives the limited nature of her own future. Unlike Eunice, whose self-deprecating and unquestioning nature tends to see life in terms of offering various daunting challenges which she is fearful she may not live up to, Helena is acutely aware of the narrowness and restriction of the middle-class feminine experience. The pressure of the importance of matrimony as the female purpose in life and the fact that it will be the only legitimate escape from the oppressive paternal environment of her home are identified by Helena as the stimuli which induce her to take Phillip from her sister:

> Has the growth of this masterful feeling been encouraged by the envy and jealousy stirred in me, when I found Eunice (my inferior in every respect) distinguished by the devotion of a handsome lover and having a brilliant marriage in view - while I was left neglected, with no prospect of changing my title from Miss to Mrs? (11)

Helena's Christian education has stimulated independence and defiance rather than inculcating morality and passivity.

As her narrative develops, Helena progresses from desiring to possess a man to determination to possess the power enjoyed by the masculine hegemony. The intellectual limitation of her domestic life stimulates this intention. She resents the petty challenge of "racking my invention to discover variety in dishes without over-stepping the limits of economy. I suppose I may confess it privately to myself - how sorry I am not to have been born a man."[12] Helena uses the scientific education which was beginning to become available to late-Victorian women when she enters the doctor's surgery and steals his poison. This incident recalls The Haunted Hotel in which Countess Narona's visit to Dr. Wybrow allows her to create a discourse challenging established medical wisdom. Helena's visit is still more subversive of masculine power. Unlike the Countess, she does not visit the doctor to gain the benefit of his knowledge. She deliberately chooses a moment when she knows he will be absent because she already has the knowledge she requires. She needs only the equipment which will allow her to put her plan into operation. Helena's theft of poison is a metaphor for social change. Women in the 1880s benefited from a more wide-ranging education than had been available to their predecessors. Public opinion was growing in favour of allowing more women to work in scientific and technical fields. The theft of poison

and the consequent weakening of Phillip symbolise the empowerment of women and the resulting decline of the masculine hegemony.

The final part of The Legacy of Cain recalls the closure of The Haunted Hotel in which Montbarry undermines the power of the Countess's sub-narrative by incorporating it within his version of events. The Governor's narrative is resumed and he attempts to limit the subversive influence of Helena's contribution by submerging it within his own. However, he is less successful in this respect than Montbarry. Since Helena's narrative subverts the Governor's discourse on the positive effects of environment, he finds it difficult to construct an ideological alternative to her amoral views. The Governor acknowledges that the masculine hegemony which Helena challenges is dangerously decayed. Gracedieu, unable to maintain his authority over his daughters, collapses into madness. Having initially perceived women as beings whom it was his duty to protect and guide, he later responds to Helena's defiance by regarding the dead wife he previously idealised as sexually deviant, and, like Germaine in The Two Destinies, seeing himself as the knight as warrior. He convinces himself that Helena is the product of an illicit sexual union between his dead wife and the Governor and attempts to kill him. The Governor acknowledges that Gracedieu is a "feeble"[13] and broken man.

Dunboyne is another figure who suggests the degeneration of the hegemony. He possesses "a nature so perilously weak, in many respects,

that it might drift into wickedness unless a stronger nature was at hand to hold it back."[14] The return of Miss Chance to treat the elder Mr Dunboyne's illness through her skill as a masseuse develops the theme of masculine insecurity. Scientific laws no longer seem able to explain the human experience. Humanity appears to be in the hands of chance.

The various ideologies espoused by members of the masculine hegemony have proved inadequate to maintain an alternative world-view. Eunice now becomes the focus of the Governor's hopes. Through her the Victorian ideal of womanhood may be resurrected. The Governor hopes that she will play the roles of dutiful daughter to Gracedieu and moral guide to Dunboyne. Eunice is no longer, however, the passive girl she was before the collapse of her relationship with Dunboyne. Absence from paternal domination while she acts as teacher to the children on a neighbouring farm allows Eunice to gain greater independence. Miss Jillgall is surprised and piqued to find that Eunice is no longer so susceptible to masculine persuasion. She wonders why Eunice has refused to see Dunboyne but cannot imagine that this is an independent decision. She tells the Governor "I feel inclined to go and ask her what has hardened her heart against a poor young man, who bitterly regrets his own folly. Do you think it was bad advice from the farmer or his wife?"[15] This development reflects changes occurring in late Victorian England. Although conservative discourses continued to represent femininity as a state of dependence,

the economic realities of a society in which women outnumbered men ensured that increasing numbers of middle-class women began to earn their own livings. For many middle-class women there was no father-figure or husband to direct their lives. In The Legacy of Cain this prevalent situation is associated with the ideological and physical decline of the masculine hegemony as symbolised by the collapse of Gracedieu.

