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"I Am a Living Enigma - And You Want To Know the Right Reading of Me": Gender Anxiety in Wilkie Collins's *The Haunted Hotel* and *The Guilty River*

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**“I Am a Living Enigma – And You Want To Know the Right Reading of Me”:
Gender Anxiety in Wilkie Collins’s *The Haunted Hotel* and *The Guilty River***

By
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A Thesis submitted to the faculty of
Gardner-Webb University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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2014

Approved by:

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Chapter One: Introduction (Part One)

The Victorian Era

Arguably the most well-known age of Great Britain, the Victorian Era stands apart in history through its encompassing quest for self-definition. Named after the renowned Queen Victoria whose rule dominated most of the nineteenth century, this period frequently entails contemporary “connotations of [Victorians being] ‘prudish,’ ‘repressed,’ and ‘old fashioned’” (Landow). Such hasty assumptions often result in stereotypical portrayals and negate the multifaceted nature of Great Britain’s people. While much of this momentous era finds itself noted for its traditionalism and structure, Victorians simultaneously partook in a time of great change and innovation. George P. Landow, author of “Victorians and Victorianism,” translates the Victorians’ structured lifestyle as possessive of a sincere “sense of social responsibility,” a unique blending of “Romantic [elements of] self, emotion, and imagination with Neoclassical ones [of] the public role of art and a corollary responsibility of the artist.” This attitude, one representative of both imagination and duty, while setting it apart from previous generations in uniqueness, frequently proved difficult to maintain in light of the many social, economic, political, and geographical transitions experienced throughout the Victorian Era.

As the century progressed, the national uneasiness only accumulated. Thomas Carlyle, an early writer of the nineteenth century, describes this agitation, observing that “never since the beginning of Time was there...so intensely self-conscious a Society. [Its] whole relations to the Universe and to...fellow-man have become an Inquiry, a Doubt” (qtd. in Damrosch and Dettmar 1049). This “doubt” bespoke more than a

tendency to analyze, as Victorians attempted to acclimate themselves to the rapidly progressive atmosphere of their nation. Such questioning naturally entailed a painful transition, as traditional norms experienced sudden upheaval. As Damrosch and Dettmar point out in “The Victorian Age,” those experiencing the Victorian Era “struggled to dominate the present moment in order to keep an uncertain future at bay” (1052). As the British Empire gained global prominence, Victorians garnered worldwide recognition in their attempts to balance the former ideas of traditionalism with the forthcoming complexities of modernization.

While many events contributed to the uncertainty Great Britain experienced at this time, perhaps none so much affected the course of Victorian life as the onset of the Industrial Revolution. This historical occurrence, beginning in 1760 and lasting as late as the 1840s, conflicted with traditional patterns of British life in its constant production of newer, faster technology that enhanced areas such as communication, transportation, and available resources. While the technology itself proved useful in its ability to increase rates of production and accessibility of goods, it likewise threw Victorians into consternation, as they attempted to shift their lives in accordance with these sudden societal changes. Consequently,

the Victorian Age [is] characterized by rapid change and developments in nearly every sphere - from advances in medical, scientific and technological knowledge to changes in population growth and location. Over time, this rapid transformation deeply affected the country's mood: an age that began with a confidence and optimism leading to economic boom and prosperity eventually gave way to uncertainty and doubt

regarding Britain's place in the world. (“Victorian England: An Introduction”)

Such rapid progress, while creating a national self-awareness of growing power and prosperity, further fostered this sense of “uncertainty” as the old ways of life vanished under the new.

As the “old ways of life” began to transition, little in the Victorians’ existence remained unaffected. Religion, politics, science, class-structuring, issues of gender and sexuality, and many others – all felt the effects of the changing times. As the British Empire’s resources and strength peaked through its industrial output, Victorians were presented with international issues of colonization and new cultures through their growing British Empire, thus highlighting tensions between definitions of “British” and “Other.” Internally, in order to maintain the supply and demand new factories and machineries introduced to Victorian society, a thriving middle-class soon appeared, growing to such a size as to drastically increase the nation’s population and unintentionally create tension between itself and the British aristocracy. In science, conflicts soon grew in relation to the Anglican Church, as Darwin’s theory of evolution, along with other scientific advances, caused consternation among those adhering to conservative Christianity. Issues of gender and sexuality materialized near the end of the century as traditional norms of male/female and heterosexual/homosexual ideology began to shift, creating tension in both the professional and private spheres. As these societal shifts, among many others, left Victorians struggling to comprehend their “sense of social responsibility” (Landow), one medium allowed them not only continuous access to these issues but also the ability to form, evaluate, and express their own views: literature.

Victorian Literary Consumption and the Rise of Sensation Literature

As the Victorian Era began, the Industrial Revolution mechanized an invention which transformed the availability of information, that is, the printing press. The introduction of the steam-powered printing press created a faster, cheaper method of producing literature as opposed to the formerly tedious, often hand-copied productions of previous centuries; consequently, authors could now produce large quantities of literature for a much lower cost. Newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, short fiction, and, eventually, the novel – all such literature led to greater increases in circulation and public consumption, thereby creating a more informed society. David Finklestein, author of “Publishing and the Materiality of the Book,” explains that “the path to efficiency was not always smooth,” as the “start of the century was marked by a period of high costs, high book prices, and extensive government taxation on paper and periodicals in an effort to suppress and control mass access to potentially subversive literature” (16). These “high costs” (Finklestein 16) of book printing ensured only the wealthy elite had access to literature, a condition Kelly J. Mays, author of “The Publishing World,” describes as an “exclusive affair,” one where “books were expensive luxuries produced in small editions designed for the wealthy and discriminating few by a close-knit group of long-established publishers-booksellers who cooperated to keep newcomers out of the trade” (12).

Yet, after the Industrial Revolution, Finklestein attributes the printing press as now allowing the rising middle class access to a broad range of texts, which effected a definite “shift[in] focus for writing and marketing,” one that went from “pleasing patrons and elite opinion-makers to pleasing a mass audience,” an occurrence which “parallel[ed]...this accelerating and enlarging publishing industry” (24). Additional

factors such as publishing formats, serialization and multi-publishing volumes, new laws, advanced technology, and copyrighting further promoted the publishing of literature as both a profitable and popular Victorian occupation (Mays 18-19), all which ultimately combined with “technology and social change...[to] cater to a readership of over 1,500,000 (Finklestein 16). Consequently, as writing and publishing developed into a viable career and popular consumer product, the production of literature led to a voracious appetite among Victorians for literature, especially in the form of fiction.

While various literary forms became increasingly popular in Victorian society, by mid-century the novel soon dominated the literary discourse. In placing the novel in a historical context, Wendell Harris, in his essay “Vision and Form: The English Novel and the Emergence of the Short Story,” aligns “the rise of the novel...with the rise of a more self-critical, self-conscious style of history-writing as well as with the rise of the middle-class” (184). Expanding Harris’s thoughts, Richard Stang, author of *The Theory of the Novel in England: 1850-1870*, further notes that Sir Walter Scott’s work is “most responsible for raising the status of the novel with the new middle class” (7), justifying the prose form in lieu of poetry, with other authors such as William Thackeray, George Eliot, and Charles Dickens firmly establishing its dominance among Victorian literature.

Adapted from magazine and newspaper installments to one, thick volume, the Victorian novel grew to prominence due to its ability to maintain an established social frame while simultaneously challenging the established norms of current reality. By using multiple perspectives and developing unreliable narrators, authors could pose questions directly to readers, asking them to move beyond a character’s socially-accepted reactions and consider the context in which the characters exist. Harris explains that “the worlds of

the great Victorian novels depend on the shaping of each individual by the interaction between the pressures of the socioeconomic world and the choices made by the individual” (185). Many types of Victorian novels appeared throughout the Victorian Era, among them the historical, detective, regional, science fiction, bildungsroman, gothic romance, and sensation novels. All of these novels, while utilizing different frameworks, reveal the effects of a rapidly changing society characteristic of nineteenth-century Great Britain.

As Victorian desire for literature increased, separate genres began to develop, with sensation literature rising in popularity around the 1860s. Kate Flint, in her essay “Sensation,” describes the genre as gathering its name from the “startling and novel sights that were made available to a mass spectatorship,” but that its literary context derives from “referring to the way in which criminal or illicit activity occurs within and disrupts a familiar social context, or the way in which the ordinary is broken into by the horrific or disquieting presence of the supernatural” (221). While sensation literature focused on the Victorian home life, it simultaneously destabilized it through the subsequent revealing of domestic secrets, elements of the supernatural, and criminality. Such “sensations” proved irresistible to the Victorian public, consequently thrusting sensation literature into mass popularity.

Not surprisingly, this genre traces its origins in Anne Radcliffe’s works of the previous century, namely *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), in which she writes of foreign, mysterious settings, brave heroines, and dashing rescuers, all which culminated into the renowned “Gothic” style of writing. Her works garnered her reader’s senses through vivid descriptions and unexpected plot twists; while sensation authors nearly a

generation later adopted Radcliffe's narrative style to create "sensations" in its readers, they rejected foreign settings and grand heroes, deciding instead to adopt their society's accepted social frame and domesticate issues such as crime and illicit sexuality. In noting the relationship between the two genres, Winifred Hughes, in her work "The Sensation Novel," identifies a unique mixture of "Gothic and melodramatic" elements in the sensation genre's ability to "transpose...the everyday domestic scene and deconstruct [it]" (268). She further views the sensation genre to be a "product of Victorian mass culture, which it helped, in turn, to define" (Hughes 267), as the genre caused its readers to reexamine expectations and appearance.

However, many Victorians viewed sensation literature as possessive of corruptive influences. Flint points out that "popular fiction has recurrently been accused of two particular things: that it corrupts the minds and morals of those who consume it, and that, reliant upon formulae, it lacks literary merit" (223). Mays develops such an observation by recounting that Victorian novels already entailed "an unwritten set of rules governing fictional propriety. While these rules obviously forbade the direct representation of anything even vaguely sensual or sexual, they also enforced certain ideas about (among other things) gender, class, and British character" (15). With sensation literature's ability to discuss such a range of issues coupled with its consumer popularity, many began to recognize – with trepidation – the genre's aptitude to affect social opinion.

As such, many concerns were raised in relation to the sensation genre, since, in light of its focus on the Victorian home, its discussions of issues such as gender and class posed especially threatening in its ability to expose and negotiate traditional values¹. Leah Price, author of "Victorian Reading," writes that, as "older concerns about the

relation of the reader to a text gave way to newer ones about the relation of one reader to another,” many felt that “reading...meant to think about difference – between classes, sexes, ages, [and] eras” (38), thus associating “literacy [with] ambivalence” (43). James Louis, in his book *The Victorian Novel*, agrees with Price, noting that literature often caused consternation among both the aristocracy and the middle-class, as this was a time of “high Victorian morality,” one where the “middle classes...w[ere] earnest, and anxious to prove respectability through their moral purpose and self-discipline” (19). In seeking moral improvement, many Victorians viewed sensation literature as posing a threat and discredit to their respectability in society.

The conflict over the respectability in reading sensation literature paralleled another controversy, as readers debated the believability of such texts. Hughes suggests that “sensationalist novelists made the assumption that any society so much obsessed with respectability and appearances as their own was bound to be peopled by impostors of varying degrees” (271). Yet she likewise criticizes sensation authors’ assumptions, claiming such writers “grop[ed] toward the secrets contained by the realist novel, determined to disrupt its celebrated equipoise” in such a way that “plot meant accident rather than logic, coincidence rather than consequence...[leaving] a lingering feeling that nothing important had really been resolved” (265). Walter M. Kendrick, in his article “The Sensationalism of *The Woman in White*,” agrees with Hughes, pointing out that that many sensation works weakly depend on “their relation to other elements in the same novel,” a self-dependency lacking correspondence to “something in the real world,” which left many Victorians hesitant to read sensational works as reality. Despite the genre’s increasing popularity, issues such as questionable morality and tentative

believability left many Victorian readers hesitant to position sensation literature as respectable and trustworthy.

Perfecting the Sensation Genre: Wilkie Collins

In spite of these concerns, sensation fiction continued to grow in popularity and development, resulting in a school of authors, including such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Ellen (Mrs. Henry) Wood, Rhoda Broughton, and William Collins.² While all these authors contributed to the rising renown of the sensation novel, Wilkie Collins – as he was more popularly known – stands apart in his efforts to perfect the sensation form,³ recognized especially for his masterpiece *The Woman in White*, a story exploring the possible abuses of Victorian marriage via the amateur detective. Margaret Oliphant, a prominent contemporary critic of Collins, praises *The Woman in White* in her article “Sensation Novels,” declaring such a work offered “a new beginning in fiction” through its ability to “find its inspiration in crime, and, more or less, make the criminal its hero.”

In criminalizing the Victoria home, Collins led his readers to question the domesticity the British normally translated as secure, for many of his characters had secrets to hide.⁴ As Jenny Bourne Taylor writes in her introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins*, “Collins’s popularity as a compelling storyteller, a ‘master of suspense’ who inaugurated the sensation novel and played a key role in shaping detective fiction has remained undiminished” (1). She further notes that, while many have identified his “exploration of how social identities and relationships are enacted and maintained [and] his fascination with the unstable boundary between the normal and the deviant,” many have failed to “pin down the novels to a fixed set of meanings, preferring to remain as unsettled as the texts themselves in exploring how Collins’s work enacts a

complex interplay of subversion and containment, critique and compromise” (2).

Nowhere has his tendency for such “subversion” (Taylor 2) been analyzed more than within his two most popular novels, *The Woman in White*⁵ (as mentioned previously) and *The Moonstone*.⁶ Each presents amateur detectives who strive to solve crimes in the Victorian home life among hints of the supernatural.

Yet, while the public praised Collins’ novels, many overlooked his shorter works, especially his novellas, criticizing them as poorly developed and less insightful than his strikingly successful novels. Though short stories gained brief popularity through the writings of American author Edgar Allen Poe, the genre fell into the background of literary tastes in Great Britain until the 1880s, revitalized once again by the works of Robert Louis Stevenson. Even with this new interest, Collins still struggled to impress his Victorian audience with his shorter works as he once had with his earlier, longer titles; in a similar manner, modern literary critics continue to appropriate Collins’ short stories and novellas as his lesser works. Many refer to a lack of character development and voice in his shorter works, declaring them to be overall “flat.” A leading commentator on sensation fiction, Lyn Pykett,⁷ in *Writers and their Work: Nineteenth Century Sensation Novel*, points out that many feel Collins’ works “of the 1860s [to be] the peak of his achievement,” thus criticizing his works thereafter to be overshadowed by his “mission...[of examining] contemporary social issues” (60). Many scholars have confirmed this opinion, not only by their critical reception but also by their overall neglect of such works.

Few scholars contest these opinions, yet those who do insist these works to be intentionally written, as the “flatness” only emphasizes Collins’ pointed negotiation of his

characters' voices. John Bowen, in his essay "Collins' Shorter Works," argues against this perspective, insisting the "dominance of the novel" resulted in the perception of shorter fiction as a "marginal form" (37). Yet Bowen asserts this shorter form necessarily contributes to the characters' "uncertainty of identity and fragility of voice" (39), particularly within Collins' own works. Bowen further argues that, despite criticism of "an inability to make his characters sound different from one another, to give them distinct *voices* [emphasis not mine]," Collins's perceived "'flatness' in his narration" is additional evidence of his interest in "the disruptive, terrifying and surprising...[and] what can control and order such forces" (37). Such negotiation would imply a strong literary presence – equal to the novel's – except in a varied form.

Yet, Bowen further views such "a concern with the uncertainty of identity and fragility of voice" as being the "center of the novels and stories themselves, at minimum one of their themes" (37). He stresses this thematic prominence, observing that

in one way, the reasonableness of the narration works to legitimize the story, convincing [readers] of the credibility of the strange things being narrated. But in its lack of individual 'voice' it can also intensify that strangeness, by giving the reader the sense that somehow all narrators are interchangeable, or not fully individual, at risk, perhaps, of blending into or being confused with each other. (Bowen 40)

Bowen's positioning of Collins's works gives such shorter forms a specific intentionality in character development, one where character voices emphasize a lack of individuality rather than the development thereof.

Part One: Defense of the Novella Form

Two of Wilkie Collins's novellas, *The Haunted Hotel* (1878) and *The Guilty River* (1886), have received little to no attention from critics past or present, briefly mentioned as entertaining but rarely viewed as possessing literary excellence. Yet, despite their extensive disregard, I argue that these novellas, as opposed to being "flat" and having underdeveloped characters, gain literary significance through their ability to emphasize marginalized characters. Furthermore, when these novellas are read as texts occurring in the cultural context in which they were created, I maintain that these texts' emphasis on marginalized characters reveals important gender implications, thereby adding to the existing commentary on the shifting gender ideology evident at the beginning of the *Fin de Siècle*. In this context, I argue that these two novellas' short fiction forms blur their characters' voices together in such a way as to create a space through which readers can question traditional mid-Victorian notions of gender.

In order to better explore these issues of identity and gender, I have divided my introduction into two parts. For rest of this chapter, I provide a brief review of the scholarly commentary surrounding the novella form, as justification for utilizing Collins's novellas as opposed to his more popular and longer novels. As mentioned previously, most of Collins' shorter works have been relegated to the outskirts of literary excellence by many contemporary academics, who declare these works to lack development and purpose, particularly in relation to characters. In light of such criticism, I will attempt to demonstrate the novella's significant literary form through its ability to emphasize the marginalized character.

The second half will be developed later in Chapter Two, where I will introduce the relationship between sensation literature and mid-Victorian gender ideology. My conclusion in Chapter Two will serve as a two-fold summary to both Chapters One and Two in the form of a brief character analysis. As both chapters provide an important foundation through which to explore the relationship present between these marginalized characters and the shifting gender ideology present in Great Britain at the beginning of the *Fin de Siècle*, this character analysis will demonstrate both the novella's emphasis on marginalized characters but also their subsequent gendering. This analysis will provide the necessary framework through which I then explore further gender implications through various social discourses.

For now, in refocusing on the vindication of Collins's shorter novellas, I will review contemporary criticisms surrounding the differences between and the literary nature of the novel, short story, and novella, with the intention of demonstrating the novella's specific – and by extension, appropriate – literary purpose.

Contemporary Criticisms on the Novel, the Short Story, and the Novella

With the Victorian novel's overwhelming literary dominance, most contemporary critics tend to focus on the influence of these longer works rather than the impact of shorter fiction. The few who do emphasize short fiction's influence often encounter great difficulty, as providing a specific definition of what constitutes shorter works is, at best, hazy among intellectual circles. In "Notes on the Novella," Graham Good elaborates on this difficulty, noting that, for many critics,

the tendency is to give up the business of formal genre definition for short fiction as hopeless or fruitless, and to deal with individual texts as parts of

the author's whole *oeuvre*, within a general perspective on fiction dominated by the novel...Short fiction is thus bedeviled for theorists by its *adjacency* to the longer form. Other genres can be *opposed* to each other more easily by basic plot-form (comedy *versus* tragedy) or medium of presentation (drama *versus* novel), whereas novel and short fiction are always in some awkward way *next* to each other, overlapping and penetrating [emphasis not mine]. (147)

While the novel's dominance and similarities proved problematic in clearly establishing the separateness of the short fiction genre, additional complications soon arose as critics attempted to solidify the various forms encompassed within the short fiction genre itself. Dennis Denisoff, in his introduction to *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Short Stories* elaborates on this difficulty, noting "many [critics] actually used terms like 'story,' 'short story,' 'tale,' and 'sketch' interchangeably" (15). Noting that these overlaps only confused those attempting to establish their difference, Robert F. Marler, in his essay "From Tale to Short Story," furthers Denisoff's thoughts by emphasizing critics' call for specific parameters within the short fiction form, particularly for the short story genre; he points out that many critics, "while simultaneously retaining the single-effect concept and the necessity of implied significance, were encouraging the modification of the conventional tale...[and the] realistic world of fiction," thus establishing the groundwork for a separate genre.⁸

While contemporary critics struggle in defining shorter fiction, most agree that these literary works still played an important role in Victorian society. In spite of the novel's frequent overshadowing of other literature, many Victorian readers still preferred

a great amount of short fiction. Marler relates much of the “short fiction was preeminently periodical material,” with much of the criteria stemming from American authors like Irving, Poe, and Hawthorne (166). Arguably the most popular of the short fiction form was the short story, which grew in popularity as the Victorian Era progressed, specifically “during the long period from Fielding and Richardson to the emergence of Kipling, Stevenson, and the myriad short story writers of the 1890s” (Harris 187). Denisoff provides several reasons as to the popularity of short stories among Victorian audiences, as they “were often aimed at a different, more specific audience than novels, such as young readers or those partial to a specific set of values”; readers “who wanted a quick fix of excitement or sensationalism would have found that short stories fit the bill more readily than the more discursive novels”; and finally, “people who were not strong readers would have found it more feasible to consume short fiction than a prolix novel” (16-17). On the author’s side, Denisoff explains that short stories were easier for authors to both write and publish, and ultimately, as “such fiction was less lucrative, less respectful, and less of a risk to publishers, it gave authors greater freedom to experiment” (16-17). All of these factors contributed to the surviving popularity of short fiction, especially the short story form.

