“Overpowering Vitality”: Nostalgia and Men of Sensibility in the Fiction of Wilkie Collins

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In Wilkie Collins’s controversial novel *Man and Wife* (1870), nostalgic and nostalgically presented old-fashioned Sir Patrick sarcastically summarizes the “cant of the day” that takes “physically-wholesome men for granted, as being morally-wholesome men into the bargain”: “I don’t see the sense of crowing over him [the model young Briton] as a superb national production, because he is big and strong, and... takes a cold shower bath all the year round.”1 The antiheroes of Collins’s novels eschew Victorian fashions of a muscular masculinity, anticipating the rise of the new fin de siècle antihero but also harking back to the sentimental heroes of the late-eighteenth-century novel of sentiment or sensibility.2 The shift from heroic masculinity to praiseworthy physical delicacy, which figures as a sign of moral strength, is connected to a sentimental reaffirmation of lovesickness and happy endings as well as to a corresponding redefinition of the villains, whose vitality contrasts with a series of similar feminized hypersensitive heroes. To understand this development, one needs to take a close look at the mental, moral, and bodily strengths and weaknesses of Collins’s heroes.

2 On account of the slippage of terminology, I use sentiment and sensibility synonymously unless a specific meaning is indicated. It has been pointed out that they meant “one and the same thing in the eighteenth century [and] were used by the writers of the period as interchangeable and synonymous” (B. S. Puthania, *Goldsmith and Sentimental Comedy* [New Delhi: Prestige, 1988], 18). Cf. G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility. Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), xvii–xix.

and also at their relationship with formidable, robust women—a relationship that sheds an intriguing light on gender issues in Victorian fiction. In particular, Collins's later novels consciously engage with the sensibilities and sensations of desirable, admirable heroes, nostalgically reclaiming an older ideal of manliness and thus doubly promoting nostalgic longing. Indulgence in emotions—especially in longing, pining, nostalgia, and lovesickness—is, after all, the redeeming quality of his nostalgically recalled men of sensibility.

The legacy of the novel of sensibility as recuperated by the Victorian sensation novel is a fascinating topic that has been ignored in literary criticism. Yet there are significant parallels between the late-eighteenth-century heroes of sensibility and the enervated (male) victims of sensation in Victorian sensation fiction. The reworking of the sentimental ideal of manliness in this body of literature places in a new light the reactions against ideals of the muscular hero in the late nineteenth century. Sensation novels such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and Charles Reade's *Hard Cash* (1863), written in the wake of Collins's popular novel *The Woman in White* (1860), create hypersensitive antiheroes who are reconfigured as assertive men possessed of recharged energies. Collins's fiction maps a shift away from this reassertion of energy and willpower. While drawing on Collins's extensive oeuvre, I shall focus on *No Name* (1862), written when the "sensational sixties" had reached a peak, and *Heart and Science* (1883), one of his mission novels, which redeploy the techniques and themes of the sensation genre to attack particular issues, such as, in the latter work, vivisection. Both novels discuss fashionable ideals of male as well as female beauty and their influence on the creation of fictional heroes and heroines. They link the question of proper masculinity to manly willpower as well as to feminine sensibilities. Their juxtaposition maps the development of a new antihero of feeling, exemplifying a shift from an ambiguous treatment of sensitive antiheroes in Collins's earlier novels to a new ideal of male sensibilities.

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Man and Wife, published eight years after No Name and thirteen years before Heart and Science, provides a useful point of entrance to the recurring theme of what constitutes a desirable hero.

The recuperation of delicate heroes and heroines of sensibility in Collins's fiction, however, has also to be seen against the background of Victorian preoccupations with health and strength, which tie in with anxieties about manliness. Recent reassessments of the Victorian sensation novel focus predominantly on its interest in gender issues, in particular on the relationship between women and madness. Insanity, the norms of normality, and incarceration in insane asylums or private attics are without doubt the favorite topoi of sensation fiction. Elaine Showalter speaks of a "pervasive cultural association of women and madness."³ Lyn Pykett argues that in opening up the transgressive domain of the improper feminine, the sensation novel can also function as a form of political activism.⁴ The centrality of female insanity in Victorian fiction is the subject of much recent criticism, whereas the significance of improper male behavior has been largely ignored. Yet the "abnormalities" of the new man of sensibility complement the transgressions of improper women, shedding a different light on gender conceptualizations in Victorian fiction. Alex J. Tuss's analysis of the "troubled young man" in mid-Victorian literature is one of the few studies that offer "a companion piece for the valuable body of criticism concerned with female writers, their works, and their representation of women." "Being judged a womanly man," writes Tuss, "was a concern for Victorian males," and "male writers often complained of being feminized."⁵ The anxiety about effeminacy is crucial to Victorian critiques of the sensation genre, in which feminized men frequently strive for a reaffirmed manliness, which invests the defense of hypersensitive men of feeling in Collins's later fiction with additional poignancy.