Miss Jillgall's support for Dunboyne further subverts the power of the masculine hegemony. Her relationship with Eunice parallels that of Mrs Ellmother with Emily Brown in "I Say No". Miss Jillgall and Mrs Ellmother are both duenna-figures who attempt to ensure that their charge conforms to the Victorian ideal of womanhood. However, Miss Jillgall is a figure who challenges the established ideas of femininity which she verbally endorses. Like Mrs Ellmother, she is sexually unattractive, an "old maid" figure. However, unlike her predecessor, Miss Jillgall is neither passive, lacking in intellect nor physically frail. She is sprightly, voluble and active. The figure of Miss Jillgall reflects the growing independence of women in the late 1880s. Like Mrs Rook in "I Say No", she is a vital figure whose activity emphasises Dunboyne's passivity. Although overtly supporting him, she describes Phillip as a "poor young man" while she herself becomes the crusading figure who will challenge Eunice. The Governor's reveals that even independent women who serve men's interests are a source of anxiety. Although Eunice saves Dunboyne's life, the moment

of crisis when she faces Helena reveals that woman has usurped the role of the knight errant figure. The male lies weak and passive while Eunice does battle with the "demon"[16]. As Miss Jillgall perceives, this behaviour is such a profound deviation from Victorian norms of feminine behaviour that Eunice becomes a demon herself:

> It was not my sweet girl; it was a horrid transformation of her. I saw a fearful creature, with glittering eyes that threatened some unimaginable vengeance. Her lips were drawn back; they showed her clenched teeth. A burning red flush dyed her face. The hair of her head rose, little by little, slowly. (17)

The anxiety inspired by Eunice recalls the scientific discourse of negative heredity created by the prison doctor. This discourse, which then seemed to order and explain the social problem of human deviance, is resurrected in the form of a vision of supernatural horror. Miss Jillgall's narration of the moment in which Eunice most effectively asserts herself re-articulates the prison doctor's discourse on negative heredity and thereby subverts the construct of Eunice an idealised figure. An idea of powerful, independent and dangerous womanhood infiltrates the main narrative at the point when it appears to be re-asserting a normative view of femininity.

Miss Jillgall's description of this crisis is one of various sub-narratives which subvert the values represented and expressed by the Governor. The newspaper article in which the Governor reads that Helena has founded a rational religion based on the idea of "the great

intellect which asserts the superiority of woman over man"[18] offers an alternative narrative on the question of the "new woman". It enables a subversive idea of womanhood to infiltrate the closure of The Legacy of Cain. By enveloping the other narratives within the form of his own, the Governor expresses his ability and that of the hegemony he represents to order, contain and control subversive sub-narratives and thereby to curtail women's attempts to gain autonomy. However, sub-narratives remain a threatening presence, warning of the inevitability of the collapse of the existing hegemony.

The Governor's discourse is also subverted by the closure of his own narrative. The prologue to the main narrative established prison as a symbol of ideologies which maintained the status quo. The execution of the murderess within the prison suggested that the hegemony was able to prevent transgression of accepted codes of behaviour. At the close of The Legacy of Cain Helena is free. She evades the power of the ideologies represented by the prison. The contrast between her treatment and that of the murderess in the prologue suggests that women are beginning to free themselves from the constraints of conservative ideology.

The Legacy of Cain is one of Collins's most successful and interesting novels. The form of the novel reveals the power of narrative and discourse. Control of language is shown to be fundamental to social power and dominance. Within the novel's

structure masculine and feminine narratives expressing conflicting ideologies compete to establish and maintain authority. The dominant masculine voice of the prison Governor acknowledges the collapse of chivalric ideology and the inadequacy of scientific discourses to order and explain life. The ordering of the Governor's world becomes increasingly dependent on an idea of morally powerful but subservient femininity. Although the masculine narrative prevails, sub-narratives exploring the tensions inherent in the Governor's view and representing women as powerful and threatening permeate the text. The novel reflects changes in late Victorian society. The masculine hegemony tenuously maintains its power in the face of a highly threatening feminine challenge.

Footnotes

1. The Legacy of Cain, Chatto, London, 1889, p. 20.
2. Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man (1871), Norton, New York, 1970, p. 156.
3. Ibid., p. 156.
4. Ibid., pp. 156-7.
5. The Legacy of Cain, p. 44.
6. Ibid., p. 44.
7. Ibid., p. 9.
8. Ibid., p. 45.
9. Ibid., p. 44.
10. Ibid., p. 46.
11. Ibid., p. 115.
12. Ibid., p. 45.
13. Ibid., p. 158.
14. Ibid., p. 331.
15. Ibid., p. 247.
16. Ibid., p. 292.
17. Ibid., p. 293.
18. Ibid., p. 322.

(x)

Blind Love (1890): the idea of morality: an uncertain future.

Blind Love explores the conflicts of three individuals emotionally involved with one another. Lord Harry Norland and Hugh Mountjoy are rivals for the love of Iris Henley. Iris respects Hugh as the superior man but finds herself sexually attracted to Norland. Norland and Mountjoy have been fond of one another. Their friendship ends when they disagree seriously over the correct response to the murder of Hugh's brother, Arthur. Norland intends to hunt down and kill Arthur's murderer even though this means assassinating a fellow member of the Irish rebels, the Invincibles. Iris originally agrees with Mountjoy that marriage to Norland would be a mistake but changes her mind after she finds that the latter has attempted to commit suicide.

The central criminal act of the novel recalls the substitution of Anne Catherick for Laura Glyde in The Woman in White. Mountjoy's fears for the outcome of the marriage are justified when Norland's doctor friend, Vimpany, poisons a patient and passes his dead body off as the corpse of Norland in order that the Irish Lord may claim on a life insurance policy. Iris is implicated in the fraud by agreeing to pose as a widow to the insurance company. When Iris realises that a man has been murdered to facilitate the fraud, she leaves Norland. He allows

himself to be assassinated by the Invincibles. The relationships of Norland, Iris and Mountjoy allow Collins to explore the changes in the role of middle-class men and women in late-Victorian England.