Attempts to establish the criteria of the short story form often find their origins in American author Edgar Allan Poe. In his popular “Philosophy of Composition,” he writes that the author has the “denouement constantly in view,” thus implying that the elements within a short story emphasize unity over plot sequence and establishing an important difference in relation to the novel. Charles E. May, in his introduction to *The New Short Story Theories*, expands this view by advocating that “short stories are therefore more apt

to embody a timeless theme and are thus less dependent on a social context than novels” (xxvi)⁹. In agreeing with Poe and May, Harris provides an important aspect, for

the short story is indeed the natural vehicle for presentation of the outsider, but also for the moment whose intensity makes it seem outside the ordinary stream of time, or the scene whose significance is outside our ordinary range of experience. ... Whereas in the novel the significance of events is defined only over time, in the short story the significance is, implicitly or explicitly, immediate. (188)

Tim Killick observes, in *British Short Fiction in the Early Nineteenth Century: The Rise of the Tale*, that short story authors could “blend genres” and “experiment with a variety of techniques and approaches” (22), a tendency encouraged and agreed upon by critic Dean Baldwin through “the rise of [Victorian] magazines” (24) in his essay “The Tardy Evolution of the British Short Story.”

Between the genre of the novel and the short story lies the often murky definition of the novella. John Bowen, while viewing the short story synonymously with novellas, still argues that shorter works of fiction are “significant and distinctive texts in their own right,” emphasizing that these works are “characteristically concerned with the disjunctive, inconclusive and oblique...which often takes marginal or outlaw figures as its central concern. It troubles itself, and thus its readers, with remarkable or strange events, with the inexplicable, disorderly and queer” (37). As evidenced by Bowen’s interchangeable use of short story and novella, this form perhaps contain the least amount of research; however, Good concludes¹⁰ that the novella form specifically and significantly differentiates itself from the novel form, particularly in that “the formal

principle of the novella is intensity,” as opposed to the popular novel’s emphasis on “extensity” (Good 162). This “intensity,” in turn, effects character development, to the extent that the novella’s characters are “dramatic or [presentational] of symbolic revelation rather than gradual development” (Good 162). In addition, the novella’s plot “lacks the long chains of consequences, the cumulative interactions of self and the other world, which characterize the novel; instead it often focuses on simple natural or preternatural exigencies” (Good 162).

As seen in this brief defense, the novella form has retained, and still demands, scholarly acknowledgement of its significance as a distinct literary framework. Despite the novella’s close alignment with other short fiction forms, its ability to stress unity and “symbolic revelation” (Good 162), coupled with a focus on “marginal or outlaw figures” (Bowen 37), points to a purpose that, while arguably still carving its niche among these other short forms, definitively separates itself from the novel’s gradual relation of events and extensive character development. In having such a specific purpose, the novella form demands an alternative, yet still scholarly, assessment of its contents as opposed to the evaluative criteria applied to the novel and even the short story. In claiming its own literary standards, the novella demonstrates not only its ability to function as a separate yet authentic literary framework, but also its aptitude of discussing a variety of issues, including the issue of gender.

Chapter Two: Introduction (Part Two)

Development of Contemporary Gender Theory

As literature increasingly available and prominent in Victorian society, many – authors, readers, and critics alike – began to recognize its inherent power to both

represent and negotiate prominent issues of the times. Pykett relates various public anxieties in her book *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century*, specifically anxieties concerning the power of fiction; she further notes how “prominent among these [concerns] were anxieties about the autonomy of the artist, and of the domain of art in a literary world increasingly dominated by markets in which the masses and women played an important part” (56). In response to these concerns, Pykett explains that, as many of the “‘advanced’ critics and novelists saw the autonomous authority of the artists and the development of the novel as a bold, experimental ‘masculine’ art form threatened by supposedly moralistic and aesthetically conservative women readers, and by the demands of a mass market which was coded ‘feminine’” (54-55), the “issue of gender [was] at the centre of the turn-of-the-century discourse on fiction” (54).

Pykett’s observations point to the scholarly discussion of gender studies developed in the 1970s, an investigation into the construction of gender that finds its roots in the feminist movement. Frequently credited with bringing feminist theory to literary attention, Virginia Woolf’s revolutionary work in the 1920s, *A Room of One’s Own*, calls on women to recognize their present identity as a social construct in a world ruled by “male virtues, ... male values, and ... [a] world of men” (609). Such a description Woolf found particularly evident in the poetic verse of Victorian author Coventry Patmore, whose work *Angel in the House* attempted to sketch the ideal relationship between men and women: “Man must be pleased; but him to please / Is woman's pleasure” (ch. 9). This portrayal Woolf viewed as the “repressive ideal of women,” one seemingly positioning women as “passive and powerless, meek, charming, graceful,

sympathetic, self-sacrificing, pious, and above all—pure” (Melani). Utilizing Woolf’s idea of a male-dominated literary world, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar examine such prominent female artists such as Austen, Shelly, Bronte and Eliot, determining that much of their literature finds itself limited by a prevailing patriarchal worldview, equating “male sexuality” with the “essence of literary power” (4). In order for women to “kill the aesthetic ideal,” or masculine definitions of women, defined by Woolf as the previously mentioned “‘angel in the house,’” as well as the “opposite and double, the ‘monster’ in the house, whose Medusa-face also kills female creativity,” Gilbert and Gubar advocate women “understanding the nature and origin of these images” through “self-definition” (17). While Gilbert and Gubar’s work has received much criticism for its generalizations, their work remains an important step in feminist studies attempting to redefine not only women’s literature but their role in society. Consequently, the feminist proposal of society constructing identity provided the leap necessary for the next discussion concerning the nature of gender for both sexes.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this critical discussion has become known as gender studies, or the belief that one’s gender is, as Kate Millet asserts in *Sexual Politics*, a “social construct created by society” (Bressler 224) rather than “finite or fixed properties” of human essence (Bressler 225).¹¹ By examining the role of both men and women through a Cultural Poetics perspective, a view which insists that “literature...should be read in relation to culture, history, society, and other factors” (Bressler 184-185), critics are able to identify factors contributing or complicating social constructs of each gender. As Gisela Bock explains in her article “Women’s History and Gender History,” the issue of gender should not be limited only to “sex in the sense of

sexuality, but must also be seen as the history of the sexes: as gender history... Therefore, the sexes and their relations must be perceived as social, political and cultural entities. They cannot be reduced to factors outside of history, and still less to a single and simple uniform, primal or inherent cause or origin” (28-29). Such an interpretive framework maintains a pluralistic view of history, one where literary texts are not considered isolated entities; rather, these texts are viewed as complete only through a realization of the culture in which they were created. This recognition naturally assumes an integrated, active relationship between literary texts and the simultaneously concurring social discourses of its time period, including that of gender.

As discussed previously, feminist movements and feminist literature provided an important foundation through which gender studies developed, as its focus on the role of women in society revealed important implications regarding the roles of women. Pykett emphasizes the role literature plays in gender construction in her article “Women Writing Women: Nineteenth-Century Representations of Gender and Sexuality” on this time period, noting that both men and women’s writings became critical focal points as to how “women could be represented aesthetically, culturally and politically” (79). In agreeing with Pykett, Hilary M. Schor, in her essay “Gender Politics and Women’s Rights,” insists that, while traditional Victorian perspectives centered women with “the commands of duty and the delights of service” (172), literature frequently demanded of its audience to consider both the “changing roles of women” as well as the “centrality of women’s social condition to the plots, forms and structures” (173) contained within the various works.

However, while many critics have given attention to women and their respective gender role during this time period, a few in recent times have begun to protest the

neglect men have experienced at the hand of feminists. Claiming that much of gender studies have professed only a monolithic view of men, hinged on the singular metaphor of oppressor and dominator, these critics have begun advocating a more complex construct of what constituted the ideal of manhood during the Victorian Era. Yet these studies have experienced difficulty in their own development, as many feminist critics perceive these endeavors as retroactive in general, as the predominant focus of history – and by consequence, literary theories in general – have been male-centered. In spite of this criticism, masculine studies has taken a foothold since the 1990s, as these theorists insist that men’s own role during the *Fin de Siècle* underwent drastic change and thereby entailed various cultural factors effecting such change.

Arguably the most central focal point of masculine studies centers around depiction of manhood during the Victorian Era. As Karen Volland Waters, in her introduction to *The Perfect Gentleman: Masculine Control in Victorian Men’s Fiction*, points out “the transformation of a male stereotype from an essentially aristocratic, inherited privilege to a middle-class, materialistic desire [indicates] the instability of this [monolithic] ideology of masculinity” (3). Her emphasis on the tensions of class focus on the ideal of a gentleman, and how the “paradoxes of accessibility (is the status of a gentleman a condition or a process?) and gender stability (the masculine ideal, in fact, contains characteristics of femininity)” (4) both contribute to destabilizing traditional masculine roles, particularly at the turn of the century.

Others divide their attention of masculine studies between two viewpoints: between men defining themselves against women, and men defining themselves against other men. For instance, Martin A. Danahay, in *Gender at Work in Victorian Culture*:

Literature, Art, and Masculinity, sees feminist studies as “denaturalize[ing] gender categories so that they no longer seemed natural, biological givens,” thereby placing “men” as “context-specific” and “relational category that must be analyzed in combination with the term ‘women’” (3). Danahay delves into the division of labor between the genders, asserting that manual labor, rather than intellectual achievements, entailed associations of “manliness” (3-4). Andrew Dowling agrees with Danahay, asserting that this gendering results due to “hegemonic deviance” (33) or an aversion to what is perceived as effeminate behavior in a manly ideal; however, Dowling argues in *Manliness and the Male Novelist in Victorian Literature* that there exists a universal “gap between the individual man and the idea of male power,” thus creating a space through which one can examine “anxieties about manliness to exist in the lives of men” (3) without comparing them to women. Dowling clearly separates this man-to-man questioning as being separate from queer theory, insisting that “the literal meaning of ‘homophobia’ – ‘fear of the same’ – suggests myriad anxieties that include but extend beyond the sexual” (3).

Mid- and Late-Victorian Gender Ideology

As gender studies rose to popularity, modern scholars found fertile ground for examination in the Victorian Era,¹² and many critics began to examine texts produced in this time for the complexities composing the social constructs of gender. As mentioned previously, discussions of gender had already gained momentum at the beginning of the Victorian Era through writings of authors like Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mills, pioneers of the feminist movement who began voicing concern over the role of women in British society. In particular, Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of*

Women attempted “to persuade women to endeavour to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness” (292). Wollstonecraft’s voice both initiated and foresaw the “Woman Question,” a rising concern of the British woman’s role in a highly structured patriarchal society.

This role became increasingly important, as it questioned what critics David Damrosch and Kevin J.H. Dettmar in their introduction describe as “ideal mid-Victorian woman”; she was “domestic and pure, selflessly motivated by the desire to serve others rather than fulfill her own needs” (1061). Such expectations further perceived ““brain work”” as inappropriate for “motherhood,” and as a consequence “women had few opportunities for higher education or satisfying employment... female workers of all ranks were severely exploited, and prior to the 1870s married women had no legal rights” (Damrosch and Dettmar 1061). Such limitations regulated women primarily in the private, domestic sphere, viewing them as nurturers and examples of propriety for all society.

With such expectations for women, Victorian expectations of men positioned them more in the professional realm, as caretakers for their families. Most gender critics have only recently begun to reexamine times like the Victorian Era for male roles, yet those who have view their roles as distinctly separate from women’s. One such critic, John Tosh, in his article “What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain” relates various expectations for the roles of men during the Victorian Era. He points out that much of masculinity revolved around men “setting up a new household”; possessing “authority within the household”; “[maintaining]...a

household [through] an income from work...free from any suggestion of servility or dependence or patronage”; and, finally, “all-male associations” which ultimately “privileged [men] to the public sphere, while simultaneously reinforcing women’s confinement to household and neighborhood” (67-68). Such a description positions mid-Victorian masculinity as both provider and caretaker of the household.

However, as the century progressed, these expectations for each gender became increasingly blurred. As the Industrial Revolution provided new opportunities for women, both in employment and independence, a rising concern over women’s rights – and consequently, man’s shifting relationship to an advocacy of such rights – caused many to reconsider these traditional gender roles, inquiries culminating at the beginning of the *Fin de Siècle*. Elaine Showalter, in her book *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, points out that, while many sought “strict border controls around the definition of gender” (4), these borders instead began “breaking down” (3) as gender and sexuality increasingly became blurred issues. This bled to all art forms, literature included, for, as Damrosch and Dettmar describe, the turn of the century was a time where “the blurring of gender boundaries” resulted in most artistic endeavors being viewed as possessing a “definitely sexual if often elusive essence” (1888). Karl Marx’s daughter Eleanor aptly describes this transition as one of “the effeminate man and the masculine woman” (qtd. in Damrosch and Dettmar 1888), an apt summary of the sharing of gender characteristics between the sexes. For both women, the “masculine woman” (qtd. in Damrosch and Dettmar 1888) became known as the “New Woman” and the “effeminante man” (qtd. in Damrosch and Dettmar 1888) translated into the male aesthete, or Decadent, both which

reflect Showalter's observation that the "New Women and male aesthetes redefined the meanings of femininity and masculinity" (3).

This upheaval in gender ideology implicated both traditional feminine and masculine roles in Victorian society. In regards to a female role centering on domestic care and a nurturing spirit, the "New Woman" certainly represented a more complex, alternative view of Victorian women. Showalter describes the New Woman as "university-educated and sexually independent, [one who] engendered intense hostility and fear as she seemed to challenge male supremacy in the art, the professions, and the home...an anarchic figure who threatened to turn the world upside down and to be on top in a wild carnival of social and sexual misrule" (38). Such an aversion to traditional Victorian ideology aided in "undermin[ing] the comfortable binary system of Victorian sexuality" (Showalter 19) and further challenged notions regarding women's role in society, as the "New Woman" provided new opportunities for women in society.

Naturally, such changes likewise affected gender ideology surrounding Victorian men, for, as the "Woman Question" soon fell under the shadow of the "New Woman," the male aesthete or Decadent soon appeared, questioning traditional notions of masculinity. In "Aestheticism, Decadence, and the *Fin de Siècle*," Damrosch and Dettmar describe the aesthetes as "ostentatious[ly] worship[ing] of the beautiful in all the arts," and the Decadent as men with "scandalous or effeminate conduct" (1885). Both embodied an intense sexuality, as they often "expressed a frustrated longing for a fleeting taste of forbidden fruits" (Damrosch and Dettmar 1888). With the *Fin de Siècle* fully realizing the New Woman and male aesthete/Decadent, mid-Victorian traditional gender ideology experienced significant shifts.

Gender in Wilkie Collins's Works

While Victorian literature as a whole posed as a forum through which gender could be discussed, the genre of sensation literature quickly developed as a prominent social concern in relation to gender ideology. Much of this concern lay with the perceived susceptibility of the female readership. Pykett points out that many of these sensation works dealt with “various aspects of the Woman Question” (68), a question encompassing ideas surrounding women’s education, legal rights, and traditional roles. Mays writes that many Victorians, concerned over literary content, specifically measured literary “rules” in relation to the “(imagined) sensibilities and susceptibilities of the distinctively English ‘young lady’” (15). However, Louis James expands Pykett’s ideas to both men and women in his work *The Victorian Novel*, declaring that many Victorians reacted strongly against the sensational novel’s “moral ambivalence,” as it frequently revealed “the emotional needs and sexually repressed by [Victorian] conventions” (216).

In refocusing readers’ attention on the genre’s narrative capabilities rather than basis in reality, many critics recognize the genre’s expansive and pointed use of “sensations,” nervous impressions which carried strong Victorian connotations of masculinity and femininity. Mario Ortiz-Robles emphasizes the physicality and intensity produced by these “sensations” (843) in his work “Figure and Affect in Collin”, an aspect D.A. Miller asserts in “Cage Aux Folles: Sensation and Gender in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*” is central to understanding the “natural immediacy of sensation itself” (107). In “‘The Interval of Expectation’: Delay, Delusion, and the Psychology of Suspense in *Armadale*,” Michael Tondre positions these bodily effects as contributive to gendered relationships, especially noticeable between “sensations” and the male

population, observing that “anxieties about delay were codified in increasingly gendered terms, so that signs of irresolution served to demarcate masculine social competence from its dilatory other, the unmanly failure of autonomous action” (588). All of these elements contribute to sensation fiction’s aptness for commentary on gender and sexuality, as Emily Steinlight, in her essay “Why Novels Are Redundant: Sensation Fiction and the Overpopulation of Literature,” attributes the Victorian reader’s inability to “[distinguish] sensational characters] from a multitude of others” to the perpetual “blurring of boundaries” (503). In possessing such a gendered commentary, sensation fiction posed as an ideal forum through which the complexities of Victorian gender ideology could be explored.

Not only have his larger works been examined for their subversive tendencies in the Victorian domestic life, but many contemporary critics have also examined Collins’s larger works for gendering.¹³ For instance, Susan Balée reads Collins’s *Woman in White* as subverting feminine sexual stereotypes in the characters of Laura Fairlie and Marian Holcombe in her article “Wilkie Collins and Surplus Women: The Case of Marian Halcombe,” while Debra Morris explores Collins’s sympathetic, yet destabilizing view toward maternal women through the character of Magdalen Vanstone in her work “Maternal Roles and the Production of Name in Wilkie Collins’s *No Name*.” While scholars often vary in their opinion of Collins’s ultimate adherence or opposition to a patriarchal system, most recognize the subversive nature of many of his female characters.

Critics have likewise discussed the role men play in his works. As John Kucich writes in his article “Collins and Victorian Masculinity,” “Wilkie Collins’s novels abound

in melancholic male protagonists [and] these dispirited heroes are an important key to Collin's conception of gender difference, since they dramatize what he saw as an identity crisis plaguing mid-Victorian men" (125), a view verified by Tamara S. Wagner in her article "'Overpower Vitality': Nostalgia and Men of Sensibility in the Fiction of *Wilkie Collins*." Other critics, such as Richard Nemesvari in his work "The Mark of the Brotherhood: The Foreign Other and Homosexual Panic in *The Woman in White*, trace homosocial bonds between male characters which explores the "threat posed by improper masculinities" that "shape growing fears about the effeminate man." Still some examine masculine archetypes, such as Anthea Trodd in her work "Messages in Bottles and Collins's Seafaring Man," while others interpret Victorian masculinity in terms of imperialistic dominance, such as Lillian Nayder's "Agents of Empire in *The Woman in White*."¹⁴ In all these works, scholars have used Collins's extended texts to examine what constitutes Victorian masculinity and subsequently disrupts it.

Purpose

As both *The Haunted Hotel* and *The Guilty River* fall into the genre of sensation literature, and as I also accept that the novella's form emphasizes "symbolic revelation" (Good 162), I propose, in agreement with Tondre, Mario-Ortiz, and Miller, that these texts contain strong gendered implications due to "sensations," thereby revealing what Steinlight refers to as "blurred boundaries" (503) in relation to its characters. As such, I argue that these narrative elements support Bowen's additional claims that the short fiction form is appropriate in emphasizing characters' "uncertainty of identity and fragility of voice" (37), resulting in voices that are "interchangeable, or not fully individual" (40). In examining the characters' voices in *The Haunted Hotel* and *The*

Guilty River, I will also give emphasis to Bowen's proposal that the "marginal or outlaw figures" (37) compose a "central concern" (40) in short fiction. More specifically, I will argue that these characters symbolize what Eleanor Marx describes as "the masculine woman and the effeminate man" (qtd. in Damrosch and Dettmar 1888), such that traditional mid-Victorian roles prescribed for men and women begin to collapse. The result is the complication and often combining of masculine and feminine characteristics between characters that foreshadow the "New Woman" and "Male Aesthetic/Decadent" of the *Fin de Siècle*.

