Wilkie Collins and Copyright
Sundeep Bisla

Published by The Ohio State University Press


For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/27564
Ingesting the Other in Armadale

I was startled just now by a shadow on the wall. It was only after a moment or two that I mustered sense enough to notice where the candle was, and to see that the shadow was my own. . . . I see my own hand while I write the words—and I ask myself whether it is really the hand of Lydia Gwilt!

—Lydia Gwilt, in Armadale 440 and 507

The Receiver and Sender
Modes of the Breaking Function

The sensation novel reinforced a particular fear of the English populace. The dread of the possibility of the invasion of the Homeland by the Other while of course not originating with the genre was nevertheless buoyed up by it. This worry is evident in an anonymous reviewer's description of sensation fiction, in a review of No Name in the Reader in 1863, as "a plant of foreign growth [that] comes to [at?] us from France" (rpt. in Page 134). The Reverend Francis Edward Paget, in the polemical afterword to his 1868 parody—a more successfully rendered imitation than he might be presumed to have intended—Lucretia or, The Heroine of the Nineteenth Century: A Correspondence, Sensational and Sentimental, feels similarly called on to characterize the threat posed by this genre as one of a potential invasion by the Other, or at least Otherness:
The staple commodity of our sensation novels is scoundrelism of the lowest type. . . . If such filthy Yahoos . . . do really exist . . . there is at least this comfort, that, as yet, . . . they do not obtrude themselves on our notice; they are a race as strange to us as the Fuegians would be, or the Andaman islanders. But strange they will not long continue, if the rage for sensational novels continues. (301)

Paget is onto something, certainly with regard to Collins's longest and most complicated narrative *Armadale* (1866), the goal of which is, on one level, to effect precisely this “noticing” of Otherness. But Collins's is actually a more radical meeting up with alterity than Paget in his worst fantasies—his reference to two purportedly cannibalistic tribes suggesting those fantasies to be pretty extreme already solely hampered by the hurdle of the ingestion moving in the wrong direction—would have been envisioning, as it involves the eventual acknowledgment that the Self is that Other. That is, the operational strategy in this one of Collins's narratives is to represent an initial encounter with Otherness that then modifies into the attendant stage of that Otherness's incorporation. Collins understood that a direct result of this ingestion of the Other/of Otherness—the distinction between integration at the minimal level (inclusion in the form of a sealed “crypt”) and maximal level (absorption and conjoining) being precisely the aspect most distinguishing, respectively, *Armadale* from *The Moonstone*—would be the bringing home of the fact, in a pre-playing of a particular Postmodernist tenet, that those problems (particularly the unsettling effects of the breaking function of language) usually automatically shunted off as entirely the fault of the Other are actually to some degree native to the Self. The latter thus loses its protective/projective disguise, its chance of scapegoating the Other. This incorporational desire is evident in the story of the Bedouin brothers, that reverse-Russian-nesting-doll situation, that Collins has Allan Armadale relate at one point in *Armadale*:

1. Many critics—especially those influenced by the Profession’s turn toward postcolonial criticism—halt in their analyses of Collins’s strategy of “Otherness ingestion” at this simple encounter stage. See for example Reitz, who argues in her punningly titled article “Colonial ‘Gwilt’: In and around Wilkie Collins’s *Armadale*” that “*Armadale* demonstrates an Englishness that is strengthened by recognizing colonial mistakes” (101).

2. See Derrida writing in “Fors” of the process of the “encrypting” of the Other leading to “a redefinition of the Self” (xv). He notes that there are two possibilities of dealing with the mourned person: as a locked safe within the self—“The inner forum is (a) safe, an outcast outside inside the inside” (xiv)—or as an element that is eventually broken open and completely melded with the self—“the break-in technique that will allow us to penetrate into a crypt . . . consists of locating the crack or the lock, choosing the angle of a partition, and forcing entry” (xv).

3. In an attempt to clear up a baroque confluence that continually has (almost by design?) the
Deuce take the pounds, shillings, and pence! I wish they could all three get rid of themselves like the Bedouin brothers at the show. Don’t you remember the Bedouin brothers, Mr. Brock? “Ali will take a lighted torch, and jump down the throat of his brother Muli—Muli will take a lighted torch, and jump down the throat of his brother Hassan—and Hassan, taking a third lighted torch, will conclude the performances by jumping down his own throat, and leaving the spectators in total darkness.” Wonderfully good, that—what I call real wit, with a fine strong flavour about it.⁴ (Armadale 62)

Whether or not this is wonderfully good as wit, it is certainly wonderfully good at representing the Otherness-internalizing strategy being deployed at this point in Collins’s long–novel project. In both Armadale and The Moonstone, Collins, like the last Bedouin brother Hassan, will be moving the public spectacle, the performance, inside, will be shifting the complications from the realm of the Other (specifically that big “O” other for Collins, the reader) to the realm of the Self, or writer, and as a result we will in Collins’s next novel have Franklin Blake, the stand-in for the writer of The Moonstone, end up being described as having had “so many different sides of his character . . . that he seemed to pass his life in a state of perpetual contradiction with himself. . . . He had his French side, and his German side, and his Italian side—the original English foundation showing through, critics making mistakes (for example, Pal-Lapinski 46, Tondre 595, and Dames 170 all confuse Allan Wrentmore/Armadale with his father Mathew), I will be denoting the five Allan Armadales according to the order of the dates they were either born into this name or changed their given names to it. Allan Armadale 1 was the original owner of the estate in Barbados who disinherited his son (Allan Armadale 2, aka Fergus Ingleby) in favor of Allan Wrentmore (Allan Armadale 3). The two sons of these Allan Armadales are, respectively, Allan Armadale 4 (the “light” Allan Armadale) and Allan Armadale 5 (alias Ozias Midwinter, the “dark” Allan Armadale), born one year apart. I will refer to these last two as Allan Armadale and Ozias Midwinter respectively. Such an unknotting, in avoiding misunderstanding, goes against the spirit of the readerly confusion Collins clearly was for some reason actively intent upon encouraging in his narrative. See Taylor noting that Armadale “exploits the links between names and inherited property to question the stable boundaries of the self, as well as to explore social construction” (Secret Theatre 154). Obviously, Allan Armadales 4 and 5 are meant to be conflated with each other in an enaction in the reader’s mind of the theme of the Other coming to be the same, or at least a brother (indeed, Young-Zook incorrectly understands these two main Allan Armadales to be “stepbrothers” [235]), while, on the other hand, their confusions with their fathers are intended to suggest the fear (eventually proved incorrect) that a murdering mindset may possibly be inherited from one generation to the next, namely from Wrentmore, the murderer of Allan Armadale 2, to Midwinter.

