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Wilkie Collins's *Cinderella*: The History of Psychology and *The Woman in White*

Barbara Fass Leavy

The 1939 publication of Clyde K. Hyder's study of *The Woman in White* helped to illuminate the unconventional life of Wilkie Collins as well as to reveal an important source for his ingeniously plotted novel. The written account of a French case in which one Mme. de Douhault is incarcerated under a false name in the Salpêtrière so that her brother might gain control of her inheritance so closely parallels the plot against Laura Fairlie in Collins's book as to leave no doubt about where Collins's idea originated. But Hyder's legacy to Collins criticism has not been a totally happy one. First, his claim that when "all is said, it is as a story that *The Woman in White* has most interest," since "Collins himself belongs among the great story-tellers rather than among the great novelists," seems to have blazed the trail followed by virtually all subsequent critics, who focus almost exclusively on the plot.¹ Second, the parallels between the plight of Mme. de Douhault and that of Laura Fairlie have turned interest away from the character who, after all, gave the novel its name. Even U. C. Knoepfelmacher's brilliant study of the book reads as if there are only two heroines in it, Laura Fairlie and Marian Halcombe. Anne Catherick is virtually dismissed as a "deranged outcast,"² whose chief importance, apparently, is as a foil for her half-sister Laura. Knoepfelmacher argues for the existence of a counterworld of Victorian fiction of which Collins was a member. Analyzing the contrast between Laura and Marian as parallel to that between Scott's Rowena and Rebecca, or

Thackeray's Amelia and Becky, Knoepfelmacher has revealed about Collins what Philip Rahv revealed years ago about Hawthorne: the novelists never allowed themselves to validate those impulses or attitudes invested in their dark ladies, with the result that it is their relatively insipid blond heroines who win the day. In such an analysis *The Woman in White*'s thematic importance is dependent upon this rich and allusive tradition, and the woman in white herself, Anne Catherick, is relegated to virtual insignificance.³

Third, Hyder's legacy has the unfortunate effect of deflecting attention away from British social history to France.⁴ But, in fact, the serialization of *The Woman in White* in Dickens' *All the Year Round* from November 1859 to August 1860 coincided with the meetings of a special Parliamentary Select Committee "appointed to inquire into the Operations of the Acts of Parliament, and Regulations for the Care and Treatment of Lunatics and their Property."⁵ The Committee began hearings in March 1859 and issued its final report in July 1860, just a month before the three-volume edition of *The Woman in White* appeared. It had been convened to investigate the adequacy of existing laws for the protection of both real and alleged lunatics, and many of the issues covered by testimony before it became significant elements in Collins's novel, which was appearing simultaneously. Close ties existed between members of the Select Committee and the professionals who testified before it, on the one side, and the literary world of England on the other. The connections between Collins and these doctors and legislators—both direct and via Dickens—explain why one of the major impediments to solving the legal and social problems concerning lunatics became an important thematic strain in *The Woman in White*. Collins was interested in the medical and legal problems of insanity; and his novel reveals a concerted attempt to create a psychological case history which goes far beyond the requirements of his narrative. In an effort to explain his own "lunatic," Anne Catherick, Wilkie Collins anticipated some of the major psychiatric theories prevalent today by embodying his insights in a mythical approach to one of Victorian England's favorite fairy tales, *Cinderella*.

I

The years 1845–1860 are particularly significant in the history of the British mental health movement. A century of agitation for reform had resulted in The Lunatics Act of 1845, which, according to the historian of the movement, "ended the first stage of reform"⁶

of lunatic asylums which more closely resembled torture chambers than they did places to cure or help the mentally ill. Accounts of cures lead one to believe that released patients must have invoked every bit of sanity they possessed to escape conditions far worse than those which had led to their breakdowns in the first place. The evolving changes and heightened awareness which led to the 1845 Act mark "the culmination of a slow process of social revolution which transformed the 'Lunatic or mad Person' of 1744 into the 'person of unsound mind' of 1845."⁷

From the time that the Act was presented, however, there was agitation from parties who believed its provisions did not go far enough. And in 1853 some uncontroversial amendments further improved the methods according to which the ill were confined and the controls on many of the places into which they were committed. The old horrors associated with asylums, however, clung to the public imagination, and, as Collins ironically reveals in *Armada* (1866), the modern and supposedly enlightened treatment of patients could be more insidious than the older, blatant abuses. In this novel, published six years after *The Woman in White* and after much of the public furor had died down, Collins suggests the persistent terror felt in thinking about lunatic asylums not so much in his description of an institution as in his description of the office of the doctor who ran and owned it:

The doctor's private snuggery was at the back of the house, looking out on fields and trees, doomed but not yet destroyed by the builder. Horrible objects in brass and leather and glass, twisted and turned as if they were sentient things writhing in agonies of pain, filled up one end of the room. A great book-case with glass doors extended over the whole of the opposite wall, and exhibited on its shelves long rows of glass jars, in which shapeless dead creatures of a dull white color floated in yellow liquid. Above the fireplace hung a collection of photographic portraits of men and women, inclosed in two large frames hanging side by side with a space between them. The left-hand frame illustrated the effects of nervous suffering as seen in the face; the right-hand frame exhibited the ravages of insanity from the same point of view, while the space between was occupied by an elegantly illuminated scroll, bearing inscribed on it the time-honored motto, "Prevention is better than Cure."⁸

In 1858 the strength of the public outcry resulted in the appointment of the special Select Committee, which would deliberate for more than a year and hear testimony adding up to some 800 pages of transcription and summary. Some of the matters covered by the

1845 Act as well as some of what remained unresolved even after the Select Committee bear on much of the content of *The Woman in White*, written while the Committee was in the process of meeting and published in book form just one month after it issued its final report.

The 1845 Act appointed a new group of Lunacy Commissioners whose main powers lay in their responsibility to inspect both state hospitals and what were called “licensed houses,” that is, private asylums of the kind to which Anne Catherick and later Laura Fairlie are confined. Those who soberly examined the situation concluded that some state institutions were making advances in improving the condition of patients through non-restraint (eliminating the use of mechanisms such as chains, or clothing such as straight-jackets) and through the establishment of conditions to match the prevailing theory that mental illness, like physical maladies, responded to good diet, fresh air, and exercise. The so-called private asylums, however, remained objects of suspicion: despite the new powers of the Lunacy Commissioners concerning the licensing of such houses, the profit motive behind such free enterprises made it difficult for public and political figures alike to shake the suspicion that proprietors of private asylums were liable to corruption. In 1858 the London *Times* articulated a position that was shared by the philanthropic Lord Shaftesbury, a prime mover in the 1845 Act: “It is not good to keep a man’s interest and duty in perpetual antagonism . . . it never can come to good to place beings so helpless as lunatics under the care of persons whose interest lies rather in the continuance than in the relief of their disorder.”⁹ While Shaftesbury’s testimony before the Select Committee in 1859 indicates that he did not think that people were being unjustifiably confined to asylums, he did worry about their being kept there unnecessarily and therefore thought that all asylums should be taken out of the hands of private owners and run by the government.

That the blatant physical abuse of patients was less an issue than their legal protection in the period from 1858–1860 is reflected in *The Woman in White* by the fact that it is the question of legal confinement that occupies Collins. In addition, that Hartright has no reason to suspect Anne of being an escaped lunatic suggests that she has not been mistreated in the asylum: she presents a clean, neat, and healthy appearance, however strange her behavior. Again, the Lunacy Commissioners were charged with the responsibility of inspecting all municipal asylums (those in the suburbs were inspected by local Magistrates), and their reports affected the issuance and

renewal of licenses to private establishments. Also, it was the duty of the Lunacy Commission to inspect the legal procedures according to which a patient was confined to an asylum; part of the 1845 Act involved a revision of the kinds of petitions and medical certificates required before a private patient could be committed and detained. But the legal safeguards that were being devised—adequate or not—led to three perplexing medical problems, at least two of which, and perhaps all three, make themselves felt in *The Woman in White*. The first two concerned the difficulty in recognizing insanity when one was confronted by it.

The ability to diagnose insanity was related to the concern of the Select Committee about whether asylum proprietors were given notice before the Lunacy Commissioners arrived to inspect their premises. The obvious fear was that the owner would have a chance to clean up his establishment, and that he could devise some means to prevent the close questioning of a patient whose complaints might cause him some trouble or whose clarity of mind would arouse the suspicion that the proprietor was out of self-interest detaining someone whose release would reduce his income. Both the threat of illegal commitment and unjustifiable detainment were matters that plagued the public; again, it was the *London Times* that in 1858 voiced this general fear:

The position of a lunatic appears to be one of the most terrible in which a human being can be placed. There is, however, a still worse condition, which is that of a person of sane mind who is treated by his fellow-creatures as though he were mad—of one who, being himself of sane mind, is incarcerated in an asylum, intended only for the insane,—who is, therefore, subjected to bodily restraint, and, still worse, to the moral and intellectual indignities consequent upon a supposed deprivation of reason. To be insane is bad enough—to be considered insane when a patient is not so in reality must, as far as present suffering is concerned, be incredibly worse.¹⁰

Public protest emphasized the assumption that the line between the insane and the allegedly insane was easy to draw.

John Thomas Perceval, the son of an assassinated former Prime Minister, whom Collins may have used as the basis for Percival in *The Woman in White*, is of special interest for his account in July 1859 to the Select Committee of his own confinement in an asylum. It is as a self-proclaimed champion of the mad and the allegedly mad that he sees himself:

I have said that I consider myself the attorney-general of all Her Majesty's madmen. I believe I am the only person, and, as far as I can see, my pamphlet is the only work that is published on the subject of maintaining the rights of lunatics. I consider that society or the Legislature, who shut up patients not only for their own benefit, which is generally looked upon to be the case, but for the benefit of society as well, in a very great measure—in a manner are compelled, in doing so, to violate the liberty of the subject, and to deprive him of the power of seeing his friends, and I think that they should most jealously respect all his other rights; he ought to enjoy them, and they ought not to interfere with them.¹¹

In November of the same year, Wilkie Collins would begin serialization of a novel in which his own character, Percival, would represent the very dangers John Thomas Perceval was fighting. He would violate the liberty of, first, Anne Catherick, and then his own wife, Laura, committing each to a private lunatic asylum, not for either their own or the public good, but for his own. That Collins reversed the role of the real Perceval in portraying his own Percival is consistent with many similar, demonstrable reversals in his fiction in general and *The Woman in White* in particular.

Though public statements often inferred that the distinction between the insane and the allegedly insane was readily apparent, it was recognized at the time that insanity could present itself convincingly under the guise of sanity, and that it was not always possible to discern mental illness when it did exist. When asked by the Select Committee about whether it is “not the fact that, in lunatic patients, the symptoms of malady do not make themselves apparent, as they do in people in a sound state of mind,” Shaftesbury provided a guarded response that reveals the scrupulosity with which he attempted to cooperate with the inquiry at hand, although it was the effectiveness of his Commissioners that was in part being called into question:

I do not know whether that is so. That is a mixed question, and I might have a private opinion upon it; but I may state that in respect to the testimony given by lunatics this is to be observed, and I think my colleagues will say the same, that the testimony of a lunatic, in respect of himself, is to be received with many grains of allowance; but the testimony of a lunatic, in respect of others, is oftentimes of the most trustworthy character.¹²

Perceval and Shaftesbury have been depicted as polite adversaries during the proceedings of the Select Committee; Perceval's

main quarrel with Shaftesbury and the other Lunacy Commissioners was only that their safeguards both in terms of law and actual practice did not go far enough in guarding the rights of supposed lunatics.¹³ On one point, however, they were in agreement: there would be no point in adding more physicians to the number of those who had to certify a patient in order to confine him. Shaftesbury and Perceval shared the prevalent belief of their time that the average intelligent person was as competent as any doctor (with the exception Shaftesbury made for experts such as John Conolly) in detecting mental illness. "The truth is," writes Perceval in the pamphlet written to expose the inadequacies of the 1845 Act, "that any person of sound common sense is in ordinary cases as good a judge of the sanity of a person of the same rank of life as any medical man whatsoever, and the friends and relations of a person of unsound mind are usually the best judges as to his insanity rendering him unfit to manage his property or to be at large." The qualification that Perceval adds to his claim is central to the plot of *The Woman in White*. For he continues that such relatives "are not blindly to be depended upon, because they may be influenced by corrupt motives, such as the desire to possess themselves of a ward's or kinsman's estate, or to get a person out of the way who interferes with their selfish gratifications."¹⁴ It is clear that, once again, John Thomas Perceval is describing the two situations that Collins's Percival would set in motion: getting Anne Catherick out of the way in a private asylum because she "interferes with [his] selfish gratifications," and then doing the same with Laura Fairlie, out of "the desire to possess [himself] of a ward's or kinsman's estate."