In order to demonstrate this claim, I now will discuss how each of Collins's novellas' fulfill this literary purpose through their emphasis on central marginalized characters; I will also attempt to briefly demonstrate how this marginality further reveals tensions surrounding traditional Victorian gender ideology. In *The Haunted Hotel*, the novel centers around the exotic yet foreign Countess Naronna, whose personal history to a haunted hotel reveals a deadly secret in her past, while *The Guilty River* focuses on the deaf Lodgers, whose own sordid past complicates his competition with the aristocratic Gerald Roylake for the hand of Cristel Toller, the miller's daughter. By exploring each of these characters' interactions with surrounding normal characters ("normal" aligning with traditional Victorian perspectives), I plan to highlight examples of unconventional relationships in a conventional Victorian setting, thereby legitimizing the suitability of the novella form while simultaneously exposing gender anxiety.

This brief character analysis will then provide a framework through which I examine gender anxiety on a larger cultural scale. Since I accept these novellas as texts functioning within a larger cultural context, I examine three specific social constructs

occurring simultaneously as these novellas around the 1870s in Great Britain. I argue that these constructs are not only identifiable in the novellas, but that they also reveal important tensions surrounding the shift in Victorian gender ideology present at the beginning of the *Fin de Siècle*. While I will examine each of these constructs in greater detail in the proceeding chapters, I maintain that, through a detailed exploration of these two novellas' embedded narratives in Chapter Three, portrayal of science (specifically chemicals) in Chapter Four, and discussion of madness in Chapter Five, two primary, marginalized characters' – the Countess Naroná in *The Haunted Hotel* and the Lodger in *The Guilty River* – blending of voices reveals the shifting gender ideology present at the beginning of the *Fin de Siècle*.

Marginalization in *The Haunted Hotel* and *The Guilty River*

As mentioned previously, both of Collins's novellas present two primarily marginalized characters whose personas present not only dynamics of deviance but also gendered implications within this deviance. The first character, the Countess Naroná, forms a dominant presence in *The Haunted Hotel*, yet she remains on the fringe of Victorian society. For instance, her foreign birth and extensive travels across the world often emphasizes her isolation in relation to the native-born British characters. While the reader never specifically learns Naroná's origins, the unknown narrator informs readers the Naroná's "accent [is] foreign" (90) and she has the "fineness and delicacy of form which oftener seen among women of foreign races than among women of English birth" (90). She further relays that she has "'seen more of the world than most people'" (183), which suggests that Naroná has not settled in one country for a long period at a time.

Yet, rather than claiming her foreign heritage, she refers to herself as “a living enigma” (183), as her extensive travels would seem to have developed a double-consciousness in her mind, one that she points out influence other characters to desire “the right reading” (183) of her. This double-consciousness can be better identified in her negotiation of what constitutes a brilliant imagination. She highlights stereotypical English assumptions surrounding outsiders, by noting that there is a “foolish idea” in the minds of Victorians that assume “natives of the warm climates are imaginative peoples,” one which she declares to be a “[great] mistake...[as in regards to] anything fanciful,...anything spiritual, their minds are deaf and blind by nature” (183). While this would seem to be slight against herself, she counters this claim through her admission that she is “an exception” (184), for, she has “that imagination which is so common among the English and the Germans – so rare among the Italians, the Spaniards, and the rest of them!” (184). In distancing herself from her original identity, Naronna seemingly positions herself as more British than foreign.

But, rather than her “British” imagination validating her place among her Victorian peers, it only serves to further isolate her. She perceives that “the ignorant English mind...is apt to be insolent in the exercise of unrestrained English liberty” (138), thereby solidifying her low opinion of British intelligence. She further describes it as “a disease,” one which has filled her with “sorrow” and “presentiments which make this wicked life of mine one long terror to [her]” (184). While I will deal with notions of fate and madness in greater detail in Chapter Five, I use this description here to demonstrate the complexity surrounding her foreign and native experiences.

Not only does the Countess find herself ostracized through her position as a foreigner, but she also finds herself doubly marginalized through her excessive sexuality. By her own admission, she describes herself as possessing both an “dangerous and attractive character,” a sort of *femme fatale*, who finds herself “subject of all sorts of scandalous reports” due to the “sensation[s she produces] wherever she goes” (223). While the Countess denies such reports, most of the other characters within the novella accept them as true. For example, the English doctor learns from his dining club that “it was doubtful whether the man who accompanied her in her travels (under the name of Baron Rivar, and in the character of her brother) was her brother at all” (99). Upon further inquiries, the doctor hears of her as “an adventuress with a European reputation of the blackest possible colour” whose travels overseas resulted in a “stock of scandal” (99). Her reputation suffers even further with her servants; in her courier Ferarri’s letter to his wife Emily, he confesses that he “ha[s] seen other things besides, which – well! which don’t increase my respect for my lady and the Baron” (117), which echoes Mrs. Rolland’s own admission that she “left [her] place in consequence of what [she] observed” (157). While no evidence presents itself as to the truth of these scandals, her own admission of being a woman who produces “sensations” (223) paints a picture of woman fully aware of her ability to attract the opposite sex.

While her reputation serves as an emphasis on the probability of her excessive sexuality, the imagery and descriptors used in relation to her character only heightens it. For example, as mentioned previously, her personal appearance suggests the embodiment of a *femme fatale*, she possesses a “tone low and firm” (90), “glittering black eyes” (137), and a “gentl[e]” (90) touch; the narrator further uses feline imagery to describe her, seen

in her “cat-like suddenness” (139) and “panther-like suppleness of attitude” (137). In both passive and active moments, Naronna finds herself alluring and seductive, and her foreign birth and scandalous reputation only serve to highlight her passion and sexuality.

All of these characteristics – her foreign origins (or rather, her double consciousness) and her excessive sexuality –all serve to position Naronna as sufficiently marginalized. In addition, these characteristics further connote gendered implications, with hers being predominantly feminine, as her foreign origins only emphasize her seductive capabilities and excessive sexuality. While clearly not falling into the neat category of the “angel” of Victorian society, her present description portrays her more as its opposite, the “monster”; however, such a gender construction begins to collapse upon closer examination of her other qualities, which position her as masculine.

For instance, alongside of her feline imagery, she further entails descriptors of resolution and control when dealing with others, asserting authority even over other male characters. When accused of yet another scandal by Emily Ferrari, she gives “not the faintest expression of confusion or alarm, not even a momentary flutter of interest stirred the deadly stillness of her face. She reposed as quietly, she held the screen as composedly, as ever” (137). Such composure evidences itself in another instance, when she confronts male doctor “resolutely” (90), relying not on her seductive capabilities, but rather on the “silent influence on her face” (91) with the “steeling steadiness of the eyes of an eagle” (91). This new image, not of a feline seductiveness, but with the authority of an eagle, positions her as masculine in her gain of power over others. Not only are others intimidated by her, but they also acknowledge her superior intellect; even other male characters acknowledge her merits, seen in Francis Westwick’s declaring her “an

educated woman” (189). While her upper class position as countess can be attributed to her education, her assertiveness – coupled with her intelligence and presentation as a *femme fatale* – align more appropriately with the Victorian New Woman, as she captures more of essence of the “masculine woman” (qtd. in Damrosch and Dettmar 1888).

While the one can trace the marginalization – and subsequent gendering – of the Countess Narona, another sidelining occurs with the Lodger from *The Guilty River*. As evidenced by his name, or lack thereof, the reader never fully identifies who this man truly is. Instead, he informs the narrator, Gerald Roylake, that he has ““ceased to bear [his] family name”” and, as his ““Christian name...[is] detestably ugly,”” he asks instead to be called ““The Lodger”” (257). His name actually changes throughout the novella, ranging from the “Lodger,” to the “Cur,” then “Conjurer,” and, lastly, the “Penitent” (257, 319, 322, 350). While he adopts all the names but the last (Gerald actually chooses it for him), his lack of identity leaves him isolated from those around him, who frequently wonder who he is.

The Lodger not only finds himself isolated through his refusal to share his name, but he also finds himself marginalized through his interracial heritage. He admits to Gerald that he is “a mixed-breed” (257), revealing that his mother was “born of slave-parents” (261). Even though his parents married legally, the Lodger’s interracial makeup has impressed him with the need to differentiate himself from one like Gerald; while Gerald finds himself somewhat marginalized through his own foreign education, he does not correct the Lodger’s assumption of their difference in heritage, thereby establishing (to an extent) the Lodger’s exclusion from the British society in which Gerald partakes. However, the Lodger seemingly contests this sidelining of his lineage through his unique

preference of desiring the name “Cur”; for, while most would associate negativity with such a label, he declares he sees ““nothing disgraceful”” about such a name, as it refers to ““a dog who represents different breeds”” (319). He even compares such a dog to the ““English [who] are a people who represent different breeds: Saxons, Normans, [and] Danes”” (319). The result, he argues, is a ““great nation”” or ““the cleverest member of the whole dog family”” (319). In his negotiation of marginality through the logical comparison of his mixed breeding to the people of England, his analogy destabilizes existing notions of foreignness and nativity in his exultation of intelligence over blood.

However, though he reconciles his mother’s bloodlines and his subsequent picture of himself as a “mixed breed” (257) through his cleverness, his father’s scandalous reputation – and his close adjacency to them – shakes his firm adherence to intelligence as a singular basis through which to negotiate his societal inclusion. In reading about his patriarchal ancestors, the Lodger discovers their “true characters” in a secret document which relates the many crimes his forebears committed. With “horror” (263), and unable to view himself as separated from such a heritage, he understands himself subject to an inherited “moral contamination” (264). Rather than basing his worth on his own decision making, he instead views his only two chances of not following his forefather’s footsteps in his “physical[.]” and “moral[.]” resemblance to his mother as well as the “happy accidents” of his life (264). Negating his previous foundation of inclusion based on intellectual – and by intellectual, rational – merit, the Lodger’s marginality falls back into place as he struggles to separate his physical lineage with his moral capacities for evil, due to his ancestor’s crimes.

Yet his greatest marginality lies in his disability, as he cannot hear anyone or anything around him. Due to an illness, he learns after he is ““deaf”” (265), a tortuous existence he claims “none but the deaf can understand” (266). As such, he can only communicate to others through “written words” (260), which excludes him from the majority of interaction occurring around him. Not only can he not physically hear those around him, he relates how many began to perceive him be “imbecile as well as deaf” (266) due to his ill-timed social responses and questions. Such an existence causes him to view him as “living the death-in life,” a life style on made bearable once he finds himself “alone” (267). Commenting on such physical marginality, Kate Flint, in her article “Disability and Difference,” explains that “those who exhibit their deformed, maimed or impaired bodies simultaneously provoke revulsion and compassion, and seem to inhabit a quite different sphere from those who encounter them in the street” (153).

Similar to Naron’s marginality entailing gender implications, the Lodger likewise reveals gendering due to his marginality. In focusing on the Lodger’s disability, Flint goes on to point out that most characters experiencing “deformities...often have a feminizing effect, making them especially sensitive, attuned to the affective aspects of culture, imaginatively sympathetic toward women – and yet also, at times, peevish; adopting a selfish whine when they feel that they are somehow frustrated in occupying what ought, by gender, to have been their ‘natural’ role” (155). While the Lodger does not portray an especially sympathetic view of women, interpreting them instead as “repellant” (267), his sensitivity, evidence by his “mortifications” (266) at his struggle in communicating with others and his “ready penetration” (256), coupled with a narcissism

seen in his blatant confession that he “became...important to [himself]” (268), all fuse together to present a foreshadowing of the effeminate man.

Just as Naroná’s marginalization closely resembled the New Woman, so does the Lodger’s persona resemble the male aesthete, or Decadent. As mentioned previously, his disability, coupled with his sensitivity and self-obsession, all serve as feminizing characteristics; such a portrayal gains additional momentum through Cristel’s assertion that the Lodger is ““very vain”” (281) and Gerald’s continuous appraisal of him as beautiful. For instance, Gerald declares the Lodger ““handsome,”” having “the most beautiful face” (254) and “movements [that were] graceful and easy” (255), with “eyes...dark [and] large” containing a “sinister passion” (238). Such a description almost aligns him with Naroná as a *femme fatale* in possessing such attractive physical features that clearly communicate a certain allurements.

However, the Lodger retains his some of his masculinity in spite of his feminizing characteristics. His intelligence, though questionable in relation to his heritage, finds masculine validation in his former career, as he possess both scientific and medical knowledge (292), and asserts himself as a rival against Gerald in pursuit of Cristel’s hand. For instance, the Lodger’s authority can be seen in the “mastery of his look,” and the determination which evidenced as an “assertion of [Gerald’s] will against his” (258). Such a combining of masculinity and femininity leaves the Lodger likewise portraying the male aesthete or Decadent.

As evidenced above, the Countess Naroná and the Lodger fully exemplify the novella’s suitability in discussing the marginalized character. Through its emphasis on such characters, readers are able to examine in detail what constitutes “outsiderness” in

relation to Victorian society. In addition, readers are able to identify gender implications in such regulating, such as those resembling the shifting ideology found at the beginning of the *Fin de Siècle*. Using the above analysis as a framework, I will discuss three separate social discourses through which I will attempt to further tease out this overlapping of gender spheres among these marginalized characters.

Chapter Three: Use of Narratives

Embedded Narratives in Sensation Fiction

As I discussed earlier in my introduction, sensation literature gathered its respective name and widespread reputation predominantly for its productions of “sensations” in its readers, with “sensations” being broadly defined through the criminalization of the Victorian home; however, the genre further encompassed a variety of narrative techniques through which to capture and enthrall Victorian audiences. Arguably one of the most defining elements of Victorian sensation literature would be the use of embedded narratives, or textual inserts, whole or fragmented, through which the plot could continue to be developed. Sensation authors would frequently utilize narratives easily identifiable in day-to-day Victorian life, such as letters, journal entries, telegrams, diary entries, and many others, consequently creating a sense of relatability with readers through its establishment of realism.

Such texts, while present in many Victorian literary genres, proved especially useful in sensation fiction, as they could be used to both validate and complicate textual evidence, particularly in relation to solving mysteries. Saverio Tomaiuolo explains in his article “Lady Audley’s Secrets and the Doom of Truth” that a sensational, “entangled plot was achieved through documents which denied or confirmed the actions of people

involved” (73) and these documents included “letters, diaries, and other heterogeneous textual fragments” (73). The purpose of this inclusion Tomaiuolo states in the following:

Sensation novelists adopted the same textual strategies used by realistic writers to unveil a social, cultural and sexual disorder that led to an implosion of the premises of Victorian realism *from within*. Since reality in sensation fiction cannot be approached according to a morally stable point of view, the usually ‘precarious’ narrating voice of many novels does nothing but reorder the documents included in the text to give sense to the story. This textual strategy gives a first-rate value to narrative fragments such as scraps of paper, excerpts of legal documents and letters, through which (amateur or professional) detectives and readers try to solve a specific mystery. (75)

These texts, scattered and frequently fragmented, surprisingly contributed to the story’s unity, though not always providing a perfect resolution.

This sense of realism emphasized itself in various ways in relation to Victorian life, particularly as the methods and technology of communication were rapidly changing due to the Industrial Revolution. Mariaconcetta Constantini, author of “Strategies of Letter Manipulation in Wilkie Collins,” argues that the sensation genre’s use of narratives caused “Victorians...to rethink the modalities and scopes of information exchanges” and “engendered a public and individual crisis of communication[.]” (106). More specifically, embedded narratives, including letters, were often

meant [by authors] to suggest the communicative impasse of a society that was undergoing a traumatic process of modernization...[as] the distress

caused by the constant shifting of their points of reference (social, economic, ethical, aesthetic, and metaphysical ones) led many writers to view their condition in terms of communicative failure or distortion. This critical perception accounts for the recurrence of blackmail, forgery, purloined or unreceived messages in Victorian texts, in which they epitomize the untenable position of subjects caught between compulsion and denial, between a drive to connect and the threat of self-disintegration posed by the rapid pace of progress. (107)

While many struggled with the “rapid pace of progress” (Constantini 107) and translated these fears through the possible dissonance of communication, others emphasized their uncertainty through the permanence suggested by these texts. Paul Lewis, in studying the correspondence between Collins and Dickens, notes in his article “My Dear Wilkie: The Letters from Dickens to Collins,” that, as Victorians had “ambiguous feelings” about letters, they “valued the frequent, rapid, and reliable postal service...but they feared the permanent testament which letters made of their intentions, views, and wishes.”

Ultimately, embedded narratives proved unstable, consequently collapsing realistic parameters as they posed alternative interpretational frameworks through which to question the nature of Victorian communications.

In turn, such instability offered itself easily accessible to commentary surrounding gender ideology. Similar to Kendrick’s suspicion of the sensation genre in general, Pamela Perkins and Mary Donaghy point out in their essay “A Man's Resolution: Narrative Strategies in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*” that, while the narratives may find their realistic counterparts in Victorian society, authors and characters alike are

often found “manipulating the narrative for [their] own ends.” As sensation fiction generally relies on mystery and secrets, Perkins and Donaghy see this inherent “ambiguity” as further resulting in “some of the reader’s reluctance to accept any of the narratives...as entirely honest.” In focusing on Collins’s *The Woman in White*, Perkins and Donaghy then emphasize manipulation in order to highlight gender tensions between characters, an identification they insist is important for readers to recognize due to its influential nature. Pauline Nestor, author of “New Opportunities for Self-Reflection and Self-Fashioning: Women, Letters, and the Novel in mid-Victorian England,” writes how narratives such as letters and novels provide important “possibility[ies] for greater interior reflection, especially amongst those who were arguably best placed to avail themselves of these new possibilities, the literate middle-classes” (19-20). She also writes how particularly the letter form functions not only as a place “to shape or create a self” but also as “a gendered site” (20). As Nestor highlights the theoretical presence and absence of persons in letter-writing as well as the self-awareness given by the novel, her emphasis points to the power of embedded narratives to influence readers, especially in relation to gender ideology.

While much study has been conducted in the use of embedded narratives in longer fiction, such as the novel, a few scholars have begun investigating its presence in short fiction. Audrey Murfin, in her article “Victorian Nights' Entertainments: Elizabeth Gaskell and Wilkie Collins Develop the British Story Sequence,” argues that many authors drew inspiration from the famed *Arabian Nights* as alternative forms from the “linear and self-contained conceptions of plot that inform realist novels of the nineteenth century” (2). Instead, she notes that in many shorter fiction forms, including Collins’,

there developed an “alternative, but still cohesive, model for fiction,” and this model “inspired story collections characterized by a reliance on embedded stories within a frame narrative, [and such a form] exposes a tension between the part and the whole, between texts that are seen to be fragmentary and the narratives that contain them” (2). Often the multiple embedded narratives contained within these shorter works functioned as stories within the story, allowing greater narrative capabilities in the smaller literary frameworks.

In this chapter, I adopt Murfin’s emphasis on the importance of embedded narratives in short sensation fiction as functioning as an important narrative element within the genre, as well as her suggestion that these embedded narratives expose a “tension between the part and the whole” (2) to the extent that they provide commentary in their own right, not simply strict resolutions. I likewise agree with Perkins and Donaghy in the gendered tensions and ambiguity surrounding the multiple narratives within the sensation genre. In this chapter, I will focus on two pivotal narratives in my novellas, the Countess Narona’s play in *The Haunted Hotel* and the Lodger’s portfolio in *The Guilty River*, where I will argue that both texts highlight gender anxiety, specifically gender anxiety at the beginning of the *Fin de Siècle*. In defense of this argument, I will first establish how writing functions as an important discourse in the mid-Victorian creation of gender ideological spheres for both men and women. I will then demonstrate how these characters negotiate these respective spheres through their own narratives.