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Significantly, Pykett links the gendering of the sensation genre to a "feminization of literature and culture which began with Richardson and the sentimental novel in the eighteenth century." The defense of nervous anti-heroes of sensibility in Collins's fiction is partly a legacy of the sentimental novel and a reaction to the more embarrassing and dangerous aspects of Victorian ideologies of energy, enterprise, and muscularity, as vividly exemplified by Geoffrey Delamayn's moral and then physical demise in _Man and Wife_. J. A. Mangan points out that the "virulent anti-intellectualism" propagated by Victorian ideologies of "muscular Christianity" cultivates distrust of "the intellectual of questionable masculinity." Thomas Hughes's _Tom Brown's School Days_ (first published 1857) has been described as "a point of entrance into a masculine, masculinist worldview shaped by mid-Victorian social forces." Young Tom is "mighty proud of his running, and not a little anxious to show his friend [East] that although a new boy he was no milksop." Sixty years later this public school ethos is exposed in Alec Waugh's semiautobiographical _The Loom of Youth_ (1917), which cynically details bullying, bodily abuse, and the hypocrisy with which homosexuality is treated. The incoherence of surveillance engenders, as Waugh puts it, "a complete conspiracy of silence." Delineating the unhealthy obsession with athleticism, favoritism, and the imperialism that is to be nurtured by them, Waugh exposes the impact of muscular Christianity: "The Public School system was venerated as a pillar of the British Empire and out of that veneration had grown a myth of the ideal Public Schoolboy—Kipling's Brushwood Boy. In no sense had I incarnated such a myth and it had been responsible, I felt, for half my troubles. I wanted to expose it." 

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9 Alec Waugh, _The Loom of Youth_ (London: Methuen, 1984), 12, 10. See Norman Vance, _The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought_ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), on mid-Victorian novels that endorse the ideals of muscular Christianity, such as George A. Lawrence's
Consciously writing against Victorian ideals of manliness, the public school ethos, and the emphasis on physical competition at the universities, Collins embraced controversy in *Man and Wife*, in which he began to set his heroes apart from the strong, energetic men of his early fiction. Nostalgic Sir Patrick is a man of wit as well as of honor, of sense as well as of sensibility, a man who wears knee breeches and quotes poetry—in short, “a gentleman of the bygone [sic] time” (57). Arnold Brinkworth, his niece’s suitor, comes close to his nostalgic ideal, because he does not resemble the “model young Briton of the present time” (68). Arnold is a sentimental antihero, naive, tearful, and helpless, but preferable to the strong, muscular villain, Geoffrey. Arnold’s tears honor him, testifying to his superiority over his base, but popular, successful, energetic, “modern” friend:

Left by himself, Arnold’s head dropped on his breast. The friend who had saved his life—the one friend he possessed, who was associated with his earliest and happiest remembrances of old days—had grossly insulted him; and had left him deliberately, without the slightest expression of regret. Arnold’s affectionate nature—simple, loyal, clinging where it once fastened—was wounded to the quick. Geoffrey’s fast retreating figure, in the open view before him, became blurred and indistinct. He put his hand over his eyes, and hid, with a boyish shame, the hot tears that told of the heartache, and that honored the man who shed them. (274)

The idealization of the tearful antihero is at the heart of eighteenth-century literary sentimentalism. Conceived in the wake of Richardson’s novels, a plethora of desirable heroes are inspired by the romances against which eighteenth-century novelists write so hysterically, by what has been termed the “Grandisonian hero,” and also by Henry Mackenzie’s and Laurence Sterne’s sentimental heroes. The importance of Mackenzie’s hero of hypersensitivity, whose tearful resistance to the ways of the world ends in an untimely death, which preserves his virginity, highlights these prevailing trends. *The Man of Feeling* (1771) has provided the sentimental crying and fainting hero with a lasting epi-

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*Guy Livingstone* (1857) and *Sword and Gown* (1859) and Frank E. Smedley’s *Frank Fairlegh* (1859).

taph. Harley is “a child in the drama of the world,” simple and therefore menaced. His childlike innocence and his capacity to wallow in distress are presented as the standard virtues of sensibility. The idealization of distress as an expression and to some extent a result of sensibility forms a topos in sentimental novels.

The conceptualization of physical and mental affliction as a moral qualification for heroes as well as heroines of sensibility deserves a closer look. As it is bluntly put in The Man of Feeling, Harley’s “notions of the kalon, or beautiful” focus on a tear at a moving tale (21–22). Καλόν signifies both “good” and “beautiful,” pinpointing the sentimental conflation of moral virtue with aestheticized tearfulness. Sentimental fiction truly makes a virtue of loss and longing, prescribing them as preconditions of beautifying displays of sensibility. “[I]t is your misfortune to have too much sensibility to be happy,” Arabella writes to the delicately beautiful Emily in Frances Brooke’s novel The History of Emily Montague (1769). Somatic susceptibility is eulogized. Emily’s “elegant form has an air of softness and languor, which seizes the whole soul in a moment.” In The Excursion (1777), also by Brooke, the desirable hero, Charles Montague, suffers from an illness brought on by lovesickness that leaves “a paleness which rendered his countenance, if possible, more interesting than ever.” The pallor that enhances Charles’s beauty exemplifies the eroticization of the tearful sentimental antihero around the turn of the century.