⁴. The critic Peter Caracciolo confesses himself to be “tantalized by this bizarre, dream-like story” (165). I am in this chapter simply attempting to account for Collins’s inclusion—a clumsy one, but all the more significant for being so—of this instance of “wit” in his narrative.
every now and then, as much as to say, ‘Here I am, sorely transmogrified, as you see, but there’s something of me left at the bottom of him still’” (Moonstone 76–77).

In this particular installment in Collins’s project, this incorporation of Otherness is, not surprisingly, correlated with the workings of language. The locally “historical” guises taken by Otherness in Armadale (racial-, gender-, and class-oriented ones) inevitably come to be outweighed by the linguistic manifestations—for example, the Otherness arising upon the word changing context (or “ownership” through “publication”) or the signifier attempting but failing to seamlessly substitute itself for its motivationlessly connected signified—that those guises had been on the verge of obscuring (successfully, in the case of postcolonialism trumping deconstruction in this novel’s criticism) in the process of representing them. Iterability opens a space through which alterity can enter the world. Derrida remarks, “In a tangential and elliptical way, a difference always causes repetition to deviate. I call that iterability, the other . . . appearing in reiteration” (Paper Machine 136). This deviating creates a rift in what had seemed simply a situation of the Same being repeated elsewhere. This Otherness is present in the term’s name itself: “iter, again, [sic] probably comes from itara, other in Sanskrit, and everything that follows can be read as the working out of the logic that ties repetition to alterity” (“Signature Event Context” 7). A space or, more properly, spacing, is always extant—whether it is utilized through recontextualization or not—at the basis of the Self represented through iterable traces. This spacing brings into being an ever-present (but not always acknowledged) “shadow” self or paradoxical “ghost presence” that potentially can be substituted for the so-called “real” self and then perhaps spirited away, a possibility that has fascinated authors throughout literary history, especially science fiction writers in the vein of Philip K. Dick and William Gibson.

That repetition-based Otherness can, however, manifest itself in the form of two different modes, that of “the receiver” and that of “the sender.” We saw in Chapter 3 the receiver-mode Otherness of the breaking function being exploited by the American publishers through their pirating of The Woman in White, especially in the scene of their representative Fosco illicitly purloining and reading Marian Halcombe’s diary. The primary goal of Collins’s project having been to progress toward fundamentals, it is not surprising to find reader-mode Otherness transforming at this point into the authorial “internal complaint” (Moonstone 429) of sender-mode Otherness, as we have, in a figurative sense, the textual violater Fosco, as the result of an impressive act of ingestion, becoming a mere projection of
Marian Halcombe’s diseased imagination (a situation very much akin to that self-conflicted one taking center stage in *The Moonstone*). This progression offers the possibility of moving us past that chimera that had mesmerized the eighteenth-century copyright commentators, the publication moment.

The possibility for deviations in the receiver mode is evident enough in our own lives; we hear of such misdirections every day, the pirated song, software, or movie being only today’s most sensational manifestations. Literary piracy would have been an especially prominent example of obtrusive reader-mode disruptiveness in the nineteenth century. These situations allow us, as senders or authors, to be lulled into a false sense of complacency. We believe, like Austin in *How to Do Things with Words*, that all we need to do to “settle” the situation and control our “language” is to keep it “safe” by avoiding some sort of dangerous region “outside,” a wish that is also motivating Paget’s comments. In other words, we believe that that zone to be avoided if we want our writing to remain safe—that “ditch or external place of perdition” (“Signature Event Context” 17) representing for Derrida the illusory locus beyond which the breaking function is rumored by solely settling-valorizing perspectives to lie safely confined—is the region of the Other, the region not (currently) under control. But what if it is the *Self* that is actually the site of tumult? In that case, one’s self-complacency—to say nothing of one’s imperializing imperative, distress at the publication moment, or entrenched resistance to “theory”—must, to say the least, be reassessed, if not quite, at this point, overthrown.

### Humanizing the Other as a Means of Disclosing the Complications of the Self

As we have already seen in this study, Collins was devoted to the practice of screening his primary intentions behind misleading secondary ones (a practice rendering him conclusively opaque to many critics, paradoxically as a result of his seeming *too* transparent). His linguistic sensationality, as we saw in Chapter 2, was often passing itself off as the standard type of sexual

---

5. Armadale, like any good transition point, is obsessed with the concept of mid-ness. Not only is the main character pseudonymously named “Midwinter” but both he and Allan Armadale end up at one point stuck for the night on a half-sunken boat located half-way between the Calf of Man and the Isle of Man— islands to which Collins had made a taxing research visit in 1863, finding them eminently suitable for his “occult literary purposes” (*Letters* 1:232).