Writing (Embedded Narratives) and Gender

As the embedded narratives within sensation fiction correspond to real-life documents found in Victorian society, I maintain that these narratives gain literary

significance through their established basis in reality. By accepting them in this manner, I further assert that these narratives possess a literary significance in their own right, and, as such, they likewise entail gendered implications. While in Chapter Two, I examined the broader relationship existing between literature and gender, I will focus my discussion here on the gender anxieties surrounding both the narratives and the occupational roles assumed in their authorship. As the Countess Naron and the Lodger each author an embedded narrative, a careful analysis of their part in writing these texts, coupled with an examination of the texts themselves, further reveal shifts in Victorian gender ideology. Before discussing these narratives and their respective authors, I will first discuss the gender implications surrounding the act of writing during the mid-Victorian time.

Showalter, in her book *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing*, traces women's writings throughout the nineteenth century, contending that Victorian women's struggling in writing stemmed partially from "culture-bound stereotypes of femininity" which created oppositions of "biological and aesthetic creativity" (6-7), limitations imposed not only by Victorian culture but also by themselves. In discussing these limitations, Virginia Woolf, in her famous work *A Room of One's Own*, points to a lack of cultural opportunities for female writers, insisting that a "woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (29). Agreeing with Woolf, Judith Johnston and Hilary Fraser, in their essay "The Professionalization of Women's Writing: Extending the Canon," argue that many women further remained anonymous or posed as amateurs in order to "negotiate gendered discursive boundaries" (231).

In “Women’s Writing and the Domestic Sphere,” Elizabeth Langland contends that, despite cultural and economic obstacles, many middle-class women “enjoyed increasing access to the conditions and means supporting writing and publication” (119), thus creating a small niche for female writers. At the turn of the century, however, this niche began to evolve, for Adrienne Gavin and Carolyn W. Olton detail in their article “She Would Write...In Invisible Ink’: An Introduction” how women began writing themselves out of common Victorian stereotypes in that they “rewrote and contested images of womanhood – angel in the house, spinster, harpy – that were culturally presented to them in literature, the press, and within their own homes” (1). Gavin and Olton explain further that female authors accomplished this rewriting through either “engag[ing] with this debate on feminine social roles” or “revers[ing] the terms of the debate by rewriting male plot lines in their novels and stories” (1).

Not only did writing prove cataclysmic in redefining female gender, but it also expanded prevailing notions of traditional masculinity. Brenda Ayres, in her work “Under the Hill: The ‘Man Question’ in the New Woman Novels of Marie Corelli, Jessie Fothergill, and Mary Linskill,” while noting the significance of women’s writings in breaking stereotypical labels, further argues that women’s writings influenced ideas of a “new man,” one created out of response to this new literature. In her work, Ayres notes the problematic representation of such a “new man,” as women “who wanted love, romance, and family, as well as equality and independence” expressed multiple opinions as to what constituted such an ideal, including some who expected men to “[allow women] to make their own choices” while others simply considered men ultimately “inferior” to women (181). In emphasizing the importance of male authorship, Robbie

Gray, in his article “Self-Made Men, Self-Narrated Lives: Male Autobiographical Writing and the Victorian Middle Class,” notes that, while male autobiographies contributed “cultural value in the shape of exemplary lives,” these writings further created feelings of “cultural anxiety and cultural debate” (Gray 291), an anxiety possibly reflective of what Waters attempted to define earlier in Chapter Two as the ideal “gentleman” (Waters 4). Such a construction Waters attributes to various systems at work in Victorian society, arguing that such an image resulted due to patriarchal influence and gender instability.

Embedded Narratives in *The Haunted Hotel*

As the occupation of writing, along with the actual literature itself, both entailed and exposed gendering, examining the embedded narratives in conjunction with their authors in Collins’s novellas reveals similar tensions. In *The Haunted Hotel*, Collins’ provides multiple embedded narratives, but arguably the most prominent is the Countess Narona’s play script, which she composes near the end of the novella. The introduction of such a narrative is not wholly unsurprising since, while being a popular novelist, Collins gained further public recognition through his own plays.¹⁵ In Simon Cooke’s “Action and Attitude: Wilkie Collins and the Language of Melodramatic Gesture,” he emphasizes Collins close proximity to playwriting, noting that “an obvious influence, and one which continued throughout [Collins’s] life, was his exposure to contemporary plays and acting”; such exposure leads to Cook’s conclusion that “Collins’s prose is clearly influenced by the melodramatic stage.” As noted by Jim Davis in his article “Collins and the Theatre,” Collins, unlike many authors who struggled in writing across genres, “was aware of the different demands posed by the novel and the drama” (179); however, Davis

points out Collins had difficulty discussing serious issues in his play such as “masculinity, repression, the social situation of women and insanity, which are seriously examined in the novels, are continually subsumed into plot devices or simplified in characterization in the plays” (178). Considering his struggle in representing gender relations adequately in script form, one finds Collins’s inclusion of a play script in this novella especially intriguing when examining for gender anxiety.

This play script can be found at the end of *The Haunted Hotel*, and provides an important frame narrative to the rest of the plot; however, it further creates a space for readers to examine the feminine role in relation to professional writing. When the Montbary family travels to Italy to visit the renovated hotel, Countess Narona follows them, deciding to meet with the youngest brother and theatre manager, Francis Westwick, in order to discuss an employment proposition: she desires to write him a play. Such an ambition is not entirely unusual, for, as mentioned previously by Langland, female writers had begun to carve a small niche through which they could begin writing professionally, one where “writing . . . presented itself as one of the very few ways to earn money for a respectable woman” (119). Though Narona’s current bereavement of her brother has left her in “want [of] money” (182), her status as a woman still deemed her ambition to write as acceptable. As such, Narona’s decision to seek income from a profession that was becoming more acceptable for women to participate in would seem to position her as traditionally feminine.

However, Narona’s writing ambition falls into an overwhelmingly male-dominated domain, one where most women would be hired as actresses rather than script writers. Katherine Newey, author of “Women and the Theatre,” examines women’s

relation to play scripting through J.S. Bratton's study, one where two women's "attempts to construct and control their careers attracted overt contempt and covert erasure from history" (192). In her study, Bratton follows the lives of Jane Scott, an actress-manager, and Elizabeth Macauley, an actress-writer, who, in both cases, "achieved what they did without the benefit of sexuality...[and, as a result] they were not worthwhile objects of the male gaze" (qtd. in Newey 192). In discussing this tension between "respectability and sexuality" (192), Newey emphasizes the importance surrounding the portrayal of a female playwright, for, while the occupation of acting could be viable and acceptable for women, their inclusion through scripting is not only unusual but also penetrative of a singularly masculine livelihood.

As mentioned previously, employment in acting compromised female integrity through objectivity, as most women who participated in the theatre were dependent upon their sexuality – and consequent desirability as objects of the male gaze – in order to obtain the role of actress; however, through writing the scripts, Naron negotiates this overwhelmingly masculine sphere to include her, not objectively, but based on her intellectual merits. Such an assertion of inclusion based on intellectuality rather than sexuality further negotiates Naron's femininity, as such a basis reflects a masculine authority. Newey again emphasizes this separateness of these two professions (script writing and acting), for, as "the actress was the most visible example of female transgression of the personal of the 'proper lady' in the nineteenth-century theatre, it was the work of manager or actress manager where women's physical, intellectual and aesthetic independence was most clearly [visible]" (191). Rather than approaching Francis for a position as an actress, especially as he was currently attempting to secure

the “most popular dancer in Italy” (175), she instead appeals to his need for a new idea for a “ghost-drama” (175), an appeal which negotiates her femininity through its masculine assertion.

Such independence can be further found in her references and admissions of qualifications, yet a distinction in these qualifications begins to develop. As discussed previously in Chapter Two, Narona’s travels have allowed her to have seen “more of the world than most people,” thereby emphasizing her foreign travels as well as her double consciousness in terms of identity. Rather than this double consciousness contributing to her ambitions, however, it only seems to detract from them. For instance, as Narona perceives her foreign identity responsible for her lack of imagination, and her English associations enhancing her talents to the point of madness, neither seems contributive to her desire to write, for each portrays a negative aspect.

Instead, her character appears to advocate readers placing her nationality in the background to her gender, in order to focus on her skills of production rather than her persona. For example, though she gives her brother, the Baron Rivar, credit for the idea, as he observes she has talent for “the point and contrast of a good stage dialogue,” an observation which “put[s] it into her head” (182) to seek such an occupation, she ultimately uses her own self-assessment as the final verification, rather than a masculine one. Narona relates that she has not only literally traveled further than most playwrights, but her life experience has allowed her to have “strange adventures” and hear “remarkable stories,” both which she has “observed” and “remembered” (183). She even goes so far as to insinuate that her understanding of human nature supersedes that of most individuals, with an additional stress of “playwrights included” (183). Her

confidence further demonstrates itself in her request for any subject content, declaring that if Francis “[has] got a subject in [his] head, give it to me. [She] will answer for the characters and the dialogue” (185). In emphasizing her experience – as well as her ability to wield the technical aspects of script writing – over her nationality, she ultimately positions herself equal, if not greater, than any playwright currently writing, men included.

Her emphasis on herself as equal to or superior in talent than most playwrights does not appear unintentional, as Naroná not only emphasizes herself in her qualifications, but also her awareness of the discrimination she will face in asserting herself in this manner. For example, she first asks Francis a few questions to establish the terms of her employment, such as any employee, male or female, would inquire of a future employer. She inquires if Francis “want[s] a new play” and will he “pay, if it’s a good one,” to which he replies that he “always want[s] a new play – provided it’s a good one” and is willing to “pay liberally – in [his] own interests” (182). After establishing his need for a play script, she then asks, “If [*she*] write[s] the play, will [he] read it? [Emphasis not mine]” (182). While this last question could be the result of the dislike Francis’s family has for Naroná, it can also be seen as pointed commentary on Naroná’s awareness of the difficulty women have in obtaining employment as a playwright, one which exposes the gendering – and Naroná’s penetration thereof – of such a masculine form of writing.

Such an interpretation gains further insight through the reception Naroná’s request for employment and subsequent writing has from the males of the Montbarry family (Francis and his brothers). For instance, Francis appears in stark contrast to Naroná’s

feminine marginality in his management of a theatre. In representing the status quo, Francis clearly embodies masculine authority as a “successful manager of a theatre” (175). He navigates the theatrical world with ease and experience, as he is “[in]capable of being impressed with favorable opinions of his fellow-creatures” (175) and used to “speak[ing] roughly to women who were distasteful to him” due to “innumerable rehearsals with actresses who had sorely tried his temper” (179). He further demonstrates intimate knowledge of script writing, as he informs Naronia that he knows “the public taste in England better than [she],” and did not wish her to “waste...time...if [she] has not chosen [her] subject wisely” (184). As “the prosperity of his theatre was his one serious object in life” (185), Francis finds himself well established as a professional and successful businessman.

When Naronia presents her request to write him a play, Francis’s reactions depict a mixed view of female authorship in the theatrical realm. Francis at once comments on her confidence, noting she possesses a “bold way of speaking for a beginner” as well as an “irresistible earnestness” (185). Rather than viewing her confidence as admirable, however, Francis instead is only “amused by her ignorant belief in herself,” and, “speak[i]ng in jest” (185), declaring he may allow her “sublime confidence” to compete with male playwrights such as “Shakespeare” by writing a “drama with a ghost in it” (185). He even wonders if her desire to write a play might be the result of too much “maraschino punch” (184), a comment emphasizing his incredulity at female playwrighting. Though Francis does eventually offer Naronia a job writing for him, he does not do so based on her skills; instead, he feels her play might offer an “explanation of what had happened to his brother, and sister, and himself. Or failing to do this, she might

accidentally reveal some event in her own experience which, acting as a hint to a competent dramatist, might prove to be the making of a play” (185). Seeing her potential as a writer only useful in relating material that could be useful to him personally, or perhaps inspiration to a “competent dramatist” (185), presumably male, Francis’s reception regulates Naroná’s abilities as private and feminine.

Her abilities as a playwright find further questioning from Francis’s brothers. Francis’s brother, the new Lord Montbarry, views Naroná’s ambitions as ““a piece of theatrical exaggeration, amusing enough in itself, but unworthy of a moment’s serious attention”” (196). Though he reads the entire script, in order to ““do the Countess justice”” (237), this seems a more patronizing act than a professional review, as he still concludes she is a ““crazy [creature]”” (235) and her writing is but ““melodramatic horrors”” (236) and ““sheer delirium”” (237). Francis’s other brother Henry further appropriates her writing as “monstrous” (229) and the product of an “overwrought brain” (234).

However, despite such a resistive masculine reception of her writing, Naroná *does* write a play, and, through it, is able to take control of her own character portrayal. In her retelling of events she is able to provide a sympathetic portrayal of events towards herself and her motives for committing murder. In viewing female narratives, such as Naroná’s play, in a different light, Alison Milbank, author of “Breaking and Entering: Wilkie Collins’s Sensation Fiction, focuses on Collins’s use of female characters and his tendency to construct what she calls “the ‘houses’ of narratives,” or narratives that “Collins’s errant (and thus homeless) heroines construct for themselves against the ravages of the providential sea are removed out of their grasp, so that their free will is

gradually lost, and they end their careers as victims of a fate that...equates...with patriarchy.” Milbanks goes on to describe that

all action by women outside the home, by implication, guilty, since it involves them in ‘plots.’... Yet because it is always the unfair operation of the patriarchal law that exposes women to the homelessness and lack of identity that forces them out into the public realm, they are at once guilty and innocent, guilty of action but guiltless of intention to act....Their own plots usually fail, and marriage is brought in as a consolation prize.

Yet, Naroná’s script does not appear, as Milbank would suggest, “guiltless of intention to act,” nor is “marriage...brought in as a consolation prize”; instead, through Naroná’s intentionally in writing, she is able to represent herself as she wishes not only to a male audience but also in a male-dominated genre.

While her ability to navigate her own portrayal equates a masculine control, the possibility of the play actually *resembling* real life events problematizes this control. For, if the play relates actual events, the script could be seen as confessional, a type of writing primarily private, and thereby feminized. Henry raises such a question in his wondering if the play could be the “offspring of the Countess’s morbid imagination? or had she, in this case also, deluded herself with the idea that she was inventing when she was really writing under the influence of her own guilty remembrances of the past?” (229). Though she asserts at the beginning of the play that it is “entirely the work of my own invention” and she has “not stolen one of my ideas from the Modern French Drama” (221), her writings center on events related to the Montbarry family that resemble actual occurrences. While Henry concludes the script to be “her memory” (237), Stephen, unwilling to accept that

Narona's "rubbish" as true, decides that he "believe[s] in nothing, nothing, nothing!" (236-238). In fact, Henry does indeed find Narona's script to be true, which would appear to render it once again as feminine; however, he never reveals this "last link in the chain of discovery" to anyone, instead carrying the "terrible secret with him to the grave" (239). With such male anxiety over her script, Narona's play posed enough threat to have the male world literally burn it, in order to keep its potential danger to masculinity at bay.

While Narona's script could be seen as participating in the larger context of the sensation plot line of *The Haunted Hotel*, its significance as a literary text further adds to the gender commentary within the novella. Not only does the narrative itself provoke associations of masculinity, seen in the predominantly male-oriented realm of script writing, but its authorship exposes conflicting tensions surrounding its creation, as Narona's assertiveness complicates her position as a female playwright. Through her masculine act of attempting to control and represent her own character, Narona's authorial experience closely aligns her with the image of the New Woman.

Embedded Narratives in *The Guilty River*

Collins' introduces another important narrative in *The Guilty River*, this time from a male author. This document possesses many names in the novella, including "confession" (260), "memoir" (260) and "portfolio" (259), all which imply an autobiographical form, as it relates the personal history of the mysterious Lodger. For purposes of this paper and for clarification, I will refer to it by its first introductory name, a portfolio. When Gerald Roylake first meets the Lodger, heated words ensue over the attention of the miller's daughter, Cristel Toller. The Lodger then produces a portfolio, which he then gives to Gerald. While the Countess Narona's writings revealed gendered

tension by the intrusion of a female author in a male-dominated writing sphere, the Lodger's works effect the opposite, as the personal, private nature of his male authorship demonstrate signs of femininity.

Studies have recently begun investigating the gendering inherent in male authorship. In his article "Professionalism, Authority, and the Late-Victorian Man of Letters: A View From the Macmillan Archive," John L. Kijinski describes the male author of letters as "a professional writer who attempted to earn a living by selling 'serious' writing to what he considered a general, middle-class readership" (229). Attributes such as "respectability," "authority", and "the highest professional qualifications" were all requirements when choosing whose letters would be included in the archive (Kijinski 232). Also, those collecting such letters for the archive felt "no need to derive authority for their critical pronouncements from a formal community of scholars with specialist training. Instead, the primary site of authority, as they saw it, was the individual professional, writing as a public man of letters, in direct, essential contact with a public man of letters of the nation's past" (Kijinski 237). Such description would seemingly render the masculine role of male authorship two-fold: such authorship is meant for the public reception, and, by implication, most likely published for monetary gain.

However, in studying the art of professional letter-writing, Trev Lynn Broughton, in his introduction to *Men of Letters, Writing Lives: Masculinity and Literary Auto/Biography in the Late Victorian Period*, examines masculine autobiographical narratives and raises important questions as to the gendered nature of the broader category of life-writing. He argues that, as "life-writing has been contested

terrain, ... debates over the nature and value of autobiography and biography as recognizable genres were of a piece with struggles over the construction of gender, class, and nationality – which is no more than to say that identities and representations are theoretically inseparable” (Broughton 11). Broughton raises the issues of gendering in autobiographical works and the “posthumous reputation” (10), asking if the male author “find[s] in the possibility of biography, of Life after death, a saving grace – a glimmer of hope on an arid secular horizon? Or is its likelihood an irritating reminder of [the author’s] own foibles, compromising both to self-esteem and manly autonomy?” (10). While Broughton focuses on the homosexual threads in the autobiographical narrative, he concludes that such “documents bore witness to a luxury of self-consciousness, an extravagance of inner life. In however diluted and censored a form, such evidence posed a direct affront to the late Victorian ideology of manly reserve” (19). Broughton’s emphasis on the lack of “manly reserve” (19) in autobiographical writings presents masculine authority in the published work but not in the personal content. While Kijinski’s observations speak as to the masculine assertion in publishing autobiographical writings, Broughton’s observations warns of the feminizing effects that the personal, private nature of such writings entail.

Both of these gendered implications can be identified within the Lodger’s portfolio. One of the first observations noticeable would be the Lodger’s audience: he guards his work carefully, only allowing Gerald permission to read his work. Angered by Gerald’s attentions to Cristel, the Lodger gives him his beloved “portfolio” (257) and urges Gerald to “look below the surface” (257), yet to “let no eyes but [his] see” (259). This privacy gains even more emphasis from the miller’s (Cristel’s father) desire

to locate and read the Lodger's portfolio, but is not given permission. For instance, the miller notes how the Lodger "set[s] a deal of store by his writings" (279) and asks Gerald to inform him of their "their value" (279), for he insists that "'tis an act of a fool to be fumbling over writings, when there's nothing in them that's not well-known to himself already – unless indeed they are worth money" (280). Here the miller echoes both Kijinski and Broughton's points in affirming the tensions existing between male authorship, masculine reserve, and professional publishing. Though the miller's motives stem from a misplaced notion of the portfolio's contents, the Lodger's subsequent refusal to allow the miller viewing privileges only heightens the content's desirable nature, which in turn contrasts even more to the limited audience the Lodger feels his works to be suitable for.

Not only is the Lodger's portfolio limited in readership, but its contents are highly personal, thereby negotiating the Lodger's masculine reserve. He refers to his writings as a "horrid sight" (259), labeling it the "Memoirs of a Miserable Man" (260); even Gerald refers to it as a "confession" (260). In allowing Gerald to read his portfolio, the Lodger acknowledges the lack of reserve he is expressing, calling it "deliberate act of self-betrayal" (260), and he equates such readings with trust; for, Cristel points out to Gerald his "wound[ing]" (281) manners towards the Lodger, particularly as the Lodger had "given [Gerald] his writings to read" (281). Gerald's mannerisms appear to gain power over the Lodger due to Gerald's now-intimate knowledge of the author himself, thus striking a double blow when Gerald treats him as a "stranger" (281). As with Naron, the Lodger's act of writing in and of itself does not necessarily negotiate his masculinity, even with his inclusion of various other narratives within his portfolio; one could even

argue that, like Narona, the Lodger is able to construct his own image through this portfolio, for, as Broughton and Kilinski both point out, the male authorship of published autobiographies can be found often throughout the Victorian era; however, the limited readership and highly personal content of this portfolio renders it more effeminate than masculine.