In the argument that the average citizen is as competent as a physician to discern insanity, one finds a curious medical dilemma. On the one hand, it is admitted that insanity can parade under the guise of sanity; a patient's claims on his own behalf are not to be completely trusted (although an insane person might be very astute where it came to another). But rather than leading to the conclusion that great expertise was necessary for some sound judgment to be made, this common belief led to the opposite conclusion: all that was needed was good common sense, possessed as well by the average person as by any doctor, provided that person were possessed not only of intelligence but also of good will. Such an individual is indeed portrayed as the hero and chief narrator of *The Woman in White*; and in the context of the perplexing legal and medical dilemma Collins's age had not yet worked its way out of, the scene in which Walter Hartright first meets Anne Catherick

assumes a significance far beyond the novel's acclaimed melodrama. When Hartright, after he attempts to help Anne, learns that she had escaped from an asylum, he is overcome by the same difficulty that pressed upon the conscience of Collins's age:

"She has escaped from my Asylum."

I cannot say with truth that the terrible inference which those words suggested flashed upon me like a new revelation. Some of the strange questions put to me by the woman in white, after my ill-considered promise to leave her free to act as she pleased, had suggested the conclusion, either that she was naturally flighty and unsettled, or that some recent shock of terror had disturbed the balance of her faculties. But the idea of absolute insanity which we all associate with the very name of an Asylum, had, I can honestly declare, never occurred to me, in connexion with her. I had seen nothing, in her language or her actions, to justify it at the time; and, even with the new light thrown on her by the words which the stranger had addressed to the policeman, I could see nothing to justify it now.

What had I done? Assisted the victim of the most horrible of all false imprisonments to escape; or cast loose on the wide world of London an unfortunate creature whose actions it was my duty, and every man's duty, mercifully to control? I turned sick at heart when the question occurred to me, and when I felt self-reproachfully that it was asked too late. (22)

Walter Hartright's bewilderment reflects the double dilemma Victorian England faced with regard to its lunatics. On the one hand, that Hartright could find no overt signs of lunacy in Anne is not conclusive, since it was believed that the insane could feign sanity or possess lucid intervals that did not cancel out the reality of the disease. On the other side, Hartright's feeling that there was no reason for the frightened young woman to be confined would carry much weight at a time when it was also believed that such general impressions were as valid as medical diagnoses, since there existed no specific medical expertise to deal with what was nevertheless a medical problem. Collins was able to use the conceptions of his time, with their peculiarly conflicting logic, to advantage, heightening the mystery surrounding his woman in white by arousing genuine doubt about her madness. At the same time, he had emphasized the social theme of his novel, for his plot does not merely involve the substitution of a sane woman for a deranged one in a lunatic asylum, but rather the substitution of an obviously unjustifiably confined woman for another whose commitment is also questionable.

For Collins to be able in this fashion to employ the ideas of his time to heighten the ambiguity and hence the suspense of his story suggests a peculiarly sharp awareness of not only the legal but related medical issues surrounding insanity. To sustain his complex approach to his subject, he would have to construct for his own satisfaction at least a medical case history that might render Anne possibly mad but not necessarily so. Thus there may be more to his description of how he wrote *The Woman in White* than critics who invoke his account are aware of.¹⁵ He tells how he first conceived of his “male devil,” Count Fosco, but “let him wait, and [began] to think about the two women.” He goes on:

They must be both innocent and both interesting. Lady Glyde dawns on me as one of the innocent victims. I try to discover the other—and fail. I try what a walk will do for me—and fail. I devote the evening to a new effort—and fail. Experience now tells me to take no more trouble about it, and leave that other woman to come of her own accord. The next morning, before I have been awake in my bed for more than ten minutes, my perverse brains set to work without consulting me. Poor Anne Catherick comes into the room and says, “Try me.” (596)

Although Collins clearly intended both his women to be interesting, modern readers find Laura not to their taste and poor Anne of little consequence. However, in the latter instance, her connection to what was happening in England concurrent with the writing and publishing of *The Woman in White* makes her a compellingly important figure.

II

In his study of private madhouses in England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, *The Trade in Lunacy*, William H. Parry-Jones refers to the fears that “flared up, at intervals, throughout the nineteenth century” that for corrupt motives sane persons might be improperly confined to lunatic asylums.¹⁶ It is his conclusion that “there is little well-documented evidence” of the practices attributed to private asylums and that much “of the hue and cry stemmed from the published recollections and accounts of alleged lunatics and ex-inmates of private madhouses.”¹⁷ Collins, of course, claimed that part of his conception for *The Woman in White* came from a letter he had received asking for his help in securing the release of an inmate from an asylum. Why Collins should have

received such a plea is unclear, though it suggests that he was known to be interested in the problem.¹⁸ An individual seeking such help would have done well to go to the Alleged Lunatics Friends Society. In fact, Perceval's intervention had secured the release from an asylum of one Charles Verity whose pamphlet, "A Voice From a Madhouse: By One Who Was Lately An Inmate of the Northampton Lunatic Asylum" was part of the public uproar in 1858.¹⁹ Verity was, he claimed, first unjustifiably imprisoned for possession of stolen goods he had not known were stolen, and then, as a natural result of the stress caused by his unwarranted fate, he had exhibited symptoms that led to his confinement in a lunatic asylum.

Verity's pamphlet was but one of many appearing in 1858 when "one of those waves of suspicion and excitement which occasionally pass over the public mind in regard to the custody of the insane occurred. . . ."²⁰ It is with obvious satisfaction that the 1858 report of the Alleged Lunatics Friends Society is able to declare that

there appears to be a growing opinion amongst society, that the system of confining persons in private asylums is wrong in principle and dangerous in practice, from the temptations which it affords to persons to make an unjust profit from the improper confinement of their fellow subjects, whilst they are unable also to afford such patients that proper care, attention, and medical and moral treatment which is requisite for their well-being and cure.²¹

At the same time the *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology* noted the number of insanity cases that were being heard by juries.²² It was probably the notoriety created by these instances of alleged lunacy that did more than anything else, including the resultant Parliamentary Select Committee, to create the atmosphere in which *The Woman in White* appeared.

Most of the cases reported in the press involved persons whose ability to administer sizable estates was at issue. One of these jury trials, which occupied the attentions of the *London Times* for many days, is particularly noteworthy because of the arresting parallels between it and the dramatic beginning of Collins's novel, *Armada*. The case involved one Henry Meux, who, having married a much younger woman after a dissolute past, fathered an infant son before sinking into the last stages of a degenerative mental illness and general paralysis. Previously, he had changed his will; the wife who would earlier have received a generous bequest was now his sole beneficiary if no children survived. His family sued to

prove that he was not of sound mind at the time of the new will. What was at issue was not whether Henry Meux was insane, but *when* he had become so and thus unable to make sound judgments about his estate. Despite days of testimony from those who knew him, and despite testimony from famous doctors appearing for both sides, the jury could not reach a verdict. This failure once again illuminated the problems attendant upon the diagnosis of mental illness at a time when England was suffering from the lack of sufficient theories to account for insanity. Nevertheless, the outlines of the case obviously impressed themselves on Collins; for it is unlikely to be a coincidence that in *Armada* one finds a similar trio: the dissolute and now paralytic dying husband; the young wife; and her infant son, one of the book's two Alan Armadales. It is the document, a letter, if not a will, written by the dying man that sets in motion what is to follow in the novel.

But perhaps the most notorious case of the time, and the one that may have triggered the public agitation of 1858, involved one Mrs. Turner, whom a jury of her peers adjudged to be sane even though a reading of even the *Times* account makes one wonder what such a conclusion was based on. Apparently Mrs. Turner, when not married or cohabiting with her husband, was able to function well enough to handle her own affairs. But, again apparently, the pressures of wedded life were such that she exhibited symptoms of excessive jealousy and paranoia, leading her reluctant husband first to seek a separation, and then, because of her conviction that he was trying to poison her, to have her committed to an asylum. What made this case notorious was that Mrs. Turner seems to have fallen into the hands of one of those genuinely incompetent and cruel asylum owners, a Mr. Metcalfe, who ran an establishment called Acomb House. His mistreatment of her both in his asylum and after her escape from it were set out in detail for the public's use in confirming the suspicion of asylums it had been nurturing all along.²³

It may have been the Turner case that caused an abrupt change in the attitude of the *Times*. In June 1858 it had reported favorably on private asylums when it noted that "most of these metropolitan asylums are agreeably situated in the suburbs, and have spacious gardens, lawns, and pleasure-grounds for the use of the patients."²⁴ But a month later, when reporting on the Turner case, it stated that "We cannot but entertain a fearful suspicion that the administration of Private Lunatic Asylums is carelessly conducted and that a sad tragedy which is never spoken of in the outer world occurs in these dismal abodes."²⁵ By August 1858 the *Times* concluded:

The fact would appear to be that under existing arrangements any English man or woman may without much difficulty be incarcerated in a Private Lunatic Asylum when not deprived of reason.²⁶

Walter Hartright's reference to the "most horrible of all false imprisonments" echoes the newspaper's contention that the "position of a lunatic appears to be one of the most terrible in which a human being can be placed," but that while to "be insane is bad enough—to be considered insane when a patient is not so in reality must, as far as present suffering is concerned, be incredibly worse."²⁷

Perhaps Collins's most lurid depiction of false commitment came more than a decade after the composition of *The Woman in White* with his publication of *The New Magdalen* (1873). It is a novel whose initial interest proves greater than its final execution, a powerful beginning succeeded by a tedious and sentimentalized middle and ending. Written when Collins's power as a novelist seems on the wane, the book hearkens back to earlier plots and themes. Like *The Woman in White*, *The New Magdalen* also deals with two women whose identities are confused, although in a typical Collins reversal, the self-made imposter proves the heroine, while the woman she is falsely pretending to be is a kind of female villain. When Mercy Merrick, a Victorian "fallen" woman, meets Grace Roseberry, she has no thought of passing herself off as Grace to the latter's relatives, who had in fact never met Grace. But the setting is wartime, and when Grace appears to be killed by enemy fire, the temptation to assume her identity and begin again proves irresistible to Mercy. She does not know that Grace was only wounded and will later arrive at her relative's house to claim her rightful place in the household which has come to love the imposter. Since the real Grace lacks the papers to prove who she is, she finds protestations of her identity futile. In turn, the family concludes she is not only a nuisance but mad. Committing her to a lunatic asylum will rid them of the inconvenience caused by her persistence. What Collins focuses on during this part of the novel is not only the pangs of conscience suffered by Mercy Merrick, but the ease with which she alone can save Grace from the asylum or allow her to be placed there: "The terrible alternative that was offered to her had showed itself at last, without reserve or disguise. Restore the identity you have stolen, or shut her up in a madhouse—it rests with you to choose! In that form the situation formed itself in her mind."²⁸ And in that form Collins turns back to an earlier period to confirm the *Times'*

contention of 1858 that “under existing arrangements” a Mercy Merrick might indeed possess such power.

The horror of the threat to Grace had already been illustrated by Collins through his portrait of the person summoned to carry her away. In this character Collins embodied all the fears that had swept through the public mind and had reached a climactic pitch more than a decade before he wrote *The New Magdalen*:

He was not a gentleman; he was not a workman; he was not a servant. He was vilely dressed, in glossy black broadcloth. His frock coat hung on him instead of fitting him. His trousers were a pair of shapeless black bags. His gloves were too large for him. His high-polished boots creaked detestably whenever he moved. He had odiously watchful eyes—eyes that looked skilled in peeping through keyholes. His large ears, set forward like the ears of a monkey, pleaded guilty to meanly listening behind other people's doors. His manner was quietly confidential, when he spoke; impenetrably self-possessed, when he was silent. A lurking air of secret-services enveloped the fellow, like an atmosphere of his own, from head to foot. He looked all round the magnificent room, without betraying either surprise or admiration. He closely investigated every person in it with one glance of his cunningly watchful eyes. Making his bow to Lady Janet, he silently showered on her, as his introduction, the card that had summoned him. And then he stood at ease, self-revealed in his own sinister identity—a police officer in plain clothes.²⁹

Such a description of the person who would spirit off to a lunatic asylum someone who did not warrant incarceration would satisfy the public imagination. A century of slow reform plus the 1845 Act and its 1853 amendments had not erased the images of neglect and cruelty associated with the treatment of the insane. In comparison to *The New Magdalen*, *The Woman in White* is positively restrained, more in accord with the Parliamentary inquiries of 1858 and 1859, intended to respond to public hysteria rather than to inflame it.

Collins, however, also addressed himself to the growing awareness that it was not possible to formulate purely legal solutions to the problems of real and alleged insanity. There was indeed a disparity between the Select Committee's theoretical conclusions and the effects of its actual recommendations to tighten the legal procedures necessary for committing the patient.³⁰ In theory, the Committee responded to the problem that the legal safeguards intended to protect the rights of the insane might in fact impede a patient's receiving prompt medical attention. What psychological theory existed at the time made a close connection between physical

and mental illness; if in the former instance, prompt detection and treatment were necessary to save the patient, so would this be the case where it came to insanity. Thus Walter Hartright's fear that he had endangered not only the public but Anne herself in aiding her escape reflects less the public hysteria with regard to the issues than what might be called the concerns of the opposing side.