This refrigeration of the male body engenders a plenitude of frail, pale heroes who swoon, weep freely, blush exuberantly, and proudly nurture “feminine” susceptibilities. The physical frailty of desirable heroes excuses even their moral fallibility as long as they “take hysterically to their beds,” as Claudia L. Johnson puts it. Reformed rakes deploy similar strategies. In Charlotte Smith’s Emmeline (1788), Adelina’s

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seducer, Fitz-Erward, who "contracted his loose morals by being thrown too early into the world," pines in remorseful lovesickness. Returning "thin, pale, emaciated, looking as if he were unhappy," redeems him. The propagation of male hypersensitivity and sentimentality perhaps expectedly leads to fears of effeminacy. Adam Smith writes that "the delicate sensibility required in civilized nations sometimes destroys the masculine firmness of character." Intriguingly, this "feminization" of the hero has led feminist critics to remark that the cult of sensibility disrupts gender codes, "leaving women without a distinct gender site" (Johnson, 11). Novels of sensibility grant equal rights to aestheticized affliction. This equality does not necessarily imply that the hero of feeling is emasculated, or that he violently usurps domestic space by becoming thus feminized or domesticated, although it is his "feminine" occupations, such as crying and sitting in boudoirs, that the parodied effeminate anthero becomes notorious for.

The late-eighteenth-century novel of sensibility, predominantly written by women in search of new Grandisonian heroes, cultivates melancholy, tearful, and lovesick men as desirable romantic heroes. Yet at the same time exploiting and transforming "the melancholy of the market-place," it also anticipates the reassessment of genuine as opposed to affected sensibility that is central to Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility (1811). It has been pointed out that Austen's novels are about "a sensibility that is 'real,' 'strong,' 'great': "If there is a false sensibility that is vain and reductive, there is also a true one, unpretentious and valuable." Although Fanny Price's physical homesickness

17 George E. Haggerty, exploring "the role of such gentle men in the construction of domesticated masculinity," maintains that "the 'man of feeling' usurps female prerogative in almost brutalizing ways" (Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century [New York: Columbia University Press, 1999], 4).
in *Mansfield Park* (1814) and Anne Elliot’s romantic melancholy in *Persuasion* (1818) are treated sympathetically, Austen’s parodies of affected sensibility inaugurate the downfall of idealized illness. Mrs. Musgrove’s famous “large fat sighings” in *Persuasion* and Mr. Woodhouse’s endless gruel in *Emma* (1816) are notorious.\(^{20}\) The unfinished *Sanditon*, set at a fictional Regency watering place, boasts an entire family of hypochondriacs, including an emasculated “Broad made and Lusty” victim of fashionable preoccupations with invalidism.\(^{21}\)

The repudiation of lethargy and bodily procrastination initiates a reversal of the sentimental mind-body relationship. Austen’s reassessment of sensibility and sentimentality would undoubtedly have been more familiar to Collins than the plethora of eighteenth-century novels that unashamedly affirm—or at the very least reaffirm—emotionalism. In Victorian fiction the idealization of weakness fostered by literary sentimentalism is displaced by an ideology of energy and enterprise that discredits incapacity. Fred Kaplan speaks of “a characteristic Victorian triad—energy, will, and power.”\(^{22}\) The gender differentiation that forms an integrated part of the new ideologies of health and strength identifies physical illness with both moral weakness and effeminacy.

Victorian sickroom fiction reflects this split.\(^{23}\) Male protagonists such as Pip in Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1861) experience catharsis in sickness, which restores moral health, while sentimentalized somatic decline is often reserved for women and children. Critics speak of the figure of “the angelic, and preferably dying, child.”\(^{24}\) The deaths of Dickens’s Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) and Paul Dombey in *Dombey and Son* (1848), as well as William’s meticulously detailed demise in Ellen Wood’s sensation novel *East Lynne* (1861), are

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among the most notorious examples. Dickens’s Eugene Wrayburn in *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) has been called “the Yellow Book Wrayburn” and as such anticipates fin de siècle antiheroes. His diatribe against energy as a societal ideal poises him against the social climber Headstone, a physically powerful, determined, and dangerous man, whose willpower feeds a threatening obsession. “The idiots talk,” said Eugene, leaning back, folding his arms, smoking with his eyes shut, and speaking slightly through his nose, “of Energy. If there is a word in the dictionary under any letter from A to Z that I abominate, it is energy. It is such a conventional superstition, such parrot gabble!” Wrayburn’s physical altercation with his energetic double results in a sentimental sickroom narrative. Rescued by the woman he loves, he is reborn, purged of his effete languor. In eighteenth-century sentimental fiction as well as in Collins’s later novels, however, the lack of willpower, energy, and “masculine firmness,” to use Adam Smith’s term, is a sign of sensitivity. Languid melancholy, sickness, and at times also distress seem to be the price that men of feeling have to pay for their sensibilities. R. F. Brisenden suggests that in the eighteenth-century novel of sensibility, the “notion not that virtue is rewarded but that virtue invites its own punishment” becomes a paradigm cliché. As it is expressed in Frances Burney’s *Camilla* (1796), “innocence [is] oppressed through its own artlessness, and inexperience duped by villainy.” In Charles Lamb’s *Rosamund Gray* (1798), the villain Matavis is “cold and systematic in all his plans,” a calculating man of the world. It is emphasized that his rape of Rosamund is not the result of uncontrolled passion. On the contrary, his “very lust was systematic.” It is his rejection of sensibility that condemns him: “O ye Matavisés of the age, ye know not what ye lose, in despising these petty topics of endeared remembrance, associated circumstances of past times.”