6. This locus for Collins in 1859 took the form of the Atlantic Ocean and for the eighteenth-century judges that of the moment of release to publication.
sensationality. Having guessed correctly that sexuality would not fade in its attractiveness for critics, Collins established that particular one of his screens on firm ground. In *Armadale*, the screen misdirecting the critics this time seems more their fault than Collins’s. The subject of glamorous “exoticism” running a close second to sexuality in capturing critical attention, his move towards counteracting one of his earlier strategies in *The Woman in White*, the fomenting of a distrust of the Other, is bound often to be read as an instance of “reverse colonization,” instead of as, as I will be interpreting it here, a simple “clearing of the decks” so that the complications of the Self can now come into their own. This situation leads directly to a critic like Lyn Pykett finding both *Armadale* and *The Moonstone* to be early examples of the “reverse colonization” narrative, a type of fiction which Stephen Arata has associated with the “cultural guilt” of the end of the nineteenth century. . . . Both *Armadale* and *The Moonstone* problematize the relationship between colony and metropole in narratives in which the “home country” is invaded by Creoles (Ozias Midwinter and Ezra Jennings) or Hindus (the Indians who have travelled to England to reclaim the Moonstone). (Wilkie Collins 156–57)

Pykett’s interpretation slots nicely into a niche carved out beforehand by the recent vogue for postcolonial criticism. Because Collins was always on the “edges” of significant historical/political trends without actually being a true adherent of them (note the difficulties critics have had in conclusively labeling him a defender of women’s rights), it is very important, even more than usual, for the critic to be sticking with the movements of the text—in this case Collins’s long–novel project, a multi-volume “text” that would be encouraging him or her to look beyond the available and enticing local screens thrown in the way by this author seemingly constitutionally compelled to do so—and not allowing transient critical fashions to dictate the interpretation. In that spirit, here I will be not only attempting to demonstrate to the fullest the institutional and narrative structures that would be pushing the critic toward reading Ozias Midwinter’s humanization simply as a postcolonial move on Collins’s part—that is, as an undoing of a “cultural guilt” stemming from colonialism—but also endeavoring to show that Collins’s is actually nevertheless *moreso* a theoretical movement toward the basis of the author’s dealings with language.

It has been generally remarked that Collins’s sensation fiction’s “sensationality” had begun with a harking back to the xenophobia associated with the influx of foreigners coming to visit the Crystal Palace of the Great Exhi-
bition of 1851. The prospect of that influx had played a central role in the establishment of the intrigues in that earlier narrative, the event providing the motivation for the visit to England of Fosco and for his continuance in the capital even after his plot of stealing Laura Fairlie’s identity and inheritance—his invasion into the heart of the domesticity—had succeeded. Late in the story Walter Hartright makes reference to the Exhibition:

The year of which I am now writing, was the year of the famous Crystal Palace Exhibition in Hyde Park. Foreigners, in unusually large numbers, had arrived already, and were still arriving in England. Men were among us, by hundreds, whom the ceaseless distrustfulness of their governments had followed privately, by means of appointed agents, to our shores. My surmises did not for a moment class a man of the Count’s abilities and social position with the ordinary rank and file of foreign spies. I suspected him of . . . being entrusted by the government which he secretly served, with the organization and management of agents specially employed in this country.\(^7\)

_Woman in White, ed. Sutherland 578_

Ronald R. Thomas clarifies the historical context standing behind this passage’s worries:

It is not only the invasion of foreigners that is of concern here, but the invasion of suspicious foreign influences—specifically, the anarchistic impulses that fueled the revolutions of 1848 in Europe. . . . The juxtaposition of the economic spectacle of the Crystal Palace with the political intrigues involving imported agents from the revolutionary movements . . . forms a striking image of the very historical transformation with which the sensation novel is centrally concerned. ("Wilkie Collins" 485)

In short, sensation fiction could be said, from a certain perspective, to have established its basis upon a fear of revolution.\(^8\) In _The Woman in White_—that

---

7. Collins may have been drawing on newspaper reports such as the following: “Two police-agents, who had been sent from Frankfort to the Exhibition of London, says the _Constitutionnel_, were, on their arrival in that capital, relieved by some adroit thieves of all their luggage and papers, amongst which happened to be the description of several famous German thieves, whom they had been ordered to seek out and observe” ("Report in a London Newspaper"; qtd. in Gibbs-Smith 29). Hartright elsewhere notes that the Count’s assistant Mrs. Rubelle and her husband “had taken a house in the neighbourhood of Leicester-square, to be fitted up as a boarding-house for foreigners, who were expected to visit England in large numbers to see the Exhibition of 1851” (_Woman in White_ 426).

8. In this sense, my argument could be said to a certain extent to overlap at this moment with Jonathan Loesberg’s contention that sensation novels “evoke their most typical moments of sensation response from images of a loss of class identity” (117).
is, at the inception of the genre that he was criticizing—we find Paget’s fear of invasion being eminently justified.

It is not surprising that latent British fears about foreigners should have been raised by the prospect of their “German Prince”’s Exhibition coming so soon after the 1848 revolutions and inviting an alarmingly large number of Continentals and Easterners to gather in the heart of the Empire. In The Shows of London, Richard Altick remarks that “So many pickpockets, confidence men, cut-throats, prostitutes, foreign spies, stealers of trade secrets, and other illicit practitioners were expected to descend on the metropolis that to dispassionate observers it might have seemed likely that they would be most effectively foiled not by the police but by the law of diminishing returns” (457). By some accounts, two million people were eventually to view the displays (but of those probably only 3% were aliens). The event provided the perfect backdrop against which to establish a culture awash in spying by, and suspicion of, foreigners. Literally “under invasion,” the isle had as a result come to be filled with strange accents and languages as well as by a patently un-English ingenuity by a people possessed of an ability to create crimes of impersonation foreign to the English nature (if not, albeit, the opium-influenced mind of the Victorian literary man). Collins, speaking years later of Fosco’s crime, says, “I thought the crime too ingenious for an Englishman so I pitched upon a foreigner” (Yates 591).

