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Emotional Density, Suspense, and the
Serialization of *The Woman in White* in
All the Year Round

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Emotion is essential to our understanding of the Victorian novel. As Rachel Ablow points out, the nineteenth century was a time “when, insofar as the novel was believed to be good for anything, it was believed to be good for making readers feel.”¹ Nicholas Dames likewise refers to the novel as a “machine for the production of affect,” and Joanna Bourke examines how emotions were used to define male and female roles in Victorian legal documents and marital advice literature.² The serialized sensation novel is a particularly useful genre for studying Victorian emotions because it relies on emotionality to stimulate reader interest—to shock and excite the reader’s senses. The sensation novel’s critical history is closely linked to the history of emotions. Victorian critics claimed that the plots of sensation serials were crafted to make the reader passively consume the emotional sensations produced by the text, “to go on to the end, whether he likes it or not.”³ More recently, scholars have traced the effect of serialization on Victorian readers by exploring the emotional affect of key characters in the text. D. A. Miller and Rachel Ablow, for example, focus on the emotional development of Walter Hartright in Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White*, arguing that by the end of the narrative Hartright becomes an emotionally mature, self-controlled patriarch. Miller has argued that Walter’s initial susceptibility to his nervous sensations is representative of men “who must monitor and master what is fantasized as the ‘woman inside’ them.”⁴ *The Woman in White*, Miller claims, is not only about “enclosing and secluding the woman in male ‘bodies,’ among them institutions like marriage and

madhouses,” but also about realizing the “normative requirements of the heterosexual ménage whose happy picture concludes it.”⁵ Based on their close reading of selected passages, Miller and Ablow conclude that Walter’s emotional development serves as a model for men in the Victorian era. Ablow states that *The Woman in White* is an “enthusiastic endorsement of new possibilities for self-invention and self-improvement that are available to men alone.”⁶ But what might a different methodological approach to studying the emotionality of the text reveal?

Analyzing *The Woman in White* using quantitative methodology stabilizes our understanding of how emotion functions in the text. Rather than privileging particular characters or scenes, my analysis accounts for every character emotion expressed or observed throughout the text’s forty serialized installments. My motive for creating this extensive catalogue of the text’s emotions was to gain a comprehensive understanding of which characters expressed the most emotions and to speculate what this might mean for the relationship between emotion and character development. I also wanted to study when the most expressions of emotion occurred during the course of the text’s serialization in order to discover how the serial’s narrative structure operates in relationship to its affective structure. This comprehensive dataset allowed me to not only visualize the text’s emotionality but also to examine particular scenes within the context of the serial’s broader emotional patterns.

The results of this empirical research reveal that *The Woman in White* is not, as some scholars have alleged, primarily concerned with Walter Hartright’s emotional development; rather, the serial novel privileges the emotions associated with female characters. In fact, it relies on their expressions of feeling to maintain suspense and reader empathy. A distant approach to the text, as Franco Moretti has claimed, allows scholars to “focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems.”⁷ The data I have gathered focuses on units of emotion occurring throughout the text, not just select scenes. This approach unsettles our understanding of how emotion operates throughout the serialization of *The Woman in White*, revealing complex layers of emotional register that are obscured by more conventional methodological approaches.⁸

Emotional Density and Suspense

In order to understand *The Woman in White*’s affective structure, I first needed to create a catalogue of the text’s emotions. I read through the serial, noting each time a character expressed an emotion, for example when Marian exclaims, “I’m mad when I think of [how men treat women]!”⁹ I also

noted instances where a character observed another character's emotions, for example when Walter remarks that Anne Catherick had a "frightened face" during his encounter with her in Limmeridge Cemetery.¹⁰ Tabulating these emotions allowed me to create a comprehensive corpus of every emotion described in the text. I also noted each emotion that was manifested through descriptions of bodily change and incorporated this data into my spreadsheet. I felt it was particularly important to record this information because Victorian commentators often linked emotional reactions to bodily manifestations. Dr. Alexander Bain, in his extensive 1859 study *The Emotions and the Will*, notes that "emotions manifest themselves in outward acts, gestures, and appearances, called the *expression of feeling*, of which a great part is instinctive, and grows out of the primitive organization of the frame."¹¹ More recently, Joanna Bourke has argued that emotions "link the individual with the social in dynamic ways," particularly the "emotional reaction of the self to stimuli in lived experience," including reactions manifested in the body.¹² Indeed, in *The Woman in White*, a number of Collins's characters express their own emotions or their observations of others' emotions using the language of the body. For example, when Walter encounters Anne Catherick for the first time on the road, he notes that "every drop of blood in [his] body was brought to a stop."¹³ Walter's emotional response, manifested in his body, is an emotional reaction to the "stimuli" of his world, so I duly included it in my dataset. My final spreadsheet, then, catalogued every self-expressed emotion, every observed emotion, and every emotion described as a change in the body, as well as the names of the characters and narrators to which each emotion was attributed.¹⁴ Using this comprehensive catalogue of emotions, I set out to analyze and visualize *The Woman in White*'s affective structure.

My first task was to tabulate the number of emotions expressed and observed in each serial installment of *The Woman in White* in order to reveal the emotional fluctuations occurring throughout the text's serialization (figure 1). *The Woman in White* consisted of forty installments that were serialized from November 1859 to August 1860 in Dickens's *All the Year Round*. The first installment has a notably higher number of total emotions than the rest of the serial installments. This makes sense given that Collins needed to establish reader interest and empathy at the start in order to encourage their commitment. Installment 1 not only introduces Walter Hartright as a narrator but also concludes with the highly suspenseful cliff-hanger of his mysterious encounter with Anne Catherick on the road. As Erica Haugtvædt notes in her analysis of sympathy and suspense in sensation fiction serials, readers must first experience feelings of sympathy for characters in the story world before the excitement of suspense can be produced: "These feelings—these investments—allow the anxiety

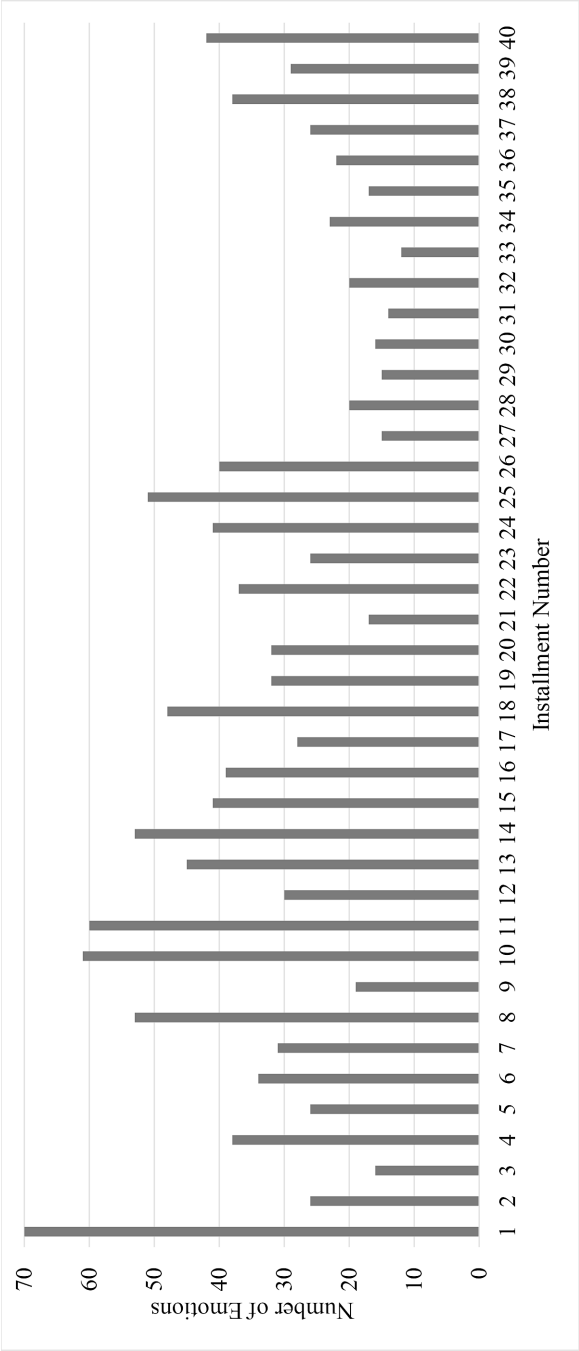


Figure 1. The raw total number of emotions in each serial installment of *The Woman in White*.

of suspense to flourish at key junctures of the narration. Thus, the fastness of suspense depends upon the slowness of sympathy.”¹⁵ Such an approach highlights the connection between serialization as a publishing format and a serial narrative’s emotional rhythms: Collins’s first installment needed to encourage readers to feel emotionally connected to the narrator and emotionally invested in the outcome of installment’s suspenseful cliff-hanger in order to maintain interest in the narrative and the periodical. In subsequent installments, expressions of character emotion likewise encouraged readers’ ongoing emotional investment.