In 1853 the "asylum doctors" responded to the public opprobrium surrounding them by forming an organized group whose views were expressed in the *Asylum Journal* (subsequently the *Journal of Mental Science*, now *The British Journal of Psychiatry*).³¹ It was not the policy of the journal to deny that there were defects in the law, but it voiced resentment that in what it called "The Newspaper Attack on Private Lunatic Asylums," the fault of the system should be "most unjustly attributed as faults to those acting under it."³² In addition, it called into question the assumption that laymen could make sound decisions in matters concerning lunacy. Pointing to the famous jury trials of 1858, it argued that even a casual perusal of the accounts in newspapers indicated that the facts presented mitigated against the jury's conclusion that the person in question (for example, Mrs. Turner) was sane. A perhaps milder and more conciliatory version of this position was voiced about the same time by the *Journal of Psychological Medicine* as it attempted to strike some balance between the legal and medical problems that, unless reconciled, would create insuperable conflicts:

It is necessary that this very natural feeling of the public should be respected; and it would be well if the press, while advocating a stricter attention to the civil rights of the insane, would also give some little thought to their social rights. . . . The person who has manifested the earlier symptoms of a disordered mind is often altogether debarred from receiving proper medical attention, unless he be first certified to be and registered as a lunatic—as being, in short, that which the medical man is anxious to prevent him becoming!³³

On April 2, 1859, in Dickens' *Household Words*, soon to give way to *All the Year Round*—that is, just four months before the serialization of *The Woman in White* began—there appeared an article entitled "The Cure of Sick Minds." Not only did the article take up certain theoretical questions concerning the origin and course of mental illness, but also, in contrast to what was going on in the newspapers, it took the stance of the medical community that at least as dangerous to the patient as a violation of his civil rights was the danger that a patient would not get needed help in time.³⁴

Household Words was not so much concerned with the impediments created by legal safeguards as with the generalized ignorance and superstition that prevented families from seeking aid. It described how

A young woman, liable to returns of insanity, and living fourteen miles away, left her home at four-o'clock one wet morning, and taking the railway as her guide, hurried to the asylum; she passed through several tunnels on her road, and arrived wet and exhausted. She said, "she dreaded being ill at home, for they treated her badly when mad. She knew the asylum was her best place, and she came as fast as she could to get help in time; she did not let her friends know of her intention, for she had asked them to bring her, and they were unwilling to do so."³⁵

It is the contrast to Collins's plot that is so striking here, for the anecdote in *Household Words* is almost a mirror image of the journey taken by Anne Catherick. In one case, a woman perhaps unjustifiably committed to any asylum, and certainly committed because she is troublesome to her family, escapes from the institution to thwart the plot against her and her half-sister. Both girls are victims of the inadequacies of the legal safeguards which should prevent such conspiracies, and both Anne and Laura reflect the public's fear of a potentially lethal combination of greedy relatives and corrupt asylum keepers acting on the worst conceivable motives. In striking comparison, *Household Words* presents an equally dramatic if condensed escape of a young woman, this time from her home to the asylum, because ignorance would prevent the needed treatment available to her when she is ill. These mirror-image plots, so to speak, embody Victorian England's attempt to decide in 1860 whether its most pressing concerns with regard to the insane were legal or medical.

Clearly the appearance of *The Woman in White* coincided with a very crucial period in the British mental health movement. A year before Collins began writing his novel, public concern about the legal safeguards involving commitment to lunatic asylums had reached a fever pitch. Private pamphlets, the accounts of ex-patients, the sensationalism surrounding some cases that were reported in the newspapers, the continuing agitation from agencies such as the Alleged Lunatics Friends Society—all these led to the convening of a Parliamentary Select Committee whose hearings ran virtually parallel to the serialization of *The Woman in White*. The Committee and those who testified before it were obviously sincere

in their efforts to deal with the reform of existing conditions where necessary, but they were hampered by some unresolved problems concerning the commitment of the insane. On the one hand, it was recognized that the insane could often feign sanity, hiding the reality of their illness. Piling up more and more legal safeguards, therefore, did not solve all the problems concerning rightful confinement and detention of patients. On the other side, the belief that persons possessed of common sense and good intentions were as able as almost any physician to diagnose a case requiring commitment did not eliminate the possibility that those asked to make a judgment would act from self-interest. And, finally, although the thrust of public concern from 1858–1860 was over the civil rights of patients, there was another voice to be heard. It came from physicians, asylum proprietors, and even from popular journals such as *Household Words*. Believing that mental illness, like physical illness, required prompt attention if the disease was to be arrested, many feared that general public ignorance and prejudice would prevent the treatment of those sorely in need of early help. What is also clear is that the discussion was severely hampered by a lack of the theoretical knowledge about the nature and causes of insanity that might resolve some of the existing dilemmas.

That Wilkie Collins was ironically aware of the paucity of theory available is reflected in *The Woman in White* in a passage that, as far as narrative itself is concerned, seems to have no special importance. When Hartright first arrives at the Fairlie home, he is met by Marian Halcombe, who apologizes for the failure of her uncle to greet the man he has hired to teach his niece how to draw. “Mr. Fairlie is too great an invalid to be a companion for anybody,” explains Marian. “I don’t know what is the matter with him, and the doctors don’t know what is the matter with him and he doesn’t know himself what is the matter with him. We all say it’s on the nerves, and we none of us know what we mean when we say it”(28).

Collins, of course, was less interested in presenting theories than in dramatizing human problems. In *The Woman in White* he fictionalizes the subtle problems that Victorian England was grappling with in its attempts at reform. Naturally the plots against Anne and Laura typified the legal concerns of the time. A combination of a private asylum proprietor, whose self-interest would make it difficult for him to be disinterested even if he were well-intentioned, and a family plotting the elimination from its midst of a troublesome member, were sufficient to lock away an individual who was either sane or at least not clearly insane. It is, of course,

noteworthy that Collins does *not* intensify the sensationalism of his book by portraying any asylum keeper such as the notorious Mr. Metcalfe of Acomb House. Neither Shaftesbury nor Perceval believed that this gentleman was typical of those who ran asylums. If he were, so the thrust of Perceval's testimony went, then the social ills of the time would be speedily cured as a result of the blatancy of the abuse. No, the danger was a more subtle therefore more insidious one: so long as asylums were in private hands, then it lay in the interests of proprietors to hold on to their fee-paying patients. Such proprietors, even if they did not actually cooperate in such plots as Sir Percival Glyde's and Count Fosco's, were vulnerable to their machinations.

Actually it is the more paradoxical medical problem that seems to have intrigued Collins, for it shows up in the ambiguity of his central, most dramatic scene: the meeting of Walter Hartright and Anne Catherick on the night she escapes from the asylum. Here Walter's inability to judge the reality of Anne's alleged insanity illustrates one of the most perplexing problems facing England's legislators. That she did not appear insane to Hartright is at one and the same time inconclusive and significant. This ambiguity suggests that Collins's story is not quite the obverse of the anecdote told some months earlier in *Household Words*, where the thrust of the article concerned the medical, not the legal, problem facing Victorians, who, if they tightened the safeguards involving commitment of the insane, might tragically deprive these poor persons of the prompt care they needed. On the surface, the contrast between Collins's plot, which involves a dramatic escape from an asylum, and the anecdote, which tells of a flight to an asylum, seems to bring the legal and medical issues face to face. Rather, Collins seems to have recognized that the legal and medical were ultimately inseparable. There would be little need for him to construct a case history for Laura Fairlie. Her commitment was clearly unjustifiable. Of much more complexity, and therefore of more interest, would be the case of Anne Catherick. It was she on whom Collins's inquiries into the nature and development of mental illness would focus.

III

To reconstruct the history of lunacy in England during the time that Collins was writing and publishing *The Woman in White* does

not of and by itself demonstrate any particular contact between the author and the events of his time, or between Collins and the men associated with these events. As it happens, however, there were very close connections between the Victorian world of letters and that involved in the treatment of the insane. In some instances the connections to Collins are direct. But since, in others, the links exist mainly by way of a mutual link to Dickens, it may be appropriate to quote Richard Renton's qualification as he tried to describe the uneasy association between Collins and John Forster: "My friend whom I introduce to you, is by virtue of that introduction, your friend also, but not as I am your friend, or you mine."³⁶ Nevertheless, because Collins and Dickens were so close, especially during the period in which *The Woman in White* was written, it is reasonable to think that the combination of Collins's interest in lunacy, and what will be shown to be Dickens' friendship with people involved in both the Lunacy Commission and the Select Committee, would result in Collins's particular awareness of what was going on.

"As the dear and close friend of Dickens, Collins must, in the nature of things, and as from personal knowledge I know he did, have 'rubbed shoulders' with Forster in such fashion as to qualify him for the title and position of 'friend of the house.'"³⁷ That the relationship between the two was uneasy is familiar to all Dickens scholars, but it is in Nuel Davis's *Life of Wilkie Collins* that an important though speculative connection is made between Collins's fiction and Forster's place on the Lunacy Commission. Davis writes that "Forster, who held a dignified and profitable sinecure as Commissioner of Lunacy, probably was the unwilling source of some of Wilkie's ghastly asylum details in the latter part of *Armada*."³⁸ It is interesting that no consideration is made of the possibility that Forster, to whom indeed *Armada* was dedicated, might have influenced *The Woman in White* as well. Again one finds an instance where the earlier and better book is thought of so exclusively in terms of its story that it draws little inquiry about Collins's sources for his conception of madness and asylums. But, in fact, the post held by Forster at the time Collins wrote *The Woman in White* is as close to the central concern of that book as his later post would be to *Armada*. Before he was Commissioner of Lunacy, one of whose duties would be to inspect asylums and interview patients, Forster had been Secretary to the Lunacy Commissioner. Renton notes that this office, taken on in 1855, was not arduous, but that it "absorbed much valuable time."³⁹ Among the

hours Forster would have spent as Secretary would have been those in which he inspected the certificates, submitted to the Lunacy Commission, which testified to the need for a patient's commitment to an asylum. These certificates formed part of the due process that stood in the way illegal confinement; if they were not in order, it was the Secretary's obligation to set in motion the procedures that would secure the patient's release. From Forster—whether directly or through Dickens—Collins would have learned not only about asylum condition but about legal procedures involving the commitment of patients. In 1859–1860, when *The Woman in White* was written, Forster was still Secretary to the Lunacy Commission and had not yet become a Commissioner himself.

Collins had another source of information concerning the workings of the Commission and the administration of asylums. When Forster assumed the secretaryship in 1855, he was replacing Dickens' friend, Brian Procter, better known in Victorian letters as Barry Cornwall. Not only is Procter an instance of the crossover between the British world of literature and the realm involving lunatics and those entrusted to look after them, but it is to him that Collins dedicated the first edition of *The Woman in White*. In brief, both that novel and *Armadale*, fictional accounts of abuses associated with asylums, were dedicated to literary figures, friends of Dickens who also held the post of Secretary to the Lunacy Commission.

When Procter resigned his secretaryship, an appeal for the job on behalf of Forster was made to the Chairman of the Commission, the Earl of Shaftesbury, who was to be an important witness at the Select Committee hearings. Shaftesbury was, as well, an acquaintance of Dickens, and therefore, according to Renton, of Forster. Renton indulges himself in the fancy that it was no coincidence that "that which Dickens hoped for, and strove, by a terrible picture of the truth, to induce men to do, *Lord Shaftesbury did*."⁴⁰ Renton thus speculates that Shaftesbury may have been inspired by Dickens' writing. It is no more fanciful to suspect that Collins may have been impressed by Shaftesbury's outspoken opposition to private lunatic asylums, as well as by his testimony to the Select Committee concerning difficulties in taking the word of a lunatic concerning his own condition, although his reports on another might often be uncannily accurate. Again, Collins's portrait of Anne Catherick is ambiguous on this point. Her clear-eyed view of Laura's plight is no sure sign of her own sanity. But her confinement in an asylum probably would not have occurred had the pro-

prietor not been inclined to cooperate with her unfeeling mother and the scheme of Sir Percival Glyde. On both these points, Shaftesbury had addressed the Select Committee: on the dangers of the profit motive behind private asylums, and the difficulty of believing a patient concerning his own state of sanity. And given the Dickens-Shaftesbury-Forster connections, it is conceivable that Collins was familiar with Shaftesbury's views. The latter was the first witness before the Select Committee, and thus his testimony was given shortly before *The Woman in White* began appearing.

That Anne Catherick need not have been committed to an asylum, and that Collins had reason to portray her as as much a victim of wrong in this regard as Laura Fairlie Glyde was later to be, is a point whose demonstration also benefits from the friendship of Dickens for a witness before the Select Committee. It has only been in recent years that the close relationship between Dickens and one of the renowned psychiatrists (as he would now be called) of his age has come to light.⁴¹ Dr. John Conolly was one of those physicians who was generally excepted from the claim that any intelligent layman could do as well as a physician in diagnosing insanity. Both his long-term experience with lunatics as director of the Hanwell Asylum and his writing on the subject of lunacy had established his expertise. Conolly's chief claim to fame in the history of British psychiatry, however, has to do with his advocacy of non-restraint in the treatment of the insane, a point which is not in fact significant for a consideration of *The Woman in White*. Anne's mistreatment in the asylum is not an issue except in terms of her being there at all. But Conolly's book, *An Inquiry into the Indications of Insanity*, a work familiar to Dickens, is quite explicit about the confinement of such patients as Anne. The *Inquiry* has as one of its purposes the urging that physicians be trained in asylums as they are in hospitals, so that they may acquire the same understanding of lunacy as they do of physical ailments. After learning to *diagnose* mental disturbances, from which Conolly excludes various forms of eccentric behavior, the physician would have to make a judgment about whether confinement to an asylum was either necessary or advisable. For Conolly by no means believed that a positive diagnosis was always to be followed by the commitment of the patient, and there were certain cases of mental disturbance for which he believed confinement was unwarranted.