While the Lodger guards his portfolio carefully and confides to paper his many personal struggles, his disability plays an important role in its development. He confesses that his writings began due to his “misfortune” and “that [his self-descriptions] must be written words because it is painful effort to [him] (since [he] lost his hearing) to speak to anyone” (260). Jennifer Esmail, in examining the relationship of speech, text, and the bodies of deaf Victorian characters in her article “‘I Listened With My Eyes’: Writing Speech and Reading Deafness in the Fiction of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins,” observes that Collins’s literature attempted to treat “disability realistically” (996). Esmail concludes that, despite most Victorian literature containing “almost no signing deaf characters” (993), Collins’s works emphasize disability, particularly deafness as “differently-abled rather than dis-abled” (998). In such a portrayal, the portfolio seems a natural tool through which the Lodger can relate his thoughts; as speaking is painful to him, he has adopted this narrative as a means of self-expression.

While such a medium might be translated as an acceptable mode of “self-expression,” the narcissistic connotations associated with such expression position such a writing as further feminized. As Kate Flint pointed out previously, the Lodger’s disability renders him “sensitive” (155), and such sensitivity evidences itself through the Lodger’s identification and portrayal of himself as an artist, as one who paints with words. He

writes that he “possess[es] considerable skill (for an amateur) as a painter in water colours,” but he can only paint “when irresistible impulse” strikes (260); this tendency applies to his writing habits as well, for the Lodger “can only write when the fit take [him]” (260). His inspiration is not lasting, as he will take “the first stray of anything” he can write with in order to “catch [his] ideas as they fly” (260). This description negotiates the meaning of being an “artist”; by his own admission, he is an amateur, one who only writes when the urge dictates. Esmail likewise connects deafness with artistry, noting how other of Collins’s deaf characters have “positive gifts,” including “physiognomic prowess, artistic skill, and refined aesthetic judgment,” which she contributes to “an outgrowth of...deafness” (997). Despite his hesitancy to reveal himself, he writes that he will “produc[e] this picture of [himself]” (260) with “photographic accuracy, as a true likeness” (268).

His depiction of an artist gains intensity, as he begins living through his renderings. For instance, after he witnesses an act of animal cruelty, he feels ashamed at his inaction and writes what he feels he should have done. Afterward, he confesses that, “strange to say, this representation of what [himself] ought to have done, relieved [his] mind as if [he] had actually done it. [He] looked at the preeminent figure of [himself], and felt good” (270). He paints others besides himself with words as well, such as the “the brutal figure of the carter” (269). In so doing, the Lodger perceives “the one chance of getting rid of this curious incubus, was to put the persistent image of the man on paper” (269). His authorship evolves into an artistry, one that, yet again, can be interpreted as a masculine assertion through the ability to control his own description; however, he complicates his own artistic endeavors through his admission at one time to

use “true likeness” (268) while simultaneously admitting his “representation[s]” (270) are often only idealistic, thereby rendering such control void.

His positioning of himself as an artist further demonstrates a lack of masculine control, as the Lodger begins to demonstrate egocentricity in his writings, which quickly develops into blatant narcissism. In his portfolio, he acknowledges that he has “become of enormous importance to myself” and, “in this frame of mind, [he] naturally enjoy[s] painting [his] own portrait in words” (260). Acknowledging the isolating effects his disability has wrought, he confesses that, in “living by [himself], [he] became...important to [himself] – and, as a necessary consequence, [he] enjoyed registering [his] own daily doings” (268). Though he attempts to deny his narcissism through his admission that ““vanity and [he] have parted company”” (257), even those who have not read his portfolio acknowledge his vanity, such as Cristel, who describes him as ““very vain”” (265). His vanity evidences itself further through his low opinion of those around him. The Lodger feels that his grandfather was a “fool” and how his “own stupidity delivered him into [the law’s] hands” (269); he also scoffs at sociality, as “women and men – even young women – were repellent” (267), acknowledging he was “ungratefully impatient of the admiration excited by [his] personal advantages” and “savagely irritated by tender looks and flattering compliments” (267). Such narcissism, while being, as Flint mentioned previously, associated with disability, is also characteristic of the male aesthete, or Decadent. In turn, this effeminate self-love only destabilizes the masculinity evidenced through the Lodger’s portfolio.

While Naron’s writings served in negotiating her femininity, the Lodger’s narrative instead renders him effeminate. In utilizing the image of an artist, the Lodger

reveals his narcissistic attitudes and contradictory self-portraits, all which ultimately communicate a depth of intimacy. Such a revelatory narrative seemingly compromises the Lodger's masculinity, as his manly reserve folds under his decision to reveal. While each of these character's narratives serve in developing the sensation plot, both further communicate gender anxieties through their slippery categorization as masculine or feminine texts. Furthermore, in taking a closer look at their creation, readers are able to grasp additional insight as to the gender expectations – and subsequent complications – surrounding the occupational role of writing for both men and women.

Chapter Four: Discussion of Science

Development of Science and Sensation Fiction

Another distinguishable discourse in Collins's works is the discussion of science. As the beginnings of the field of science – and its separate branches – originated during the Victorian era, many sensation authors adopted this field in their works, as its rapid expansion and controversial nature proved easily accessible in criminalizing domesticity. In his essay "Scientific Ascendency," Joh Kucich points out how "new scientific models brought rational knowledge into direct conflict with religion, igniting controversies that deeply engaged novelists...[in which they then] attempt[ed] to replace religious conceptions of worldly order with rational models" (120). Wilkie Collins being no exception, Kucich notes how this author's works are specifically

marked by a rivalry and mistrust between scientific professionals and literary or artistic intellectuals. The plots of Collins's novels tend to revolve around the outwitting of pretentious scientific professionals by a broad collection of quasi-professional humanists – artists, writers,

dilettantes, proto-bohemians – who manage to fuse scientific deduction with creative imagination in their quest to solve the central mysteries of the novels... Yet... all of Collins's protagonist[s seek] legitimation in the very professional arenas he seems to challenge. (133)

Advancements in science usually utilized applications of reason and rationale, both which quickly developed conflicts with fields like religion and aesthetics.

Such a controversy offered itself readily accessible to literature, and soon the incorporation of science as a social issue became prevalent. In relation to this new development in fiction, George Levine, in his work "Objectivity and Death: Victorian Scientific Autobiography," asserts that "questions of knowledge are always questions of morality" (273). His emphasis lies with the rise of the popular and metaphoric Victorian scientist, epitomized in Mary Shelly's Victor Frankenstein, and describes him as a "knowledge-obsessed figure," one who will "be destroyed by what he wants to know" (273); such a reading, Levine argues, results in the idea of "knowledge... contemporaneous with, and equal to, death" (Levine 273). Elizabeth Wadge perceives an alternative to Levine's observations in her work "The Modern Prometheus?: Victorian Science and Literature" through her noting that, by examining the "flawed scientist within Victorian fiction" (2), the binary formations of "limits and limitless... [and] potential and actualization" (5) never fully resolve themselves, consequently resulting in a never-ending story of "imbalance followed by a restoration" (2). However, Wadge further points out that "real scientists... as much as their fictional counterparts, are acts of narrative creation, reworked and reinterpreted across the years" (2). Despite the multitude of opinions regarding the morality of science, and the

following tensions surrounding the authentic portrayal of scientists, Victorian literature readily adopted and explored the issue in its textual space.

As such tension developed, many Victorians perceived these discussions involving science in literature as dangerous. Gillian Beer, in her work "Science and Literature, explores various aspects of the unique relationship present between the two entities; however, she ultimately concludes that "relations between science and literature, and their bearing on social mores, were often heated in this period" (468). In "Sensationalising Substance Abuse in the Victorian Home," Tamara S. Wagner expounds on this "heated" (Beer 468) relationship through her concentration on sensation literature. Here, she positions sensation fiction as "addictive [and] as feeding on and into the attraction of experiencing, vicariously through reading, the sensations of accidental and deliberate poisoning, suicide, and attempted suicide, while seemingly policing the uses of substances in detailing their destructive potential" (Wagner 30). While Wagner specifically focuses on sensation fiction in terms of substance abuse, her comments highlight the use of substances as a branch of Victorian science revealed within this genre; in addition, she emphasizes the cathartic and "addictive" threat many Victorians perceived sensation literature to have toward "the indiscriminating young female consumer" (30).

Sensation fiction only compounded these fears through the exposing of gender anxieties surrounding the issues of science. In her work "Dazed and Abused: Gender and Mesmerism in Wilkie Collins," Sharrona Pearl insists that scientific ideals frequently entail gendering, especially noticeable in Collins' works, arguing that "values can never be detached from [this] type of knowledge and the ways in which it can be used."

Through her examination of mesmerism in Collins's works as a "new science," Pearl views the "morality of the experience" inextricably linked to the "question[ing of] ideas about gender." Such gendering of a scientific discourse reveals tensions between Victorian notions of appropriate placements of men and women in relation to science.

In this chapter, I acknowledge Beer's observation as to the "heated" (468) relationship present between literature and science, and I further adopt Sharrona Pearl's argument that literature's discussion of science reveals important gender implications, especially noticeable within the sensation genre. First, I will briefly discuss the development of the field of science during the Victorian Era, and the subsequent gendering evidenced by the formation of the male scientist. This formation further entailed the exclusion of women, yet they began to contest such exclusion through writing and participation, thereby further destabilizing gender spheres of male authority and female passivity. I will then discuss my two marginalized characters, the Countess Narona and the Lodger, and their subsequent relation to chemicals. While Narona finds herself excluded from scientific knowledge, her assertiveness is necessary for male scientific endeavors to come to fruition. In opposition to Narona, the Lodger finds himself unable to fulfill his scientific experiments due to the female interference of Cristel. In both cases, these scientific experiences deal with chemical substances, which I will focus on and separate from other scientific endeavors, such as natural studies. For both of my characters, I utilize the character of the scientist Humphrey Davy as a reference for my characters' participation – or lack thereof – in these experiments and the entailing gender implications as a result.

Realm of Science and Gender

Not only did the Victorian Era oversee rapid developments in the field of science, but it also began to assert itself as an authority through which to interpret life. Kucich notes that “an enormous increase in the prestige and authority of science, was, perhaps, the central intellectual event of the Victorian period...[which provided] new models for understanding the nature of human life itself” (119). As discussed previously, these “new models” (Kucich 119) of scientific understanding frequently clashed with religious norms, and literature became a platform for both authors and readers to explore this controversy in greater depth. Yet, while this debate garnered public concern, the subject of science did not limit itself to mere theological questioning. As literature served to propagate new scientific discoveries, many began to perceive gendered assumptions surrounding the issue of science along with questions of morality. With the introduction of startling new experiments and advancements that could now be cathartically lived through literature, especially sensation works, Wagner’s observation of what many feared to be an “addictive” (30) threat to the Victorian public exposed such assumptions through concerns regarding the susceptibility of the “young female consumer.” Such fear, while still entailing moral concerns, further demonstrates a gendered anxiety, as the believed threat of a susceptible female relationship pointed to a broader context of gendered roles in relation to science.

Arguably one of the most prominent gendered implications surrounding science often presented itself through the dominance of the male scientific voice. Jan Golinski, in her article “Humphrey Davy: The Experimental Self,” writes how, during this time, “new scientific disciplines...were dramatically reconfigured...[as] entirely new fields were

marked out and came to shape how scientific knowledge was made” (15), with most of these shaping suggestions predominantly proposed by male scientists. The model of the male scientist quickly established itself as a scientific norm, and such a norm often found relevance through prominent Victorian scientists such as Humphrey Davy, Thomas Huxley, Charles Darwin, and Herman Kolbe. As discussed previously by Levine and Wadge, literature too adopted the form of the male scientist, especially evident in Levine’s model of Shelly’s Victor Frankenstein (Levine 273; Wadge 2). However, many critics point to assumptions beyond real-life counterparts of male scientists, for, as Golinski emphasizes in “Humphry Davy’s Sexual Chemistry,” the “stereotypical scientist is invariably male and also associated with distinctly masculine character traits...[greatly due to] scientific traditions [which] have sanctioned accounts of the superiority of the male intellect and the inherent weaknesses of the female mind, attempting to enlist the authority of nature to explain why men are better at science” (15). Such a belief in the varied intellectual capabilities of men and women aided in establishing gendered notions of scientific accessibility and propagation.

Yet, gaps among ideas of total masculine control in relation to science began to surface, thereby complicating societal perceptions of male scientific authority. For instance, Peter B. Ford explains in “Aestheticizing the Laboratory: ‘Delirium,’ the Chemist, and the Boundaries of Language,” that prominent scientists, like Humphrey Davy, received criticism for issues such as “the limitations of referentiality” (Ford 251), or the additional developments in language necessary to “capture” the experience in new experiments. In discussing Davy’s “self-experimentation” (249) further, Ford contrasts the “newness of the experiments” (251) with “the interjection of subjectivity” (249), a

combination emphasizing the “exhaustibility of language and its relationship to the sense” (249). Such “exhaustibility of language” (Ford 249) pointed to a lack, which, in turn, posed potentially destabilizing of total masculine control, as the inability to articulate an experience threatened notions such as “the superiority of the male intellect” (Golinski 15).

The ability to articulate not only complicated notions of male scientific authority, but it also provided women opportunities to participate within the scientific realm, specifically through the written word. Barbara Gates, in her work “Retelling the Story of Science,” notes that, though “in the nineteenth century, none of the great discoveries of natural and physical science belonged to women,” they “took an intense interest in those discoveries and throughout the century sought knowledge of the workings of the universe,” such as “botany” and “geology” (289). Gates goes on to relate that, while women wrote of “scientific theories...which had become accepted,” she asserts that their “originality...in the distinctive counter-discourse that they evolved as they narrated the story of science” (289) depicted feminine involvement as “an alert woman sharing an interest in the world around her” (295), a great contrast to the common, Frankenstein-like “lone scientist on the eye of a new discovery” (295). These “counter-discourse[s]” (289) of “narrative[s] of natural history” (302) Gates distinctly separates from the “narrative of science,” as she perceives the second category to be “the more narrow, exclusively male preserve” (302). Though women still struggled in participating in the scientific realm, they were able to negotiate a purely masculine sphere through the insertion of their own feminine discourse.

Throughout the Victorian Era, science not only offered new theoretical frameworks through which to interpret the world, but significantly affected gender ideology in British society. While the metaphoric “male scientist” grew to prominence, thereby reinforcing notions of masculine authority in science, women’s own assertive participation through re-writing, coupled with a lack of masculine assertion in the struggle to articulate, served to debunk prevailing notions regarding male control of scientific discovery. While acts of writing and articulating negotiated male and female participation in the realm of science, literature likewise explores such issues – and the resulting gender shifts – in relation to Victorian science, a discourse readily identified in Collins’s two novellas.

Discussion of Chemicals in *The Haunted Hotel*

While both of Collins’s novellas bespeak of scientific elements, each work contains numerous references to the use of chemicals. In exploring the relationships among characters who utilize these chemicals, gendered implications surrounding the issue of science begin to unravel. In *The Haunted Hotel*, the first character introduced with any relation to chemicals is the Countess Narona, who mentions on her visit to an English doctor that she had ““a narrow escape from death by poisoning”” (92), an episode that permanently left her without ““a complexion”” and skin so delicate as for her not to be able ““to paint without producing a hideous rash”” (92). This encounter, at first glance, appears almost insignificant, as Narona bespeaks herself as a passive participant, the recipient of someone else’s intentions to take her life. This passivity consequently renders herself effeminate, as she is unable to take any scientific assertion in the knowledge of the chemicals used on her person. Already limited through her own gender as a woman,

and without contributing to the scientific realm through writing, Naronna seemingly embodies the passive female in relation to the chemical world of science

Yet, though no details of the poisoning are mentioned further, such as to who would poison her or as to how she was saved, the Countess clearly has had a near-death experience with chemicals so as to leave her knowledgeable about her own limitations with other chemical-based elements, such as paint, and the consequent results in her own body. While such an encounter may not be described an intentional experiment, the Countess's poisoning does qualify among Victorian scientists who would experiment with various chemicals on their own person. One such example would be Humphrey Davy, whose own personal experiments, as discussed previously by Ford, gave rise to distressing ambiguity among Victorian scientists.

In exploring Davy's chemical experiments, Jan Golinski, writes how "Davy and his companions experienced the respiration of nitrous oxide not in terms of anesthesia or addiction, but as a novel and confusing experience that called for articulate description but at the same time thwarted their ability to speak authoritatively about what happened to them" (20), consequently emphasizing the lack of masculine authority in an ability to utilize a framework through which to explain these experiments. While Davy's experience rendered him unable to authoritatively to speak of his encounter, Naronna's inability to identify the chemicals used on her person seems at odds with her aptitude in identifying within her own body the effects of her "experiment." In being able to describe what happened to her [she had a "narrow escape from death by poisoning" (92)] and its effects [her skin is "delicate," she has no "complexion," and "paint...produc[es] a

hideous rash” (92)], even in layman’s terms, Naronia appears to negotiate masculine authority through such an ability.

Naronia’s negotiation can also be further seen in the relationship with her brother, the Baron Rivar. While her personal interaction with chemicals remains limited, her brother, the Baron Rivar, takes a highly active participation. His character finds itself more in the background, normally referenced only in third person or from other collected texts, separated from the majority of characters, and his “his flash of suspicion” (104) to anyone around his sister causes others to distrust him. However, his marginality appears not as extreme as Naronia’s, as he, at first appearance, fulfills the Victorian ideal of the male scientist. Readers learn of his work area, which consists of “vaults” resembling “dungeons in the old times – say, some centuries since,” an isolated area where “air and light were only partially admitted” and protected by “iron gratings” (128). Here, he informs the insurance agents that his “favorite study is the study of experimental chemistry” and that this is his “workshop” (128). He further explains that, while it is “not a pleasant place to study,” he has been banished to the lower regions due to his “timid sister” and her “horror of chemical smells and explosions” in order that his experiments “may neither be smelt or heard” (128). This complete isolation almost appears referential not only in keeping the Baron’s work private from others but also symbolically isolating scientific knowledge to the male world only, away from “timid” women (128).

The Baron’s work further positions him as a model scientist, seen in his many experiments and his pursuit of knowledge. The insurance agents describe his various experiments as “twofold sort – faintly aromatic, as it were, in its first effect, but with

some after-odour very sickening in [their] nostrils” (128). He possesses many familiar tools of chemists – “furnaces and retorts, and other things, were all there to speak for themselves, together with some packages of chemicals, having the name and address of the person who had supplied them” (128). His hands even bear the marks of scientists, as he confesses ““accidents will happen sometimes...no matter how careful a man may be”” and shows them his ““burnt hands”” as a result of a ““trying a new combination”” (128). His tools, his work space, and his confession of new experimentation all create an image of masculine authority, conquering new territory in the scientific domain. This authority finds emphasis in the public announcement in newspapers that, “in the scientific columns of the newspapers, [of an] investigation into the present state of experimental chemistry in the great American republic” (153). Both in the public and private spheres, the Baron is situated as both knowledgeable and tenacious, attempting discovery in this new area.

If Naroná’s play can be viewed as an authentic narrative form, she likewise perceives her brother’s position as an authoritative figure in the realm of science. She describes him as a “noble person” and “a young and handsome man with a brilliant future,” one who, “with a single-minded devotion to the science of experimental chemistry,” has attempted to solve “the famous problem called the ‘Philosopher’s Stone’” (222). Yet his one flaw appears to be gambling, as he “profanes his noble enthusiasm for science by yielding his soul to the all-debasing passion of the gamester” (222). Even in spite of his short comings, Naroná still allows him control, even though he has spent almost their entire family inheritance (222). In her play, however, she does not see this control as manipulative or base; rather, she views such behavior as consistent with the ultimate scientist, one who only sees “to a crowning experiment in the fatal search after

the secret of transmuting the baser metals into gold” (222). Given a choice by her brother for him or her to marry someone for money, she quickly decides to “sacrifice [herself] on the altar of [the Baron’s] glory” and have him “take as stepping-stones on the way to [his] triumph, [her] love, [her] liberty, and [her] life!” (223). All of these present an affirmation of the masculine control – and rightful authority – over the scientific realm, one which requires feminine support and loyalty, one perhaps with no questions, in order to operate.