But this accounting of the serial’s emotional content, I decided, would need to correct for the length of each serial installment. Episode 1, which is one of the longest installments of *The Woman in White*, totaling ten pages, would seem to reference more emotions expressed and observed than shorter installments like episode 33, which is only five pages in length. In order to account for these discrepancies, I normalized my data by dividing the total number of emotions expressed and observed in the installment by the installment’s total number of pages. This created what I termed the “emotional density” of each serial installment: the average number of emotions expressed per page (figure 2). This chart reveals the emotional “pulses” of serialization: high pulses and fluctuations of emotional density occur during weeks ten through twenty-five of serialization, and low pulses generally occur during weeks twenty-six through forty. What might prompt such changes in emotional density?

One possible explanation for these emotional fluctuations is the narrative genre of each serial installment. A notable spike in emotional density begins with installment 10, when readers are introduced to Marian Halcombe’s diary. Many of Marian’s diary entries oscillate between emotionality and rationality, an oscillation that is particularly evident in her suspicions concerning Sir Percival Glyde. Marian continually tries to justify her emotional impulse to distrust Sir Percival with logical explanations: “On looking back, I find myself always referring to Sir Percival in disparaging terms. In the turn affairs have now taken, I must and will root out my prejudice against him. . . . Is it Laura’s reluctance to become his wife that has set me against him? Have Hartright’s perfectly intelligible prejudices infected me . . . ? I cannot account for the state of my own feelings: the one thing I am certain of is, that it is my duty—doubly my duty, now—not to wrong Sir Percival by unjustly distrusting him.”¹⁶ Marian tries to rationally account for her suspicions, but as her narrative progresses, she ultimately succumbs to her emotional instincts: “I hate Sir Percival! I flatly deny his good looks. . . . I am more unreasonable and more unjust than ever. In three words—how glibly my pen writes them!—in three words, I hate him.”¹⁷ Her narrative, presented to readers as a private diary, allows

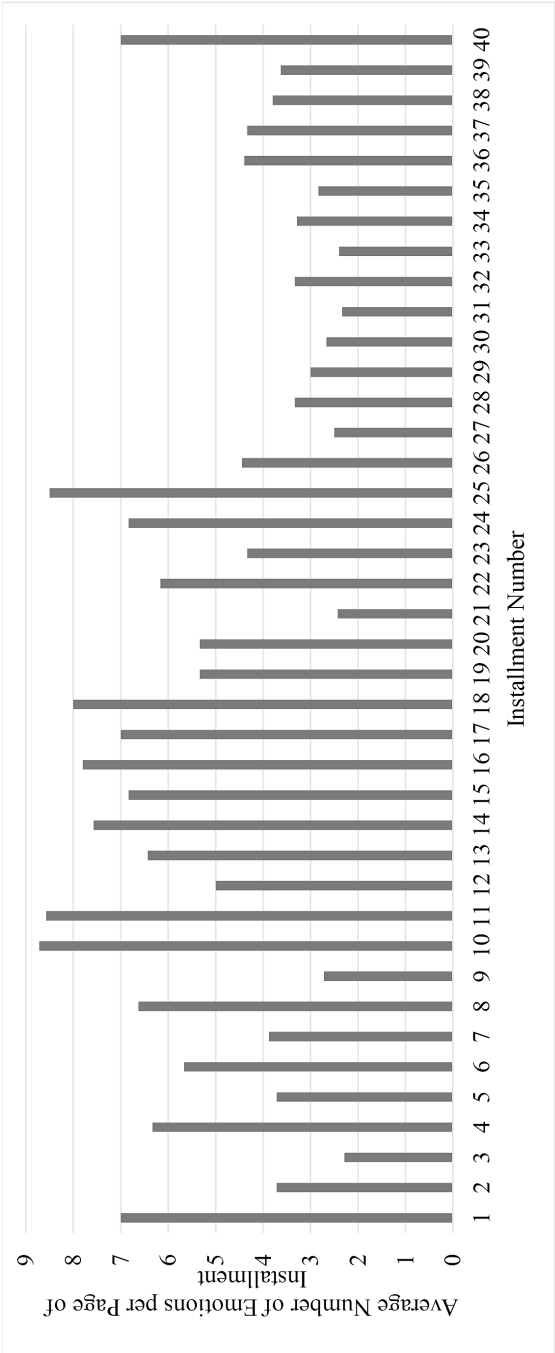


Figure 2. The emotional density of each serial installment in *The Woman in White*.

for freedom of emotional expression, which perhaps explains the high pulses of emotional density that spike throughout her narrative installments (figure 2). The final third of the text's serialization, where there is a consistent drop in emotional density, is primarily controlled by Walter, who tells the reader that he is determined to relate the rest of the story's events in words that are "brief, plain, [and] studiously simple" rather than in an account, like Marian's diary, which is "often interrupted [and] often inevitably confused."¹⁸ Walter's narratives are presented to the reader as legal testimony that aims "to present the truth always in its most direct and most intelligible aspect."¹⁹ Walter also serves as the narrative's editor, sifting through each character's account and redacting passages, such as those in Marian's diary, that "bear no reference to Miss Fairlie or to any of the persons with whom she is associated in these pages."²⁰ In his roles as legal witness and editorial advisor, Walter privileges rational thought over emotional reaction. He even goes so far as to purposefully ignore the emotions of the female characters in his transcription of their testimonies, telling the reader, "It is not necessary to dwell here upon the effect which the intelligence of Lady Glyde's sudden death produced on her sister. It is only useful to the present purpose to say that she was not able to travel for more than three weeks afterwards."²¹ Unlike Marian, Walter chooses to ignore the emotionality of events, and his conscious decision to refrain from including these emotional details in his final narrative, particularly the emotional details of the text's female characters, might account for this drop in the serialization's emotional density.

As I continued with my analysis, I determined that the narrative genre of each serial installment could not alone explain these fluctuations in emotional density. I discovered that the serial's variations in emotional density correlated with the suspense level of each installment. In her study of Elizabeth Gaskell's *A Dark Night's Work* (1863) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Eleanor's Victory* (1863), Haugtvedt investigates whether the ending of each serial installment had a low, moderate, or high degree of suspense. She categorizes low-suspense installments as those that conclude with the "greatest number of possible outcomes in play," thus downplaying anxiety regarding approaching plot events.²² Moderate-suspense installments conclude "without a clear promise that the mystery [will] be immediately resolved but may be resolved in two to three parts," and high-suspense installments typically, but not always, end with a cliff-hanger or the promise that the plot point will be "resolved in the next installment, probably in its first scene."²³ With Haugtvedt's analysis in mind, I decided to determine whether varying levels of suspense in serial installments might be correlated with the emotional density of *The Woman in White*. I applied Haugtvedt's criteria to *The Woman in White* by categorizing the suspense

level of each serial part conclusion. The resulting data, shown in figure 3, reveals that Collins's text is dominated primarily by moderate-suspense installments.²⁴