The lead-up to the Exhibition had been tinged with a paranoia growing among the residents of London, and among their politicians as well. Up until its opening on May 1, 1851—the Exhibition would close on October 15—various Victorian notables would be foreseeing an unhappy outcome for the event. Benjamin Disraeli, future Prime Minister and close friend of

9. Elsewhere Altick notes that “no crime wave ever materialized” (Presence 422). Even Dickens’s Household Words—not a journal generally supportive of the Exhibition (Dickens remarked of the Exhibition, “I don’t say ‘there’s nothing in it’—there’s too much. I have only been twice. So many things bewildered me. I have a natural horror of sights, and the fusion of so many sights in one has not decreased it” [Letters 6:428])—would be forced to acknowledge in mid-October that those people who had predicted disasters ranging from plague to famine to fire to the “unchristianisation” of England, who “amid the fogs of November, 1850, [had] wagged their heads, and sibilated evil predictions awfully,” had been conclusively proven wrong: “The threatened invasion has taken place: the Gaul, the Teuton, the Muscovite, and the Moslem have arrived—and to the extent of some thousands, too—yet, I am proud to say that the flag of England, named ‘Meteor’ by Thomas Campbell, does ‘yet terrific burn’ above the gates of Buckingham Palace, and Mr. Cutmore’s European Dining Rooms. . . . [O]ur foreign visitors have neither burnt our houses about our ears, nor endeavoured to overturn our government, nor run away with our daughters” ([Sala], “Foreign Invasion” 64).

10. Indeed, the threat posed turned out to have been more fearsome than the actuality. The Royal Statistical Society was informed that “The number of visits to the Crystal Palace were 6,039,195,—and the number of persons who visited it were 2,000,000; nevertheless, the landing of only 65,233 aliens was reported in the year” (Cheshire 45).
the recently dethroned Louise Philippe, was prompted to confide the following warning to Lady Londonderry on April 20: “You may rely upon it, as a fact, for it reaches me from a quarter that never misled me—that the Ministers are really alarmed about the concourse of foreigners to the Exhibition, & that the Socialists have been making, & are making, extensive arrangements for our regeneration, apropos of that gathering. This affair has been the subject of cabinet councils” (Letters 430). “Regeneration” here is Disraeli’s euphemistically sanguine manner of alluding to the general fear of a Continentally-based revolutionary movement coming to raise havoc in England. Collins had been thus in The Woman in White most decidedly guilty of propagating, or perhaps resuscitating, a fear of the encounter with the Other—taking the form of a grandly unscrupulous Exhibition visitor—by purposely setting his story at a time when that fear had been especially operative in his culture.

Thus, taking that context into account, the critic can be forgiven for viewing Collins’s project of humanizing Ozias Midwinter in Armadale as, say, an imitation of his friend Dickens’s move in 1865 of having attempted to compensate for his portrayal of the criminal Fagin in Oliver Twist with the creation of the sympathetically-rendered Jewish moneylender Riah in Our Mutual Friend.11 Or another interpretation—the result of a “reading backward” from the reformist zeal evident in his later “mission fictions”—could be to find this move to be of a piece with his later humanitarian endeavors in such overtly polemical laters works as The New Magdalen (1873), The Two Destinies (1876), The Fallen Leaves (1879), and Heart and Science (1883). Prior to his mental breakdown of 1870 or so, Collins was a literary theorist before he was a defender of the oppressed (not to suggest that the two are necessarily mutually exclusive). Either way, Collins’s intent could well appear in Armadale to be simply the atonement for his earlier having sensationalized the fear of the Other in The Woman in White. In offering such a reading, the critic is happy and the Profession (self-)satisfied. However, it is important to see what is actually occurring, for the crudely “political” interpretation of this situation will be—while perhaps advancing the Collins critic’s career—unfortunately immuring him or her within

11. Collins’s move also could be seen simply as an attempt to broaden the insular perspectives of his English readers, readers exhibiting a tendency toward closed-mindedness that Dickens, in 1856 in Household Words, had been warning against: “We English people, owing in a great degree to our insular position . . . have been in particular danger of contracting habits which we will call for our present purposes, Insularities” ([Dickens,] “Insularities” 1).
that region that our author is, I believe, at this moment in his project, precisely engaged in leaving behind. Only by taking a long-range perspective, that is, by considering the whole of Collins’s long–novel project, can we observe his rejection of the false earlier path offered by the simple undoing of xenophobia as he moves on to the investigation of the more ontological zone. At one point in *Armadale*, Collins has Allan Armadale and Pedgift Jr. visit the Exhibition (348), but in this instance that reference, in direct contrast to those in *The Woman in White*, serves no major plot function. Instead, its ancillary nature stands as a clear indication that Collins has progressed past his earlier xenophobia-fomenting. Collins’s humanization of Midwinter is not one carried out for itself, but rather in order to remove the possibility of the Other’s potential complicatedness obscuring the perception of the complicatedness of the Self.

We should look at that process of humanization in the narrative in detail: the character Ozias Midwinter—one of the many Allan Armadales who nevertheless chooses to go under a radically strange assumed name Otherness-ingesting (as a sort of double feint)—is obviously an Other. Leaving aside his name, the “strangeness” of which is remarked on by several characters—Mrs. Armadale will describe him as “the man with the horrible name” (63)—there is his parentage. He is the son of a white Englishman (Allan Armadale 3) and his mulatto wife. On first meeting, Midwinter gives the impression of being from elsewhere: “His tawny complexion, his large bright brown eyes, and his black mustachios and beard, gave him something of a foreign look” (60). Collins has this foreignness invariably become in the narrative the impetus for sparking a distrust in the uncontestably English characters. Reverend Brock, guardian of the other Allan Armadale of Midwinter’s generation, fears him at first because of his foreign looks. His appearance we are told “tended to discompose the rector” (64):

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!” (64)

But Collins will eventually have that distrust be overturned. Late in the narrative, in a posthumous letter Brock will urge Midwinter not to acqui-