Blind Love is, despite its flaws and fragmentary construction[1], an important novel in which Collins further explores the theme of psychological conflict. Like many characters in Collins's fiction, such as Roylake and the lodger in The Guilty River, Benjulia and Lemuel in Heart and Science and Macallan and Dexter in The Law and the Lady, the figures of Norland and Mountjoy represent contrasting aspects of one individual. Their emotional lives are closely paralleled. Both are deeply attached to Iris Henley and Arthur Mountjoy. Many characters who represent socially unacceptable aspects of an individual are associated with ill health, such as Oscar Dubourg in Poor Miss Finch, who suffers from epileptic fits and a blue complexion, Dexter in The Law and the Lady who is confined to a wheelchair and collapses into mental illness and the deaf lodger in The Guilty River. However, although Norland represents the rebellious, shadow side of the socially conformist Mountjoy, he is characterised by his health, vitality and mobility. Before marrying Iris his life is characterised by geographical and occupational change. He experiences life as a sailor, a travelling actor, a companion of Red Indians, a journalist, a spiritualist and an Irish Republican rebel. He says: "I am a variable man"[2]; Iris speaks of "my husband's variable nature"[3] and the narrator describes him as "a man whose whole idea

of life was motion, society, and action."[4]

Norland's instability appears to signify immaturity. Iris says that Norland is "delightfully innocent; he's like a nice boy"[5] and the narrative voice describes him as possessing a "genial boyish smile"[6]. Marriage requires from Norland a degree of physical and emotional stability which he has never yet experienced. He finds domestic life claustrophobic, often leaving Iris at home alone. He also finds it impossible to sustain his trust in his wife and begins to suspect her of flirtation with Mountjoy. Iris tells Mountjoy that Norland's instability makes it impossible for him to change his ways: "his repentance is sincere, while it lasts - only it doesn't last!"[7] Mountjoy's life reflects his inherent stability. He is financially comfortable. He makes judgements only after careful consideration and thereafter never wavers from them. He remains faithful to Iris despite her rejection of him. Blind Love seems to be a variation of the Bildungsroman in which the eventual death of Norland and Iris's marriage to Mountjoy symbolises an individual overcoming his youthful instability in preparation for a mature life.

Apparent progress is, however, subverted by a level of sub-textual meaning. The social backgrounds against which events occur create an impression of the decay of Victorian civilisation. The provincial town of Honeybuzzard in which Norland and Mountjoy seek out Iris before her marriage becomes an image of the decay of England:

"for years past, commerce had declined, and population had decreased."[8] Honeybuzzard subverts conventional Victorian discourses equating technology with progress. The introduction of the railway fails to revive the town:

> The directors of the new railway, after a stormy meeting, decided on offering (by means of a station) a last chance of revival to the dying town. The town had not vitality enough left to be grateful; the railway stimulant produced no effect. (9)

Civilisation is not only stagnant but unstable. When Mountjoy visits Vimpany's new house in London he finds it "flimsily-built"[10] and Iris's father is forced to go on a journey "occasioned by doubt of the soundness of his investments in foreign securities."[11] Even the fundamental structure of class difference appears to be eroding. Faced with Vimpany's servant Mountjoy finds that "her familiar manner, with its vulgar assumption of equality in the presence of a stranger, revealed the London-bred maid-servant of modern times."[12]

The threat offered by the Invincibles unifies such detail and expresses the precarious position of the existing social order. Iris meets Norland while he is a member of their movement. A ruined house forms an image of the threat offered by the rebels to the existing order and its values. In this way the figure of Norland and his negative influence over Iris's life is placed within the context of a broader cultural decay. Iris reacts negatively to the ruin. Her

response suggests that she perceives the destructive reality beneath the appealing image of Norland as a dashing, romantic figure:

> A ruin which she had not previously noticed showed itself among the trees on her left hand. Her curiosity was excited; she strayed aside to examine it more closely. The crumbling walls, as she approached them, looked like the remains of an ordinary dwelling-house. Age is essential to the picturesque effect of decay: a modern ruin is an unnatural and depressing object- and here the horrid thing was. (13)

Iris "strays aside" from the path as she will from the constraints of respectable behaviour. The ruin is "an ordinary dwelling-house", an image of the collapse of domestic life and the corruption of its values which will be a result of Iris's marriage.

The moral decay of Iris and Norland, who passes from contempt of Vimpany to acquiescence in his schemes, is placed within the context of personal alienation. Their situation recalls that of Roylake and the lodger in The Guilty River. When Mountjoy asks Iris why she degrades herself by marriage to Norland she replies:

> Mine is a lonely lot - isn't it? I have acquaintances among the few ladies who sometimes visit at my father's house, but no friends. My mother's family, as I have always been told, cast her off when she married a man in trade, with a doubtful reputation. I don't even know where my relations live. Isn't Lord Harry good enough for me, as I am now? When I look at my prospects, is it wonderful if I talk like a desperate woman? (14)

Norland's life is characterised by a parallel sense of alienation. Prior to his marriage he has entered many communities but his negative experiences in each have resulted in failure to establish lasting personal relationships. He leaves his position as a journalist on account of "an unfortunate love-affair"[15], became "wearied of the society of actors and actresses"[16] and is abandoned by the Indian tribe with whom he lives for a short time.