Fifty-five percent of the installments end with a moderate degree of suspense, while 35 percent and 10 percent of the serial installments end with high and low degrees of suspense, respectively. If, as Haugtvedt claims, emotional investment is needed in order "to build the bonds that let readers care enough to worry about the outcome of the prototypical cliff-hanger," then these fluctuating suspense levels would seem to correspond with each installment's emotional density.²⁵ Indeed, figure 3 reveals that moderate and high levels of suspense tend to occur in installments that also have higher levels of emotional density. In order to better understand the relationship between emotional density and suspense, I calculated the average emotional density for each suspense level (figure 4). I gathered this data by grouping together the emotional densities for high-suspense installments, moderate-suspense installments, and low-suspense installments and then calculating the averages for each group.²⁶ Moderate-suspense installments predominate in *The Woman in White* (twenty-two of forty total installments), but when these moderate-suspense installments appear, they are, on average, lower in emotional density than the high-suspense installments. Installments with a high degree of suspense, on average, also have a high emotional density. Just as the narrative presents multiple and competing futures before the story actualizes one path, the characters within the story express multiple and competing emotions until their fates are eventually realized.²⁷ This is evident, for example, in installment 25, when Laura Fairlie is forced to leave Blackwater Park and journey to what she thinks will be London. Just as the narrative presents multiple and competing possibilities for Laura's unknown future in what turns out to be a lunatic asylum, so, too, is she described as being "anxious and uncertain" about her own fate.²⁸ Indeed, her character's emotionality accounts for 41 percent of the installment's total emotions. In Collins's text, competing outcomes concerning the fate of the narrative correspond with increasingly emotional responses to these unknown futures. While suspenseful installments, as Haugtvedt claims, depend upon the sympathy cultivated through "slow" character development and narrative unfolding, the data in figure 4 also reveals that an installment's suspense level can be directly connected to its emotionality: frequent expressions of character emotion correlate with high-suspense installments.

But which characters express the emotions that produce high levels of suspense? Throughout *The Woman in White*, Collins uses male and female narrative voices to relay plot detail and character emotion to the reader. This method of narrative construction, wrote one contemporary reviewer,

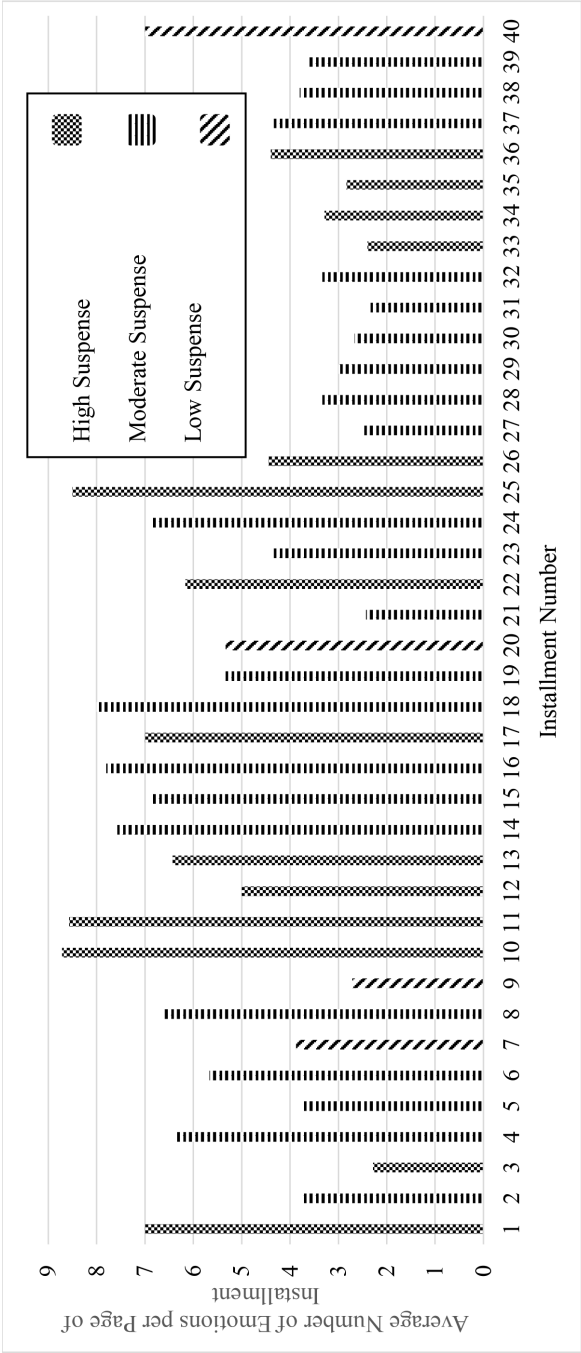


Figure 3. The emotional density and suspense level of each serial installment of *The Woman in White*.

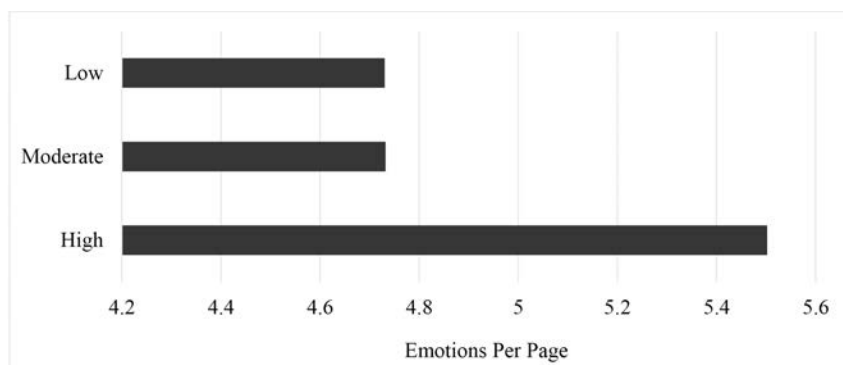


Figure 4. The average emotional density for each suspense level.

was “at once pleasing, novel, and ingenious.”²⁹ But Collins’s depiction of these narrators, particularly their emotional expressions, raises questions concerning Victorian gender ideology. If an installment’s emotional density directly correlates to its suspense level, then investigating which characters narrate these highly emotional and highly suspenseful installments can reveal how character emotion is used to construct gender identity. I created figure 5 in order to compare the emotional density of installments narrated by male characters to those narrated by female characters.³⁰ I then divided the male- and female-narrated installments into their respective high-, moderate-, and low-suspense categories and calculated the average emotional density for each. This process allowed me to visualize the difference in emotional density between male and female narrators in low-, moderate-, and high-suspense installments.³¹

The averages presented in figure 5 reveal a notable difference between the emotional densities of installments narrated by female characters and those narrated by male characters. As I speculated above, this difference might be due to the genre in which women’s narratives were presented. The spike in emotional density at the start of Marian’s narrative in installment 10 (see figure 2) may be due to the fact that it is written in the diary form. Yet further analysis reveals other possible readings of this data. Figure 5 shows a steady decline in emotional density associated with male narrators as the suspense level of the installment increases. This may be because high-suspense installments, which produce higher states of anxiety concerning particular plot points, often demand that a course of action be taken so that the suspenseful plot point might be resolved. As I have previously noted, male narrators, particularly Walter Hartright, focus on narrative action rather than emotional response in their narratives. For example, in “Part the Second,” Walter responds to the revelation that Laura is alive only by suppressing his brief betrayal of emotion and redirecting the reader’s attention back to narrative action: “My heart turns faint, my mind sinks in darkness and confusion when I think of it. This must not be, if I,

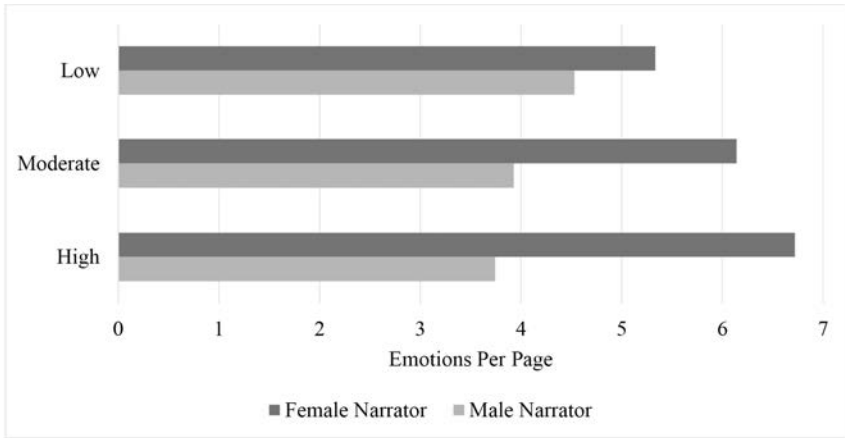


Figure 5. The average emotional density expressed by male and female narrators in low-, moderate-, and high-suspense installments.