The alignment of willpower, strength, and also emotional control

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with moral depravity recurs in late Victorian and Edwardian fiction, as the Victorian health craze loses its impetus. Gerald dying "broken up in the football match" in E. M. Forster's novel *The Longest Journey* (1907) takes the lighthearted ridicule of exhausting rowing competitions in *Hard Cash* to its logical conclusion and is reminiscent of Geoffrey's more sensational demise during a footrace in *Man and Wife*.28 Gerald is a brute and a bully, sharply contrasting with the novel's delicate and disabled hero, Rickie. As Norman Vance puts it, "The official, manly ideology that the healthy body will foster a healthy mind and a healthy morality seems increasingly wide of the mark" (192).

The novel of sensibility and the sensation novel share, moreover, a concern with both the proper feminine and the proper masculine. Their emphasis on sensual experience is linked to fears of "the excessive or 'effeminate' feeling of a potentially uncontrollable feminine emotionalism" (Pikett, *Feminine*, 27). Recent reassessments of the sensation novel suggest a connection between, or at least parallel development of, popular genres that produce affect. "Despite their difference," notes Ann Cvetkovich, "genres such as the Gothic novel, the sentimental novel, the novel of sensibility, the Newgate novel, the domestic novel, and the detective novel are similar to the sensation novel in their ability to produce affect."29 In the sensation novel, female excess is, as feminist critics frequently emphasize, given free rein, even though it is usually policed and the policing is not always criticized. Male sensibilities are let loose as well, and, in this case, it is more often the system of surveillance and restraint that is exposed.

The resistance of the emerging hypersensitive antiheroes engenders sensational plots that focus on a fear of incarceration in insane asylums. Incompetent or fake diagnoses, ruthless experimentation, and other abuses of power by medical practitioners as well as by scheming relatives become the main ingredients of sensation plots that involve critical dissections of the definition of sanity. In many novels the victims are not "madwomen in the attic" but young, sensitive, and delicate men of feeling who fail to abide by ideologies of willpower.

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and capitalist enterprise. Collins’s *Jezebel’s Daughter* (1880), in every
sense a sensation novel, although written twenty years after the genre’s
heyday, sympathetically describes Jack Straw, a holy fool, as one of “the
poor martyrs of the madhouse.” The hero of Reade’s *Hard Cash* is
removed to an asylum because his absence will facilitate his relatives’
financial plots. Reminiscent of a sentimental man of feeling, he is “a
clever boy, not a cool . . . man of the world.” It is precisely his “feminine
suffering [that makes] him doubly interesting,” testifying to his emo-
tional and also intellectual potential. In this quality he contrasts with
his university friends, “who strayed into Aristotle in the intervals of Per-
spiration.”30 Sally Shuttleworth compares the limitations that con-
strained Victorian women to “equivalent constraints . . . imposed upon
young men: failure to show sufficient enterprise in the realm of com-
merce was judged sufficient evidence of insanity.”31 What was consid-
ered inappropriate for a young woman was prerequisite for her male
counterpart.

The experimentation with gender boundaries in the sensation
novel marks it as an arena in which active antiheroines and passive
antiheroes are played out against each other. Collins’s *No Name* exem-
plifies both the antiheroine’s transgressions (and her failure and suc-
cessful reintegration) and the dismissal of the weak antihero in favor of
a hero who is both physically and morally strong. At the center of most
ever sensation novels lies a reassertion of willpower and manly firm-
ness, a restoration of a proper masculinity. In Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s
Secret*, the habits of Robert Audley, “the most vacillating and unener-
getic of men,” invite Lady Audley to describe him as a nervous hypo-
chondriac and then as a monomaniac. Thus, while attempting to read
the signs and symptoms of crime and madness, the novel’s amateur
detective figure is reinscribed as the sought madman. As Lady Audley
accuses her suspicious brother-in-law, it becomes a matter of skillful
scheming for him to combat her allegations: “Are you going mad,
Mr. Audley, and do you select me as the victim of your monoma-

Marston, 1853), 47, 38, 11.
31 Sally Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (Cambridge: Cam-
bridge University Press, 1996), 50.
nia? eventually, it is the murderous, bigamous, and possibly hereditarily insane Lady Audley herself—all of these attributes are part of her sensationally revealed secret—who is tricked into lifelong incarceration in an asylum abroad. Robert has to reassert his willpower, his dormant energies, and his interest in an enterprise. He investigates his friend's death and saves his uncle from a powerful, willful woman even as he successfully woos the good woman he loves. This twist in the narrative initiates a rejection of the hypersensitive hero's resistance and reaffirms ideologies of vigor and strength.