The relationship between feelings of alienation and acts of transgression in Blind Love is established within the context of a social environment in which alienation is a standard experience. Alienation plays an important part in the moral decline of both Iris and Norland. In late-Victorian England personal relationships are stilted and formal and the expression of emotion is considered abnormal and vulgar. Iris is told by her father that "if we don't get in each other's way, we shall do very well"[17]. Norland's paternal experience is equally negative: "It was said of the Earl that he had not been a good father; he had cruelly neglected both his sons."[18] Friendships are difficult to establish on account of the existence of social structures which establish emotional reticence as normal. Like Hester Dethridge in Man and Wife, who attacks Geoffrey Delamayne in order to save the life of her mistress, Anne Silvester, and Mrs Ellmother in "I Say No", who entreats Alban Morris to ensure that Emily Brown does not discover the truth about her father's death, Fanny Mere, Iris's maid, finds that her devotion to her mistress

induces her to go beyond the bounds of her social role in order to try and protect her. She consequently begins to spy on Vimpany. However, the barriers to relationships established by constructs of status and gentility remain powerful and prevent Fanny from expressing her devotion to her mistress in words: "Being a servant I mustn't say I love that one. If I was a lady, I don't know that I should say it."[19] Mrs Vimpany describes similar feelings. She tells Mountjoy "I am almost afraid to say that I love Iris."[20]

The moral decline of both Iris and Mountjoy accelerates after their marriage. The emotional failure which enables Norland to become involved in the murder of Vimpany's patient, Oxybe, is paralleled by the collapse of his relationship with Iris. Marriage, conventionally perceived as a normalising and positive moral experience, is represented as playing an integral part in moral and social decline. Marriage not only fails to contain deviant potential but its ideology creates a structure which encourages personal moral decline. Iris conforms to standard ideas of feminine matrimonial duty by admiring her husband and acceding to his wishes. It is this which initiates her own moral decay.

When Mountjoy visits the newly-weds in Paris he finds Iris in a highly unstable mental condition. Her response to the problem posed by subjection to a husband she instinctively feels inferior to herself is already forcing her outside accepted behavioural codes: "she reviled

herself in language that broke through the restraints by which good breeding sets its seal on a woman's social rank."[21] Iris later evades the moral complexities of her situation by placing Norland's fraudulent behaviour within the standard discourse of the husband's role as protector of his wife. Recalling Miss Dunross in The Two Destinies, she suggests that Norland is a knight errant figure whose actions are motivated by concern for his lady-love. She tells him that she knows it was concern for her which motivated him: "It is through love of your wife - through love of your wife - oh! husband."[22] The novel subverts her perspective, however, as it becomes clear that Norland is motivated by his own desires. The idea of the husband as protector of his wife is exposed as a construct with which Iris simplifies the complexity of her situation.

The idea that marriage stimulated deviant behaviour was, although still radical, a well-established one by the 1880s. George Sand had argued through her novels and other writings that marriage which was not based on equality of the sexes would inevitably induce women to behave badly. In 1848 she argued that until laws structured to preserve male domestic dominance were reformed

> women will be prey to the vices of all oppressed people, and be reduced to using the wiles of the slave ... Yes, woman is a slave in principle and this is because she is beginning to emerge from slavery in fact. For her, now, there is hardly any point between exasperating servitude or a tyranny which belittles her husband ... in the vast majority of homes it is the woman who rules ... Wives have been corrupted by

> usurpation of an authority wrongly denied to them and which they can never legally recover. (23)

Sand represents female deviance within marriage in terms of the exercise of illicit power. <u>Blind Love</u> modifies this idea. It is Iris's subjection to her husband, in other words her conformity to standard ideas of female passivity, which precipitates her moral decay. In his earlier fiction Collins had echoed Sand's warnings that women would seize power legitimately denied them. Here his message becomes more subversive still. It is no longer female rebellion but female conformity which poses the greatest danger to society.

The narrator argues that Iris's error is choosing to submit herself to Norland rather than Mountjoy. The full meaning of the text is rather more complex, however. Iris feels a distinctly sexual attraction to Norland. This is the covert meaning beneath the phrase "blind love". The narrative voice describes this attraction in terms which suggest it to be a biological imperative independent from the rational faculties represented as superior in orthodox discourses. The attraction Iris feels towards Norland is represented as a powerful vital force. Prior to her marriage she learns of Norland's vagabond life:

> She felt, as she had never felt before, how entirely right her father had been in insisting on her resistance to an attachment which was unworthy of her. So far, but no farther, her conscience yielded to her own conviction of

> what was just. But the one unassailable vital force in the world is the force of love. (24)

Norland's vitality makes him an attractive figure both to the female characters of Blind Love and to the reader. Mountjoy is reliable but dour and passive. It is this contrast which creates the moral ambiguity of Blind Love. The death of Norland suggests the loss of vital power. The fact that Mountjoy is ill or convalescing throughout the later part of the novel intensifies this impression. Civilization is seen as being in the grip of the lassitude which signifies degeneration, whilst the violence of the Irish rebels provides a disturbing contrast. Like Norland, its onetime member, the Invincibles are a misdirected but vital force. Collins suggests that the moral questions facing humanity are complex and will not easily be resolved since violence is one of the forms in which human vitality expresses itself.

Further ambiguity centres around the figure of Fanny Mere. As the relationship between Iris and her husband worsens, a comradeship grows up between the maid and her mistress. Fanny determines to spy on Vimpany and Norland in order to protect Iris. In this way the established social hierarchy is subverted. Vimpany says that "servants should never think. They should obey."[25] In her determination to protect her mistress Fanny is psychologically and literally liberated from her role as servant. She thinks and acts independently, becoming dangerous to Vimpany's plans. He consequently sends her away from her

post. In a corresponding process Iris expresses her submission to Norland by assuming the role of a social inferior: "In everything, Harry," she said, "I am your servant."[26] In a process which parallels Mountjoy's experience of the London maidservant, Iris's conduct illustrates the erosion of established social distinctions.