who write, am to guide, as I ought, you who read. This must not be, if the clue that leads through the windings of the Story is to remain, from end to end, untangled in my hands.”³² Walter emphasizes twice that the confusion prompted by his emotionality “must not be” so that the sequence of suspenseful narrative events can be “most speedily and most intelligibly unrolled.”³³ Male narrators must control their emotionality as the suspense increases. This is the inverse of the trend for female narrators: when women are given narrative control, both the suspense level and the emotional density of the installment increases. This notable disparity between male and female character narration reveals that emotion is not only more present in Collins’s female-narrated episodes but is also one of the primary elements upon which the suspense of these installments depend. If Marian did not note to the reader that she had become “distorted by the suspicion which had now become a part of [her]self,” her description of the unlocked room and the possible violation of her diary would not rouse the reader’s sense of anxiety concerning her safety and future at Blackwater Park.³⁴ Mentioning her suspicious feelings heightens the suspense of the scene. Limiting my analysis to the text’s male and female narrators does not however account for *all* of the emotions expressed by male and female characters in the serial, for example Laura Fairlie and Sir Percival Glyde, who are consistently present throughout the narrative. To account for these emotions in my calculations, I noted every emotion that was expressed by a character in dialogue with another character.³⁵ I combined these indirectly narrated emotions with the emotions of the narrators in order to account for every expressed emotion in the text.

Figure 6 reveals a significant difference between male and female emotional density for all characters in low-, moderate-, and high-suspense installments.³⁶ While the male characters’ emotional density does

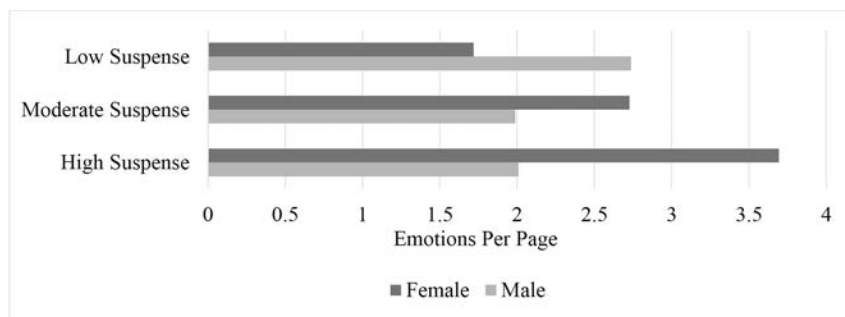


Figure 6. The average emotional density expressed by male and female characters in low-, moderate-, and high-suspense installments.

not exceed three emotions per page for each suspense level, the female characters' emotional density increases as the installment's suspense level increases. Furthermore, female characters express almost two more emotions per page in high-suspense installments than do male characters. This data thus reveals that the emotional density of the text's female characters directly correlates to the suspense level of the installment: the more female character emotion, the higher the installment's suspense level. One possible explanation for this finding is perhaps best understood in the context of Victorian gender ideology. In his 1887 essay "Mental Differences Between Men and Women," English evolutionary biologist George John Romanes champions a strain of Victorian medical writing which claimed that in women, "undue influence is more frequently exercised from the side of the emotions; and, in general, all the elements which go to constitute what is understood by a characteristically judicial mind are of comparatively feeble development."³⁷ Biologist T. H. Huxley also theorized female biological inferiority, writing, "Women are, by nature, more excitable than men—prone to be swept by the tides of emotion, proceeding from hidden and inward, as well as from obvious and external causes."³⁸ Given that women were thought to be more "excitable," lacking any volitional power to combat their "tides of emotion," the high-suspense installments in *The Woman in White* appear to emphasize stereotypical "feminine" emotional responses. Female characters, lacking volition and intellect, can only respond emotionally to highly suspenseful circumstances because, as one Victorian psychologist put it, the "feelings of woman" are "frequently called forth by the occurrences she witnesses around her."³⁹ If she can do nothing but passively submit to her instinctive and emotional nature, then it makes sense that her intuitive emotional responses would, on average, reaffirm the suspense level of an installment. In this way, female character emotion is a medium through which Collins cultivates suspense. According to Victorian gender ideology, women cannot take intelligible action in response to highly suspenseful plot developments; they can only feel.

Emotional Density and Character

Given that the emotions of female characters are crucial in determining an installment's suspense level in *The Woman in White*, we may want to question the assumption that Walter Hartright's emotional development is central to the development of the serial's plot. Ablow claims that Walter embodies a "model of male identity that relies less on memory or experience than on the ability to feel sensations, to name them, and to convince others of those names' validity."⁴⁰ But does Walter "feel" or even "name" sensations throughout the text as often as scholars have assumed? In order to determine whether or not *The Woman in White* is truly focused on Walter's emotionality, I decided that I should first determine which characters were, in fact, the most emotionally dense. I first calculated these emotional densities by dividing the total number of emotions attributed to each character by the total number of pages on which each character appears (figure 7). Once again, by calculating these quotients, I was able to normalize the data so that each character's emotional density might be comparable, no matter how often or how seldom he or she appeared in the text.

This analysis revealed that women, rather than men, were the most emotionally dense characters in Collins's text, meaning that they, on average, were attributed the most emotions per page. The top five most emotionally dense characters are all women: Anne Catherick (1.28 emotions per page appearance), Hester Pinhorn (1.11 emotions per page appearance), Eliza Michelson (1.04 emotions per page appearance), Marian Halcombe (.93 emotions per page appearance), and Laura Fairlie (.87 emotions per page appearance). Notably, it is the text's minor female characters—a madwoman, a cook, and a housekeeper—who have the highest emotional densities. These lower-class characters are not given many page appearances but are nevertheless the most emotionally efficient characters, meaning that when they do appear, Collins is sure to highlight their emotionality. The emotionality of these lower-class characters is essential to the suspense level of the installments in which they appear—those with either a high or moderate degree of suspense.⁴¹ This data elevates the importance of these seemingly "minor" characters to the serial's overall affective structure.

The dominance of female emotion became even more apparent when I isolated the emotions that all characters in the serial expressed about themselves (figure 8). These emotions include, for example, Mr. Gilmore's declaration to the reader, "I was a little surprised—perhaps a little piqued, also, by these last words [from Marian Halcombe concerning Walter Hartright]."⁴² This declaration includes two self-expressed emotions that I duly noted as emotions attributed to Mr. Gilmore: surprise and anger. Female characters express a notably higher number of emotions than male characters in installments 16, 18, and 27—all of which are moderate-suspense