---

12. Young-Zook describes Midwinter as “a racial hybrid” and a “Lacanian split subject” (236–37).
escape to his current fears and in so doing will call this character whom he had initially distrusted by a significant epithet: “Look up, my poor suffering brother—look up, my hardly-tried, my well-loved friend, higher than this! Meet the doubts that now assail you from the blessed vantage-ground of Christian courage and Christian hope” (513). This transformation from discomposing stranger or Other to “brother” is highly suggestive of the tenets of the abolitionist movement in the United States. The narrative of Armadale was, of course, being planned from 1863–1865, the latter part of the American Civil War.13 I believe that John Sutherland is right, in a general sense, to refer to the movement when he remarks of Midwinter’s request of Allan—as the two stand on the deck of the half-sunken ship—to shake hands “while we are brothers still” that “The abolitionists’ slogan, ‘Am I not a man and a brother?’, would echo for many readers here, given the fact that Ozias is black and Allan white” (Armadale 688n1). Perhaps a better example of this concern with abolition might be seen to come, however, on the last page of the story when Midwinter makes a clear claim to brotherhood:

All I can sincerely say for myself is, what I think will satisfy you to know, that I have learnt to view the purpose of the Dream with a new mind. I once believed that it was sent to rouse your distrust of the friendless man whom you had taken as a brother to your heart. I now know that it came to you as a timely warning to take him closer still [italics added]. Does this help to satisfy you that I, too, am standing hopefully on the brink of a new life, and that while we live, brother, your love and mine will never be divided again? (677; last two emphases added)

The Other has successfully turned brother here. This could be viewed as a consciousness-raising move on Collins’s part—and is so by some critics14—

13. In 1862, Margaret Oliphant would connect the English desire for sensation fiction with the turns and turnabouts occurring in the American Civil War: “That distant roar has come to form a thrilling accompaniment to the safe life we lead at home. On the other side of the Atlantic, a race blase and lost in universal ennui has bethought itself of the grandest expedient for procuring a new sensation; and albeit we follow at a humble distance, we too begin to feel the need of a supply of new shocks and wonders” (“Sensation Novels” 564).

14. See, for example, Young-Zook writing that “Collins uses his characters Ozias Midwinter and Lydia Gwilt, both class, gender, and racial hybrids, to sensationally subvert the ideals of British nationalism and undermine dominant Victorian racial and gender ideologies. . . . Of Collins’s non-British characters in this novel, one is its loveliest woman—Midwinter’s mother—and the other is its most loyal and capable man—Midwinter himself. Thus the novel sublimates these critiques [of British nationality and manhood] into questions of friendship and proper romantic ties while simultaneously suggesting that the ideal of masculinity is not reckless and patriarchal but collective and fraternal and not necessarily only British” (234 and 239).
or as a means of having the sender, the receiver having exited from intellectual consideration, come to be in a position to disclose him- or herself as the truly complicated and self-threatening/self-threatened entity.

Collins is primarily interested in facilitating the revelation of the potentially destabilizing threat to be coming from the inside rather than the outside and thereby extending the foundation-reaching-after goals of his long–novel project. The settling-valorizing interpretations (of, say, D. A. Miller’s Foucault or J. L. Austin, among others) are not only half-blind but are accompanied by unfortunate corollary implications, as they result in constant mis-ascriptions and displacements onto, say, a fear of the “outside,” of the potentially-invading racial, gender, class, or political Other. Collins’s transition from receiver-mode to sender-mode breaking in *Armadale* (and *The Moonstone* as well), at the same time that it will be requiring an undoing of this xenophobia—and thereby rendering itself in danger of being understood as solely a consciousness-raising “political” maneuver—will be bringing with it an implication that, being drawbridge–indefensible, is far more disturbing, for the ruse of compassionately doting on the Other as a means of avoiding the Self will no longer be available to us.

**Sender-mode Complications and the Other Side of the Paradox of Publication**

In *Armadale* the internalization of Otherness occurs not just at the diegetic level, in scenes such as the story of the Bedouin brothers, but at the extra-diegetic level also. Collins uses this process specifically to explode the usual—but incorrect—understanding of the process of publication. When publication is viewed from the settling perspective, as it so very often is, it is seen as a type of “making one’s mark” on the world. Publishing is considered a “birth,” a coming to be noticed. However, there is also a “death-of-the-author” aspect potentially manifest in the act, as Roland Barthes famously asserted, a “death” resulting from the action of dispersal characteristic of publication. The conflict between these two aspects of the process creates what I will be labeling here “the paradox of publication.”

The dispersive threat to the Self posed by publication is seen more clearly when one moves from the receiver-mode to sender-mode view of the breaking function. Derrida acknowledges that the text will always already be breaking away and venturing into regions filled with “others,” that is with “improper” readers: “To be what it is, all writing must, therefore, be capable of functioning in the radical absence of every empirically deter-
mined receiver in general. And this absence is not a continuous modification of presence, it is a rupture in the structure of the mark” (“Signature Event Context” 8). While Derrida does not hierarchize between the two modes, simply pointing out that “What holds for the receiver holds also, for the same reasons, for the sender or the producer” (7–8), Collins’s ever-deepening exploration of the moment of publication in his transition from *The Woman in White* to *The Moonstone* allows him to perceive that the undeniable terrors threatened by those reader-mode alienations, represented so gallingly and obtrusively by the nineteenth-century Americans, are themselves being funded by an unacknowledged terror residing within the sender’s psyche. While the author might well blame illicit readers as the sole cause of her own disturbing, but re-assignable, schizophrenia (and thereby reinforce the denial of her own difficulties the more ardently she does so—a situation that I believe the later works of Dickens were never able to transcend), the knowledge of a sender-mode alienation will nevertheless continually be reintroducing itself.