It is noteworthy that Conolly did not testify on these important matters to the Select Committee, which drew mainly on his experience as a hospital administrator and was interested in such matters

as staff-patient ratios. If Collins were familiar with his theoretical ideas, he would probably be so through Dickens or because Collins too had read *Indications of Insanity*. While it is not possible to demonstrate that he had done so—although it would be surprising if he had not, given his interest in the subject—there is one section of Conolly's book that touches on the plight of Anne Catherick who, had she been Conolly's patient, would not have been confined to an asylum even if he had confirmed the belief of Mrs. Fairlie and the doctor who examined Anne that she suffered from some form of intellectual impairment. For the man whom *Household Words* had called "the highest living authority" on the subject of insanity⁴² was quite explicit in his belief that among those patients improperly put into asylums, not necessarily because of malice but because of ignorance on the part of his own profession, were what his age called "idiots"—people not so much insane as mentally retarded or in other ways defective. In his statements on this subject, Conolly may have provided Collins with another source for Anne and her plight:

Another class of patients for whom a lunatic asylum is a most improper place, consists of those who, in various periods of life, become affected with various degrees of weakness of intellect. The portion of the nervous system, through which intellectual power is manifest, is liable, like those portions on the integrity of which other functions depend, to impairment, either to direct impairment, or to sympathetic injury, in consequence of the disordered state of other organs: the impairment may be temporary, or it may be permanent; and may be compared to a partial paralysis. In this state there is a general imbecility of mind, accompanied with the irritable feelings of hasty and fickle moment which belong to states of weakness; but there is a little or no extravagance of action, still less is there any thing in the condition of the patient which would make his liberty dangerous, or, if he were properly attended to and watched, even inconvenient to others or to himself. Nothing can be more lamentable than to observe the unconcern with which [such] individuals [are abandoned by their families].⁴³

Conolly's description of a "general imbecility of mind" which, however, may be temporary, shows up in *The Woman in White* when Mrs. Fairlie writes to her husband about the little girl who has recently become her charge:

I was left to discover (which I did on the first day when we tried her at lessons) that the poor little thing's intellect is not developed as it ought to be at her age. Seeing this, I had her up to the house the next

day, and privately arranged with the doctor to come and watch her and question her, and tell me what he thought. His opinion is that she will grow out of it. But he says her careful bringing-up at school is a matter of great importance just now, because her unusual slowness in acquiring ideas implies an unusual tenacity in keeping them, when they are once received into her her mind. Now, my love, you must not imagine, in your off-hand way, that I have been attaching myself to an idiot. (49-50)

That Mrs. Fairlie denies that Anne Catherick is an idiot may reflect the growing awareness that *Household Words* expressed in its second essay on the subject—"Idiots Again"—that its age had misconceived and hence mistreated that form of mental impairment.⁴⁴ Mrs. Fairlie's admonition that her husband must not jump to conclusions attributes to him the kind of prejudice that Conolly was attempting to deal with. The doctor's influence on Dickens is documented; that he also influenced Collins's perceptions is likely.

When Conolly described the lamentable condition that occurred when persons like Anne Catherick were sent to asylums because they were inconvenient to have around, he probably was not thinking about those situations that worried Perceval, where a family might be influenced by corrupt motives of the sort that form the plot of Collins's novel. The pathetic Anne Catherick emerges in *The Woman in White* as a victim not only of Sir Percival Glyde's and Count Fosco's machinations, but of the public and professional ignorance against which Conolly's *Inquiry in the Indications of Insanity* was directed, a general ignorance without which the villains' plots could not have been so effortlessly carried out. In Conolly's additional belief, as quoted by Dickens, that "every lunatic asylum should be the property of the state, and be controlled by public officers," and in his concern for the wrongful confinement of patients as the result of medical ignorance, one finds common beliefs linking three of the witnesses before the Select Committee: Shaftesbury, Conolly, and Perceval, two of whom at least were known by Dickens.⁴⁵

Possibly Collins became aware of Perceval and his writings through his and Dickens' friend, Richard Monckton Milnes, who was a member of the Select Committee. Milnes's personal guest book shows that Collins was a visitor to Milnes's home in 1860, when the Select Committee issued its final report and Collins published *The Woman in White*.⁴⁶ An analysis of the questions Milnes posed to witnesses before the Committee reveals that while he may not have been the most active of the Parliamentary interrogators, he

was not a passive member of the Committee either. His questions showed a keen interest in the investigation. Furthermore, since the relationship between the Milnes and Perceval families involved what Milnes's biographer calls one of the most interesting chapters in the "romance" of British politics,⁴⁷ Milnes himself must have been more than usually cognizant of Perceval's appearance before the Select Committee. Fifty-one years earlier their fathers had had a series of curious exchanges, and now as the sons faced each other on opposite sides during the Select Committee, Milnes possessed the power, influence, and connections to effect some of the changes Perceval was fighting for.⁴⁸

There seems to be no way to prove that Collins and Milnes talked of Perceval. But Perceval testified in July 1859; Collins began publishing shortly thereafter a book in which one of his chief villains bears the same, unlikely and inexplicable name, standing in direct contradiction to the values of John Thomas Perceval and, in fact, illustrating the very fears that Perceval expressed in his testimony and writing. But it need not have been Milnes himself who acquainted Collins with John Thomas Perceval; the Alleged Lunatic Friends Society, while not exactly renowned, did draw the same kind of correspondence that Collins himself claimed to receive from persons seeking release from asylums; and Collins may very well have been familiar with Perceval's pamphlet concerning the inadequacy of the 1845 Act. But the Milnes connection strengthens the probability that Collins was aware of Perceval and knew what he stood for—this aside from the possibility that he actually knew Perceval. Finally, given the cross-connections among Dickens, Forster, Procter, Shaftesbury, Conolly, Milnes, Perceval, and Collins, and the mutual interest they shared in lunacy, lunatic laws, private asylums, and a patient's right to both sound medical treatment and legal protection, it would be surprising if Collins did *not* know of Perceval, the Alleged Lunatics Friends Society, the work of the Select Committee, and the overall issues with which it was concerned.

And, of course, there is Dickens himself, whose fiction, unlike Collins's, contains little about lunatics and asylums, but whose writings in general mark him as one of those Victorians with a keen interest in the subjects. Of the two articles that appeared in *Household Words* about idiots, the second reveals an increased theoretical interest in distinguishing among kinds of idiots as well as in the causes of idiocy.⁴⁹ This was the kind of intellectual exploration that unites Dickens with those who were beginning to understand that well-intentioned humanitarian efforts on behalf of the insane had to

be aided by a better understanding such as Conolly was trying to achieve in his *Inquiry into the Indications of Insanity*. Actually, Dickens' best-known writing on the subject of insanity was more in the mainstream of British concern with the conditions experienced by the insane in the asylums to which they were sent than with the more subtle issues that attracted Collins. In 1860 a privately printed booklet paired Dickens' well-known article, "A Curious Dance Round a Curious Tree" (*Household Words*, 1852), which recounts a visit to an asylum and pleads for improved conditions for patients, with an 1860 *Times* piece about a "Ball at St. Luke's Hospital."⁵⁰ The booklet, whose date once again reveals how important the 1858–1860 period was in the history of the British mental health movement, concludes with a brief account of the improvement that had taken place in eight years, but argues that more must be done and funds raised. Hence, Dickens' name justifiably figures among the Victorians concerned with the plight of the mentally ill, and given his close connections with many important figures discussed above, and his close friendship with Collins, whose *Woman in White* he was serially publishing, it is virtually impossible not to conclude that through Dickens as well as through his own friends and interests Collins stood very close to the events of 1858–1860.

IV

While the sad truth is that most insanity involves quite ordinary people unable to cope with the quite ordinary pressures of everyday life, most ages have their myths of mental illness according to which emotional problems are associated with persons seen as extraordinary. In the Victorian age, such myths led in two directions. In the first case, the lunatic is put into the role of the demonic and ghostly figures who fill the gothic novel, and in such a tradition Charlotte Brontë's Bertha satisfies the reader's imagination both with regard to its conceptions of insanity and its expectations concerning sensationalism in fiction. On the other side, however, the furor in England during the time that Collins was writing his novel made it possible to conceive of the mental patient as a victim of society, a kind of Cinderella, deprived of a life of privilege and thrust into an existence of privation, misery, and drudgery.

When Perceval devoted himself to the protection of lunatics, he distinguished among four categories. There were the criminal lunatics, who created and still create for society a plethora of moral and

legal dilemmas. And there were the pauper lunatics, whose plight in Victorian England revealed the inadequacy of social consciousness and reform at that time. Perceval's other two categories, however, encouraged the popular notion that alleged lunatics were the fairy-tale-like victims of malicious families and an inadequately protective environment. One of these groups consisted generally of those confined in private establishments. From Perceval's point of view, they were those whose families exercised over them "despotic power" that was in turn delegated to the asylum owners. That they needed to be rescued from their plight was Perceval's clear message.⁵¹ But nowhere was the abrupt transition from a life of presumed comfort to one of deprivation as sharply defined as in the case of the special category of the insane known as Chancery lunatics, most of whose situations were strikingly similar to those of *Cinderella*, a tale which Collins draws on in *Armada* and in *The Woman in White*.

Chancery lunatics were wards of the Crown, people with sufficient wealth that committees were assigned to look after them and their property. The procedure involved in committing Chancery lunatics was unique. It once "involved a trial by jury of the case of an allegedly insane person whose relatives petitioned for a declaration of insanity to prevent him from dissipating a considerable fortune."⁵² This had been replaced by an inquisition before the Masters in Lunacy (specially appointed Commissioners). But it was part of a continuing scandal over Chancery lunatics that their rate of release from asylums was even lower than the general rate of release from private institutions, which in turn was lower than the rate of release from public institutions.⁵³ Not only were the asylum keepers profiting from the illness of the Chancery lunatic, but so were the committee in charge (which drew salaries) and the family in whose financial interests it was to have the lunatic out of the way. That a Chancery lunatic was a veritable *Cinderella* can be seen in the anonymously written pamphlet intended to expose their sorry plight: the "wealthy lunatic wards of Chancery are placed, as it were, in living tombs, beyond which their voices cannot be heard, and within which their slightest comforts are dependent upon the needy and vulgar persons by whom each of them is surrounded by their Committees, and to whose care they are assigned."⁵⁴ He describes a patient of six hundred pounds income a year, reduced to "scouring the chamber pots, shaking the carpets, making the beds, sweeping the rooms, and carrying water. He was to be seen every day, when the weather was fine enough, seated on a stool in the

garden, near the muck-heap, with tucked-up shirt-sleeves, and cloth in hand, washing out the chamber-pots in a tub of water.”⁵⁵

Cinderella, reduced from riches to rags, from a life of comfort to drudgery and victimization by her wicked stepmother can be paralleled by another Chancery patient whose

clothes were scanty, threadbare, and very dirty. He was made a butt of, cuffed, and kicked about in a manner painful to one’s feelings to witness. . . . He was too insane to have his liberty, but he was not too insane to do the keeper’s work. It would have been quite impossible for him, *of course*, to have carried a tray up and down stairs, swept the passages, and cleaned boots and shoes in any other place than a madhouse! . . . Here was a man, probably a gentleman, accustomed to be treated with that delicacy which the feelings of a gentleman requires, reduced to become the menial of a menial, the humble and submissive slave of a madhouse keeper! kicked, cuffed, insulted, abused—exposed to every species of degradation and tyranny.⁵⁶

The London *Times* of August 1858 voiced particular sympathy for the “most glaring cases . . . of cruelty and crime . . . among those poor but wealthy wretches who are subjected to the tender mercies of able-bodied attendants—‘keepers’ in out-of-the-way houses, under the precarious inspection—at the outside—bi-weekly visitation—of some well-meaning physician.”⁵⁷ The system was such that what was clearly needed by the Chancery lunatic was the magical power of some benign fairy godmother.