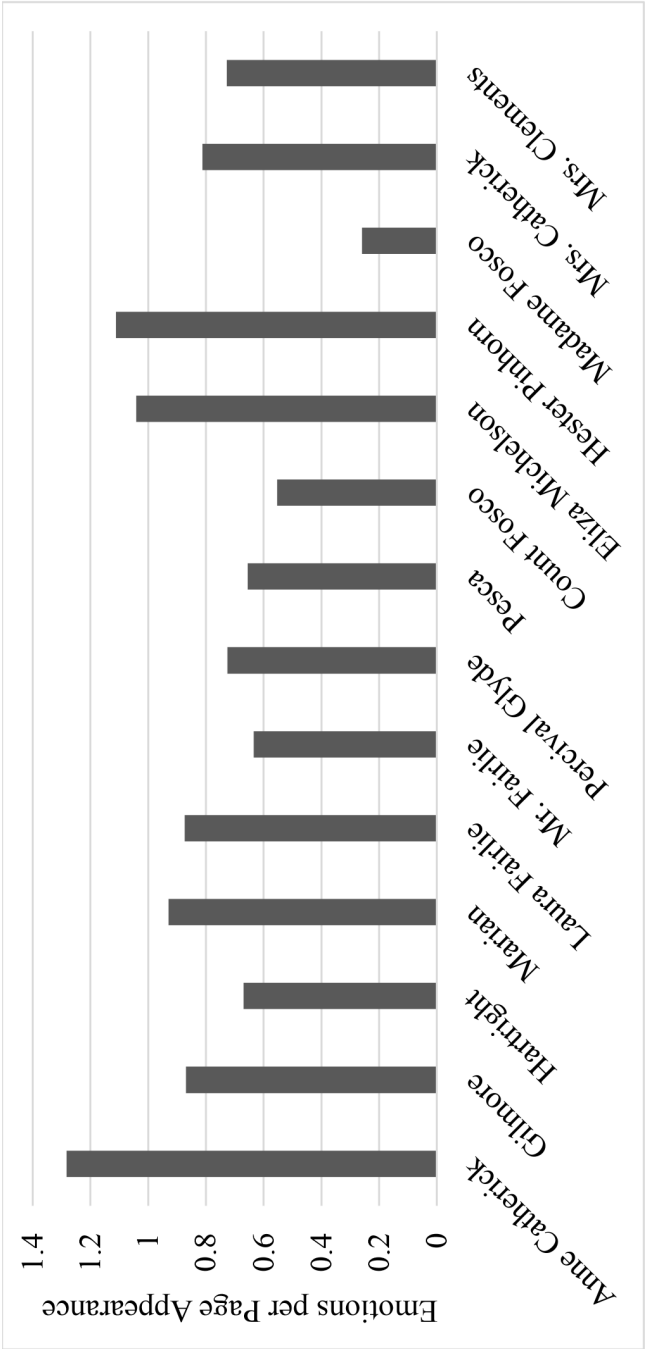


Figure 7. The emotional density of each character in *The Woman in White*.

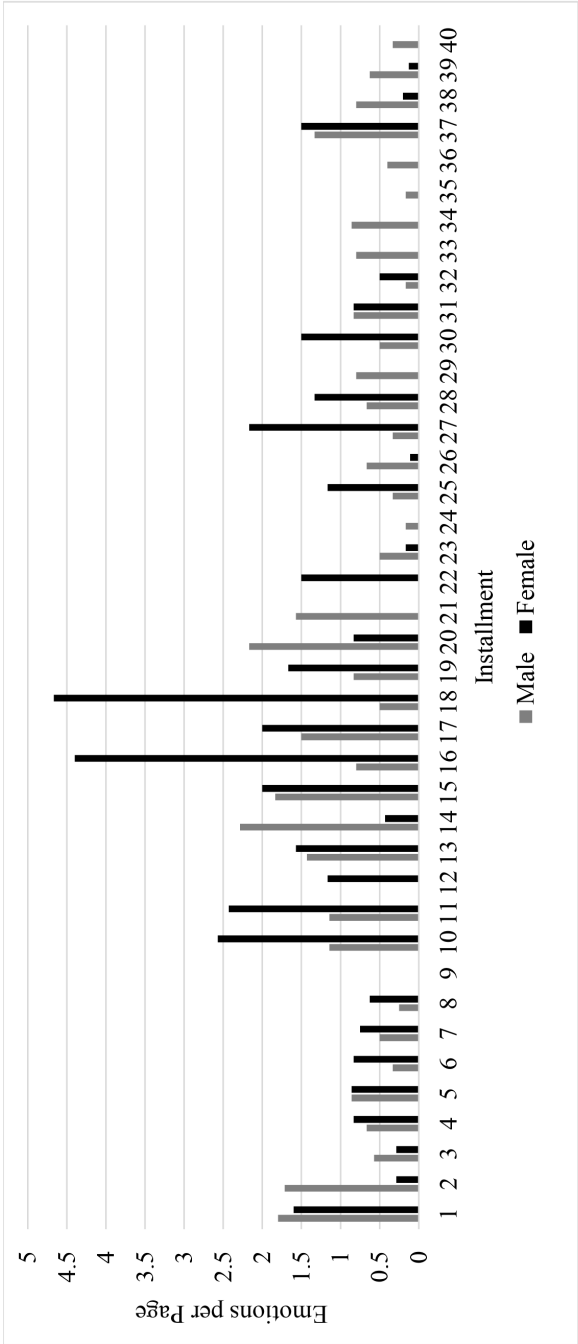


Figure 8. The density of self-expressed emotions per installment of *The Woman in White* for male and female characters.

installments (figure 8). Installment 18, in particular, reveals the greatest difference between male and female emotional self-expression: female characters express 4.17 more emotions per page in that installment than male characters. Installment 18, narrated by Marian, elevates the relationship between the text's three female protagonists: Marian, Laura, and Anne Catherick. After Laura spends much of the installment telling Marian of her mysterious encounter with Anne Catherick, the two sisters discuss their suspicions regarding Sir Percival Glyde. Marian turns to her diary when she fails to remember the conversation she had previously overheard between Sir Percival and his lawyer: "In the perilous uncertainty of our present situation, it is hard to say what future interests may not depend upon the regularity of the entries in my journal, and upon the reliability of my recollection at the time when I make them."⁴³ For the text's female characters, Marian's diary serves as a reliable resource and timeline despite her detailed assessment of her emotions, which Walter later claims is "often interrupted and often inevitably confused."⁴⁴

In installment 16, female characters express 3.60 more emotions per page of the installment than male characters. Here again, the episode is also dominated primarily by female character relationships. Laura spends the majority of the installment describing the horror of her honeymoon, while Anne Catherick, unbeknownst to Marian and Laura, spies on them from outside the boat-house. The highest degree of emotional self-expression, then, appears in installments where female character relationships are privileged. Overall, female characters are more emotionally self-expressive than male characters, expressing 1.96 emotions per page to the male characters' 1.63 emotions per page. Installments that are dominated by male character plotlines do not reveal the same level of emotional self-expression. Installment 34, which documents Hartright's investigative quest to the Old Welmingham Church and Sir Percival's violent death, includes only .86 self-expressed emotions per page of the installment. Female characters are hardly present in this episode, which implies, based on the high intensity of female character self-expression in installments 16 and 18, that the lack of female characters contributes to the installment's lack of self-expressed emotions. This reveals that female characters are central to an installment's emotionality and that the homosocial relationships between Collins's female characters encourage rather than stifle feminine emotional self-expression. The communal nature of female emotional expression operates in contrast to the text's clearest depiction of a male-governed community: "The Brotherhood."⁴⁵ The male bonds cultivated in this fraternity incite fear and punishment in death, a menace that Pesca admits will continue to plague him for the rest of his life.⁴⁶ Conversely, the female character bonds fostered through emotion cultivate moments of

female self-expression and emotional bonding. Furthermore, if, as Miller has noted, “nervousness must first be represented” in order to make the reader feel nervous, then the communal nature of female emotional expression extends beyond the context of the plot and fosters a communal relationship between character and reader.⁴⁷ Female characters are the most emotionally dense and the most emotionally self-expressive characters in the text, which means that the reader’s emotional investment in the narrative depends primarily upon his or her bond with the emotionality of this community of female characters. While the association between femininity and emotion might be explained by either suspense or women’s stereotyped “emotional nature,” another explanation might be that the sensation serial relies on the depiction of affective female communities to construct a reading community.

Understanding the broad affective structure operating in *The Woman in White* allows us to reexamine familiar scenes in the serial from a new perspective. Both Rachel Ablow and D. A. Miller analyze Walter Hartright’s self-expressed emotions in their close readings of what Miller calls the text’s “primal scene”: Walter’s mysterious encounter with Anne Catherick on the road to London.⁴⁸ Their analyses isolate the scene from the entirety of the text’s emotional landscape, resulting in a limited understanding of both Walter Hartright’s emotionality and the serial’s broader affective structure. Ablow argues that Walter’s sensations throughout the scene are the result of his unexpected encounter with Anne, which “has no context, no precedent and so no obvious meaning.”⁴⁹ Walter’s evident susceptibility to his sensations “leads [him] into error,” preventing him from acting rationally and asking Anne Catherick the “right” questions that might explain her presence.⁵⁰ Miller also isolates Walter’s emotional susceptibility, arguing that the scene reveals the “origins of male nervousness in female contagion—strictly, in the woman’s touch.”⁵¹ Overtaken by feminine nervousness, Walter must work to reaffirm his masculinity by “enclosing and secluding the woman in male ‘bodies,’ among them institutions like marriage and madhouses.”⁵² Both Ablow and Miller privilege Walter’s self-expressed emotional responses in their understanding of the scene, treating Anne Catherick as a catalyst for propelling Walter’s emotions into action. However, it is Anne Catherick’s expressions of emotion, not Walter’s susceptibility, that dictate the outcome of this opening scene. After Anne’s unexpected touch causes “every drop of blood” in Walter’s body to be “brought to a stop,” Walter spends the rest of the scene calculating his actions in response to Anne’s emotional expressions.⁵³ He does “[his] best to reassure her” of his trustworthiness after hearing her speak with “unnecessary earnestness and agitation,” and his “natural impulse to assist her and to spare her” is inspired by Anne’s “loneliness and helplessness.”⁵⁴