In Collins’s hands the fear of the foreigner turns out to be a fear of a consciousness that might be as valid as one’s own, a necessary step in bringing to the fore that schizophrenia lodged at the core of the writer’s selfhood. Unlike many writers of his time, Collins does not recoil from the situation of a contest between two equally-weighted entities. Indeed, far from it. Collins relishes watching the fight between the two. Before memorably exemplifying the unsituatedness characteristic of the encounter with a consciousness as valid—or as “own”—as one’s own in Franklin Blake’s meeting up with an unknowingly previously-alienated “second self” on the beach in *The Moonstone*, Collins performatively enacts this circumstance for the readers of *Armadale* by having the two interpretations of Allan Armadale’s dream fight it out for priority, a priority that is never conclusively decided on, or decidable upon. Both of these contests will stand as attempts by Collins to represent the author’s selfhood in the process of its being split by the peculiar workings of iterability.

We see the paradox of publication played out for us at both the beginning and end of the narrative. Early on, Allan Wrentmore (Allan Armadale

---

15. Perhaps Collins was attempting to teach his excessively-aggrieved (see Welsh) friend this lesson in his three masterpieces of breaking, *No Name, Armadale*, and *The Moonstone*.

16. Taylor argues that “meaning is rendered problematic in the novel”: “By continually replaying a plot with modifications the novel elicits distinct interpretations which succeed and overlap with one another, and which form a set of interlocking but dissonant frameworks. In this respect, *Armadale* generates a sense of mystery by continually undermining the terms on which its own cognitive assumptions are founded while allowing them, on another register, to remain intact” (*Secret Theatre* 156 and 154).
3) dictates his biography, in a letter intended eventually as a warning to his infant son, to the Scotsman Mr. Neal while Wrentmore still has the self-control and life to do so. Paralysis will soon be taking away his speech, as it has already his ability to write, and he therefore requires aid to convey his message, that is, to, in a sense, “publish” it. The Doctor tells Mr. Neal, “The paralysis is fast spreading upwards, and disease of the lower part of the spine has already taken place. He can still move his hands a little, but he can hold nothing in his fingers. He can still articulate, but he may wake speechless to-morrow or next day” (15). The illness is slowly cutting off Wrentmore’s means of articulation: it could be said that it is his final act of “publication” that actually kills him, the palsy overtaking him to such an extent that he cannot seal the envelope himself.17 When his letter is completed, in response to Mr. Neal’s question, “Do you insist on my posting it?” Wrentmore makes a great effort: “He mastered his failing speech for the last time, and gave the answer. ‘Yes!’” (50). Mr. Neal leaves the room for the post-office and Wrentmore immediately dies. Here we have a sort of death-of-the-author resulting from publication.

Similarly, in the sensational conclusion of the narrative we are presented with another (this time more symbolic) instance of death-via-publication. This episode is a clear transition point between the materiality outlook expressed by Collins so many years before through the manuscript’s having been equated with land in *Basil* and the acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the claims of immateriality in the publication situation. The nefarious Dr. Le Doux uses intriguingly suggestive terms to describe to Lydia Gwilt the killing mechanism built into the architecture of his asylum:

Do you see that bottle? . . . that plump, round comfortable looking bottle? . . . Suppose we call it “our Stout Friend”? Very good. Our Stout Friend, by himself, is a most harmless and useful medicine. . . . But bring him into contact with something else—introduce him to the acquaintance of a certain common mineral Substance, of a universally accessible kind, broken into fragments; provide yourself with (say) six doses of our Stout Friend, and pour those doses consecutively on the fragments I have mentioned,

17. Collins was mesmerized by the situation of the legal document being signed by one person but sealed by another. This situation had already occurred in *No Name*: “With that final act of compliance, [Noel Vanstone’s] docility came to an end. He refused, in the fiercest terms, to seal the envelope. There was no need to press this proceeding on him. His seal lay ready on the table; and it mattered nothing whether he used it, or whether a person in his confidence used it for him. Mrs Lecount sealed the envelope, with its two important enclosures safely inside” (*No Name*, ed. Ford 475). I will be arguing that such an instance recurs once more in *The Moonstone* only in that case with regard to Collins himself.
at intervals of no less than five minutes [emphasis added]. Quantities of little bubbles will rise at every pouring; collect the gas in those bubbles; and convey it into a closed chamber—and let Samson himself be in that closed chamber, our Stout Friend will kill him in half-an-hour! . . . What do you think of that, my dear lady, in the way of mystery and romance? . . . Don’t suppose I am exaggerating! Don’t suppose I’m inventing a story to put you off with, as the children say. (Armadale 642)

Armadale was of course initially published in twenty monthly serial parts in the Cornhill Magazine from November 1864 to June 1866 (Armadale xxxi). Collins can be seen here to be re-presenting that process of serialized publication in the sequenced aspects of the very elaborate murder scenario that concludes his narrative—an intricately-choreographed dance recalling the automatons of Major Milroy’s clock—in which Gwilt will end up both murderer and victim, akin to Blake’s serving in The Moonstone as both detective and thief. Collins’s immateriality-respecting position here stands in stark contrast to that of his good friend Charles Reade. The latter would be publishing a series of letters in September and October 1875 addressed to the editor of the Pall Mall Gazette and entitled “The Rights and the Wrongs of Authors.” There Reade would inveigh against the particular “delusion,” resulting directly from the immaterial side of textuality, he called “The Aetherial Mania”:

The aetherial mania intermits, like every other. Its lucid intervals coincide with the visits of the rent-gatherer, the tax-gatherer, and the tradesmen with their bills. On these occasions society admits that an author is a solid, and ought to pay or smart; but returns to aether when the funds are to be acquired, without which rent, taxes, and tradesmen cannot be paid, nor life, far less respectability, sustained. No Anglo-Saxon can look the aetherial crotchet in the face and not laugh at it. Yet so subtle and insidious is Prejudice, that you shall find your Anglo-Saxon constantly arguing and acting as if this nonsense was sense: and, pray believe me, the most dangerous of all our lies are those silly, skulking falsehoods which a man is ashamed to state, yet lets them secretly influence his mind and conduct. (131-32)

At the conclusion of Armadale, Collins far from confusing the iterable with the purely material, as he had in Basil, comes to honor writing’s ethereal qualities, representing them through the toxic ether that results from the chemical reaction between rocks (perhaps limestone—paper?) and an energetic acid (perhaps carbonic acid—ink?) (see Armadale 710), an ether that will kill Gwilt when she substitutes herself for her unconscious husband
Midwinter. Thus, the text here is equated with an initially solid mineral substance that dematerializes—into a toxic ether no less—through the publication process.