The depiction of the Chancery lunatic as an implicit Cinderella coincided rather well with a perhaps common Victorian fantasy. During an age in which the middle class was gaining ground, and upward mobility became an increasing possibility, deprivation could be fantasized as the failure of great expectations. Such a view informs the plot of Collins’s *Armada*, in which the outcast of the two Alan Armadales about whom the story revolves is forced to take a name not his own and wander friendless about the world, the victim of a cruel stepfather and an indifferent mother (in Collins’s major fiction, it is the real mother who plays the role of wicked stepmother). *Armada*’s first memory is of his stepfather beating him with a whip, and he responds thus to inquiries about where his mother stood in this cruel household:

Yes, I remember her having shabby old clothes made up to fit me, and having fine new frocks bought for her two children by her second husband. I remember the servants laughing at me in my old things, and the horsewhip finding its way to my shoulders again for

losing my temper and tearing my shabby clothes. My next recollection gets on to a year or two later. I remember myself locked up in a lumber-room, with a bit of bread and a mug of water, wondering what it was that made my mother and my stepfather seem to hate the very sight of me.⁵⁸

But the private and public merging of fantasy and its reflection in the *Cinderella* story lies still closer to Collins than the writings about well-to-do lunatics. Michael Kotzin has shown how frequently *Cinderella* appears in Dickens, and Harry Stone has demonstrated both how it prevades the themes and plot of *Great Expectations*, as well as how it was employed by Dickens in his quarrel with Cruikshank over the uses to which fairy tales might be put.⁵⁹ Stone focuses on Dickens' conception of the fairy tale as an antidote to the climate of an age in which the imagination was being stifled in almost every activity of life, and in which an early nourishment on fairy tales would allow the imagination to survive the light of common day. Because of this emphasis, Stone does not note the extent to which his own depiction of Dickens' childhood reflects the story he has already demonstrated to be so important in the novelist's fiction. Would Dickens' seeming banishment to a blacking warehouse at a time when he expected his life to take a better path be very different from Midwinter's cruel exile from parental love and finally the parental home, or the Chancery lunatic's plunge from comfort to misery? As Stone portrays Dickens' plight, "Seen through the somber dusk of his first year in London, his Chatham childhood seemed serene and idyllic—appareled in that 'fairy light.' Seen through the dark shadow of the blacking warehouse, it took on the radiance of paradise itself."⁶⁰ But Stone does not comment on the extent to which Dickens' own account turned his life into a *Cinderella* story. "My father," Stone quotes from Dickens' writing,

appeared to have utterly lost at this time the idea of educating me at all, and to have utterly put from him the notion that I had any claim upon him, in that regard, whatever. So I degenerated into cleaning his boots of a morning, and my own; and making myself useful in the work of the little house; and looking after my younger brothers and sisters (we were now six in all); and going on such poor errands as arose out of our poor way of living.⁶¹

If Dickens had been self-conscious about his self-portrayal as *Cinderella*, or aware of how this identification worked its way into *Great Expectations*, he had clearly altered his view from that time,

almost a decade earlier, when he wrote to Wills about Cruikshank's *Cinderella* that he meant "to protest most strongly against alteration—for any purpose—of the beautiful little stories which are so tenderly and humanly useful to us in these times when the world is too much with us early and late. . . . I shall want . . . the most simple and popular version of *Cinderella* you can get me."⁶² That he went on to parody *Cinderella* in "Frauds on the Fairies" in order to satirize Cruikshank does not necessarily lessen his reverence for the power of fairy tales to redeem an imagination lost in the hazes of mundane reality.

There is no direct evidence of just where Collins stood in the quarrel between Cruikshank and Dickens over fairy tales, which is unfortunate, for such evidence might shed light on Collins's own frequent use of the *Cinderella* motif in his fiction. There is reason to believe that Collins was repelled by Cruikshank's stand on drinking alcoholic beverages, for it was the latter's temperance crusade that apparently caused Collins to decline to attend a testimonial dinner for the artist.⁶³ Therefore, he probably sided unequivocally with Dickens in the latter's aversion to Cruikshank's having turned *Cinderella* into a temperance tract. Ironically, however, Collins and Cruikshank seem from a contemporary perspective not only to have much in common with regard to the fairy tale, but to be closer to a modern view of its function than Dickens was—at least in theory if not in practice.

In lashing out against Cruikshank, Dickens insisted on the purity of the fairy tale, for reasons already discussed. And in Stone's valuable analysis, Dickens has the better argument, also for those reasons; Cruikshank, however, was much clearer than Dickens about the anthropological significance of the fact that fairy tales came not in pure versions which he or anyone could corrupt, but in multiple versions, some of them quite at odds with others. In one of his rebuttals to Dickens, he wrote, "I will just take the liberty of suggesting to those gentlemen who may feel inclined to criticise my editing of those Fairy Tales, that they had better make themselves somewhat acquainted with all the old editions of these stories before they find fault with my version."⁶⁴ It was not a Victorian practice to focus on the *function* of the folk and fairy tale as a reflection of conflicts within a society and the way that a given society found of resolving them. Clearly, however, Cruikshank intuited as much when he altered *Cinderella* for his own social purposes. Such a conception of the fairy tale would be quite threatening to Dickens' own view of a fairy world that was an antidote to rather than an expres-

sion of contemporary reality, and, again, it is difficult to know where Collins stood in theory between these two positions. To judge from his practice, however, particularly in *The Woman in White*, Collins could find in *Cinderella* an expression of private as well as social pathology. As a result, he was able to read into this story a psychological meaning that brought him astonishingly close not only to interpretations of *Cinderella* found today, but astonishingly close to modern psychology itself, for which *Cinderella* is a favorite object of study.

Collins's *The Woman in White* is a reworking of the popular *Cinderella* fairy tale. The *Cinderella* motif, of course, appears ubiquitously in the world's folktales, and five out of the six motifs that A. Aarne and Stith Thompson categorize in *The Types of the Folktale* as well as some of their major variations combine in the plot and the central episodes of *The Woman in White*.⁶⁵ The five motifs are: 1) The persecuted heroine; 2) Magic help; 3) Meeting the prince; 4) Proof of identity; 5) Marriage to prince. Two of the variations emphasize the two stepsisters and the stepdaughter at the grave of her own mother.

The first of Aarne's and Thompson's motifs, "the persecuted heroine," hardly needs elaboration; the whole story revolves about the plot to shut Laura up in an asylum so that Glyde and Fosco can acquire her wealth. The second motif, "magic help," involves the intervention on *Cinderella*'s behalf of a fairy godmother or other supernatural agent whose best remembered gift to the fairy tale heroine is the beautiful gowns that allow her to go to the balls at which she encounters her prince. The counterpart to this theme in *The Woman in White* leads to the very title of the novel. Mrs. Fairlie, who has taken a fancy to Anne Catherick, writes to her husband that

Although she is dressed very neatly, her clothes show a sad want of taste in colour and pattern. So I arranged, yesterday, that some of our darling Laura's old white frocks and white hats should be altered for Anne Catherick; explaining to her that little girls of her complexion looked neater and better in all white than in anything else. She hesitated and seemed puzzled for a minute; then flushed up, and appeared to understand. Her little hand clasped mine, suddenly. She kissed it, Philip; and said (oh, so earnestly!), "I will always wear white as long as I live. It will help me to remember you, ma'am, and to think that I am pleasing you still, when I go away and see you no more." This is only one specimen of the quaint things she says so prettily. Poor little soul! She shall have a stock of white frocks, made with good deep tucks, to let out for her as she grows. (50)

This is Mrs. Fairlie's practical Victorian version of the Cinderella ball gown.

The third of these motifs, "meeting the prince," has to do with the role played by Walter Hartright, who, if he is not exactly a royal suitor, is nevertheless the novel's hero. Anne first meets him in her flight from the asylum; and it is he who sets about resolving the question of Laura's true identity, just as the prince in *Cinderella* sets out to solve the mystery surrounding the identity of the beautiful woman with whom he has fallen in love.⁶⁶ And, of course, it is in Laura's eventual rescue and marriage to Hartright that the fifth motif, "marriage to prince," is fulfilled. It is the fourth motif, however, "proof of identity," that forms the crux of *The Woman in White* as Fosco conspires to have Laura confined to an asylum under the identity of the now dead Anne Catherick. In Collins's French source, proving her identity and right to her inheritance after securing release from the Salpêtrière was precisely what Mme. de Douhault was unable to do. Once again, much of Collins's fiction hinges on this motif, including *Armadale* and *The New Magdalen*, which is derived from the episode in *Cinderella* in which the stepsisters try to pass themselves off as the woman the prince is seeking.

But it is in a little-known short story that Collins wrote early in his career that such a substitution merges most clearly with the fairy tale. What was malign in *Cinderella*, however, as the stepsisters hide Cinderella out of sight while the prince makes his house-to-house search for her, is tragically benign in Collins's "The Twin Sisters."

Streatfield, the hero, falls in love with a girl he sees on a balcony as he drives by in his carriage. After considerable effort he learns her identity, gets an introduction, and eventually becomes her accepted suitor. At the pre-nuptial banquet, however, he meets for the first time his fiancée's twin sister, Clara, and realizes it was she whom he saw on the balcony and with whom he fell in love at first sight.⁶⁷

This kind of reversal of the fairy tale plot is not unusual in Collins's use of *Cinderella*. In *The New Magdalen*, again, the imposter is actually the deserving heroine, whereas the rightful claimant is the novel's antagonist.

Two of the popular variations to the basic Cinderella story categorized by Aarne and Thompson are central to *The Woman in White*. One of these has to do with the presence in the fairy tale of

two stepsisters. In Collins's novel there are also three women, each of them half-sister to at least one of the others. Two, Laura and Marian, have the same mother, and two, Laura and Anne, the same father. No two have both the same mother and father. The complications shared by their mingled identities is nowhere so apparent as in the scene—also typified in the fairy tale classifications—where Anne visits the grave of Mrs. Fairlie and vows to protect the latter's real daughter, Laura. More will be said about this scene shortly; for the time being it is worth noting that the visits to the dead mother's grave by Cinderella are frequently cited in studies of the fairy tale in order to differentiate the passive heroine of Perrault's version of the story from the more active heroine of Grimm's fairy tales.⁶⁸ Collins had used elements from both Grimm and Perrault. Like the passive heroine of the latter, his Cinderella, Anne Catherick, is rescued by a fairy godmother in the person of Mrs. Fairlie, whose gift of a dress is given without any effort on Anne's part and in response only to her unhappiness. But like Grimm's more active Cinderella, who tends her mother's grave and seeks the help she needs, Anne also proves herself worthy of Mrs. Fairlie's love by actively trying to save Laura. Unlike Dickens, who sought in his quarrel with Cruikshank the simplest and purest version of *Cinderella* available, Collins gathered from the two most famous variants of the tale elements to weave into his novel.

V

But the renowned fairy tale did more than provide Collins in *The Woman in White*—as it had provided him in his other fiction—with the basic characters and actions he used for his plot.⁶⁹ From his insight into the potential meaning of *Cinderella*, Collins also was able to construct the case history which made the character whose invention had eluded and tormented him, Anne Catherick, a psychological study for his time. Collins's own theory of composition mandated that if he created a character who was or appeared mad, the nature and etiology of her illness had to be clarified—at least in his own mind. And it was Anne, not Laura, who caused Collins the difficulties he described when outlining his procedure in writing *The Woman in White*.

Cinderella has been as popular among contemporary psychologists as it was among Victorian novelists. A favorite fairy tale

among young girls, the story has drawn questions about what, in particular, the tale means to them as children and adolescents, and about why the appeal lessens in adulthood. Cinderella complexes have from one perspective or another filled the pages of professional journals of psychology.⁷⁰ But a more encompassing theoretical account of *Cinderella* as it relates to the development of children can be found in two recent books which shed light on Collins's depiction of Anne and his treatment of this fairy tale in *The Woman in White*.

Bruno Bettelheim, in *The Uses of Enchantment*, argues that children intuit the deep psychological content in fairy tales, which thus aid them in working through the conflicts that beset them as they grow up. Taking a position unlike either Dickens' or Cruikshank's, Bettelheim nevertheless combines some important elements from each. He believes that children healthily nourished on fairy tales benefit from these stories because they move into adulthood better able to face the demands of maturity. Like Cruikshank, he sees these tales as instructive for those who search for that which gives life its moral significance. However, instead of being overtly didactic, fairy tales, for Bettelheim, contain complex structures whose meanings are apprehended unconsciously rather than consciously. Bettelheim's study of *Cinderella* focuses not unexpectedly on the theme of sibling rivalry, and on the relationship between the heroine and her antagonistic step-sisters. Such, of course, is not the case in *The Woman in White*, although the sibling relationships among Anne, Laura, and Marian prove to have great significance. What is, however, more important at present is the light shed by Bettelheim on the theme of the wicked stepmother and common fantasies which comprise what Bettelheim calls the "family romance," involving

daydreams which the normal youngster partly recognizes as such, but nonetheless also partly believes. They center on the idea that one's parents are not really one's parents, but that one is the child of some exalted personage, and that, due to unfortunate circumstance, one has been reduced to living with these people, who *claim* to be one's parents. . . . These fantasies are helpful; they permit the child to feel really angry at the Martian pretender or the "false parent" without guilt.⁷¹

In short, Anne Catherick's pretense at the grave of Mrs. Fairlie that it is her real mother she is weeping over is played out in the normal lives of all children who express anger at parents through the pre-

tense that the latter are really step-parents, thus protecting themselves against the guilt they would feel for the momentary hatred felt towards the real father or mother. But Bettelheim is describing an essentially normal process on the part of children who will learn to cope with such conflicts, especially if aided by exposure to fairy tales.