After she looks “anxiously up and down the road . . . with a pleading fear and confusion that it troubled [him] to see,” Walter asks the reader, “What could I do? Here was a stranger utterly and helplessly at my mercy—and that stranger a forlorn woman. . . . What I did do, was to try and gain time by questioning her.”⁵⁵ Though Walter, as Ablow and Miller note, is “bewildered” by Anne Catherick’s presence, he does not, as they suggest, lose complete control of his faculties. Walter carefully assesses Anne’s emotional expressions before answering her questions, even noting at one point that “there was an unmistakable tone of suspicion in the strange question. I hesitated about answering it.”⁵⁶ After Anne responds violently to one of Walter’s questions, raising “her clenched hand in the air, and [shaking] it passionately,” Walter confesses that he “could hardly refuse to humor her” and discloses the names of his baronet acquaintances.⁵⁷ Anne’s emotional expressions dictate Walter’s line of questioning and his response to this “forlorn woman.”

Eventually Walter questions whether or not he has “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 [his] duty, and every man’s duty, mercifully to control.”⁵⁸ While Ablow claims that Walter’s “susceptibility to his sensations has prevented him from asking these questions until it is too late,” Walter in fact confesses that 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.”⁵⁹ It was not Walter’s supposed inability to control his emotional responses but instead Anne’s “language” and “actions” that prevented him from drawing a connection between her and the asylum. This supports my broader findings that Walter’s emotional responses are overall less significant than the majority of the text’s female characters (see figure 7). The suspense level of any installment, including the opening episode, depends much less upon Walter’s emotions than it does the emotions of female characters like Anne Catherick (see figure 6). Understanding this scene within the broader context of Collins’s emphasis on female emotionality reveals that it is Anne’s emotional expressions, rather than Walter’s emotional responses, that impact his actions and the ultimate outcome of the scene.

Indeed, my findings show that Walter Hartright, along with the text’s other male characters, is not only less susceptible to emotional expression but also less likely to observe emotions in other characters. In figure 9, I isolated the observed emotions throughout *The Woman in White*. These observed emotions include, for example, Marian’s observation that

Laura Fairlie “threw herself on the sofa, in a paroxysm of sobs and tears that shook her.”⁶⁰ The installment with the greatest difference between the emotions observed by male characters and the emotions observed by female characters is installment 11. Female characters observe 5.14 more emotions in other characters per page appearance than the text’s male characters (figure 9).⁶¹ In fact, the top five installments with the greatest discrepancies between male and female observations of emotion are the installments in which female characters consistently observe at least four more emotions per page appearance than the text’s male characters. And each of these installments (10, 11, 12, 17, and 25) is narrated by a female character. After I divided the total number of observed emotions associated with male and female characters by the total number of pages on which male and female characters appear in the text, respectively, the totals revealed that female characters observe, on average, 4.07 emotions per page appearance, while male characters observe 3.56 emotions per page appearance. Female characters, according to these results, are more emotionally observant than the text’s male characters, meaning that female characters throughout *The Woman in White* are more attuned to the emotional expressions of other characters and, in turn, feel more compelled to describe those emotions to the reader. This data reflects a common strain of Victorian gender ideology: because women were defined as being dominated by their emotions and bodily impulses rather than their intellect, they were viewed as being more empathetic than men. Victorian psychologist Dr. John Gideon Millingen emphasizes this female “power,” writing, “The *intuitive* powers of woman are certainly greater than those of man. Her perceptions are more acute, her apprehensions quicker, and she has a remarkable power of interpreting the feelings of others, which gives to her not only a much more ready sympathy with these, but that power of guiding her actions so as to be in accordance with them, which we call *tact*.”⁶² The presence of female affective communities in the text could explain why women are more likely to observe emotions in others, but Collins’s emotionally attuned female characters also introduce a different, perhaps “feminine,” type of emotional detection that might also explain their high levels of emotional observance. This “feminine” detection operates alongside Walter Hartright’s investigation of Sir Percival and Count Fosco’s plot. While Walter is able to actively investigate the legal case against Sir Percival and Count Fosco, Marian trusts her emotional instincts—for example, her “insane hatred and distrust of Sir Percival Glyde”—as well as her emotional attachment to Laura, both of which prompt her not only to track down Laura in the asylum but also to release her from captivity.⁶³ Her emotional “acuteness” prompts her own investigation and ultimately saves Laura from the asylum, allowing Walter’s investigation to proceed. In the top five installments with the greatest discrepancies between male

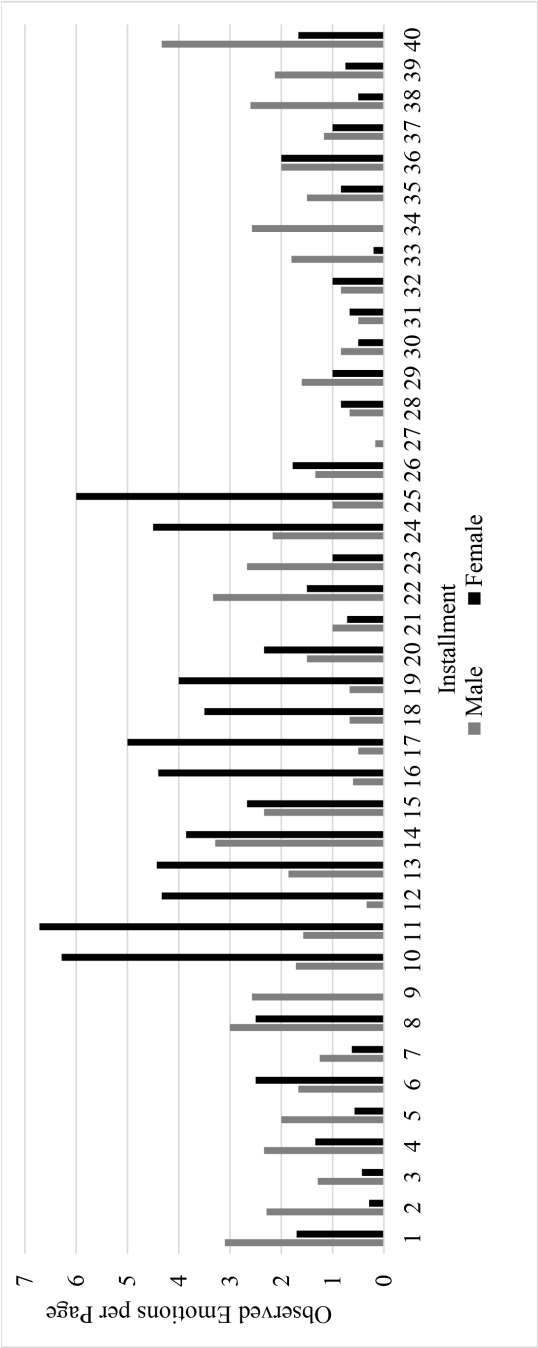


Figure 9. The density of emotions that male and female characters observe in other characters per installment of *The Woman in White*.

and female observations of emotions, moments of female detection and investigative action are prompted by the female narrator's observance of an emotion in another character. For example, Marian's suspicions concerning Sir Percival and Count Fosco are almost always prompted by the emotional turmoil she observes in Laura. Before Laura is forced to marry Sir Percival in installment 11, Marian's suspicions and doubt concerning Sir Percival, which will guide her throughout the remainder of her narrative, are ignited by the emotional "pain" she observes on Laura's face.⁶⁴ Moments of emotional observation prompt Collins's female characters to action and intellectual deduction.