Thus, both at the beginning and end of this narrative, characters are expiring while publishing. It might not be wrong to say that they die through publication. These scenes thus enact one side—the breaking function—of the paradox that has plagued publication from its very beginnings, particularly in the legal realm. The paradox-of-kind associated with the act of sending one’s writing off on a mass scale has always posed the question of whether publication should be seen to constitute an assertion of the author’s proprietary right or, on the contrary, represent a relinquishment of it, and by extension whether it should be seen to be a consolidation or dispersal of the author’s “identity.” The paradox-averse judges in Millar v. Taylor in 1769 were, not surprisingly, divided on this issue. Justice Aston, upholding the “consolidative” view, understood the act to be a straightforward laying claim by the author to the ownership of the work:

[W]ithout publication, ’tis useless to the owner; because without profit: and property, without the power of use and disposal, is an empty sound. In that state, ’tis lost to the society, in point of improvement; as well as to the author, in point of interest. Publication therefore is the necessary act, and only means, to render this confessed property useful to mankind, and profitable to the owner: in this, they are jointly concerned. (Millar v. Taylor 222)

18. Collins is committed, in a direct recantation of Basil, to dematerializing land in this narrative. The Norfolk Broads, the site of a memorable picnic scene in the narrative, are a marshy region of shallow lakes that seem to be both land and water at the same time. They are paradoxically described as “quite a watery country”: “With the ancient church towers and the wind and water mills, which had hitherto been the only lofty objects seen over the low marshy flat, there now rose all round the horizon . . . the sails of invisible boats moving on invisible waters. All the strange and startling anomalies presented by an inland agricultural district, isolated from other districts by its intricate surrounding network of pools and streams . . . began to present themselves in closer and closer succession. Nets appeared on cottage pailings; little flat-bottomed boats lay strangely at rest among the flowers in cottage gardens; farmers’ men passed to and fro clad in composite costume of the coast and the field, in sailors’ hats, and fishermen’s boots, and ploughmen’s smocks,—and even yet the low-lying labyrinth of waters, embosomed in its mystery of solitude, was a hidden labyrinth still” (244–45). Here where church towers can be obscured by the sails of “invisible boats moving on invisible waters” the aquatic and the terrestrial domains are intertwined.

19. It is appropriate in this context that the names of the estates, Combe-Raven and Thorpe-Ambrose, in both No Name and Armadale should be split—representing fissured land and stability?—by hyphens.

20. Peter Thoms remarks a similar duality to be characterizing the substitutions occurring at the end of the narrative: “In Armadale the idea of substitution . . . possesses . . . duality, being interpreted either as an eradication of identity or as a confirmation of identity in which one so identifies with another that one assumes the other’s troubles” (125).
Championing the “dispersive” view, Justice Yates, that strong advocate for the acknowledgment of the effects of the breaking function, on the other hand, held the opposite opinion. He considered publication a clear handing over to the public of the proprietary right:

From these observations, this corollary, in my opinion . . . does naturally follow; “that the act of publication, when voluntarily done by the author himself, is, virtually and necessarily, a gift to the public.” . . . To this I might add, that in every language, the words which express a publication of a book, express it as giving it to the public.\(^2\) (Millar v. Taylor 233–34)

Aston’s response to Yates's outlook was not surprising: “[T]o construe this only and necessary act to make the work useful and profitable, to be ‘destructive, at once, of the author’s confessed original property, against his express will,’ seems to be quite harsh and unreasonable” (Millar v. Taylor 222). John Dunning, co-counsel along with Wedderburn for Becket in Donaldson v. Becket, in 1774 claimed something similar:

My Lords, it is to me most extraordinary to admit an Author hath a Property originally in his Composition, and that the first Moment he exercises his Dominion over that Property, and endeavours to raise Profit from it, he looses [sic\(^2\)] it. Publication I cannot conceive to be of such a Nature as to destroy that Right to the Matter published, which is acknowledged an Author hath before it is published. (Cases of the Appellants 30)

In the late 1700s the effects of publication were clearly ambiguous, but they were such not as a result of inadequate previous policies or laws. Nor was

---

\(^1\) To offer a more timely expression of this outlook we might quote from a letter published in The Springfield Republican by George Merriam, at the time the publisher of “Webster’s Dictionary.” This letter is excerpted in an article entitled “Who Owns an Author’s Ideas?” from The Nation, 27 June 1867. Merriam writes, “What are the true grounds for a claim for an international copyright? . . . It is said an author has a natural, perfect, perpetual, and inalienable—but by his own act—right to the coinage of his own brain, as fully as the mechanical workman to the product of his own hands. . . . I deny the premise, and the conclusion therefore fails. It is true that while the manuscript is in his own possession he may do what he will with his own. . . . But when he publishes, he parts with his exclusive ownership, and gives it to the public under a contract with that public which for the benefit thus received secures to him in return certain valuable unexclusive rights and enjoyments, and extends over him the shield of its protective law. In other words, literary property is the creature of law. If it were not so, if the author’s property in his works is founded on natural right, then, is he entitled to the exclusive enjoyment not only in all lands, but through all time” (520).