In *The Treatment of the Borderline Adolescent*, James F. Masterson presents an analysis of *Cinderella* (and *Snow White*) in which what Bettelheim calls the "family romance" is presented in a less benign context. The death of the "real" mother and her replacement by the punishing stepmother reflects the inability of the emotionally disturbed young person to see the mother—and consequently others—as whole human beings. As Masterson writes, "The image of the good mother is split and preserved by the dramatic device of relating that although she wanted (i.e., loved) the child very much, the good mother died shortly after birth. The blood mother loves the child. The same theme is noted in *Cinderella*," where again, "the image of the good mother is preserved through her death. The blood mother, not present, had loved *Cinderella*."⁷² And in the case of *Cinderella*, unlike *Snow White*, "the envy and jealousy are further split off and conveyed not by the stepmother but by the sisters."⁷³

The cast of characters in these unhappy dramas that Masterson sees repeatedly re-enacted in the lives of his patients is negatively completed by the passive father who fails to protect his child against the damages of his non-nurturing or aggressively angry wife. The result is a young child whose illness develops like a hidden abscess which erupts in adolescence, as deep depression explodes into self-destructive and rebellious patterns of behavior at odds with the accepted forms of action expected of a young person. Masterson might be describing Anne Catherick, whose anguish leads to the impulsive, rebellious behavior that initially leads to her being committed to an asylum. That the cast of characters found in common between the fairy tale and the families described in Masterson's case histories can also be found in *The Woman in White* reveals Collins's ability to turn *Cinderella* into a study of an aberrant Victorian adolescent.

Masterson points out that in neither *Snow White* nor *Cinderella* does the father have any role to play. In the former, only one line is devoted to the father: "after a year had passed the King married a second time." In *Cinderella*, Masterson ironically notes, the father "gets better treatment (four lines)" but still "plays literally no role in

her life. 'Once upon a time there was a nobleman of France who took a second wife after the death of his first. He did it for the sake of his little daughter so that she would have a mother. Then he left for a journey that would take him a whole year. He believed that his daughter would be happy while he was away.'"¹⁴ This depiction applies equally to the ostensible fathers of both Anne Catherick and her half-sister Laura Fairlie.

There are three passive fathers in *The Woman in White*. That they combine to form a single type is reinforced in two ways. First, Anne's ostensible father turns out not to be a blood relation, and Laura's father proves to be Anne's as well. This Mr. Fairlie is replaced after his death by his brother, also referred to as Mr. Fairlie, so that it is effectively difficult to distinguish the two from each other. It is the latter Mr. Fairlie who represents the "bad," that is neglectful, father of the fairy tales who fails to protect the daughter who should be able to count on his strength.

Even Anne Catherick's nominal father reflects the paternal figure in *Cinderella* who after marrying his second wife left on a year long journey. Mrs. Catherick's husband, who married her when she was pregnant by another man, emigrates to America on a more enduring journey because of the bad marriage he is forced to endure with Anne's mother. But Anne's real father, the acknowledged father of Laura, is hardly more of a presence in his family's life. Mr. Fairlie's death only literalizes the role he had played for Laura. This is made evident in the crucial letter that Mrs. Fairlie had written to her absent husband, the one in which she informs him that one of her pupils (Anne) in the school she runs has been taken under her wing both because of her sympathy for the poor creature and because of the close resemblance Anne bears to their daughter Laura. (Mrs. Fairlie does not know, and the reader does not yet know, that she is providing her husband with information about his own illegitimate child.) The letter has an important function in *The Woman in White*, since it gives Collins an opportunity to supply past information about his characters not otherwise easily made known. Therefore there is a narrative necessity in his supplying a motive for Mrs. Fairlie's having to correspond with her absent husband. Nevertheless, her reason proves consistent with the view of fathers and father-substitutes in the novel. As Marian explains to Hartright when she first mentions the existence of the letter, "I will pass the morning in looking over my mother's correspondence with Mr. Fairlie. He was fond of London, and was constantly away from his

country home; and she was accustomed, at such times, to write and report to him how things went on at Limmeridge" (30).

The absent Victorian father, a common figure in the literature of the period, had gradually given way to the growing emphasis on the maternal role in child development. But that the family was experiencing the negative effects of his neglect was also a popular theme.⁷⁵ Laura can idealize her dead father nonetheless because, again, the evil effects of this neglect are embodied not in him, but in his brother, who becomes Laura's guardian after her father dies. Since referring to both brothers as "Mr. Fairlie" blurs the distinction between them, Collins tends to fuse rather than separate the good and the bad fathers.

The reader first meets the guardian Mr. Fairlie—or more accurately does not meet him—when Hartright arrives at Limmeridge. Marian apologizes that she is the only one to greet him:

"My sister is in her own room, nursing that essentially feminine malady, a slight headache; and her old governess, Mrs. Vesey, is charitably attending on her with restorative tea. My uncle, Mr. Fairlie, never joins us at any of our meals: he is an invalid, and keeps bachelor state in his own apartments." (26)

The dynamics of this passage are clear: there is a vulnerable, helpless heroine (Laura) ministered to by a "good" mother figure, while the passive substitute father secludes himself. Later, after Laura marries and both she and Marian leave the house, Marian comments, "As for Mr. Fairlie, I believe I am guilty of no injustice if I describe him as being unutterably relieved by having the house clear of us women. The idea of his missing his niece is simply preposterous—he used to let months pass, in the old times, without attempting to see her" (179). But it is not just a matter of women in general. Laura, his niece, is essentially his daughter in that he is her guardian, and he makes it clear to Walter Hartright in a private interview in his bachelor quarters that he cannot bear children:

"There are no children, thank Heaven, in the house; but the servants (persons born without nerves) will encourage the children from the village. Such brats—oh, dear me, such brats! Shall I confess it, Mr. Hartright?—I sadly want a reform in the construction of children. Nature's only idea seems to be to make them machines for the production of incessant noise. Surely our delightful Raffaello's conception is infinitely preferable?" (36)

The pun here on the word “conception” is, of course, part of Collins’s irony. Mr. Fairlie is referring to Raphael’s portrait of the Madonna and Child hanging on his wall, a portrait in which a natural father for obvious reasons is missing. Mr. Fairlie has substituted art for life because he cannot confront the demands and responsibility incurred by human contact. Later in the book he himself narrates part of the story of Laura’s misfortunes:

It is the grand misfortune of my life that nobody will let me alone. Why—I ask everybody—why worry me? Nobody answers that question; and nobody lets me alone. Relatives, friends, and strangers all combine to annoy me. What have I done? I ask myself, I ask my servant, Louis, fifty times a day—what have I done? Neither of us can tell. Most extraordinary! (309)

Fairlie’s bachelorhood is but the symbol of his attitude, although the family’s lawyer, shocked when the guardian’s passivity allows him to make a marriage settlement for his niece that exposes her to innumerable dangers, attributes to his single condition this gross mishandling of her affairs.

Masterson has argued that the disturbed adolescent has parents similarly suffering from the illness that afflicts the child. The father, in particular, “crippled by failure to solve his own developmental difficulties, is unable to respond to the mature demands of fatherhood which more often he sees as a threat to his dependent relationship with his wife rather than as an opportunity for satisfaction. Indeed, his own immaturity prevents him from sensing and enjoying that satisfaction.”⁷⁶ Mr. Fairlie, of course, does not see his guardianship of Laura as a threat to any other relationship he has formed, but he does similarly see it as a threat to his self-imposed isolation. He has resolved the problems described by Masterson by not marrying and by retreating into his own quarters, losing himself in his art collections—one of the most grotesque caricatures of the aesthete to come to us from the Victorians. That his passivity can be traced to some emotional malfunctioning can be seen, again, in the explanation by Marian (quoted earlier) that his condition is attributed to his nerves, but that “we none of us know what we mean when we say [that].”

In his study of *The Woman in White* and the contrast between Collins’s dark and fair ladies, Knoepfelmacher implies that the process that informs Bettelheim’s “family romance” was practised in Victorian England on a wide scale. Knoepfelmacher writes of the

Victorian novelist that "one side . . . rejects the escapism or aggression that the other side indulges."⁷⁷ This is essentially what happens when the child splits the mother into disparate figures, in the meantime protecting himself from the guilt wrought by his own aggressive anger. In Masterson's analysis of *Cinderella*, based on the French version in which the step-sisters are actually the instigators of Cinderella's misery, the mother merely agrees "with the sisters that they had best put Cinderella to work in the kitchen."⁷⁸ But the step-sisters are also part of the splitting process that Masterson describes and Bettelheim explains in a wider context. According to Masterson, "the mother's negative attitudes towards the child are introjected unconsciously *by* the child and become associated with his own *fragmentary self-image*" (italics added).⁷⁹ It is possible that just as the child may split the mother into two figures to keep intact the fantasized image of an ideal parent, so is it possible that the child can be similarly split, the bad side projected onto bad siblings. Collins's adaptation of the step-sister motif from *Cinderella* involves him, however, not in a two- but a three-way split. The doublings and triplings that go on in his book (and in his writings in general) are quite complex, as the moral climate of his time and not only the family pathology he intuited in the *Cinderella* story contribute to Anne's illness, Marian's seemingly enforced spinsterhood and vicarious existence, and the insipid heroine, Laura.

Neither Anne Catherick nor Laura Fairlie are "good" or "bad" sisters from a moral point of view; what they are, however, are sane and possibly insane (at the least, disturbed) versions of the same person. Anne is what Laura could have become if she had been born to Anne's mother; Laura is what Anne fantasizes she might have been as Mrs. Fairlie's daughter. Indeed, her desperation to save Laura from her demonic fiancé seems a desperate attempt to preserve that fantasy. In a frantic letter sent to Laura warning about the impending marriage, Anne writes,

Your mother's daughter has a tender place in my heart—for your mother was my first, my best, my only friend. (68)

The significance of that circumlocution, "your mother's daughter," becomes clear later when Anne's "friend" becomes the "mother" of her fantasy; for had Anne had Laura's mother, then she would in effect be Laura. Crying on the dead woman's tombstone, which she has been tending just as Cinderella in the Grimm version tends the grave of her mother, Anne exclaims:

"Oh, if I could die, and be hidden and at rest with *you*!" Her lips murmured the words close on the gravestone; murmured them in tones of passionate endearment, to the dead remains beneath. "*You* know how I love your child, for your sake! Oh, Mrs. Fairlie! Mrs. Fairlie! tell me how to save her. Be my darling and my mother once more, and tell me what to do for the best!" (90)

It is possible to wonder why Collins created three half-sisters, since it is the doubling of Anne and Laura that is essential to his plot and theme; Marian could easily have been a cousin or even more distant relative and not lost any of her role in the sequence of events. Collins apparently has placed Laura between two half-sisters, one on each side, because each in her own way completes his heroine's character. Where it comes to Marian, Collins may have been indulging in his own wish-fulfillment or developing one side of a conflicted inclination, as Knoepfelmacher would have it. Unable to endow his idealized Victorian heroine with the qualities of vibrancy, sensuality, and superior intelligence, he protects her from what his age might have viewed as negative female attributes by projecting them onto Marian, who herself describes the difference between her and Laura:

Except that we are both orphans, we are in every respect as unlike each other as possible. My father was a poor man, and Miss Fairlie's father was a rich man. I have got nothing, and she is an heiress. I am dark and ugly, and she is fair and pretty. Everybody thinks me crabbed and odd (with perfect justice); and everybody thinks her sweet-tempered and charming (with more justice still). In short, she is an angel; and I am—Try some of that marmalade, Mr. Hartright, and finish the sentence, in the name of female propriety, for yourself. (27)

By facetiously casting herself in the role of devil, Marian portrays *herself* as the wicked half-sister, except that her so-called wickedness, a kind of Blakean energy not tolerated in women at that time, is turned upon herself, not her sister. Masochistically, she decides to sacrifice herself for the angelic sister, taking all that is negative upon herself to keep Laura free of it.