Marian's presence in the text both upholds and interrogates these constructions of Victorian femininity, and her use of empathy as a means of detection merges her emotionality with her rationality. In a letter to an adoring fan of Marian Halcombe, Collins claims that a "character in fiction can only be made true to the general experience of human nature, by a principle of selection which is broad enough to embrace many individuals who represent, more or less remarkably, one type."⁶⁵ While Marian's narrative is comprised of the text's most emotionally dense serial installments, reflecting stereotypes of the "emotional woman," her frequent meta-critical critiques of her own "miserable, weak, women's tears of vexation and rage" or her own "womanhood," which "would pity [Sir Percival], in spite of [herself]," emphasize the feminine role she knows she is supposed to play, thus undermining the "naturalness" of her emotionality.⁶⁶ Collins uses Marian to oscillate between replicating emotional stereotypes and drawing attention to their social construction: Marian is emotionally volatile but also meta-critically aware of her own emotionality. Her character fluidity allows Collins to explore Victorian gender ideology without dismantling the emotional system that drives the suspense of the serial's plot.

Emotionality and Authority

This quantitative study unsettles readings that interpret Walter Hartright's emotional development as the serial's central point of interest and reveals a complex depiction of Marian, who is an emotional "feminine" detective but is also meta-critically aware of her own "feminine" emotionality. Marian's emotional self-awareness ultimately gives her authority in the text's concluding scene. At the text's deepest structural level, women, rather than men, account for the majority of the text's emotions and influence the suspense level of each serial installment. Scholars have interpreted the serial's final scene as the culmination of Walter's emotional control and financial gain. Ann Cvetkovich has argued that Walter's investigation "serves as a vehicle for his accession to patriarchal power and property," and Rachel

Ablow has noted that the text's final scene presents readers "not so much with a vision of normative, naturalized heterosexual domesticity as with an oddly insistent reminder of the conventionality of that domesticity."⁶⁷ Walter has restored Laura's identity, achieved emotional control, and is rewarded with "middle-class male mobility" premised on "man's power to feel, to name those feelings, and to persuade others of the legitimacy of those names."⁶⁸

However, situating this final scene in the context of the text's broader affective structure reminds readers that Walter's emotions do not dominate Collins's text—that the affective experience of reading is governed primarily by the narrative's female characters. Walter's "feelings" throughout the serial's final scene are determined by Marian and Laura. Marian, not Walter, is the final scene's authoritative figure, orchestrating not only what emotions Walter should feel but also when and how his new role should be announced. Walter returns home from Ireland to discover that "Laura and Marian and the child had left the house on the day before [his] return," leaving only a note with the details of their location because "Marian had prohibited any attempt at written explanations."⁶⁹ Marian's stipulations force Walter to join them at Limmeridge House, where "complete enlightenment awaited [him] on [his] arrival."⁷⁰ Just as Collins's female characters control the text's entire emotionality, so too do they control Walter's emotionality in this final scene. His emotional state is cultivated by Marian and Laura's sudden absence, leaving him feeling "utter astonishment" and "surprise."⁷¹ Marian even goes so far as to "forbid" Walter from "feel[ing] the slightest anxiety," thereby underscoring her own authoritative role.⁷²

Once Walter arrives at Limmeridge, Marian continues to control the scene's development. Though Ablow argues that Marian's presence in this final scene "indicates how her subversive potential could be enlisted to support an ideologically acceptable paradigm of male identity formation," Marian does more than simply confirm Walter's new role as head of Limmeridge House.⁷³ Like the author of a story, Marian cultivates Walter's anticipation and suspense. She withholds her explanations for their presence at Limmeridge, "suspend[ing]" Walter's questions.⁷⁴ Even Laura refuses to explain herself immediately, instead taking a moment to "enjoy the surprise which was still expressed in [Walter's] face."⁷⁵ Marian decides that she will relay the news of Walter's inheritance not, as Laura suggests, by "referring to the past" but by "referring to the future," a future in which she has actively made a comfortable place for herself: the presence of the baby on her lap while she sits in Walter's work chair implies that she has assumed the role of caretaker or governess to the heir of the estate, financially and socially securing her future.⁷⁶

It is undoubtedly true that Walter is able to reestablish himself as a member of the middle class, but Marian's control of the scene contests Wal-

ter's supposed patriarchal power. Even after Walter confidently responds to Marian that he "can still answer for knowing [his] own child," she chastises, albeit playfully, Walter's single moment of authority in the scene: "Are you aware, when I present this illustrious baby to your notice, in whose presence you stand? Evidently not!"⁷⁷ Though Walter serves as the scene's narrator, Marian forces him to adopt the same unknowing position as the reader while she slowly unravels the mystery of their unexpected trip to Limmeridge. Walter does nothing but passively submit to the timeline of her revelation, reversing the sexual roles outlined in story's first sentence, "This is the story of what a Woman's patience can endure, and what a Man's resolution can achieve."⁷⁸ Walter must be patient as Marian's resolute authority ushers the serial novel to its close. After Marian christens his son "*the Heir of Limmeridge*," revealing Walter's new position as a member of the upper class, she becomes the medium through which Walter and the reader can realize their emotional satisfaction with the text's conclusion: "The long happy labour of many months is over. Marian was the good angel of our lives—let Marian end our story."⁷⁹ Marian and Collins's other female characters have been the vehicle through which the text's affective structure has unfolded and thus it is through a woman, as noted in the final acknowledgement to Marian, that the narrative must emotionally conclude.

Conclusion

Approaching texts such as *The Woman in White* using quantitative methodology allows us to isolate how complex devices such as emotion operate both on and beneath the surface of a serial narrative. Empirical research methods allow these structures to be visualized, drawing our attention to the complexity of the text in its entirety rather than narrowing our focus to the usual scenes scholars analyze. Daniel Cohen and Frederick Gibbs have argued that digital and quantitative research methods "must allow the scholar to move easily between distant and close reading, between the bird's eye view and the ground level of the text's themselves."⁸⁰ Using such a hybrid approach when reading *The Woman in White* reveals that female character emotion is crucial to the suspense level of the text's serial installments: the more female character emotion, the higher the installment's suspense level. Furthermore, while the serial's fluctuating emotional densities might be explained by the emotional narrative genres in the text (such as the diary), other explanations, such as the female investigative action prompted by emotion or the homosocial bonds cultivated through emotional self-expression between women, reveal that emotionality can ultimately be seen as something more like authority. The importance of women to the serial's affective structure would have gone unnoticed with-

out the tools of empirical analysis. Using a comprehensive dataset, we can revisit key scenes in the serial and situate these particular instances within broader textual trends, avoiding the interpretive bias associated with employing close reading alone.

A quantitative approach to reading the affective structure of *The Woman in White* suggests exciting new possibilities for future research. While my analysis isolates the emotions expressed and observed throughout Collins's serialized novel, future analyses might be extended from the serialized novel to the periodical. Mapping the emotional topography of a periodical during the weeks that a particular story was being serialized might reveal a number of different trends or patterns concerning the emotional density of a periodical issue or run. Is *All the Year Round* more emotionally dense when it serializes stories by Collins or Dickens? Is there a difference in the affective structure of weeklies, quarterlies, or monthlies? Another area for future research might be to catalogue the emotionality of an author's entire oeuvre. How might the affective structure of *The Woman in White* compare to Collins's *No Name* (1862) or *The Moonstone* (1868)? What might these differences in emotionality reveal about Collins's construction of male and female emotion in his work as a whole? In the preamble to *The Woman in White*, Walter asks the reader to treat every element of the narrative as a connected part of the whole—"the course of one complete series of events."⁸¹ Analyzing Collins's text using a combination of close and distant reading methodology allows scholars to continually readjust their critical lens so that the specific scenes or characters can be understood within the context of the serial novel in its entirety.