Collins's extensive oeuvre maps the development of the man of feeling both in the ways that he is treated by society and its institutions and in the novels' treatment of his failures or successes. Although the nervous, physically delicate hero of *Basil* (1852) anticipates the transformation of masculinity that becomes central in the novels of the 1870s and 1880s, interest in the proper masculine is displaced in this early novel by a focus on the sensual woman who deceives the delicate hero. Basil falls madly in love with a physically well-developed, even fleshy, but emotionally and intellectually insipid woman, who breaks his heart and almost drives him insane. His lovesickness results in physical illness. It is reserved for Collins's later novels to reclaim love and longing from narratives of sickness and the sensitive hero from allegations of effeminacy and morbidity.

Janet Oppenheim sees Walter Hartright in Collins's best-known sensation novel, *The Woman in White*, as an "important fictional figure from [this] transitional period of Victorian manliness." Like the

33 Wilkie Collins, *Basil: A Story of Modern Life* (London: Bentley, 1852). As early as *Hide and Seek* ridicule of Victorian health crazes paves the way for the new nervous, nostalgic hero, but at this point the description of the physically strong, cheerful, and careless protagonist is mainly humorous and far removed from the vehement diatribes in Collins's later works. Zack is "the perfection of healthy muscular condition," with "a thoroughly English red and white complexion," and is "the most thoughtless of human beings": "In short, Zack was a manly, handsome fellow, a thorough Saxon, every inch of him; and (physically speaking at least) a credit to the parents and the country that had given him birth." When he decides to become an artist, he starts by practicing leapfrog in the studio (In *Hide and Seek* [London: Bentley, 1854], 273).
hypochondria of the antiheroes in *Hard Cash* and *Lady Audley's Secret*, however, Hartright’s nervous sensibility is transformed into a self-confident masculinity strengthened by experience abroad. The “transitory period” that he spends in a primeval Central American forest functions as “a process of rebirth” and “a crucial period in his growth.”

Hartright’s tested fortitude—in a novel that promises to show “what a Woman’s patience can endure, and what a Man’s resolution can achieve”—plays a crucial role in what has been termed a “case of feminization via the nerves.” Whereas Laura is seen to be “nursing that essentially feminine malady, a slight headache” (31), “Mr. Fairlie’s selfish affection and Mr. Fairlie’s wretched nerves meant one and the same thing” (37). His effeminate body is diagnosed as diseased: “He had a frail, languidly-fretful, over-refined look—something singularly and unpleasantly delicate in its association with a man” (38).

Hartright returns from his strengthening experiences to save the delicate woman whom he loves, and who has been declared dead, as well as her half-sister, a strong, almost masculine, antiheroin, who has been emaciated and emasculated, as it were, by a fever.

The topos of restored manliness is even more pronounced in Collins’s next novel, *No Name*, published two years after *The Woman in White*. In its focus on the transgressing antiheroin and its stereotyping of effeminate, peevish men as well as of heroic manliness, *No Name*, in fact, best illustrates the early development of Collins’s heroes. Even more than some of the earlier novels, it endorses the manly hero, Captain Kirke, whose worth has been tested in the China Seas, arrives just in time on his aptly named ship, the *Deliverance*, to rescue the novel’s strong and scheming, but by now endearingly helpless, heroine. The novel’s emphasis on the transgressing heroine admittedly pushes the problematics of the hero’s manliness to the margins of the narrative,

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but its juxtaposition of proper forms of femininity and masculinity deserves a closer look.

Like most sensation novels of the 1860s, *No Name* exposes ostensibly ideal family life in Victorian Britain. It focuses on power in the family, on physical as well as emotional violence at home, on the "domestic Gothic" of the sensation genre (Nayder, passim). Anticipating Collins's mission novels, it concerns, moreover, the legal issues of adultery and illegitimacy. In many of Collins's novels the law plays a central role and is attacked for its inconsistencies and inhumanity. The disputation of wills in *No Name*, however, also articulates a struggle of willpower—a quality that the effeminate men in the novel lack and the strong, transgressing women have in abundance. The balance between genders is restored as the disputed inheritance is given to one of the few manly men and the only consummately passive woman, while her transgressing sister is put in her place by an illness that, significantly, leaves her physically weakened and morally chastened.