Here, the argument could be made that the Baron’s close relationship with his sister compromises his masculine control in relation to his scientific knowledge; yet this claim draws further clarification when once again compared to a prominent scientist such as Humphrey Davy. Golinski points out that Humphrey’s “ambiguities of his public persona reflected more widespread cultural tensions concerning the identity of the male scientist and his relations with a female audience” (22) due to his struggle to maintain his “masculine self-command” in light of his “female powers of imagination and passion” (26). While the Baron undoubtedly shares Davy’s passionate pursuit of scientific knowledge, and likewise has a female audience in his sister, unlike Davy, he does not share his knowledge with his sister. This would seemingly negate a feminization of the Baron, as he continues to assert his masculine dominance through his withdrawal of scientific knowledge.

Yet, while the Baron continues to assert his masculinity through his withholding of knowledge, Naron’s assertiveness compromises this total control through a different aspect: dependency. The Baron’s all-consuming desire to solve the “Philosopher’s Stone” soon leads him to depend on his sister for his next scientific step; as he has no money due

to his gambling addiction, he informs his sister that, as she has produced a “‘strong impression’” (222) on Lord Montbarry, if they are able to “‘turn that impression into money, no matter at what sacrifice, the thing must be done’” (223). Once sure of Lord Montbarry’s intentions towards Naron, he again informs his sister that she must “‘take [her] choice, between marry [the] Lord’s income, in the interest of my grand discovery – or leave me to sell myself and my title to the first rich woman of low degree who is ready to buy me’” (223). Though Naron does sacrifice herself, an act seemingly representative of feminine submission, her decisiveness in choosing herself rather than her brother demonstrates a masculine assertiveness the Baron completely lacks.

Naron continues to find herself appropriating this authority in regards to her brother. For instance, after Naron has married Lord Montbarry, the Baron’s “‘one obstacle in the way of his grand discovery is, as usual, the want of money’” (224). Unable to borrow money due to the now strained marriage relationship between the Naron and her husband, they both mutually understand “‘the position in which they are placed; they clearly see the remedy for it. What is the plain alternative before them? Disgrace and ruin – or, my Lord’s death and the insurance money!’” (226). While they both understand their current predicament, and the Baron hints at Montbarry’s “‘constitution, probably weakened in India – [and] of a cold which my Lord has caught two or three days since’” (226), the Countess gives yet again the final word: “‘Is there no such thing as a serious illness...corked up in one of those bottles...in the vaults downstairs?’” (226). Her imagination concocts the plan, and her decisiveness sets their planning into action.

Even with the Baron’s hesitancy over the many events – and chemical trails - that could leave traces (226), Naron takes the planning even further: “‘she suddenly pauses –

considers for awhile – and springs to her feet, with a cry of triumphant surprise: the wonderful, the unparalleled idea has crossed her mind like a flash of lightening. Make the two men [the sick Courier and the sick Lord] change names and places – and the deed is done!” (229). While the Countess does not possess any scientific knowledge through which to participate directly with her brother, her tenacity, determination, and own authority are necessary for the Baron to complete his work, even murderous work. She, unlike the Courier, desires to know everything – when the Baron brings the bottle “labeled ‘Chloroform,’” she immediately inquires what it is and where they will hide her husband’s body (233). Her presence is necessary for any scientific endeavors to come to fruition.

Through an examination of Naroná’s close proximity with chemical use, readers are able to identify not only a distinct scientific discourse but also significant gender implications. While Naroná does not actually perform her own experiments with chemicals, appearing, at first glance, passive and removed from the scientific scene, her tenacity translates into masculine authority in her ability to bring male experiments to fruition. Such authority poses problematic to neat translations of male scientific authority.

Discussion of Chemicals in *The Guilty River*

While the discussion of chemicals in *The Haunted Hotel* render masculine assertion dependent upon a female presence to act within the scientific realm, *The Guilty River* exposes the female ability to render masculine scientific authority ineffective and effeminate. The first character referenced in regards to any scientific relation is Gerald, who, at the novella’s beginning, is capturing moths at night. His activity seems specialized, as he, the narrator, relays his instruments of “a brush and a mixture of rum

and treacle,” he goes to set a “snare,” one that is “familiar to hunters of moths” (246). He further emphasizes his belonging to this specialized group, as he uses specialized language (“we call it sugaring the trees”) and the value of his practice (“the other two [moths], of no great value as specimens”) (245). He demonstrates a sort of scientific passion, as he describes his time as a “favorite studies of the insect-world” (146), thereby suggesting his inclusion of masculine, knowledgeable scientists.

However, Gerald’s inclusion in such a masculine group collapses through his very activity. In referencing Humphrey Davy once more, Golinski echoes Gates former observation of female “narrative[s] of natural history” (Gates 302) in her identification of a “discursive construction of a strongly gendered sense of identity among scientists themselves” (Golinski 15), one which regulated “women remain[ing] important to the economy of fact-gathering in such sciences as geology and natural history” (Golinski 17). In choosing such a activity as insect-collecting, one closely aligned with “natural history” (Golinski 17), Gerald renders his own profession effeminate; even he does not consider it a serious profession, claiming he only collects as a “means of getting through [his] idle time” (245). This would seemingly position his activity as more of a personal hobby, one meant solely for the private sphere. While Golinski does write that “the years around the turn of the nineteenth century brought to prominence models of male creativity that stressed imagination and the emotions, rather than classical rationality” (18), especially in relation to the ““scientific hero”” (19), found in the figure of Humphrey Davy, I argue that Gerald’s position, while possibly foreshadowing this “scientific hero,” here eliminates him from obtaining the masculine authority necessary for his inclusion as a professional and authoritative scientist.

The distinction in Gerald's activities in comparison to the Lodger's further evidences itself in the total lack of connection Gerald perceives in their scientific occupations. For instance, upon seeking the Lodger, Gerard finds him standing at an open window in the Lodger's apartment, with "his personal appearance [having] undergone a singular process of transformation. The lower part of his face, from his nostrils to his chin, was hidden by a white handkerchief tied round it" (291). Not only are the chemicals located in a private apartment, but the Lodger has undergone a personal transformation, one that has altered his appearance by the clothing of specialization. Gerald's removal from the scene is evident; he notes that the Lodger holds a "strangely shaped bottle, and [the Lodger] was absorbed in watching some interesting condition in a dusky liquid that it contained. To attract his attention by speaking was of course out of the question" (291). Gerald, a naturalist, clearly shares no mutual scientific sympathies with the tenant; he views the Lodger as a stranger. Clearly, the Lodger shares this lack of mutuality, as he does not welcome any intrusion to his domain. For, when he spies Gerald, he asks him to "wait in the boat-house...[and he] will come to [him] directly" (292). In keeping the space of chemical knowledge separate from Gerald's natural studies, the Lodger instead associates his work with that "happy time in [his] life when [he] was entering on the medical profession" (292). Like the Baron, the Lodger has been attempting "an experiment," one which likewise results in "an abominable smell" (293), a scientific experiment with chemicals seen as distinctly separate from the more feminine gathering of natural history.

Like the Barona, the Lodger finds himself firmly established as an authority on the scientific use of chemicals. As mentioned previously, he informs Gerald that he has

“resumed the chemical studies,” a study he fondly associates with his previous engagement in “the medical profession” (292). His knowledgeability, both in chemical elements and human anatomy, all serve to heighten his authority in terms of scientific ascension. While he attributes his tendency for a “variety of occupation[s]” (292) as a result of his disability, a possible feminizing characteristic, his masculinity seems prominent, as no other character in the novella can rival his education. Though the Lodger entails the help of Gloody, a servant, he uses him only to the “limited capacity for making himself useful” (329). Even Gerald, a part of the aristocracy and educated overseas, appears intimidated by the Lodger’s intelligence, as he give no contradiction and remains outdoors due to the Lodger’s warning of the “fumes...[that are] disagreeable...[and] dangerous” (293). His authority further demonstrates his power as he conducts experiments on the miller’s dog, Poncho, as he “entice[s the dog] into the new cottage, and apparently kill[s it] by the administration of poison of some sort. After another interval, a dose of another kind was poured down the poor creature’s throat, and [Poncho] began to revive” (329). Not only does the Lodger demonstrate his scientific thoroughness by using animal testing, but he also demonstrates his authority in commanding and appropriating other’s property while conducting his experiments.

However, in spite of the Lodger’s masculine control of scientific knowledge, he finds himself unable to conduct his ultimate experiment due to feminine intervention. Jealous and angered by Gerald’s attentions to Cristel, the Lodger determines that he will poison the landlord; however, Cristel, with the help of Gloody, decide to counteract this plot. Her intuition first suspected the Lodger’s motives, and she attempts to warn Gerald of the Lodger’s “hatred that never forgives and never forgets,” and that, if Gerald goes

to “drink tea with him, God only knows what cause [he] may have cause to regret it” (302). While Gloody first perceives the Lodger’s plot after witnessing “the experiment on the dog,” he “trusted the whole of responsibility of preserving [Gerald’s] life” in Cristel, who he feels is “true as steel” and “not easily frightened” (329). With her “firmness” and “steady resolution,” she and Gloody develop a set of “signals” (330) through which to counteract the Lodger’s plan. Cristel’s assertion successfully enacts a counterplan to the Lodger’s experiment.

Not only does she develop a counterplan with Gloody, but she takes control of the experiment itself. Deciding to attend the tea party, Cristel gives strict instructions to Gerald to specifically note if the Lodger refuses to “let her make the tea” (320), and further includes Gerald in a set of signals where a “touch on the knee” means “wait” (321). Though puzzled, Gerald promises to yield to her authority. When the Lodger “filled a tumbler from the water in the claret jug, and drank it,” (323), Cristel rushes to give Gerald one when the Lodger leaves, declaring that he will “drink it...if [he] values his life!” (324). Once Gerald drinks it, he realizes it has “a taste which...can compare to no drink, and to no medicine” and that “at last, the tremendous truth forced itself on [his] mind. The man in whom my boyish generosity had so faithfully believed had attempted my life” (324). By her quick insight and masculine assertion, Cristel renders the experiment void.

Such masculine assertion renders the Lodger’s own authority null, seen in his metaphorical portrayal of emasculation. When the tea party first begins, the Lodger refers to himself as a “[master] in the art of making tea” (321); his referencing as himself as a “master” holds double meaning, for, in claiming that “masters...[know] one infusion

ought never to be used twice, ” he refers to the poisoned tea, and by extension, his mastery in the art of science (321). However, as the night continues, the Lodger performs various tricks, to which Cristel declares she “hates puzzles” and feels as if the Lodger is calling her a “fool, to [suppose] that [she] like[s] being deceived” (323). Cristel’s outrage at being “an outsider” to this specific realm of knowledge seemingly reflects a larger resistance at being excluded from such a domain as scientific knowledge. Her outrage translates into action, as she feigns dropping the jar that holds the cure after Gerald drinks. When the Lodger returns and sees the cure ruined, Gerald notes that “the utter stillness of him was really terrible to see” and that he was as a “dead man, erect on his feet” (235). Having had his sphere breached, the Lodger, though possessive of the phallic symbol of “erect,” no longer has “life,” but is “dead” due to his inability to carry out his experiment (325).

Not only does Cristel aid in thwarting the Lodger’s plans to poison Gerald, but she further prevents the Lodger from kidnapping her, another plot further involving the use of chemicals. Unable to convince Cristel to be with him, the Lodger plans to “[carry] Cristel away by the river” while her “father was keeping watch on the road” (353). His entire plan revolved around using a “soporific drug” on Cristel, under whose “influence” he would steal the miller’s daughter away (353). Just as Cristel’s masculine assertion and tenacity aided in rendering the Lodger’s previous experiment on Gerald void, so does her active presence prevent her attacker from completing his next scientific endeavor. While the miller’s “knowledge of the stream” concocts Cristel’s escape route, her “ready courage” both enacts and completes her escape, and the Lodger once again finds himself thwarted in his experiment by a female presence (353).

Through a close examination of the discourse of science, specifically the use of chemicals, in Collins's novellas, readers can begin to identify significant gender implications surrounding characters and their subsequent correlation with this discourse. While both Naron's and the Lodger's relationship with chemical usage exposes existing gendered tensions surrounding the involvement of men and women in science, their consequent overlaps – seen in Naron's masculine assertion and the Lodger's effeminate passivity involving scientific experiments – further suggest shifts in traditional Victorian gender ideology, shifts possibly even echoing the rise of the New Woman and male aesthete or Decadent.

Chapter Five: Portrayal of Madness

Discussion of Madness and Sensation Fiction

A final discourse through which one can examine gender anxiety in Collins's works lies in his portrayal of madness, a topic frequently found in nineteenth century literature. The discussion surrounding the issue of madness finds itself rooted in Victorian perceptions of otherness, as those declared mentally unstable were often deviants from societal norms in one form or another. As Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore point out in the introduction to *Victorian Crime, Madness, and Sensation*, “the Victorians were....completely fascinated with the ‘other,’ whether that other was the imperial subject in a far-off colony, the revolting emaciated inhabitant of the slum dwelling or the newly demonized criminal” (4). In adding to the commentary on “othering,” many Victorian authors explored deviant characters in their works, but none so much as sensation authors. As sensation works already contained acts of “murder, adultery, bigamy, poisoning and mistaken identity,” this form naturally became a perfect

medium through which authors could portray and discuss characters of Victorian deviance (Maunder and Moore 4).

In choosing to discuss a topic such as madness, sensation authors often created great distress in their communities. As discussed earlier in Chapter One, sensation literature quickly became morally controversial, as many perceived such a form “to be symptomatic of the degeneration, not only of literature, but also of moral values, and there were very real concerns that reader – particularly female readers – would be adversely influenced by the amoral characters to be found in these works” (Maunder and Moore 5). The added concern surrounding reading women not only reflected concern over the supposed susceptibility of the female readership, but also mirrored the large number of deviant women found in sensational literature. As Lucia Zedner explains in *Women, Crime, and Custody in Victorian England*, “in early Victorian England[,] the woman who had fallen...became the subject of mass literature” (12); since the “fallen woman,” broadly defined, included women considered mentally unstable, these female characters caused many to view sensational literature as a potentially dangerous influence.

Yet this portrayal did not limit itself to only female characters, but further included male characters who blurred expectations of masculine “normalcy” as well, though these characters have only recently been brought to critical attention. As a result, public concern only increased as authors often presented complex interpretations to mental instability across both genders, thereby complicating simple, one-dimensional interpretations and solutions. As Dafydd Moore, in his article “‘The Truth of Midnight’ and ‘The Truth of Noonday’: Sensation and Madness in James Thomson’s *The City of*

Dreadful Night,” points out, the “sensation narrative [has] most notably an interest in making problematical neat and stable distinctions between truth and illusion, sanity and insanity” (131). By blurring such distinctions, sensation authors were able to provide a forum through which readers could question accepted definitions of “normalcy” and “other.”

Collins’s works are no exception, as they often explore issues of deviance through a discussion of madness, which many scholars have likewise noted. Maria K. Bachman, in her article “‘Furious Passions of the Celtic Race’: Ireland, Madness and Wilkie Collins’s *Blind Love*,” asserts how Collins “explores the inner psyches of his mental deviants, examining what it means to be cast as ‘other’ and relegated to the margins of society in Victorian England” (180). Agreeing with Bachman, Jenny Bourne Taylor writes in *The Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth Century Psychology* that Collins’s influence expanded beyond mere definition, as his “use of insanity as a narrative strategy is more complex than that of any of his contemporaries[;] but he wrote in a context in which the fictional mediation of madness helped to shape its cultural meaning” (qtd. in Bachman 179). Many critics perceive Collins’s handling of the issue of madness as contributive to the wider discourse surrounding mid- to late-Victorian notions of insanity.

In contributing to such a discourse, Collins’s works have also been studied for issues of gendering in relation to madness. Bachman further asserts that the “highly speculative nature of defining and diagnosing madness had broad cultural implications in the Victorian period. The sliding boundary between sanity and insanity was crucial to...reinforcing hierarchies of gender” (183). In discussion of these “hierarchies”

(Bachman 183), critics such as Emma Liggins, Clair Hughes, Patricia Frick, Virginia Morris, and Helen Philpott perceive Collins' works to expose such instances of masculine assertion and female subversion, explained as Morris describes it as the "stress[ing of] the social causes of criminality – alienation, abuse, economic deprivation – and show[ing of] profound sympathy for women faced with the unpalatable choice between suffering and violence." While these critics claim Collins's works to be sympathetic in their portrayal of female deviance, as they often defy gender stereotypes, all ultimately read the reinstatement of masculine control at the work's conclusions.

Only recently have critics begun to discuss additional masculine perspectives within Collins's works concerning the issue of madness. In two of his works, "Hysterical Fictions: Mid-Nineteenth-Century Medical Constructions of Hysteria and the Fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon" and "'What Could I Do?': Nineteenth-Century Psychology and the Horrors of Masculinity in *The Woman in White*," Andrew Mangham contests the idea of medical diagnoses only resulting in "male population...regulating women." Instead, Mangham insists that "clinical accounts of hysteria...expressed a degree of dissatisfaction with the social marginalization of women and a genuine desire to treat a condition [men] perceived as real." He further reads "male anticipations of women's madness [as] uncover[ing] more about the unbalanced nature of masculinity," thereby negating simple constructs of masculine identity as always controlling the opposite sex; rather, he emphasizes the multiple constructs within the masculine perspective – and fears – surrounding hysteria. This coincides with Ellen Bayuk Rosenman's own perspective in "The Man on the Street: Gender, Vision, and the City," as she argues "men...struggle to fabricate some version of penetrating gaze in order to distance

themselves from temptation.” Here, Rosenman argues the various defenses male characters construct as a “defense against women’s bodies,” consequently augmenting parameters of masculine relation to women.

Such portrayals complicate Victorian views of madness, and, in turn, reveal tensions among gender portrayals. In this chapter, I first contextualize this discussion of madness, exploring in more detail Victorian notions surrounding both female and male diagnoses of mental instability. I further will demonstrate how this discourse necessarily entailed gendered assumptions, which in turn complicated such diagnoses. Most of this research focuses on female deviance in relation to madness, as contemporary critics are only recently beginning to reevaluate masculine relationships with deviant behaviors, including mental instability. While many critics draw distinct lines between terms such as “madness,” “mental instability,” and “hysteria,” for purposes of this paper, I use them interchangeably, as my emphasis in this chapter deals with character deviance in relation to labels of “madness” more than medical rationale. I will then try to tease out some of this gendering in Collins’s novellas, focusing primarily on the portrayal of madness relating to the Countess Narona and the Lodger.

Diagnoses of Madness and Gender

As the nineteenth century progressed, advances in both the scientific and medical sphere led to greater desires to both explore and diagnose symptoms and cures surrounding the intriguing yet intricate issue of insanity. As a result, Victorian England soon became a model through which other nations looked to for definitions of madness. Elaine Showalter, tracing women’s relation to madness in *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980*, notes that “from the 1830s to about 1870s,

experiments in the humane management of madness put English psychiatry in the avant-garde of Western medical practice and made English lunatic asylums a mecca for doctors and social investigators all over the world” (25). Here, Showalter adds an important layer to defining mental instability through her description of “moral insanity” (29); she defines moral insanity as

not as a loss of reason, but as deviance from socially accepted behavior... a definition [capable of being] stretched to take in almost any kind of behavior regarded as abnormal or disruptive by community standards. In addition, not only moral insanity but also such traditional categories of madness as mania, dementia, and melancholia might be brought on by moral causes[, or]... strong emotions and psychological stresses [that] had reduced the system. (29)

Through an emphasis on “deviance from socially accepted behavior” (Showalter 29), definitions of mental instability during this time period were murky at best, convoluted through admissions of both moral and Darwinian discourses.