But if Laura, split away from the characteristics of Marian, is thereby less than a whole person, so is she incomplete without her other half-sister, Anne. When Hartright first meets Laura, the reader is treated to lengthy passages in praise of her beauty and charm. Then Hartright reports that "at the same time, [I was] most

troubled by the sense of an incompleteness which it was impossible to discover. Something wanting, something wanting—and where it was, and what it was, I could not say” (42). He is subsequently haunted by the resemblance between Laura and the mysterious woman in white, whom he has come to believe is the girl once cared for by Laura’s mother. But it is only on the happenstance of his next meeting with Anne that he comprehends what it is that Laura is missing:

I had seen Anne Catherick’s likeness in Miss Fairlie. I now saw Miss Fairlie’s likeness in Anne Catherick—saw it all the more clearly because the points of dissimilarity between the two were presented to me as well as the points of resemblance. In the general outline of the countenance and general proportion of the features . . . the likeness appeared even more startling than I had ever felt it to be yet. But there the resemblance ended, and the dissimilarity, in details, began. The delicate beauty of Miss Fairlie’s complexion, the transparent clearness of her eyes, the smooth purity of her skin, the tender bloom of colour on her lips, were all missing from the worn, weary face that was now turned towards mine. Although I hated myself even for thinking such a thing, still, while I looked at the woman before me, the idea would force itself into my mind that one sad change, in the future, was all that was wanting to make the likeness complete, which I now saw to be so imperfect in detail. If ever sorrow and suffering set their profaning marks on the youth and beauty of Miss Fairlie’s face, then, and then only, Anne Catherick and she would be the twin-sisters of chance resemblance, the living reflexions of one another. (84)

The passage is, of course, a piece of foreshadowing. Later on, after her disastrous marriage has taken place, Laura actually meets her double, who reminds her:

“You don’t remember a fine spring day at Limmeridge . . . and your mother walking down the path that led to the school, with a little girl on each side of her? I have had nothing else to think of since; and *I* remember it. You were one of the little girls, and I was the other. Pretty, clever Miss Fairlie, and poor dazed Anne Catherick were nearer to each other, then, than they are now!” (252)

But, in fact, Anne is mistaken. The two are soon to be closer than either can imagine. In relating this incident to Marian, Laura reports how startled she had been while looking at Anne, “as if it had been the sight of my own face in the glass after a long illness” (252).

What Collins seems to be implying in his portrayals of the differences and similarities among Laura and her two half-sisters is a kind of mass object splitting in the Victorian mentality which, in order to protect its feminine ideal, had to keep her free of, on one side, the sexuality and intellect of one sister, and, on the other side, the maturity that comes from a confrontation with pain and suffering. But if Laura cannot become a complex and whole woman, even when her experiences in the asylum have left their marks on her beauty, Anne does not place upon her creator the same restraints. And thus Collins in effect uses a technique that has in modern times become more common. He tells much of his story from the perspective of the villain's or underdog's point of view. For example, a novel-length version of Cupid and Psyche has been written from the narrative point of view of one of the sisters who instigates Psyche's fall. What would *Cinderella* look like from the point of view of the step-sisters? If one can think of something analogous going on in *The Woman in White*, it is possible to see that from a psychological point of view it is not so significant than under adverse circumstances Laura Fairlie could have been Anne Catherick. Rather, the point that Collins seems to have wanted to drive home is that under other circumstances his "poor Anne Catherick" could have been Laura Fairlie. What Masterson says of the young patients he has treated applies equally to Anne Catherick, whose story also reveals "in a clinical metaphor the ancient struggle of mankind against fate . . . condemned by birth and subsequent accidents of fate to be victims rather than masters of their own fortune; they are emotionally attacked and impaled before they have developed the resources and weapons with which to do battle."⁸⁰ The circumstances that would have made Anne become Laura seem to have hinged simply, or perhaps not so simply, on having the good fortune to be born to another mother.

VI

In *Cinderella* there are two "good" mothers, and one "bad." The first good mother is dead, but she is reincarnated in the "Good Fairy . . . to banish Cinderella's feelings of abandonment by magically fulfilling her wishes."⁸¹ In the story, it will be remembered, she appears suddenly to provide Cinderella with the dress that will allow her to go to the ball and meet her rescuer. In Collins's novel, again, it is Mrs. Fairlie who similarly relieves Anne's feelings of misery by similarly endowing a dress, even if one which can meet

the needs of prudent Victorian utilitarianism in its capacity for alteration as Anne grows.

Because Mrs. Fairlie dies before the book begins, although it is Anne's deep attachment to her that is at the heart of the story, it is necessary to provide in *The Woman in White* another if lesser "good" mother figure to help Anne when she escapes from the asylum and to provide the reader with information about Anne's blood mother. This figure is Mrs. Clements, whom Anne describes to Hartright:

"Mrs. Clements is my friend. A good kind woman, but not like Mrs. Fairlie. Ah, no, nobody is like Mrs. Fairlie!"

"Is Mrs. Clements an old friend of yours? Have you known her a long time?"

"Yes; she was a neighbour of ours once, at home, in Hampshire; and liked me, and took care of me when I was a little girl. Years ago, when she went away from us, she wrote down in my prayerbook for me, where she was going to live in London, and she said, 'If you are ever in trouble, Anne, come to me. I have no husband alive to say me nay, and no children to look after; and I will take care of you.' Kind words, were they not? I suppose I remember them because they were kind. It's little enough I remember besides—little enough, little enough!" (87)

Collins adds special force to the good and bad mother theme in *The Woman in White* and in *Armadale*, by making the blood mother and not her successor the "bad" mother. However, Collins is perhaps closer to nature than is the fairy tale he is adapting, since it is the failure of the real mother to nurture her child which sets in motion the negative forces in his book. In the child, the

need for affection and approval from his mother to build ego structure and grow are so absolute and his rage and frustration at the deprivation of these very supplies on the part of the mother so great that he fears these feelings may destroy her and himself. To deal with his fear and to preserve the feeling of receiving supplies, the infant splits the whole object of the mother into two parts, that is, a good and bad mother.⁸²

The child clings to the image of the good mother as Anne clings to the memory of Mrs. Fairlie, and the anger at the bad mother is projected onto someone else or is in some other way acted out. Only once in *The Woman in White* does Anne reveal her anger and her capacity for object splitting; this scene occurs when Hartright questions her about her mother:

"Don't ask me about mother," she went on. "I'd rather talk of Mrs. Clements. Mrs. Clements is like you, she doesn't think that I ought to be back in the Asylum; and she is as glad as you are that I escaped from it. She cried over my misfortune, and said it must be kept secret from everybody." (87)

Anne knows that she and her mother do not have an appropriate relationship with each other: "I don't get on well with her. We are a trouble and a fear to each other" (87). But as she is directly confronted by Hartright with the reality of how her parents have abandoned her, her mother actually cooperating with her being sent to the asylum, her way of dealing with her anger is immediately to transfer her attention to one of her "good" mothers.

It is through this good mother, Mrs. Clements, that the reader first gets a detailed look at Mrs. Catherick. It is not, however, the first look, which had come through Mrs. Fairlie's letter to her husband:

Mrs. Catherick is a decent, well-behaved, respectable woman; middle aged, and with the remains of having been moderately, only moderately, nice-looking. There is something in her manner and in her appearance, however, which I can't make out. She is reserved about herself to the point of downright secrecy; and there is a look in her face—I can't describe it—which suggests to me that she has something on her mind. She is altogether what you would call a walking mystery. (49)

She is not, however, a mystery to Mrs. Clements, who nevertheless, unreliable reporter that she is, misinterprets Mrs. Catherick's erratic behavior towards her daughter. When asked how she had come to care for Anne, Mrs. Clements responds, "There was nobody else, sir, to take the helpless creature in hand. . . . The wicked mother seemed to hate it—as if the poor baby was in fault!—from the day it was born. My heart was heavy for the child; and I made the offer to bring it up as tenderly as if it was my own" (437). However, when asked if she had had constant care of Anne, she tells Hartright that she had not, but in an answer worth quoting at length, since it reveals better than any other passage in the book the extent of Collins's insight into the complex nature of the relationship Anne had had to her own mother:

"Not quite entirely, sir. Mrs. Catherick had her whims and fancies about it, at times; and used now and then to lay claim to the child, as if she wanted to spite me for bringing it up. But these fits of hers

never lasted for long. Poor little Anne was always returned to me and was always glad to get back—though she led but a gloomy life in my house, having no playmates, like other children, to brighten her up. Our longest separation was when her mother took her to Limmeridge [where Anne forms the attachment to Mrs. Fairlie]. Just at that time, I lost my husband; and I felt it was as well, in that miserable affliction, that Anne should not be in the house. She was between ten and eleven years old, then; slow at her lessons, poor soul, and not so cheerful as other children—but as pretty a little girl to look at as you would wish to see. I waited at home till her mother brought her back; and then I made the offer to take her with me to London. . . .”

“And did Mrs. Catherick consent to your proposal?”

“No, sir. She came back from the north, harder and bitterer than ever. Folks did say that she had been obliged to ask Sir Percival's leave to go, to begin with; and that she only went to nurse her dying sister at Limmeridge because the poor woman was reported to have saved money—the truth being that she hardly left enough to bury her. These things may have soured Mrs. Catherick, likely enough—but, however that may be, she wouldn't hear of my taking the child away. She seemed to like distressing us both by parting us. (437-438)

Obviously, Mrs. Catherick's ambivalence toward her child, caring for it one moment and pushing it away another, had more to it than a desire to spite Mrs. Clements, although that is how that simple woman interprets it. What it actually was, Collins himself probably could not explain, although modern psychology could say a great deal about Mrs. Catherick's erratic desire to possess the child she was nevertheless unable to nurture.

Mrs. Catherick presents her own version of Mrs. Clements's story in a section of the novel in which, finally, Hartright has an opportunity to confront her, hoping to wrest out of her her daughter Anne's secret, which he believes to be the key to Laura's freedom. Mrs. Catherick proves with regard to her daughter to be one of the most chilling characters in the book—perhaps one of the most chilling in Victorian fiction.⁸³ In a confessional letter written to Hartright, she admits to more than the mere fact that she hardly mothered her child:

Pray understand that I do not profess to have been at all over-fond of my late daughter. She was a worry to me from first to last, with the additional disadvantage of being always weak in the head. You like candour, and I hope this satisfies. (494-495)

Believing her daughter to be insane, she also believes that her “worst responsibilities, so far as she was concerned, were all over

when she was secured in the Asylum" (499), especially as it was to "A Private Establishment," and not to a "pauper Asylum" that she helped to have Anne committed, thereby confirming all the fears about such places and the families that sent their unwanted members to them that swept England during the time Collins wrote his novel.

Anne Catherick, daughter of a father who never made himself felt in her life and a mother who in her inability to love her child reveals her own mental pathology, is the Victorian version of the emotionally ill adolescent of modern psychology. The Victorians, who, in general, hardly recognized adolescence as a separate category, were only beginning to recognize childhood "insanity" as more than a category of either idiocy or immorality. Deprived by her mother of those emotional resources that would have allowed her to grow into a healthy woman, Anne clings to the mother of her double as the good mother of her longings. As Hartright describes the attachment to Mrs. Fairlie, the latter does emerge as the fairy god-mother of the fairy tale:

The old grateful sense of her benefactress's kindness was evidently the ruling idea still in the poor creature's mind—the narrow mind which had but too plainly opened to no other lasting impression since that first impression of her younger and happier days. (85)

This fixation is Anne's defense against her misery. Abandoned by her real mother, she is obviously given to depression. Mrs. Clements describes her as a gloomy child, and the death wish Anne articulates more than once in the book expresses her melancholy. But her opportunities to act out in order to guard against what Masterson calls the "abandonment depression" are limited, since the gross delinquency of the time would have been unthinkable for her. Yet, both Mrs. Clements and her mother speak of Anne's stubborn whims, one of which is her insistence on wearing white even when her mother tries to prevent it in her attempt to break the bond between Anne and Mrs. Fairlie. It is this blatant disobedience in an age in which childhood obedience had absolute value that leads to the quarrel between Anne and her mother whose final result will be Anne's commitment to a lunatic asylum. It is Anne's inability to control her angry impulses, however, that sets in motion the events that lead to her incarceration. When Sir Percival, Laura's future evil husband, insults her by calling Anne an "idiot," she threatens him with the secret that can ruin him, as her mother explains in her account of the scene,

She had always had crazy notions of her own about her dignity; and that word, "idiot," upset her in a moment. Before I could interfere, she stepped up to him, in a fine passion. "Beg my pardon, directly," says she, "or I'll make it the worse for you. I'll let out your Secret! I can ruin your life, if I choose to open my lips." . . . He sat speechless, as white as the paper I am writing on, while I pushed her out of the room. (497)

Mrs. Catherick, nevertheless, has no hesitation in cooperating with Sir Percival's scheme to commit Anne to a lunatic asylum.

But what, specifically, could Collins have made of the behavior of his own creation, Anne Catherick, once he had overcome the obstacles her invention had posed? In the Victorian age, a growing awareness of mental disturbance on the part of children was reflected in the report published in the *Journal of Psychological Medicine* that there are some children who are strange even in their nurse's arms,⁸⁴ and Mrs. Clements does muse over what strikes her as Anne's strange behavior:

"Queer," she said to herself, "always queer, with her whims and her ways, ever since I can remember her. Harmless, though—as harmless, poor soul, as a little child." (82)

The *Journal* reports on this phenomenon as a kind of mental retardation, and Collins seems to have considered this possibility when he has Mrs. Fairlie call in a physician to diagnose Anne's apparent slowness in learning. But in the letter to her husband, Mrs. Fairlie explicitly rules out a judgment of "idiocy." Collins may have faced the same dilemma as Marian Halcombe who says of her uncle that he suffers from nerves, although no one quite knows what it means to say that. What he therefore depicts is a young woman who, made ill by the absence of mothering during her formative years, might have recovered or grown out of her malady had her fairy godmother not proven more helpless than her counterpart in fairy tales.