The opening chapters introduce the emphatically happy household of the Vanstones, an ostensibly perfect Victorian family. Yet after the parents' sudden deaths, the family lawyer discloses a never suspected dark past. Respectable, florid Andrew Vanstone, a happy husband and fond father of two grown-up daughters, had been guilty of adultery. Married as a young man to a debauched woman in the line of Bertha Mason, in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), he had been saved at the brink of suicide by one Major Kirke, Captain Kirke's father, who negotiated a pecuniary arrangement with the woman. She then settled in New Orleans, her probable place of origin, which again links her to Bertha Mason. Casting the debauched wife as a type, Collins refuses to make more of her dubious past. Love and lovesickness, however, receive their customary defense from him: Andrew returned to England and fell in love with a woman who agreed, as Jane Eyre would not have done, to live with him as his wife despite his prior entanglement. After almost thirty years they were finally able to marry on the death of the first Mrs. Vanstone, which is mysteriously hinted at in the first chapter. Yet this marriage has disinherited Andrew's children, for it has annulled his will. Then, after his sudden death in a railway accident, his second wife dies while giving birth to a stillborn boy. This series of unfortunate events leaves the two Vanstone daughters penniless, "nobody's children" with "no name."
As in many of Collins’s novels, adultery and illegitimacy are sympathetically treated, while the law and society are the culprits. Andrew’s fortune goes to his elder brother, whom their father disinherited, and then, after his own death, to the brother’s sickly son, Noel. While Andrew’s older daughter, Norah, is resigned to be exploited as a governess in a stereotypically nasty rich family reminiscent of those exposed in Anne Brontë’s *Agnes Grey* (1847), the younger daughter, Magdalen, vows to reclaim her fortune. As the novel traces her struggles under the “opposing influences of Good and Evil,” as it is melodramatically put in the preface, it becomes frighteningly clear that Magdalen will stop at nothing: “It is your [society’s] law—not hers. She only knows it as the instrument of a vile oppression, an insufferable wrong. The sense of that wrong haunts her, like a possession of the devil.”

Although Magdalen’s obsession is detailed with sympathy and her transgressions are viewed with tentative admiration for her daring attempts to free “herself from all home-dependence, ... to run what mad risks she pleases, in perfect security from all home-control” (180), they are shown to lead to her depravity. By carrying out her ruthless schemes, she loses moral and then physical substance, pathetically dwindling away.

Magdalen’s exploitation of Noel’s admittedly repellent physical and moral weaknesses shows her at her worst. She plots to marry this “abject mannikin” (291) under an assumed name, and his feebleness is then comically accentuated by the contrast with his emphatically strong wife, who, although only eighteen, is blooming in “full physical maturity,” “in right of her matchless health and strength”: “Suffering! ... I don’t know the meaning of the word: if there’s anything the matter with me, I’m too well” (14, 15). Yet Magdalen does suffer, after all; as a transgressing woman redeemed, she lives up to her name. In the opening chapter the omniscient narrator suggests that her name simply externalizes her “self-contradictory” nature, but this seeming contradiction proves as ominous in foreshadowing her ordeal as her complaint about being “too well”:

Magdalen! It was a strange name to have given her? ... Surely, the grand old Bible name—suggestive of a sad and somber dignity; recall—

ing, in its first association, mournful ideas of penitence and seclusion—had been here, as events had turned out, inappropriately bestowed? Surely, this self-contradictory girl had perversely accomplished one contradiction more, by developing into a character which was out of all harmony with her own christian [sic] name! (15)

Her “overflowing physical health” and “exuberant vitality” (14) contrast sharply with the moral and physical feebleness not only of the overindulged Noel but of the man Magdalen really loves, the spineless sneak Frank Clare. Handsome “in his own effeminate way,” Frank embodies the tearful sentimental antihero at his lowest: “His beard was still in its infancy; and nascent lines of whisker traced their modest way sparely down his cheeks. His gentle wandering brown eyes would have looked to better advantage in a woman’s face—they wanted spirit and firmness to fit them for the face of a man” (41).

Thus furnished, Frank meets with the narrator’s steady ridicule. “Ready tears” rise in his eyes (116). He is “so dull and helpless” in his “sentimental resignation” (76, 78). That “his gentle melancholy of look and manner [have] greatly assisted his personal advantages” counts against him (78). He is lampooned as a “convalescent Apollo,” an apt description for most sentimental antiheroes: “His soft brown eyes wandered about the room with a melting tenderness; his hair was beautifully brushed; his delicate hands hung over the arms of his chair with a languid grace” (78). The explanation for Magdalen’s love, whose strength and will disqualify her as a sentimental heroine until both are broken, is equally satiric. As her parents put it, “She is resolute and impetuous, clever and domineering; she is not one of those model women who want a man to look up to, and to protect them—her beau-ideal (though she may not think it herself) is a man she can henpeck” (77). Frank’s “small regular features” are, together with his want of “spirit and firmness” (41), denounced as unmanly and revealed as indicators of moral frailty. His delicate beauty does not disqualify him as a desirable hero, but it obscures his petulance. Not blinded by love, Magdalen’s sister Norah clearly sees that he “is selfish, he is ungrateful, he is ungenerous—” (69). His helplessness is a symptom of his idleness, and his tears are meant to appeal to Magdalen’s sympathy.