The clos of Blind Love looks towards a future that is ambiguous and uncertain. The figure of Mountjoy is central to this sense of ambiguity. In the early part of the novel Mountjoy is suggestive of the knight errant of the neo-medieval revival. Although Norland may superficially resemble the figure of the knight errant, his wanderings are the result of his alienation. It is Mountjoy whose journeys to Honeybuzzard, Paris and London are undertaken with the purpose of helping the woman to whom he is devoted. Norland and Mountjoy are not simply contrasted, however. Mountjoy also is a failed knight errant figure. Each of the journeys he makes to help Iris results in failure. He fails to dissuade Iris from marrying his rival and his plan to induce Norland to break off the engagement is equally unsuccessful because of the Irish Lord's genuine devotion to her. When he visits Paris he temporarily succeeds in inducing Vimpany to leave the household but cannot prevent him returning later. His journey to London to forestall Norland's attempt to revenge Arthur's death results in the illness which makes Mountjoy a passive figure for the remainder of the novel. Ultimately, it is not Mountjoy, but Fanny who saves Iris.

The death of Norland represents Mountjoy's victory over his deviant tendencies. The illness he suffers is an image of the psychological damage which this effort has cost him. The Victorians envisaged physical and mental health as inextricably related. In The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture (1978) Bruce Haley argues that Victorian thinking

> went beyond a materialistic terminology and moved visibly toward materialism: all health begins with the body, and the healthy body is no longer merely a conceptual starting point, a cognitive model for intellectual and spiritual growth, but the chief prerequisite for human happiness and usefulness. (27)

In this context the vitality lost with the death of Norland is both a symptom and an image of Mountjoy's loss of health. As Haley notes, to the Victorian mind "health is a state of vitality."[28] This suggests that Mountjoy's moral triumph may have been bought at too high a price. To remove from man any possibility of deviance is to emasculate him. The final words of the novel add to this sense of uncertainty, suggesting that the passion which stimulated deviance has not been destroyed since it lives on covertly within Iris. The narrative voice informs the reader that Iris has only one secret from her new husband: she preserves a lock of Norland's hair in her writing-desk. The closing words of the novel assert the power of vital, animal forces: "Blind love doth never wholly die."[29]

Blind Love is a radical novel which questions not only the morality of late Victorian England but the concept of morality itself. The novel asks whether it is valid to pursue an idea of perfection which is evidently antithetical to man's biological impulses. The novel's ambiguity results from the honesty with which Collins and Besant face the complexity of the issue. The horror of violence and its negative effects are acknowledged despite the intimacy of its relation to vitality. Collins's final novel explores the decay of his own cultural milieu through its dependence on the construct of morality without denying the positve aspects of that construct or idealising the forces of social change which threaten it. The novel creates a complex moral world in which the old structures of morality partially sustain, but also seriously weaken the existing order.

Footnotes

1. Collins died whilst writing this novel which was completed by Walter Besant. In analysing Blind Love I have not examined Besant's role as contributor to the narrative. This is partly for reasons of economy but also because, as Besant asserts, it was Collins's habit to make extremely extensive working notes which would make the completion of the novel in his accustomed style a relatively easy task. Besant's preface illustrates his determination to adhere as strictly as possible to Collins's purpose.
2. Blind Love, Chatto, London, 1907, p. 156
3. Ibid., p. 177.
4. Ibid., p. 274.
5. Ibid., p. 147.
6. Ibid., p. 215.
7. Ibid., p. 163.
8. Ibid., p. 34.
9. Ibid., pp. 34-35.
10. Ibid., p. 119.
11. Ibid., p. 114.

12. Ibid., p. 119.
13. Ibid., p. 32.
14. Ibid., p. 124.
15. Ibid., p. 24.
17. Ibid., p. 91.
18. Ibid., p. 24.
19. Ibid., p. 149.
20. Ibid., p. 133.
21. Ibid., pp. 146-7.
22. Ibid., p. 255.
23. George Sand, letter quoted in introduction to Marianne. Translated by Sian Miles. Methuen, London, 1987, pp. 55-56.
24. Blind Love, p. 25.
25. Ibid., p. 260.
26. Ibid., p. 257.
27. Bruce Haley, The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture, Harvard U. P., 1978. pp. 21-22.
30. Ibid., p. 20.
31. Blind Love, p. 312.

Chapter Five: Enthralling Terrors: Violent Crime and Degeneration

Enthralling Terrors: Violent Crime and Degeneration

The best early fiction of Wilkie Collins explores the discovery of violent tendencies within the self, a theme which was to develop into a central concern of the later fiction. In Basil (1852) the eponymous hero discovers his own violent potential, finding his own repressed nature reflected in the figure of Mannion, who tells him; "Take care of your life. It is not yours to throw away - it is mine."[1] Basil's discovery of his own criminal potential is also associated with his sexual development. As his dream about the woman whom both he and Mannion desire indicates, he sub-consciously finds pleasure in illicit eroticism which appears to him to degrade his conscious feelings "worthy to be offered to the purest and perfectest woman that ever God created."[2]

In the short story "Mad Monkton" (1859) an ambivalent response to psychic self-discovery is associated with the theme of degeneration. Monkton's search of his ancestral home is a metaphor for the discovery of repressed aspects of himself. The old prophecy which predicts the extinction of the family line images Monkton's discovery of degenerate tendencies within himself. Like the deaf lodger in Collins's later novel The Guilty River, he finds in the history of his family a revelation of his own potential to commit crime. Documents detailing

his family history reveal "terrible confessions of past crimes, shocking proofs of secret wickedness that had been hidden securely from all eyes but mine."[3] The ghost of the disreputable relative which Monkton subsequently finds to be always with him is an image of criminal potential.