\(^2\) This particular instance of eighteenth-century freedom with spelling is unfortunate, as the whole point of copyright would seem to be that to loose is not to lose.
this ambiguity, as Collins came to learn in the transition from *The Woman in White* to *Armadale*, the result of the actions of illicit mid-Victorian readers across the Atlantic. Rather, it was the direct result of the timeless linguistic structures grounding the author's self-expressed-through-language. At the moment of publication, the Other, rather than being safely cordoned off outside, was instead disclosed to be, shockingly, solidly located inside.

**Writers Proliferating**

While the deinstitutions deployed in *Armadale* do not quite reach the depths of those deployed in *The Moonstone*, we do on occasion see signs of a type of fundamental undermining of the author's stability in the former novel. As the goal of Collins’s incorporational process is to remove the mesmerizing screen of readerly complications and to disclose them to be writerly ones, it is not surprising that *Armadale* should be a narrative filled with writers, and complicated ones at that. Allan Armadale 3, as we have seen, and his son Ozias Midwinter both strenuously work to create texts, the latter presumably “tak[ing] to Literature” (676) after a period of laboring as a foreign correspondent for a London newspaper. But it is the character of Lydia Gwilt who most clearly presents to us the complications of the author. A character who is, in a prefiguring of *The Moonstone’s* Franklin Blake, self-avowedly “inconsistent with [her]self” (559), she is from the beginning shown to be uncomfortable with—or at least complicately-situated with regard to—the process of writing. She begins her career of iniquity at the age of twelve through an exercising of her “imitative dexterity” in the forgery of a letter, the embodiment of someone else’s text. She is during the story not only constantly writing letters, many to be included in the narrative, but also writing a diary, excerpts from which end up making up nearly a fifth of the completed text. In “breaking off” that diary—a hint at her approaching suicide?—she expresses herself as if she were bidding adieu to her life rather than to a mere recreation: “Good-by, my old friend and companion of many a miserable day! Having nothing else to be fond of, I half suspect myself of having been unreasonably fond of you. What a fool I am!” (612). At one point she asks herself, “Why do I keep a diary at all?” and responds as any born writer might, “I don’t care why! I must write down what happened between Midwinter and me to-night, *because* I must” (559).

Gwilt is also, like Collins, a consummate plotter, and the plots she formulates are not just of any old variety but scenarios that show the Self to be surprisingly profoundly vulnerable to substitution. She at one point comes
up with an effective intrigue through which to mislead Reverend Brock as he observes her door from his own rooms across the street. She will, mimicking her earlier forgery of text, have her housemaid be seen leaving the house clothed in her previous day’s walking dress, that is, in the iterable or imitable markers of her identity. Gwilt’s accomplice Mother Oldershaw suggests additionally having the housemaid lift her veil so as to have her face (ie, to Brock’s understanding the London Miss Gwilt’s face) be noted clearly as a means of further establishing her difference from the Miss Gwilt who will soon be showing up at Thorpe-Ambrose Cottage to take up the position of governess. Oldershaw’s own particular contribution to the con game is described by her as one worthy of reality: “Don’t suppose I’m at all over-boastful about my own ingenuity. Cleverer tricks than this trick of mine are played off on the public by swindlers, and are recorded in the newspapers every week” (219). Here “publication” leads to a type of “death” of the person and, of course, the birth of her substitute.

Of her original scheme, Gwilt comments,

The thing would be quite impossible, of course, if I had been seen with my veil up; but, as events have turned out, it is one advantage of the horrible exposure which followed my marriage, that I seldom show myself in public, and never of course in such a populous place as London, without wearing a thick veil and keeping that veil down. If the housemaid wears my dress, I don’t really see why the housemaid may not be counted on to represent me to the life. (216; emphasis added)

This concept of being represented “to the life” suggests the type of destabilizing contestation between equals that Collins came to realize is always occurring between an author and her words. Being “represented to the life” suggests that the literal reaches down to the very bases of the Self. Textuality—and therefore iterability, in all its aspects—can be seen to be a fundamental aspect of “being.” Indeed, once her strategem has succeeded, Gwilt will crow about her having been “proved not to be myself” (284; emphasis in original)—a statement Franklin Blake could also make. Here we have the Self and its texts disclosed to be launched on a perpetual whirligig of substitutions and screenings. Here we have “Hassan” jumping down his own throat.

23. Even when she is herself, as the wife of Ozias Midwinter—really Allan Armadale 5—that is, when she is finally officially “Lydia Armadale,” she is attempting to use that name to pass herself off to the citizens of Thorpe-Ambrose as the widow of the other Allan Armadale of Midwinter’s generation. Those citizens will turn out to be more credulous than the real-world critics and her plan will have a fair chance of success until, that is, Allan Armadale 4 returns from his presumed death at sea.
This concept of the author being proved not to be herself is seen also at the climax of the novel. In the asylum scene, it will be recalled, Midwinter will exchange bedrooms with Allan Armadale and Gwilt will then, upon discovering the change, commit suicide by substituting herself for her overcome husband in the poisoned air, an air poisoned, it should be recalled, by figurative serial publication effects. Here we have “the author” living on as one Self while a different side of the Self dies as a result of “publication.” The substitution of Gwilt for Midwinter shows us a writer with a split psyche. Both are writers, as already noted, as well as being husband and wife. If man and wife are truly “one person,” as Blackstone’s Commentaries, an authority amusingly cited in the narrative on marriage in a different context (455–59), famously has it, one writer-Self of “the happy couple” can be seen here to be substituting for another aspect of itself. Here the extroverted and introverted (Midwinter is more than once described as “shy” [118 and 221]) sides of the author are undergoing the publication process and one side is—as a result of self-sacrifice—ending up overcome by it while the other lives on. This move is very close to, as we will see in the next chapter, Collins’s in the writing of The Moonstone.