These two discourses, moral and Darwinian, aided in propelling gendered notions surrounding the issue of madness. The first discourse heavily influential in gendering madness would be Victorian morality. Like Showlater, Zedner describes Victorian definitions of normalcy resulting from “how far a woman’s behaviour contravened the norms of femininity” (28). She writes how a dualistic model became standardized in circumscribed “ideal[s] of femininity,” which divided between “the middle-class wife and mother whose asexual, morally uplifting influence was held as a vital bulwark against the sordid intrusions of industrial life. Her antithesis was the epitome of female

corruption – fallen from innocence, she had plummeted to the depths of degradation and contaminated all who came near her” (Zedner 11). These “fallen women” not only entailed associations of humiliation and moral depravity, but such stereotypes also propelled beliefs of deviant women being contagious. H.G. Simmons, in his article “Explaining Social Policy: The English Mental Deficiency Act of 1913,” emphasizes the concern these “fallen women” prompted through his assertion that “the problem of mentally deficient women . . . posed a deep threat to existing middle-class and respectable working class notions of sexuality and familiar normality. This explains the near hysteria which characterizes discussions about the social problem of mentally defective women” (qtd. in Zedner 266).

Another traceable discourse influential in gendering notions of madness lies in the Darwinian theory, which held that biological makeup was responsible for women’s susceptibility to madness. Zedner notes that, “beginning with the mid-nineteenth century, it opened with moralistic understandings of crime and quasi-religious attempts to reclaim the offender. It concludes with the rise of secular, ‘scientific’ explanations of deviance, which, in their turn, led to medically orientated attempts to replace punishment with treatment and containment” (264). Pykett asserts that medical experts identified the female reproductive system as being largely responsible for symptoms of madness in women in “Women Writing Women: Nineteenth-Century Representations of Gender and Sexuality,” as she describes women’s role in the biomedical discourse as being one “controlled by her womb and her ovaries” (79). Showalter, likewise focusing on biological makeup, takes a strong feminist stance, stating that women were considered more predisposed to madness than men, as medical professionals viewed female

reproductive systems accountable for the lack of “sexual, emotional, and rational control” (55). This belief then translated into “theories of biological sexual difference generated by Darwin and his disciples,” which confirmed “female intellectual inferiority” and “‘womanly’ traits of self-sacrifice and service...as essential for the survival of the race” (122). This combining of evolutionary theory with biology resulted in gendered notions which perceived females more predisposed to mental instability than males.

Yet diagnosis did not limit themselves to women only. Men too were diagnosed with mental stability, but many contemporary scholars perceive these diagnoses as significantly differently from those of women. With women’s assumed “intellectual inferiority” (Showalter 122), a problem arose in male diagnoses of madness, as their intellectually superior position proved problematic in its justification. Consequently, as John Kucich explains, the diagnosis of mental instability in males originated with men being assumed to suffer from an excess of intellect; however methods of diagnoses eventually began to reflect assumptions of a common malady:

the crisis in Victorian masculinity...stemmed from a sudden disruption in [the] psychosocial system. By the 1850s and 1860s, for a variety of reasons, melancholia was sharply devalued as a sign of male cultural authority. Rather than signaling the creative power of the rarefied genius, it seemed to have become widespread, mundane and *déclassé* – a conventional attribute of middle-class commercial, leisured and professional men. (126)

Such a transition shifted male diagnoses of madness to obtain connotations of “dangerously effeminate,” even though its “traditional association with male genius persisted to some extent” (Kucich 127).

While men retained diagnoses due to an excess of intellect, allowing dangerous threats of femininity, women were often instead reputed as diseased. As the fallen women’s depravity was considered to be transmittable, they posed an especially dangerous threat to men; with the model of female virtue circulating in part as a means to control masculine desire, a fallen woman could potentially tempt masculine desire with unchecked morality and sexuality. In her article, “The Inside Story: Crime, Convicts and Careers for Women,” Barbara Onslow, in discussing deviant women, explains that medical professionals drew

attention to the imperative need to help such women not in spite of, but *because of* their peculiar depravity...the female sex was considered less criminal than the male, [but] persistent female convicts were thought to be more hardened, depraved, and, being prone to violent uncontrollable outbursts, more intractable than the men. Yet their baleful influence upon society was much greater since to their care...[was given] the formation of the characters of the coming generation. (110)

As women were expected to be the pillar of the Victorian family as a virtuous example, the deviant woman garnered seemingly additional criticism as she threw off her societal expectations, falling into moral depravity. Consequently, deviant women often drew more public attention – and criticism - than their sex’s counterpart.

Showalter comments on this exclusion of men from diagnoses of mental instability, particularly hysteria, in her work *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media*. Here, she notes that “throughout most of its medical history, hysteria has been associated with women” (15). The lack of attention, and medical diagnoses, men have historically received Showalter views as “no accident: it’s the result of avoidance, suppression, and disguise” (64). Her reasoning suggests that, while physicians “despair of finding a single diagnosis (14), doctors, specifically those in the nineteenth century, would be “forced to acknowledge strong emotion and other hysterical traits in men often concluded that their patients were unmanly, effeminate, or homosexual” (64). Such an interpretation implies the shielding of male mental instability to avoid connotations of feminine emotionality, which could explain the underwhelming focus on masculine hysteria.

Madness in *The Haunted Hotel*

In each of Collins’s novellas, readers can identify the thread surrounding notions of madness, and such threads suggest gendered associations. In *The Haunted Hotel*, the question of madness surfaces first with the Countess Narona, whose first meeting with Agnes Lockwood, whom Narona had “innocently robbed of her lover, and destroyed [Agnes’s] prospects in life” (94), leaves her questioning her sanity. For, upon seeing Agnes for the first time, the Countess relates that she had “no enmity of feeling” towards the other woman; rather she “admired her” and “felt for her” (95). However, the Countess became concerned when, as she “rose and met that woman’s eyes looking at [her], [she] turned cold from head to foot, and shuddered, and shivered, and knew what a deadly panic of fear was, for the first time in [her] life” (95). As Agnes behaves

perfectly civil to Naroná, the countess begins to question her mental stability, as her fear of Agnes continues.

Unable to shake these fears, Naroná continues to question her sanity, as her conviction that Agnes is her reckoning becomes an all-consuming fear. She describes Agnes as having “like the eyes of a serpent” and “felt [Agnes’s] soul in them, looking into...her own mortal self” (95). She feels her “impression” to be full of “horror and...folly” by declaring Agnes to be

destined (without knowing it herself) to be the evil genius of [Naroná’s] life. Her innocent eyes saw hidden capabilities of wickedness in [Naroná] that [she] was not aware myself, until [she] felt them stirring under her look. If [Naroná] commit[s] faults in [her] life to come – if [she is] even guilty of crimes – she will bring the retribution, without...any conscious exercise of her own will. (95)

In positioning Agnes so, Naroná has made her to be more than human, one who can call her to answer for all the sins in her life. Due to such an irrational conclusion, she begins to wonder if she is “in danger of going mad” (91).

As discussed earlier, associations of female madness were closely associated with notions of deviance, and, as mentioned in Chapter Two, Naroná’s excessive sexuality and suspicious reputation already served in distancing herself from Victorian society and respect. With her growing fears surrounding her relationship with Agnes, both private and professional opinions begin to surface in regards to her mental stability. Various private assessments, both male and female, of Naroná’s condition further emphasize her believed susceptibility of mental instability. Perhaps most vocal would be Stephen

Montbarry, the head of the Montbarry family, who describes Naronas as a “crazy creature,” (235) a woman who displayed “sheer delirium” (237). Not only does the head of the Montbarry family consider her unstable, but Naronas former Courier (Ferrari) refers to her as “the Devil” (232), while his wife, Emily Ferrari, declares that Naronas is “guilty” (135) as well as a “wicked woman” (138). Such descriptions contain dualistic meaning, for, terms connoting moral evil, such as “wicked” (138) and “the Devil” (232), are seemingly equivalent to those of physical strain, such as “delirium” (237), yet both set of descriptors seemingly point to broader implications of overall deviance in Naronas behavior.

While Naronas private acquaintances voice their suspicions of her mad behavior, her visit to an English doctor seemingly echoes such misgivings. This doctors professional – and significantly, male – opinion gains additional significance through his lack of name, which seemingly situates him as the representative voice of Victorian medical professionals. The narrator informs readers that this particular doctors reception of “women (professionally speaking) rested on the ripe experience of more than thirty years; he had met with them in all their varieties – especially the variety which knows nothing of the value of time, and never hesitates at sheltering itself behind the privileges of its sex” (90). Seeing women as not only insensitive to the demands of the professional work force, but also as advantageous to the benefits of their sex, the doctor raises associations of sexism and a poor opinion of female intelligence. Such an attitude further evidences itself as he urges Naronas that “the sooner [she] can come to the point, the better for [his] patients and [him]” (94). After hearing her concern, he authoritatively redirects her question, as he inquires why she did not first visit “a doctor whose special

employment is the treatment of the insane” (91). Here, the doctor assumes the position of authority, exerting masculine regulation of a female patient.

Not only does the doctor assert masculine authority through his dismissal of Naroná’s concern, and by extension female intelligence, he treats her afterward as diseased, despite his alternative diagnosis as to the cause of her fear. For, instance, his initial diagnosis relates that ““there is no sign of [Naroná’s] intellect being deranged, or being likely to be deranged, that medical science can discover – as [*he*] understand[s] it [emphasis not mine]”” (97), advising instead she look ““for spiritual rather than . . . medical advice”” (97). Here, the doctor insists that Naroná’s fears lie in spirituality rather than mental instability; however, after Naroná departs, he wonders if ““the woman left an infection of wickedness in the house”” and if he had ““caught it,”” as a ““perverse instinct in him said, as if in words, Beware how you believe in her!”” (96). Rather than sympathizing with her dilemma, as he ““tried vainly to think of her as a person to be pitied – a person with a morbidly sensitive imagination, [he soon became] conscious of the capacities for evil which lie dormant in us all, and striving earnestly to open her heart to the counter-influence of her own better nature; the effort was beyond him”” (96). Deciding that the diagnosis was out of his power – or, more likely, frightened by dominant notions surrounding the diseased threat of the female deviant – the doctor’s reaction aligns with the masculine tendencies to repress and control feminine threats of madness.

Naroná herself largely contributes to her own labeling of madness. She describes her fears surrounding Agnes to be a ““fascination of terror,”” as she is the ““instrument of the retribution that my sins of many years had deserved”” (144); Naroná further informs Agnes that she is the ““means of innocently ripening the growth of evil”” in her, and that

Agnes will bring her “to the day of discovery, and to the punishment that is [Narona’s] doom” (144). Such fatalistic and unprovable assumptions further contribute to Narona’s own assumptions of her impending mental disability. Her continual references to a “will of [her] own,” (179) and Destiny’s “rope round [*her*] neck” [emphasis not mine] (181), coupled with the continual qualifier that her day-to-day living relies on her being a “living woman and a free woman...[or in] possession of [her] senses” (183), pose problematic in a concise interpretation of events, as she feels at one moment hope, the next despair in terms of her fate.. Such back and forth beliefs and confessions, with her ultimately gaining a “vacant resignation, like a woman who had done with hopes, done with interests, done with everything but the mechanical movements and instincts of life” (190), position the countess as hopelessly confined to the feminine position of deviance, and ultimately, madness.

Yet, through Narona’s ability to counteract societal labels of her impending madness, she begins to destabilize masculine notions of madness lying solely in female deviance. For instance, despite her conviction that Agnes has a powerful connection to herself, Narona negotiates the male diagnosis of madness through rational acts. She decides to visit an English doctor and pose the question to him: is she is “a demon who has seen the avenging angel? Or only a poor mad woman, misled by the delusion of a deranged mind?” (96). Her awareness of the two possible outcomes of her connection to Agnes demonstrate a metacognitive recognition that one mentally compromised should not be able to navigate. Upon being asked why she chose this doctor rather than a specialist, she presents perfect logic, stating she has visited him precisely because a specialist “has the fatal habit of judging everybody by lines and rules of his own laying

down. [She came] to [*him*], because [her] case is outside all lines and rules, and because [he is] famous in [his] profession of mysteries in disease” (92), thus emphasizing her rationality in coming to him first.

Not only does she combat labels of madness through her rational actions, she further defies them through her elevation of herself as a standard through which to interpret her own sanity. For instance, when the doctor becomes impatient with her, she firmly declares that “every word [she has] said is to the point” (94), thereby not only revealing her recognition of the doctor’s sexist stance but also emphasizing her logic’s rationality above his. When the doctor first declares that he is incapable of identifying the cause of her concern, she declares she came for his “opinion given positively,” and, though she “believed in [him],...[he has] disappointed [her]” (92). Here, Naroná’s understands that she, not the medical opinion, is the basis through which to validate her diagnosis; the authoritative control in the diagnosis of madness shifts then from the doctor to the countess.

As discussed earlier, Naroná’s marginality appears disadvantageous to her, as her excessive sexuality and scandalous reputation only serve to emphasize her deviant behavior. Nonetheless, her awareness of the “frowned upon” societal views of her nonconformity further emphasize her attempts to negotiate labels of her supposed insanity, for, in refuting masculine attempts to control her, she instead initiates such control. For instance, in her play, Naroná observes that the “stock of scandal” (99) that questions her relationship with her brother and assumed international crimes are “fals[e] and abominabl[e],” which she then repudiates with “just indignation” (223); this decisive ownership of her own person through her play rewrites her “deviant behaviors” as both

sympathetic and justified. Furthermore, as discussed earlier in Chapter Two, her foreign birth served in distancing her from English society, and appeared to have created a sort of double consciousness in terms of her identity; however, while she attributes her skills of writing to her English associations, she labels these – not her foreign associations – as “disease[d]” (184). In aligning English “normalcy” with contagion, Naronia appears to be not only starkly aware of her own socially tainted reputation, but also determined in her efforts to cast her labels of deviance, such as “disease[d]” (184), back onto those who position her as such. Through her recognition of and subsequent resistance to the areas where she has been declared deviant, Naronia further defies masculine authority in declaring her mad.

Her resistance appears even to effect reconsiderations from those previously inclined to completely dismiss her fears as insanity, thereby emphasizing her ability to negotiate opinions of her madness. Readers are informed that Henry Montbarry, though declaring the countess to be “partially deranged” (205), clarifies such a stance as to view her as “false, superstitious, inveterately cruel – but not mad” (145). The narrator further positions Henry as taking a “truer view” in his assessment of Naronia’s mental health; noting her deep “flush,” “incapability of calculating...distance,” “bloodshot and widely dilated” eyes, “articulation [that] was confused, and a “step [that] was unsteady,” he informs her that she has been “working too hard” and looked as if she “wanted rest” (219). While this notice may not seem significant, the narrator contrast it with “most men [who] would have suspected [Naronia] of being under the influence of some intoxicating liquor” (291). While “most men” (291) would have made an incorrect assumption regarding the countess’s true condition, Henry does not. This can be found

further in his reading of Narona's script, for, after finishing it, Henry "answer[s] silently by a sign in the affirmative" that he accepts Narona's work as truth, rather than the work of a "crazy creature," and asks his brother to "face the truth honestly...and say her memory" (235). The cost of such affirmation results in Henry's being called "childish" (235) and having declared that his own "nerves are out of order" (237).

Even Agnes Lockwood, the epitome of Victorian femininity, who originally suggested Narona was "mad" (145), begins to recant her opinions. While Narona's character continuously falls under the suspicion of deviance, Agnes's persona seemingly reflects the model for the ideal woman in Victorian society. Native-born, securely placed within the private home, and hailed by all as a virtuous woman, Agnes's questioning of Narona's mental stability seemingly echoes standard masculine notions regarding female deviance through her own embodiment of such standards. However, Agnes begins to doubt Narona's suspected madness, a hesitancy she originally feels "ashamed of" and decides it is nothing but "superstition" (164). Such shame would seem further to emphasize Agnes's desire to maintain her traditional Victorian femininity, but she continues to question those insistent upon Narona's madness, even opposing other males. For instance, she confides in Henry that, while she could possibly believe her defense of Narona to be a "superstitious view," or perhaps even a view reflective of Narona's immorality as a "guilty wife suffering the tortures of remorse" (216) she "feel[s] in her heart of hearts that [those who believe Narona mad] are deceived" (216). In adopting such a view, Agnes concludes that "nothing will shake [her] belief that [they] are still as far from having discovered the dreadful truth as ever" (216), thereby reiterating her belief in Narona's sanity.

Not only does Naron begin to effect change in private opinions of her mental instability, but she further negotiates the masculine medical discourse. Though the Countess ““completely puzzles [him]”” (92), the English doctor’s “sympathies [are] touched” and his “professional pride was a little hurt” (92). Arguably, the doctor’s feelings only risked being offended if he valued Naron’s opinion of his abilities. He further perceives himself “influence[d]” by a “feeling she produced in the Doctor,” one of an “overpowering feeling of professional curiosity” (90), which resulted in his “pulse quicken[ing] in beat in the presence of [his] patient” (91). Such “quicken[ing]” (91) connote not only a yearning of professional curiosity, but also the possibility of a sexual desire. The possibility a sexually-charged desire relates to an observation referenced earlier in Andrew Mangham’s “‘What Could I Do?’: Nineteenth-Century Psychology and the Horrors of Masculinity in *The Woman in White*,” for, in describing male character’s uneasiness with their own masculinity in Collins’s *The Woman in White*, Mangham notes that “male anticipations of women’s madness” often reflected “the unbalanced nature of masculinity,” an observation evidenced most through the “awakening sense of the dangerous possibilities of [the male character’s] own heterosexual desire.” Perhaps the doctor, besides begrudgingly acknowledging Naron’s opinion to be meaningful, further recognizes in himself a sexual interest alongside his professional curiosity. If the doctor does indeed recognize such a desire within himself, his hesitancy to produce a diagnosis of madness could be interpreted as what Rosmann identified as a “defense against women’s bodies,” a safety precaution against threats to his own masculinity.

A final resistance to dominant labels of her impending madness can be seen in the validation of her premonitions. For instance, after Naron perishes, Agnes realizes that

“the [deceased] person in the chair was no other than the widow of the dead Montbarry – the woman who had warned her that they were to meet again, and that the place might be Venice!” (201). While some readers may view Naroná’s traveling to Venice as intentional, thereby shaping her premonition as a work of her own hand, the countess’s experience with Agnes and the “hovering head” (203) finds description as a “supernatural movement” (203), an event Agnes verifies herself. Not only does Naroná’s firm belief in her meeting with Agnes take place, but her fears of dying afterwards come true upon Naroná’s “sudden and shocking death” (230). Though Naroná’s premonitions consume her, they validate her mental stability in their authenticity, as opposed to her behavior being explained through deviance.

Through Naroná’s ability to negotiate societal labels of female deviance in relation to madness, readers are left questioning whether the countess is truly insane, or were rumors of her mental instability a result of societal pressures to declare her so. Through her masculine assertion against such societal pressures, readers are able to not only identify a gendered discourse surrounding the issue of madness, but also perceive Naroná’s own masculine resistance as characteristic of the *Fin de Siècle*’s New Woman.

Madness in *The Guilty River*

While Naroná’s label of madness negotiates feminine diagnoses of deviance, the Lodger reveals ambiguities surrounding threats of masculine insanity. Similar to Naroná’s obsessive fears surrounding the fatalistic and almost supernatural relationship with Agnes, the Lodger develops two separate relationships which combine to suggest possibilities of madness. The first relationship involves an intense infatuation with Cristel which causes those around him – including himself – to question his mental stability.

However, upon first glance, the Lodger's love appears passionate rather than compulsively neurotic. Upon first meeting Gerald, he jealously informs the landlord that he "loves [Cristel]" and is "determined to marry her" (258). He further warns that "any man who comes between him and that cruel girl... does it at his peril," for she is "the misery of [his] life [as well as] the joy of [his] life, to love her" (258). Such a dramatic and intense passion gains further description in his portfolio, in which he describes his love through rather objectifying terms, as "his eyes devoured her; [his] heart beat as if it would burst out of [his] bosom....she belonged to me....She was MY FATE" (271-272). Here, he confesses "the state of [his] mind, exposed without mercy!" (272). While such a confession warrants a deep-rooted attachment, and his jealousy seems somewhat excessive, the Lodger's love for Cristel could still be interpreted as the ardor of a dedicated suitor, one that would still leave the Lodger's masculinity firmly in place.