That—despite the absence of theoretical knowledge on which to draw—Collins was able to anticipate such insights of modern thought proves him to be a novelist skilled in psychological analysis as well as clever narrative in *The Woman in White*. It should no longer be necessary to appeal to the importance of plot in fiction in order to win this book a wide circle of appreciative readers.⁸⁵

NOTES

1. Wilkie Collins and *The Woman in White*," *PMLA*, 54 (1939), 303. H. P. Sucksmith, in his introduction to the scholarly edition of *The Woman in White*, invokes Aristotle to argue that the novel is in no way denigrated because of Collins's emphasis on story (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. x. Citations will be to this edition. R. P. Ashley's biography of Collins argues that when judged "by the standards of melodrama and sensation—the only standards by which it is fair to judge it"—the novel is a "masterpiece": *Wilkie Collins* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1952), pp. 69-70. Also see Walter M. Kendrick, "The Sensationalism of *The Woman in White*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 32 (1977), 18-35.
2. "The Counterworld of Victorian Fiction and *The Woman in White*," in *The Worlds of Victorian Fiction*, ed. Jerome H. Buckley (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 363. Aside from Knoepfelmacher's major excursion into the novel's meaning, there have only been occasional glimmers of a thematic approach. In *Victorian Conventions*, John Reed argues that in his famous novel as well as in *Armada*, Collins was concerned "with abuses of law which permitted sane individuals to be confined" (Ohio University Press, 1975), p. 204. Reed's claim that Collins was not interested in current theories of insanity, however, is one of the points against which this essay will argue. D. B. MacEachen also stresses that Collins, who was trained in law even if he never practised it, "made his readers aware of existing legal injustices that might not have engaged their attention at all had he not incorporated these problems in [his] novels," and also claims that Collins, like Dickens and Reade "realized that the presentation of an emotionally stirring 'case history' was a far more potent means of reform, so far as the average, uncritical reader was concerned, than either satire or denunciation . . .": "Wilkie Collins and British Law," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 5 (1950), 139, 133-134. But MacEachen does not discuss *The Woman in White*, and thus the question of whose case history is important in this novel remains open.
3. Probably the most explicit dismissal of Anne Catherick is made by Kenneth Robinson in *Wilkie Collins: A Biography*: "Anne Catherick, *The Woman in White*, suffers from an infirmity of mind, which, while appealing to our sympathies, nevertheless limits our interest in her and her fate, and she misses the tragic stature intended for her by the author" (London: The Bodley Head, 1951), p. 152. Peter Caracciolo comes close to an important point when he refers to Anne as "this harmless girl" who has been "put away by her mother and Sir Percival Glyde": "Wilkie Collins's 'Divine Comedy: The Use of Dante in *The Woman in White*,'" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 25 (1971), 390. For the point that troubles the novel's chief narrator and hero, Walter Hartright, is the very point that critics tend to take for granted or dismiss as unimportant: whether, in fact, Anne's con-

- finement to an asylum is any more justified than Laura's. But Caracciolo has other aims in his essay and does not pursue this theme.
4. Sucksmith, in his notes, acknowledges that abuses existed in England, but he refers the interested reader away from Collins's fiction to Charles Reade's, p. 606.
 5. The charge appeared on the Committee's reports, three of which were issued. See Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, *Sessional Papers*: 1859 (Session 1), III: 75-470; 1859 (Session 2), VII: 501-752; 1860, XXII: 349-442.
 6. Kathleen Jones, *A History of the Mental Health Services* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 148.
 7. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
 8. *The Works of Wilkie Collins* (1890; rpt. St. Clair, Mich.: Scholarly Press, 1976), VIII, 426-427.
 9. August 28, p. 8.
 10. August 19, p. 6.
 11. *Sessional Papers*, VII, 531.
 12. *Sessional Papers*, III, 100.
 13. Those, such as Kathleen Jones, who note the adversary positions of the Select Committee and the Alleged Lunatics Friends Society, which Perceval helped to form, neglect the points held in common by Perceval and Shaftesbury. See Jones, p. 159; William H. Parry-Jones, *The Trade in Lunacy: A Study of Private Madhouses in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 238; Richard Hunter and Ida Macalpine, "John Thomas Perceval (1803-1876) Patient and Reformer," *Medical History*, 6 (1962), 393-394.
 14. *Letters to the Right Honourable Sir James Graham, Bart., and to other Noblemen and Gentlemen, Upon the Reform of the Law Affecting the Treatment of Persons Alleged to be of Unsound Mind* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1846), p. 35.
 15. Sucksmith includes Collins's account, which first appeared in *The Globe*, November 26, 1877, in Appendix D of his edition.
 16. P. 290.
 17. *Ibid.*
 18. While, to my knowledge, no one has challenged the veracity of Collins's claim to have received such a letter, neither has anyone proven its existence. Sucksmith includes Collins's reference to the letter, which appeared in *The World*, (December 26, 1877), in Appendix C, p. 591.
 19. (Northampton: Privately Printed, 1858).
 20. Daniel H. Tuke, *Chapters in the History of the Insane in the British Isles* (London: Kegan Paul, 1882), p. 190.
 21. Read at the General Meeting of June 23, 1858, pp. 9-10. The Society issued only two reports, of which this is the second.
 22. 11 (1858), xxx.
 23. The actual inquisition concerning Mrs. Turner was not given the same attention as the Meux case, which was reported on daily from

- June 9-18 (with the exception of the 13th). But the Turner case created an editorial uproar in the newspaper.
24. June 21, p. 12.
 25. July 28, p. 9.
 26. August 19, p. 6.
 27. Already cited.
 28. (New York: Harper and Bros., 1873), p. 197.
 29. *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.
 30. See Kathleen Jones, p. 160. Jones entitles this chapter in her study, "The Triumph of Legalism."
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
 32. *Journal of Mental Science*, 5 (1858-1859), 151.
 33. 11 (1858-1859), xxxiv.
 34. That the article in *Household Words* quoted from the *Journal of Mental Science* in the course of its discussion (p. 416) indicates that for the educated Victorian reader, there was no wide gap between popular and scholarly publications.
 35. April 2, 1859, pp. 416-417.
 36. *John Forster and his Friendships* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), p. 213.
 37. *Ibid.*, pp. 212-213.
 38. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), p. 245.
 39. Renton, p. 195. Renton also provides the information that it was Proctor whom Forster succeeded, p. 187.
 40. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
 41. Richard A. Hunter and Ida Macalpine, "Dickens and Conolly: An Embarrassed Editor's Disclaimer," *TLS*, August 11, 1961, pp. 534-535.
 42. "The Treatment of the Insane," *Household Words*, June 5, 1852, p. 272. Quoted by Richard A. Hunter and Ida Macalpine in their introduction to John Conolly's 1830 book, *An Inquiry Concerning the Indications of Insanity: With Suggestions for the Better Protection and Care of the Insane* (London: Dawsons, 1964), p. 34.
 43. *Indications of Insanity*, pp. 29-30.
 44. April 8, 1854, pp. 197-200. Dickens and Wills wrote the first essay on "Idiots" in the June 4, 1853 issue; Harriet Martineau wrote "Idiots Again." Dickens' sustained interest, however, is in no way lessened because he delegated the subject to another writer.
 45. Quoted by Hunter and Macalpine, *Indications of Insanity*, p. 34. Before Anne Lohrli's index to *Household Words*, there was a tendency to attribute to Dickens all that appeared in his magazine. "The Treatment of the Insane," in fact, was written by Henry Morley as was "The Cure of Sick Minds" in 1858. Again, this does not necessarily lessen the Dickens connection to these ideas. For a discussion of the authorship of articles on insanity appearing in *Household Words*, see Lohrli's biographical notes on Richard Oliver: *Household Words; a Weekly Journal 1850-1859* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), pp. 388-389.

46. T. Wemyss Reid, *The Life, Letters, and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes, First Lord Houghton* (New York: Cassell Publishing Co., 1891), I, 463.
47. *Ibid.*, I, 17.
48. *Ibid.*, I, 10-17 for an extended account of the relationship between the elder Perceval and Milnes.
49. Already cited.
50. This booklet, "A Curious Dance," was privately printed by St. Luke's Hospital in 1860, and is in the New York Public Library Rare Books Room.
51. *Letters*, p. 29.
52. K. Jones, p. 156.
53. *An Address on the Laws of Lunacy: Especially as They Affect the Lunatic Wards of Chancery, for the Consideration of the Legislature* (London: Charles and Tiver, 1858). Anonymous author [Senex] protests against being a Ward of Chancery, p. 3.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
57. August 28, p. 8.
58. *Works*, VIII, 144.
59. Michael Kotzin, *Dickens and the Fairy Tale* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1972), p. 51 and *passim*; Harry Stone, "Fire, Hand, and Gate: Dickens' *Great Expectations*," *Kenyon Review*, 24 (1962), 662-691 (the novel as an inverted *Cinderella*). In *Dickens and the Invisible World: Fairy Tales, Fantasy, and Novel-Making* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), Stone devotes an important chapter to the significant quarrel between Dickens and Cruikshank. In *Victorian Conventions*, Reed also notes the importance of *Cinderella* in *Great Expectations*, but his argument that "Dickens means to convert the fable to Christian purpose" (p.30) rather puts the novelist in Cruikshank's camp. It is noteworthy that *Great Expectations* was the novel that followed *The Woman in White* as serial in *All the Year Round*. That both books should draw heavily on the *Cinderella* story suggests a possibly mutual awareness. For further connections between the two novels, see Martin Meisel, "Miss Havisham Brought to Book," *PMLA*, 81 (1966), 278-285.
60. *Dickens and the Invisible World*, p. 59.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
62. Charles Dickens to W. H. Wills, July 27, 1853, Berg MS.
63. Robinson, *Wilkie Collins*, p. 189.
64. George Cruikshank, "To the Public," in *Cinderella* (London: David Bogue, 1854), p. 31.
65. Antti Aarne, *The Types of the Folktale: a Classification and Bibliography*. Translated and enlarged by Stith Thompson (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1961), pp. 175-177.
66. There are two biographical elements that should be considered in ex-

aming Collins's being influenced by *Cinderella*. First is Collins's own pride in his particularly small feet. Davis, for example, notes that Collins "had tiny hands which he took care to keep soft and white, and feet so small that they would slip about inside a woman's shoe," *Life of Wilkie Collins*, p. 53. Ashley relates that "Wilkie's feet were so small and delicately shaped that one night when he arrived at a friend's for dinner soaked to the skin, no shoes, not even the women's, could be found small enough to fit him," *Wilkie Collins*, p. 24. Then there is the often-quoted account by Millais that one night, when he was accompanied by Collins after a party, they heard a cry of a woman in distress. The iron gate of a nearby villa opened, "and from it came the figure of a young and very beautiful woman dressed in flowing white robes that shone in the moonlight." Collins is reported to have run after her, determined to find out who she was. There is an arresting parallel here between Collins and the prince determined to discover the identity of the beautiful woman (Cinderella) who flees the ball just before midnight so that he must make a house-to-house search with her lost slipper to find her. It is difficult to know where fact and fiction diverge in this supposed episode in Collins's life (see Sucksmith's notes, pp. 604-605).

67. This is Robert P. Ashley's summary in "Wilkie Collins' First Short Story," *More Books: The Bulletin of the Boston Public Library*, 23 (1948), 105.
68. See, for example, Phyllis Ralph, "Fairy-Tale Heroines in Nineteenth-Century English Fiction," *Folklore Forum*, 11 (1978), 124-139.
69. In the context of the Cinderella influence on Collins, Fosco and his pet mice become a parody of the coachman who takes Cinderella to the ball.
70. The interested reader can begin with Stanley Rosenman, "Cinderella: Family Pathology," *American Imago*, 35 (1978), 375-396 and follow the author's notes and bibliography.
71. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), p. 68.
72. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1972), pp. 25, 28.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
74. *Ibid.*
75. See my essay, "Fathering and *The British Mother's Magazine*, 1854-1864," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 13 (1980), 10-16. This essay is the result of the initial work I did on British psychology during the time that Collins wrote *The Woman in White*.
76. Masterson, p. 75.
77. "The Counterworld of Victorian Fiction," p. 352.
78. Masterson, p. 28.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
83. It is also noteworthy that Collins, in focusing on the relationship of Mrs. Catherick to her daughter Anne as a source of the latter's ill-

ness, has written a Mother-Daughter novel in an age famous for its depictions of Fathers and Sons.

84. "On the Education of Children Predisposed to Insanity," 1 (1848), 493. In her book on *Mothers of England: Their Influence and Responsibility* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1844), Mrs. Ellis describes childhood melancholy as something mothers should watch carefully, and it is clear from her discussion that the reasons for this condition will not always be apparent. She also views what now would be termed depression in children as a terrible affliction (p. 90).
85. The scope of this essay has caused me to seek help from divergent sources. I would like to thank Drs. Eric T. Carlson, Helen E. Daniells, and Jacques Queen of The New York Hospital-Cornell Medical College for the aid I received from discussions with them. Dr. Carlson also made it easier for me to conduct research in England. Some of the material in the essay was presented on two occasions at the Research Seminars of the History of Psychiatry section of New York Hospital-Cornell Medical College. I also would like to thank Gloria and Fred Kaplan for their consistent interest in and support of this project.