Monkton's narrative of these events reveals that the discovery of horror and crime within his family and himself is both a terrifying and exhilarating experience:

> Ah! what a life it was when I began my search. I should like to live it over again! Such tempting suspense, such strange discoveries, such wild fancies, such enthralling terrors, all belonged to that life! Only think of breaking open the door of a room which no living soul had entered before you for nearly a hundred years! think of the first step forward into a region of airless, awful stillness, where the light falls faint and sickly through closed windows and rotting curtains! ... think of prying into great cabinets and iron-clasped chests, not knowing what horrors may appear when you tear them open! ... only think of these things, and you may imagine the fascination of suspense and terror in such a life as mine was in those past days! (4)

Monkton finds a "horrible interest"[5] in the search for family crimes. His repulsion at his own potential for violent crime is mingled with fascination.

In the fiction of the 1860s Collins develops these themes and incorporates them into a more complex narrative structure. Narratives and sub-narratives sub-textually reflect the psychic inadequacies of

their creators. The theme of masculine anxiety about women is also developed and established discourses of femininity are revealed as mechanisms with which the hegemony attempts to confirm and maintain its power. Narratives reveal the psychic inadequacy of their creators whilst superficially reinforcing the discourses of the existing hegemony. In The Woman in White Hartright's narrative is subverted from within and revealed to be a justification for his own social advancement. The discourses of femininity which it superficially endorses are challenged by the sub-narrative of Marion Halcombe and by the importance in the sub-text of the theme of degeneration which becomes associated, through the parallel figures of Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie, with the Victorian ideal of womanhood.

The narrative of The Moonstone reveals the fantasies of the editor-figure Franklin Blake. Like Hartright's, Blake's narrative both expresses his desires and reveals his own darker side. His involvement with the pariah-figure Ezra Jennings exposes Blake as the taker of Rachel Verinder's diamond, an image of rape. The ambivalent nature of the human reaction to crime is experienced by Gabriel Betteredge, who finds himself fascinated by the facts of circumstances whilst conscious that he is degrading himself by doing so. He uses the imagery of disease and physical decay to express this ambivalence: "If there is such a thing known at the doctor's shop as a detective-fever, that disease had now got fast hold of your humble servant."(6) Blake's response to the discovery of the dead body of his rival, Ablewhite, is

a similarly ambivalent response to violent crime. Blake's ambivalence is revealed by his reaction to Gooseberry. Blake sees "something so hideous in the boy's enjoyment of the scene"[7] that he ejects him from the room. In this way he is able to evade responsibility for his own enjoyment of the murder scene by displacing his pleasure onto Gooseberry. In No Name the omniscient narrator's response to the development of the novel reflects the inadequacy of the existing hegemony of which he is a part. His representations of women reveal his fantasies and anxieties about female sexuality. In Armadale Collins again uses parallel figures to express complex aspects of one individual. The various narratives explore the violent potential of Armadale/Midwinter and his anxieties about female sexuality.

The theme of degeneration also remains important in the novels of the 1860s. Developing the technique used in "Mad Monkton", Collins uses the idea of degeneration to unite the twin themes of crime and the decay of the existing hegemony. The process of degeneration becomes a metaphor for the destructive effects of crime. In The Woman in White the Victorian ideal of womanhood is subverted through the operation of a parallel between Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie. The ideal woman becomes associated with degeneration. Glyde's incarceration of Laura in an asylum symbolises domestic life in which the husband protects the wife by ensuring that she need not leave the home sphere. This sub-textual parallel reveals that the Victorian notion of womanhood and the idealisation of the domestic sphere are

devices intended to perpetuate male power by limiting and debilitating women. Social Darwinist thinking suggested that degeneration could occur when an acquired characteristic was passed on to a child. Laura's mental decline suggests that the hegemony contributes to its own destruction. The biological weakness identified as a fundamental aspect of femininity in conventional Victorian discourses has been stimulated in Laura to a dangerous level by a repressive environment. Although his narrative superficially portrays himself as her saviour Hartright is implicated in this process. As her protecter who encourages her passivity and designates her too fragile to be given full information about events, he is a parallel figure to Glyde.

In Armadale the elder Armadale envisages crime as an inheritable tendency. The sub-text of the novel explores the presence of violent tendencies within Armadale/Midwinter. His ambivalent response to aspects of his nature which he perceives as evidence of degeneration is illustrated by his desire for and fear of Miss Gwilt, whose criminality is explored within the context of questions of health and sexuality. Miss Gwilt's narrative suggests that there is a disturbing and yet appealing association between sexuality and violence which reaches its apotheosis in her murder and resuscitation of Armadale/Midwinter in his bed at the brothel/sanatorium. The sub-texts of the various narratives reveal the psychological vulnerability of men and their need to construct discourses on femininity in order to maintain the masculine hegemony. The novel's closure parallels that of

The Moonstone. Equilibrium is restored at the close of the novel because men's violent and criminal tendencies are displaced onto the figure of Miss Gwilt.

In the best fiction of the 1870s Collins depicts both the psychological vulnerability of Victorian men and the psychology of women who try to achieve independence. These themes are associated closely with that of degeneration as the exposure of the dark side of the self and its strange attractions becomes increasingly central to the fiction. In Poor Miss Finch the narratives of Lucilla Finch and Madame Pratolungo explore the psychological development of Lucilla/Pratolungo and the problems of achieving independence in a society which limits and controls women. Lucilla/Pratolungo's narrative details her discovery of the vulnerability and degenerate tendencies submerged beneath the surface personality of Oscar/Nugent. However, she suppresses this knowledge in order to be able to be happy in a society dominated by a hegemony which can be challenged but not yet defeated.