Meanwhile, Noel serves as Frank’s caricatured double. While Mag-
dalen views Frank through the eyes of love, the same physical attributes disgust her in the man she loathes. This “frail, flaxen-haired, self-satisfied, little man,” with a complexion “as delicate as a young girl’s” and a “weak little white moustache” (281), begins to waste away after his marriage: “The poor weak creature! The abject, miserable little man!” (429). Noel becomes the helpless object of a power struggle between her scheming wife and his “domestic treasure” (205), the old Swiss housekeeper, Mrs. Lecount, a subaltern servant who subverts the rule of her English master by manipulating his will. This struggle, concerning the direction of Noel’s dwindling willpower and the contents of his last will, depicts the “mannikin” as a pitiful victim and strong women as perverted.

Both elder Vanstones having died intestate, Noel leaves two wills, one written under his wife’s influence and one, literally, at his veneful housekeeper’s dictation. This second will disinherits his “false” wife, leaving her again with “no name”: “No legacy of any kind is bequeathed to her. Her name is not once mentioned in her husband’s will” (457). Magdalen’s conniving becomes increasingly desperate. She gains entrance to the house of the new heir as a parlor maid, a scheme that underlines the subversive stratagems of transgressing women. Magdalen’s redemption is her inability to succeed, which undercuts the fascination with which her plots are delineated and eventually restores her to the novel’s deserving hero, Captain Kirke. Ultimately, the inheritance goes to a peripheral character who happens to fall in love with Norah, who is thus rewarded for her resignation. As an ideal of virtuous womanhood, however, she recedes too far into the background to qualify as a foil to her sister, who, it is repeatedly made clear, is more interesting than her dull, largely offstage, counterpart.38

But the big, strong, scheming young woman is cut down to size. Used up by her final attempt to gain control of her husband’s last will, Magdalen collapses: “Her energy was gone; her powers of resistance were crushed” (672). Arriving just in time, Captain Kirke finds her hidden in the “squalid by-ways of London,” “cast friendless and help-

less, on the mercy of strangers, by illness which had struck her prostrate, mind and body alike” (701). When Kirke takes her up in his manly arms, her mind wanders “back to old days at home,” and she mistakes him for her father (699). Now infantilized, she can recuperate from the perversions wrought by her willpower to begin a new life as Kirke’s grateful wife. The traces of illness in her face leave “a delicacy in its outline which adds refinement to her beauty” (727).

In contrast to Kirke, Magdalen’s first suitor, Frank, is a failure abroad, although he becomes a successful sycophant in England; indeed, his pathetic helplessness ensures his advancement as, in the words of his outspoken father, “one of the legislators of this Ass-ridden country” (541). Having returned to England stowed away on Kirke’s ship, Frank marries a rich colonialist’s widow old enough to be his grandmother and thus joins the other feeble members of the ruling classes. The juxtaposition of enfeebling cultivation and a hard life in tropical or arid places where manliness is tested partly reasserts the ideologies of masculinity. Kirke’s successes in the China Seas contrast both with Frank’s pitiful flight from a dull position as clerk in China and with the armchair existence of the imperialist Noel, whose dressed-up, wizen body is more grotesque than any of his exotic “litter of curiosities” (282). Yet Kirke’s true heroism manifests itself in his rescue of Magdalen, whom he marries, regardless of society’s judgment of her former ruthlessness, and thereafter “nurses . . . with a woman’s tenderness” (Pykett, Sensation, 26). Even Kirke shares the tenderness, if not the susceptibilities, of Collins’s increasingly delicate heroes.

In Collins’s next novel, Armadale (1866), big, handsome Allan Armadale is treated with fond ridicule; his empty-headed naivété sets off the sympathetically portrayed emotional susceptibility and intellectual superiority of the novel’s real hero, Midwinter, Allan’s secret namesake and double, “a slim, dark, undersized man.” In The Moonstone

30 Wilkie Collins, Armadale (London: Smith, Elder, 1866), 342. Christopher Kent points out how both Allan and Midwinter pale in comparison with a strong, scheming, villainous woman: “The adventuress Lydia Gwilt, by contrast with both the Armadales, is a bold risk taker and a calculator of the odds, who takes advantage of circumstance and accident to shape the perceptions of probability of men to meet her own requirements” (“Probability, Reality, and Sensation in the Novels of Wilkie Collins,” in Smith and Terry, 61). Intriguingly, Lydia is also “the dubious beneficiary of the male chauvinism of public opinion which declares [that beautiful women cannot commit murder]” (71).
(1868), the biggest Englishman figures as the morally weakest, most corrupt character. The real thief of the moonstone is the eminently respectable, hypocritically pious philanthropist Godfrey Ablewhite. That this muscular Christian serves as the novel’s villain paves the way for physically unprepossessing, often awkward heroes, whose delicacy contrasts forcefully with Godfrey’s self-confident, grand exterior. By eulogizing his “magnificent head,” “his charming voice and his irresistible smile,” Miss Clack inadvertently parodies the “Christian Hero.”