However, while having infatuation does not seem to draw threats to the Lodger's masculinity, the strong connection to hysteria – and consequent irrationality - surrounding his feelings for Cristel serve to portray the lover as effeminate. For example, when warning Gerald to stay away from Cristel, he voice "rise[es] in pitch," revelatory of an inner "frenzy" (258). Such a frenzy soon draws strong associations of hysteria, for, when she "[takes] no notice of him... the hysterical passion in him forced it way outward – he burst into tears" (281). While such a reaction may be shakily attributable to the Romantic lover, it firmly questions Victorian notions of manly reserve. He further equates his passion to a "delirium," (271), and describes how he loves her "in spite of the protest of [his] own better taste" (272). While many might still view such a declaration as a sort of "loving against the will," taking the Lodger's knowledge that Cristel defies his

own “taste” (272) along with his confession that he has distanced himself purposefully from other women, those “privileged victims of hysterical impulse, who wrote [him] love-letters, and offered to console the ‘poor beautiful deaf man’ by marry him” (267), hint at an infatuation beyond that of love. In having such a controversial interest to the point of hysteria, the Lodger’s masculinity begins to fall under questioning in lieu of his effeminate behavior.

As mentioned previously, the Lodger’s passion for Cristel resulted in a jealous guarding of her person from other suitors, like Gerald; however, he soon confides in Gerald that he fears the river as a sort of “suitor,” thereby heightening the perception of others to view him as mad. He relates to Gerald that the River Loke

frightens [him]...all of [his dreams] sir, without exception connect Critstel with the river. Look at the stealthy current that makes no sound. In [his] last night’s sleep, it made itself heard; it was flowing in my ears with a water-music of its own. “Fool, fool, no Cristel for [him]; bid her good-bye, bid her good-bye!” The cruel current held me back when [he] tried to follow her. [He] struggled and screamed and shivered and cried. [He] woke up with a start that shook me to piece, and cursed [Gerald’s] interesting river....Oh that river, that river, what devil set [him] talking about it? [He’s] not mad, Mr. Roylake; only wretched. (294)

Through his seemingly irrational – and “[intuitive]” (271) – connection between Cristel and the river, the Lodger causes readers to further question his ardor as it evolves to now involve forces of nature. Not only does he adopt nature as a competitive suitor, he further expresses such revelatory emotions like ““scream[ing],” ““shiver[ing],” and ““cr[ying]”

(294). Such confidence expressed openly only further serves to emphasize a sense of feminine irrationality, both suggestive of ensuing labels of mental instability.

The second relationship through which readers – as well as characters – question the Lodger’s sanity would be through his fears surrounding his heritage. As discussed earlier in Chapter Two, his mixed breeding served in emphasizing his marginality from society, and the scandals conducted by his male forefathers posed as a potentially additional separator from societal respect. However, his belief in the transmutable quality of the sins of his ancestors cause the Lodger to ponder susceptibility to “moral contamination,” (264) and by extension, raising suspicions of moral deviance. In so doing, the Lodger’s fears once again render him effeminate, for while moral deviance often evidenced itself in the fallen woman, “contamination” (264) equates itself with fears surrounding the transmittable nature of female transgression. For instance, while the Lodger refers lovingly to his past times with his mother and tutor, he wonders, as “his father’s son,” if he is now susceptible to “the inherited evil lying dormant” (266) inside of him. Such a realization leaves him full of a “horrid dread” (266) and locked within a passivity as he awaits his future.

While both of these relationships serve as pivots through which the Lodger’s mental stability falls into question, his disability further serves to enforce Victorian notions of madness. For instance, Daffyd Moore points out, “the inability to partake of social interaction was taken to be one of the major symptoms of madness in the nineteenth century” (129). Clearly, the Lodger’s deafness naturally creates a barrier between himself and the other characters, as he is unable to properly communicate or understand them. The Lodger recognizes his separateness, as he no longer “bear[s] his]

family name” and is “out of society” (257). Yet, his isolation likewise raises questions as to the nature of such a diagnosis, as readers can also perceive his fears as results of disability rather than a moral malady. For instance, the Lodger sorrowfully writes that he is “living the death-in-life of deafness, apart from creatures – no longer my fellow-creatures – who could hear” (267). His only consolation arrives in being “alone,” a consolation in obtaining “composure of mind” (267). Through such questioning the Lodger appears almost counteractive against dominant suggestions that his isolation alone equates mental instability, and such resistance appears as resistive to his feminine disability.

However, these questions collapse through the Lodger’s prevailing belief that such isolation entails moral corruption, for, as he informs Gerald, his portfolio reveals “what devils my deafness has set loose in [him],” describing it a “horrid sight” (259). He even wonders if there is “some mysterious influence...that is hardening [his] nature? Is there something unnatural in the existence of man who never hears a sound? Is there a moral sense that suffers when a bodily sense is lost?” (269). The Lodger would seem to portray the answer “yes” to such questions, as he describes himself becoming “reckless and savage” (268), feelings only contained through his indulging of his “grandfather’s crimes” (268) and “imitate[ing]...criminal stories...[which] catch [his] enemies” (270). In portraying such nervousness, the Lodger again depicts traditional societal expectations of feminine deviance.

Not only does the Lodger reveal through his portfolio his fears surrounding moral contamination, but his inherent narcissism further identifies him with male insanity. As discussed earlier in Chapter Three, the Lodger’s artistic talents revealed not only a high

intelligence but also an egotistical obsession; such often translated into mental instability for Victorian men. For, as Kucich points out, “although it may seem counterintuitive to believe that melancholia has an affinity with exaggerated narcissism, such an affinity has a long history in British cultural assumptions about male cultural elites. At least since the Renaissance, melancholia had been associated in British culture – and in European thought generally – with the man of genius” (125). Kucich further relates how “male melancholia came to be viewed in the mid-Victorian years as dangerously effeminate, debilitating and banal” (127). This connection can be found in the Lodger’s own portfolio, for, after confessing that he has “become of enormous importance to myself,” he further admits only a few sentences below that he likewise fears that his “brains are not so completely under [his] own command” (260). While the Lodger does not consciously connect the two characteristics together, his willful admission of both suggests the author’s fulfillment of Kucich’s descriptions of “male melancholia,” a condition which only highlights the Lodger’s “dangerously effeminate” deviance (127).

While the Lodger’s disability posed as potentially disruptive of prevailing ideas concerning madness, yet collapsed due to his effeminate behavior, other character’s evaluation of the Lodger’s mental health further highlight such a tension. Gerald’s perspective originally seems receptive of the Lodger’s impending madness. Though he finds himself likewise marginalized through his foreign education, Gerald’s impressions closely align with Victorian notions of female deviance. He first describes the Lodger’s face as having “demonical rage and hatred” (259) towards him, thereby entailing associations of the monstrous. He perceives the Lodger to be “threatening” (258) and

wonders if the Lodger is “mad” (259). But, after reading the Lodger’s portfolio, he decides that

not one impression, but many impressions, troubled and confused [his] mind. Certain passages in the confession inclined [him] to believe that the writer was mad. But [Gerald] altered [his] opinion at the next leaf, and set him down as a man with a bitter humour, disposed to make merry over his own bad qualities. At one time, his tone in writing of his early life, and his allusions to his mother, won [Gerald’s] sympathy and respect. At another time, the picture of himself in his later years, and the defiant manner in which he presented it, almost made me regret that he had not died of the illness which had struck him deaf (273).

While at first glance, Gerald appears sympathetic to the Lodger’s condition, as he does not initially label the Lodger as “mad” (273), his emphasis and approval on the Lodger’s *earlier* attitude – meaning, before his disability – bespeaks an unacceptance of the Lodger *after* his disability appeared. Rather than expressing understanding at the Lodger’s changed attitudes, he instead positions a “defiant manner” would be better off having “died” (273), a rather similar Victorian notion towards female deviance.

While such an opinion condemns the Lodger as mentally unstable, it further creates sympathy for the Lodger’s inability to combat such overwhelming societal judgment. For instance, Gerald feels the Lodger as a miserable creature to be pitied, as the “the very exaggeration of his language had its effect on my mind [and] it revealed to me the horrible isolation among humanity of the deaf,” which creates a “picture of misery” (256) in the aristocrat’s mind. Gerald further tells the Lodger that his impaired

condition ““makes [him] sorry”” (257). While Gerald’s two-fold opinion develops both a conclusive yet sympathetic portrayal, the endeavors of both the medical profession and the Lodger’s close acquaintances contribute to such a perspective. The Lodger’s friends and nurses also pity him, yet they simultaneously attempt to reform him. Nurses look at Lodger “with pity in their eyes” (265), while his friends undertake his “moral management” (265). While these may seem natural reactions, they further appear somewhat patronizing, as the result made the Lodger’s “infirmity conspicuous, and direct[ed] the general attention to [him]” (266).

In an effort to combat such attitudes, the Lodger, similar to Naron, resists through counteracts. In giving Gerald his portfolio, the Lodger wishes for Gerald to ““look below the surface”” of his exterior, which he describes as a ““valuable habit”” (259). As discussed earlier in Chapter Three, the Lodger’s exertion in using his portfolio to control his characterization seems reminiscent of Naron’s assertiveness as she fought to represent her own character through her play. The Lodger shares yet another similarity with Naron in that he also appears highly conscious of societal labels of instability, evidenced in a letter written to Gerald that admitted the Lodger’s “rud[ness] and ungrat[fullness]” might be construed as “a little mad” (289); he even points out that he hopes Gerald will “make some allowance” and use his “sense of justice” (289) when considering if the Lodger’s actions equate mental instability. Through such attempts, the Lodger appears authoritative in his attempt to reclaim his masculinity; however, the revelatory nature of both the Lodger’s writings, as discussed earlier in Chapter Three, serve to question such a claim through their lack of masculine reserve. Not only is his writing effeminate in nature, but the Lodger further begs Gerald’s “indulgence for [his]

behavior” (289), as if seemingly to apologize for his deviant actions. While the Lodger effectually begins counteracts against labels of deviance, his lack of manly reserve and his failure to legitimize his actions negotiate interpretations of a total reclaimed masculine control.

The Lodger likewise attempts to resist labels of madness through the fact that his fears *do* come true, just as Naroná’s do; however, unlike Naroná’s unshakable faith in her premonitions, the Lodger’s collapses in subjection to societal judgments of his conduct. For instance, his fears of the river come to fruition, as Cristel escapes the Lodger through a “boat [a]drift,” thereby confirming his fear that “the River [would be a] Guilty accomplice” (353). Also, his fears of his “moral contamination” (264) seem justified, as he had created plans to “[carry] Cristel away by the river...while her father was keeping watch on the road” (353). Yet, instead of decisively claiming justification, the Lodger projects almost all his fears on the societal label of his mental instability: his disability. While he does ask Gerald to “remember his family taint,” he instead shifts emphasis to “a deaf man’s isolation among his fellow-creatures,” which he claims “developed” all previous failings in his person (351). Unable to overcome societal notions of deviance, the Lodger finds himself once again rendered effeminate due to his lack of masculine control.

Upon a closer examination of the portrayal of madness in each of Collins’s novellas, gender implications surrounding suspicions of hysteria in men and women quickly begin to surface. While Naroná’s resistive counteracts and assertiveness aided in refuting labels of her deviant behavior, the Lodger’s inability to resist such labels positioned him as possessing effeminate melancholia. Yet again, both of these characters,

while contributing further to the gendered discourse entrenched in Victorian notions of madness, further hint at the “the effeminate man and the masculine woman” (qtd. in Damrosch and Dettmar 1888) embodied in images of the New Woman and male aesthete or Decadent.

Chapter Six: Concluding Thoughts

As seen in these chapters, the issue of gender presents a complex picture, one whose close relation with multiple social constructs often requires careful analysis and no clear conclusions. Such a discussion held in these chapters has only scratched at the surface of the many discursive threads that compose gender ideology, and each thread contributes a new perspective to understanding the issue of gender more appropriately. The Victorian Era offers a fascinating study in regards to gender, especially with the *Fin de Siècle* ushering in gender models such as the New Woman and male aesthete or Decadent, both which upheave and transition traditional Victorian perspectives surrounding ideal masculinity and femininity.

As print culture both began and found itself entrenched in Victorian culture, literature offers itself up as an ideal medium through which scholars can attempt to pull apart these discourses in an effort to better understand such a significant time period. With sensation literature’s focus on the Victorian domestic life, this genre has found itself at the forefront among scholarly debates, and its ability to deconstruct, or at the very least, negotiate Victorian stereotypes has left many drawing theorizing ideas about the construction of Victorian gender ideology. Included in this discussion is Wilkie Collins, who, as his literary works gaining the mass audience’s attention – and the accompanied public outrage – of his time, has recently garnered the attention of many nineteenth-

century academics. As Jenny Bourne Taylor notes, “in the past few years...there has been growing interest in the full span of Collins’s writing, reflected in and generated by the increasing availability of his lesser-known works” (3). While his novels have maintained critical acclaim throughout the years, Collins’s full range of works are now being discovered and reexamined.

As more scholars look to the Victorian Era and its vast array of literature, including the works of prominent authors like Wilkie Collins, many have pondered the relationship Victorian literature and the twenty-first century possess. Jay Clayton asserts in “The Future of Victorian Literature” that Victorian literature did not always hold its current scholarly popularity, particularly in the twentieth century, as “critics in the early decades of the twentieth century...[and] advocates of Modernism in the novel contrasted its formal experimentation and self-referentiality with what they regarded as the improbably plots, naïve realism, and mawkish happy endings of Victorian fiction” (713). However, a more positive approach developed as the twentieth century closed, and John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff discuss this very relationship in their introduction to *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century*; together, they note that “an intense historiographical curiosity...drove the 1980s and 1990s Victorian revivalism and located the Victorian age as historically central to late-century postmodern consciousness.” (xi). While simultaneously pointing out contemporary time’s “nostalgia for the nineteenth century,” Kucich and Sadoff expand on this centrality as they identify postmodernism’s tendency to utilize the “the Victorian past to aestheticize contemporary reality” (xii). Other critics, such as Nancy Armstrong in her article “Contemporary Culturalism: How Victorian Is it?” attribute this rising interest in

Victorian culture through the postmodern culture's identification as its "other"; such an identification perceives itself as "very Victorian and not Victorian at all" through the enactment of "that contradiction as a division within our culture over the definition of culture itself" (312). While such debates reveal the impossibility of fully realizing the impact Victorian literature has had and is having during the twenty-first century, most academics agree that its influence is undeniable.

This resurgent interest Victorian literature became a specific focal point for new forms of literature, and variations of the Victorian novel have become increasingly popular in today's culture. Kucich and Sadoff explain such rewritings as attributable to "postmodern fetishizes notions of cultural emergence" and "nineteenth century provi[sions of] multiple eligible sites for theorizing such emergence" (xv). In agreement with Kucich and Sadoff, Anne Humphrey, in her article "The Afterlife of the Victorian Novel: Novels about Novels," pinpoints these sites, noting that the "gaps in the Victorian novel into which the aftered [postmodern] Victorian novel moves most persistently, then, are those of gender, race, sexuality, and sometimes class" (446). Through the commonality of such issues found in both postmodern and Victorian times, the "old" and "new" Victorian novels possess similarities; however, critics have shied from viewing these postmodern works as simply adaptations or even reinterpretations of the traditional Victorian novel¹⁶. Hilary M. Schor observes in her work "Sorting, Morphing, and Mourning: A.S. Byatt Ghostwrites Victorian Fiction" that

the Victorians...matter not for their answers but for their bewilderment. It is too easy to say that the 'new' Victorian novel frames itself around doubt, not faith, for any careful reading of the fiction of the mid-

nineteenth century reveals the same uncertainties posthumously, but somehow the contemporary weaving together of certainty and implausibility (all that makes up the rather uncertain ‘probabilities’ of realism) has been accomplished differently. (235)

Such “careful reading[s]” (Schor 253) have aided in the development new “aftered” (Humphrey 446) Victorian novel, one which, while distinctly separating itself from the Victorian novel, finds its origins entrenched in the literature of the nineteenth century.

While possessing such a unique relationship with the postmodern era, Victorian literature continues to surface in scholarly discussions, as its ability to highlight and influence postmodern narrative forms simultaneously reflects its own literary culture. Not separate from such a discussion would be the function of sensation works, for, as Beth Palmer notes in her article “Are the Victorians Still with Us? Victorian Sensation Fiction and Its Legacies in the Twenty-First Century,” that “sensation fiction’s most significant and last legacy is a self-consciousness about how the contemporary moment is constructed in and by print culture as it mediates the past” (87). As sensation fiction’s entrenchment in print culture highlights the “contemporary moment” (Palmer 87), Collins’s own works draws additional importance, for, as Rachel Malik notes in “The Afterlife of Wilkie Collins,” when one “consider[s] the versions and revisions of Collins’s writing as a set of processes of production and reception[, these] in turn reflect back on the publishing and reading cultures that shaped Collins’s own work and to which he was highly responsive” (Malik 181-182). In connecting Victorian and postmodern cultures through their submersion in print culture, Collins’s works gain additional significance not only in Victorian social context but postmodern as well.

Yet, as discussed previously, most scholarly attention has been devoted to the novel form as opposed to short fiction, and, though Taylor mentions the reappearing of Collins's lesser known works, those often include his lesser known *novels*, not his novellas. Such a neglect seems unnecessary, for, as Graham Good points out, the novella possesses a "wide range of mixtures: a high degree of psychological complexity and atmospheric sensitivity [which] is compatible with narrative suspense and surprise" (160). With a literary range like this, the novella has the potential to negate criticisms of its failure to develop, and instead position itself as both separate from yet equal to the novel and short story in both form and purpose. Just as the novel has been exalted due to its revelatory nature concerning Victorian culture, so can the novella likewise present an accurate, yet alternative, perspective. As presented by this paper, Collins's novellas possesses the ability to both discuss and navigate social issues of its times, and, as Humphrey has previously noted, contemporary critics have drawn similarities between postmodern and Victorian culture across a variety of issues, including "gender" (446). While I have discussed at length two of Collins's and their respective discussion on the shifting gender ideology present at the beginning of the *Fin de Siecle*. I further maintain that, in light of these novellas' ability to hold such a discussion, these works not only have earned scholarly appreciation but also the ability to impact our postmodern culture.

Notes

1. For more on the relationship between morality and sensation literature, see Griffin 55-73 and Oulton.
2. To take a close look at Collins's literary and social circle, see Edwards, Peters, Maunder, Law, Knight, and Nayder 15-40.
3. See Allen 31-40 for full synopses of Collins's more successful novels, and Bedell for a thorough list of Collins's works and brief biography of his life.
4. Two authors who discuss Collins's influence on later and present detective novelists would be Trecker 337-351 and Robinson 21-34. For additional scholarly discussions surrounding Collins's works as detective fiction, see Hanes and Hutter 181-209.
5. Other critical receptions of Collins's *The Woman in White* can be found in Liddle 37-41; Atlas; Weliver; Hyder 297-303; Hallum 27-47; Pykett 37-45; Williams 91-110; and Greenaway 40-57.
6. Other critical receptions of Collins's *The Moonstone* can be found in Maier 26-36 and Blumberg 162-186.
7. For an additional critical analysis of Collins and his sensation works, see Pykett 50-64.
8. Marler develops a more thorough analysis of the variations between the short story and the tale throughout the rest of his work.
9. May further provides an excellent literary review of various theories concerning the criteria for short stories.

10. Good separates the novella from the short story after a detailed examination of the novella's history, declaring the novella to constitute a separate genre.

11. For further insight into the relationship of sexuality and gender in popular fiction, see Kuzmanovic 411-425 and Schroeder 87-103.

12. See Fletcher's complete work for an analysis of gender from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries.

13. For ecocritical approaches to Collins's works see Bernstein 291-305 and Cooke.

14. Other scholarly analyses of British imperialism and "othering" in Collin's works can be found in Collins, Carens 239-265, Husemann 66-89, and Bollen and Ingelbien 403-420.

15. For a thorough discussion of Collin's professionalism in the literary market, see Law 91-111.

16. For critical studies on these adaptations, see Dillion, Steere 52-77, and Salah 32-55.

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