Collins's most effective treatment of this theme is in The Law and the Lady. The sub-text of the novel follows that of Poor Miss Finch closely. Valeria Macallan's discovery that her husband has been charged with the murder of his first wife and her detective work into the circumstances of the crime is used as a device for suggesting her growing awareness of repressed aspects of her husband's psychology.

Valeria's detective work reflects her determination to pursue knowledge forbidden to women. However, like Lucilla Finch, she ultimately abandons this in exchange for the limited happiness that the conventional role of passive wife allows her.

In The Law and the Lady Collins is able to use the imagery of degeneration to more powerful effect than in Poor Miss Finch. The latter novel relies too heavily upon the device of Oscar's deformity in order to associate Nugent's immorality with the process of degeneration. In The Law and the Lady the parallel between Macallan and Miserrimus Dexter is more effective since Dexter is a more complex and convincing figure. Dexter, representing the suppressed parts of Macallan and the decay of the masculine hegemony, embodies the ambivalence which characterises Collins's treatment of the themes of violent crime and degeneration. He is a compelling and repulsive figure, both energetic and degenerate, sympathetic and disturbing. The suppression of the tendencies which Dexter represents, reaching a climax with his death, is argued by other masculine figures to be essential for the maintenance of the social order. However, this impression is largely subverted by the sense of loss occasioned by his death. By contrast Macallan appears an insipid and passive figure.

The figure of George Germaine, the central figure of The Two Destinies, although considerably less successful, possesses some of the complexity of Dexter. While Dexter represents the failure of

Macallan to repress his desires, Germaine's chronicle of his moral progress expresses his failure to achieve the Victorian ideal of the "gentleman". Germaine's attempt to murder his mistress, surrounded by a landscape which symbolises the process of degeneration which he believes to be at work within himself, explores his ambivalent response to his crimes. Although he is disgusted with himself, Germaine also derives psycho-sexual pleasure from his own corruption. His desire to die beside Mary is an alternative to sexual union which suggests decay and degeneration.

The Countess in The Haunted Hotel is also a parallel figure to Dexter. Like him, she is associated with the themes of crime and degeneration. A self-revealed murderess, she falls into a state of physical and mental decline and dies. She is compelling, vibrant and sexual, yet also a horrific figure who is associated with death and decay. She is sexually attractive despite her "ghastly complexion"[8] and although her illness gives an impression of passivity, her actions and her narrative of past events dominate the novel. The effect of her death-like complexion and her vibrant eyes suggest that the degeneration she seems to embody is both repulsive and fascinating to those around her. The ambivalence she provokes is evident in Doctor Wybrow's reaction to her: "The startling contrast between the corpse-like pallor of her complexion and the over-powering life and light, the glittering metallic brightness in her large black eyes held him spellbound."[9] Imagery of degeneration suggests both the destructive

effects of her crimes and her own corruption, and her eyes the compelling energy of her criminal acts.

In the best fiction of the 1880s Collins uses the theme of female deviance as a metaphor for the powerful challenge to the existing hegemony represented by women's success in gaining intellectual and material independence. Helena Gracedieu in The Legacy of Cain is a parallel figure to the Countess in The Haunted Hotel. Both women make attempts to murder their husbands, actions which are the apotheosis of an attack upon the authority of the middle-class male. However, the different fates of Helena and the Countess reflect the greater independence of women in the 1880s. The Countess's murderous actions leave her tortured by guilt. Her concern about the fatal power that binds her to Agnes Lockwood suggests that, despite her actions, she remains psychologically dependent upon the Victorian ideal of femininity. Her death and the innocuous re-interpretation of her tale of murder by the new Lord Montbarry suggests her inability to pose a significant threat to the masculine hegemony. By contrast, Helena Gracedieu is not psychologically weakened by her attempt to murder Dunboyne. Newspaper reports reveal that she has suceeded in using the Victorian stereotype of passive, vulnerable womanhood in order to meet her own needs. She is able to convince people that she did not commit murder and was a victim of a miscarriage of justice. Her success as the founder of a rational religion based upon the idea of the superiority of women suggests that she represents a dangerous threat to the hegemony.

Collins's best novels of the 1880s challenge the idea of an association between deviant femininity and degeneration. In the early part of The Legacy of Cain the governor and the doctor dispute over the extent to which Eunice's criminal heredity will affect her future. The doctor suggests that Eunice's life will exemplify of the process of degeneration. However, Gracedieu and Helena later exhibit violent tendencies as well as Eunice. Helena's narrative challenges the relevance of heredity to crime since she identifies the stifling environment of the middle-class home as the primary cause of her criminality.

Similarly, in The Evil Genius Sydney Westerfield's life does not conform to the stereotype of the "fallen woman", whose life would, according to standard discourses, culminate in degradation and suicide. However, no imagery of degneration is associated with Syd. She remains a robust and healthy figure who has no thought of suicide. At the close of the novel she is living in happy domestic circumstances. In Heart and Science Mrs Gallilee's lapse into madness recalls both the Countess in The Haunted Hotel and Hester Dethridge in Man and Wife, both of whom become mentally disordered after committing criminal acts. The Countess and Hester are associated with the imagery of degeneration. Each falls into a decline from which they never recover. However, although Mrs Gallilee's lapse into madness is mooted by Mr Null, the doctor, as a possible symptom of degeneration, they

acknowledge that her robustness makes this unlikely. Mr Null states that:

> Assuming that there is no hereditary taint, the doctors think favourably of Mrs Gallilee's chances of recovery ... The doctors don't look on her violence as a discouraging symptom. They are inclined to attribute it to the strength of her consitution. (10)

The physical violence exhibited by Mrs Gallilee, unlike that displayed by the Countess and Hester, is not evidence of degneration. Like Helena Gracedieu, Mrs Gallilee's violence suggests her health and strength.