Independent Scholar

NOTES

1. Ablow, "Victorian Feeling and the Victorian Novel," 298.
2. Dames, "Wave-Theories and Affective Physiologies," 210. See Bourke's "Sexual Violence, Marital Guidance, and Victorian Bodies." See also Jed Mayer's "Expression of the Emotions in Man and Laboratory Animals" for an analysis of how emotion was used to both justify and condemn animal experimentation in the late nineteenth century. Ann Cvetkovich's *Mixed Feelings* also offers an intriguing exploration of the political implications of the era's discourse of affect on marginalized groups such as women and the working classes.
3. "Popular Novels of the Year," 257; Henry Mansel's scathing critique argues that practically any sensation can be artificially produced by the genre: "There are novels of the warming-pan, and others of the galvanic-battery type—some which gently stimulate a particular feeling, and others which

carry the whole nervous system by steam. There are some which tickle the vanity of the reader, and some which aspire to set his hair on end or his teeth on edge; while others, with or without intention of the writer, are strongly provocative of that sensation in the palate and throat which is a premonitory symptom of nausea." [Mansel], "Sensation Novels," 487. Margaret Oliphant famously noted the power of the sensation novel, particularly *The Woman in White*, to both produce subjective sensations within the reader and convince the reader that these sensations were natural: "The distinguishing characteristic of the book (always excepting Fosco) is the power and delicacy of its sensation incidents; the simple manner in which they are brought out; generally the perfect naturalness of the fact, and always the extremely effective manner in which the critical moment and event strike into the tale, giving it a precision and distinctness which no other expedient could supply so well." [Oliphant], "Sensation Novels," 570.

4. Miller, "Cage aux folles," 112.
5. Ibid., 112, 118.
6. Ablow, "Good Vibrations," 160.
7. Moretti, *Distant Reading*, 48–49.
8. My quantitative approach to *The Woman in White* combines Franco Moretti's "distant reading" methodology with the "surface reading" approach championed by Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, which emphasizes what is evident and perceptible in texts "rather than what we must train ourselves to see *through*." Best and Marcus, "Surface Reading," 9.
9. Collins, *Woman in White*, 41:333.
10. Ibid., 36:218.
11. Bain, *Emotions and the Will*, 4–5.
12. Bourke, "Sexual Violence, Marital Guidance, and Victorian Bodies," 420. Bourke expands the definition of "aethesis" to include not only the senses and sense perception but also the emotions: "In this sense, aesthesiology describes the study of feeling or the history of bodily and emotional reaction to the world" (420). I interpreted many of Collins's descriptions of emotions expressed via the body with this concept in mind.
13. Collins, *Woman in White*, 31:101.
14. In my dataset, I only included emotions that were specifically noted for the reader. This means that I did not include emotions that the reader might infer a character feels based on the context of the scene or the development of the plot. I only included emotions that were specifically described to the reader by a character or narrator so that I could build a comprehensive dataset of the text's emotions. A different reader might have interpreted a description of bodily change that I believed to be a physically manifested emotion as nothing more than a bodily experience. I did my best to interpret each emotion based on the context of the scene in which the emotion was being expressed.

15. Haugtvedt, "Sympathy of Suspense," 151–52.
16. Collins, *Woman in White*, 41:335.
17. *Ibid.*, 41:337–38.
18. *Ibid.*, 57:146.
19. *Ibid.*, 31:95.
20. *Ibid.*, 40:309.
21. *Ibid.*, 57:146.
22. Haugtvedt, "Sympathy of Suspense," 155.
23. *Ibid.*
24. While Haugtvedt and I attribute different levels of suspense to a few different installment numbers, we both (independently) conclude that *The Woman in White* is comprised of four low-suspense conclusions, fourteen total high-suspense conclusions, and twenty-two moderate-suspense conclusions. Haugtvedt, in a note, also emphasizes the moderate-suspense installments that seem to dominate Collins's text: "Collins's text operates at moderate suspense for longer than any other sensation serial I have examined." Haugtvedt, "Sympathy of Suspense," 166.
25. *Ibid.*, 155.
26. The standard deviations for the average emotional density in low-, moderate-, and high-suspense installments are as follows: 4.730 (low), 4.732 (moderate), and 5.502 (high).
27. Haugtvedt, "Sympathy of Suspense," 151.
28. Collins, *Woman in White*, 55:101.
29. "Woman in White," 250.
30. The standard deviations for the average male narrator's emotional density in low-, moderate-, and high-suspense installments are as follows: 2.21 (low), 1.36 (moderate), and 2.22 (high). The standard deviations for the average female narrator's emotional density in low-, moderate-, and high-suspense installments are as follows: 0.00 (low), 1.96 (moderate), and 2.19 (high).
31. This graph does not include installments (three in total) that were narrated by both male and female characters. An example of this would be installment 26, where Eliza Michelson, Hester Pinhorn, and Walter Hartright narrate parts of a single installment. The data in figure 5 reflects only the installments that were narrated by a single male or female character.
32. Collins, *Woman in White*, 57:145.
33. *Ibid.*, 57:146.
34. *Ibid.*, 50:549.
35. For example, when Laura tells Marian that her "anxiety made [her] bold enough to rise and follow [Anne Catherick]," I noted this emotion as being indirectly narrated by Laura during Marian's narrative. Collins, *Woman in White*, 48:503.

36. The standard deviations for average male character emotional density in low-, moderate-, and high-suspense installments are as follows: 1.21 (low), .97 (moderate), and .92 (high). The standard deviations for average female character emotional density in low-, moderate-, and high-suspense installments are as follows: 1.36 (low), 1.88 (moderate), and 2.41 (high).
37. Romanes, "Mental Differences," 12. In his 1852 essay examining the roles of male and female novelists, George Henry Lewes also notes these rigid binaries of sexual difference: "The Masculine mind is characterized by the predominance of the intellect, and the Feminine by the predominance of the emotions." [Lewes], "Lady Novelists," 131-32.
38. Huxley, "Emancipation," 24. Huxley argued that the Darwinian social competition prompted by emancipation for English women would demonstrate women's inferiority to white men. Education would serve only to partially improve the natural, particularly emotional, deficiencies of the female sex (22-23).
39. Millingen, *Passions*, 161.
40. Ablow, "Good Vibrations," 159.
41. Thirty-three percent of Anne Catherick's emotional expressions occur in high-suspense installments, 44 percent occur in moderate-suspense installments, and 11 percent occur in low-suspense installments. Sixty-seven percent of Hestor Pinhorn's emotional expressions occur in high-suspense installments, 33 percent occur in moderate-suspense installments, and none occur in low-suspense installments. Thirty-eight percent of Eliza Michelson's emotional expressions occur in high-suspense installments, 50 percent occur in moderate-suspense installments, and 13 percent occur in low-suspense installments.
42. Collins, *Woman in White*, 38:264.
43. *Ibid.*, 48:505.
44. *Ibid.*, 57:146.
45. *Ibid.*, 68:416.
46. *Ibid.*, 68:417.
47. Miller, "Cage aux folles," 108.
48. *Ibid.*, 110.
49. Ablow, "Good Vibrations," 161.
50. *Ibid.*, 162.
51. Miller, "Cage aux folles," 110.
52. *Ibid.*, 112.
53. Collins, *Woman in White*, 31:101.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*, 31:102.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Ibid.*, 32:117.

59. Ablow, "Good Vibrations," 162; Collins, *Woman in White*, 32:117.
60. Collins, *Woman in White*, 40:313. Laura's sadness would have been noted in my data collection as an emotion observed by Marian that she attributed to Laura in her narrative.
61. The results in figure 9 are dominated primarily by the text's narrators. Controlling the narrative causes these narrators (some more than others) to observe and relay the emotions of other characters to the reader. However, a number of the text's non-narrating characters, such as Laura Fairlie and Sir Percival Glyde, also observe emotions in other characters and describe them, through dialogue, to the narrators of the text. These observed emotions are also included in figure 9.
62. Millingen, *Passions*, 161.
63. Collins, *Woman in White*, 57:147.
64. *Ibid.*, 41:337.
65. Collins to Nugent Robinson, August 28, 1860, in Baker et al., *Public Face*, 1:210.
66. Collins, *Woman in White*, 40:313, 41:333.
67. Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings*, 72; Ablow, "Good Vibrations," 176.
68. Ablow, "Good Vibrations," 173.
69. Collins, *Woman in White*, 70:467.
70. *Ibid.*
71. *Ibid.*
72. *Ibid.*
73. Ablow, "Good Vibrations," 176.
74. Collins, *Woman in White*, 70:468.
75. *Ibid.*
76. *Ibid.*
77. *Ibid.*
78. *Ibid.*, 31:95.
79. *Ibid.*, 70:468.
80. Cohen and Gibbs, "Conversation with Data," 76.
81. Collins, *Woman in White*, 31:95.

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