In the novels of the 1880s the imagery of degeneration becomes associated with the decaying masculine hegemony. In The Black Robe Lewis Romayne's decision to abandon his wife and become a priest reflects the inability of Victorian man to function adequately in the domestic sphere and maintain its values. The decline of the masculine hegemony implied by Romyane's actions is paralleled by his physical decay. He becomes "withered and whitened"(11) and eventually dies. In Heart and Science Ovid Vere is contrasted with his vigorous mother. He finds that he does not possess sufficent physical strength to devote himself to work as he wishes and becomes forced to rest. His condition is depicted as a common experience among late-Victorian men: "He had received a warning, familiar to the busy men of our time - the warning from overwrought Nature, which counsels rest after excessive

work."[12] In The Evil Genius it is Herbert Linley who is associated with imagery of degeneration, rather than the "fallen woman" with whom he elopes. An old friend who visits him finds him "fallen away, as if he had suffered under long illness"[13]. Although the endings of some novels apparently reaffirm the masculine hegemony and its values, as in Jezebel's Daughter, "I Say No", The Evil Genius and The Guilty River, these closures are subverted by a level of sub-textual meaning which reveals the inadequacy of concepts overtly endorsed. Such closures are the fantasies of masculine narrators who seek to deny the erosion of the Victorian hegemony and of the discourses which maintained its power in the past.

The "ideal" Victorian woman is also associated with degeneration. Collins exploits contradictions within established discourses on femininity. Since womanhood was considered to be an inherently inferior state to that of white masculinity which represented the norm of physical and mental health, the supposedly ideal Victorian woman was envisaged as frail and prone to illness. In the fiction of the 1880s this idealised frailty is represented as evidence of degeneration. In Heart and Science Carmina's physical weakness and "sensitive nature"[14] make her vulnerable to the nervous illness from which she never fully recovers. Mrs Devlin in "I Say No", who lives a passive and protected domestic life, is dying of a wasting disease. These figures are greatly outnumbered by such vigorous, unconventional women as Helena Gracedieu, Mrs Gallilee and the governess Miss Minerva

in Heart and Science, Emily Brown in "I Say No", Madame Fontaine and Mrs Wagner in Jezebel's Daughter and Syd Westerfield and Catherine Linley in The Evil Genius.

In the most successful novels of the 1880s Collins connects the ambivalence he perceived in human reactions to crime with the subject of the empowerment of women in Victorian society. Although masculine narrators overtly endorse discourses of idealised femininity, their narratives reveal the attractions of the women they designate as deviant. In Jezebel's Daughter, although David Glenney initially suggests that his narrative will focus on the passive and idealised figure of Madame Fontaine's daughter, Minna, it is Madame Fontaine who begins to dominate the novel. Glenney's narrative reveals that he is influenced by her sexual power, as are other masculine characters within the novel. Although the narrator of Heart and Science presents his narrative as focussing on the conflict of ideology between Ovid Vere and Dr Benjulia, it is the figure of Mrs Gallilee who is developed with the greater force. Similarly, although the governor-narrator initially suggests that The Legacy of Cain will focus upon the life of Eunice, Helena Gracedieu emerges as the charismatic and sexually powerful figure in the narrative. It is in these novels that the masculine hegemony seems most under threat. The villainesses of Collins's later fiction are powerful because they are attractive, as well as frightening, figures.

The later fiction of Wilkie Collins is a corpus which attempts to explore the anxieties of middle-class, masculine psychology in a complex and changing society. In the novels of the 1860s he began to use the themes of crime and degeneration to reveal the inadequacies of established Victorian discourses on deviance, femininity, morality and health. He also developed the device of the narrative which sub-textually expresses the inadequacies of its narrator, a mechanism which enabled him to explore these issues in a more complex manner than in the early fiction. The best fiction of the 1870s explores the troubled states of masculine protagonists and explores their ambivalent response to violent crime. The fiction of the 1880s reflects the climate of change which characterised the closing years of the nineteenth century. Collins's final novels represent the growing independence of women as a significant threat to the decayed existing hegemony. Female criminals are embodiments of the ambivalent feelings of masculine narrators towards women and the changes which were empowering them in the 1880s. Collins's women are figures both of fantasy and nightmare, vigorous, charismatic and sexually complex as well as threatening. They reflect masculine ambivalence towards the possible effects of social change. The most successful of Collins's later novels powerfully convey a sense of this complexity.

Footnotes

1. Basil, Dover, New York, 1980, p. 323.
2. Ibid., p. 44.
3. "Mad Monkton" in The Queen of Hearts, Chatto, London, 1925, pp. 128-129.
4. Ibid., p. 129.

5. Ibid., p. 129.
6. The Moonstone, Oxford, 1987, p. 135.
7. Ibid., p. 497.
8. The Haunted Hotel, Dover, New York, 1982, p. 4.
9. Ibid., p. 4.
10. Heart and Science, Sutton, Gloucester, 1990, p. 310.
11. The Black Robe, Chatto, London, 1892, p. 214.
12. Heart and Science, p. 5.
13. The Evil Genius, Chatto, 1907, p. 179.
14. Heart and Science, p. 18.

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