*Man and Wife* (1870), a controversial novel about the inconsistencies of marriage laws in Britain and about the moral as well as physical dangers of athleticism, witnesses a turning point in the development of Collins’s heroes. “Rough in broadcloth” (x), Geoffrey Delamain embodies the healthy muscular villain. Cultivated only physically, he is “a magnificent animal”: “The modern gentleman was young and florid, tall and strong. [His] features were as perfectly regular and as perfectly unintelligent as human features can be” (77, 76). Sir Patrick, nostalgic for intellectually refined men of sense and sensibility, who in his judgment have vanished from society, is proved right as the novel dramatizes Godfrey’s physical and moral demise. Having exhausted his “vital force” (489), he collapses during a race; he also plots the murder of his unwanted wife, who after his death marries the old, old-fashioned, but nostalgically idealized Sir Patrick. The development of Collins’s heroes is, in fact, informed by a twofold nostalgia: the new ideal is built on nostalgia for a sentimental, romantic hero, and nostalgia is praised as an essential part of his sensibility.

In Collins’s subsequent novels of the 1870s, the contrast between muscular men of the world and sentimental heroes recurs endlessly. In *Poor Miss Finch* (1872), Oscar Dubourg is not only beautiful in a girlish way, fragile and epileptic, but also more irresolute and sensitive than his identical, evil twin. “He was a little too effeminate for my taste,” declares Madame Pratolungo, the delightful would-be revolutionary and first-person narrator through most of the book. “In common with

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all women, I like a man to be a man. There was, to my mind, something weak and womanish in . . . this Dubourg." Temporarily cured of her blindness, Miss Finch is tricked into marrying the wrong twin, Nugent, but she can tell them apart by touching them, reaffirming the belief in spiritual love and the power of nostalgia that are asserted in most of Collins's novels. Nostalgia for the time before her sight was restored leads Miss Finch to discover the deception. Eventually, she is united with Oscar. Madame Pratolungo has to acknowledge that her initial preference for the more resolute twin was the result of common prejudice in favor of energetic men:

A man with delicately-strung nerves says and does things which often lead us to think more meanly of him than he deserves. . . . A man provided with nerves vigorously constituted is provided also with a constitutional health and hardihood which express themselves brightly in his manners, and which lead to a mistaken impression that his nature is what it appears to be on the surface. . . . In the last of these typical men, I saw reflected—Nugent. In the first—Oscar. (2:274)

Thus the surface attractions and hidden qualities that are so central to Man and Wife—its "prologue" focuses on the "strong personal contrast" between "a dashing, handsome man" with "energy in his face" and "an inbred falseness under it," on the one hand, and the "steady foundation of honor and truth" of his "slow and awkward" counterpart (11–12), on the other—are pointedly exemplified by the twin brothers of Poor Miss Finch. In The New Magdalen (1873), Horace Holmcroft is morally weak and physically handsome, with "his clear complexion, his bright blue eyes, and the warm amber tint in his light Saxon hair." His physical largeness, which sets off his moral pettiness, contrasts sharply with the stature of Julian Gray, who is "of not more than the middle height." Like the aestheticized sickness of the sentimental hero, Julian’s pallor highlights the “lustrous brightness of [his eyes],” which indicate his deep nature. As expected, the pale, slight man of feeling is the desirable hero.

In The Law and the Lady (1875), a strong, resolute heroine pushes her sensitive husband to the margins to clear his name and restore his

peace of mind. In fact, the novel boasts a successful female amateur detective as well as an interesting treatment of doubled weak men. Eustace Macallan, tried for the murder of his first wife, suffers under the Scottish verdict of not proven. The “state of nervous depression” to which he succumbs is offset by his second wife’s resolute enterprise. Indeed, Valeria’s attraction to Eustace’s gentleness and sweetness suggests a reversal of traditional gender roles: “He looks at me with the tenderest and gentlest eyes (of a light brown) that I ever saw in the countenance of a man. His smile is rare and sweet; his manner, perfectly quiet and retiring.” His androgynous double, Miserrimus Dexter, who has been called “a chaotic mixture of male and female gender characteristics who is at once a villain, a madman, and a cripple,” externalizes Eustace’s effeminacy: “He would have looked effeminate, but for the manly proportions of his throat and chest. . . Never had a magnificent head and body been more hopelessly ill-bestowed than in this instance!” (173).

Dexter’s combination of vulnerability and violence, as well as his passion for both Valeria and her predecessor, marks him as Eustace’s double. After Valeria’s discovery that the first wife died not by a murderer’s but by her own hand, convinced by Dexter of her husband’s indifference, and after Dexter’s own destruction, which symbolizes Eustace’s recuperation, Valeria and Eustace are reunited. Significantly, her love for Eustace and her nostalgia for the happy time before her discovery of her husband’s dubious past enable Valeria to succeed where the law has failed: “Let me see for myself, if his lawyers have left nothing for his wife to do. Did they love him as I love him?” (109). Nostalgia urges her to reclaim the love they once cherished: “My mind wandered backward once more, and showed me another picture in the golden gallery of the past” (15).

Nostalgia is a transgressive desire in a society that values progress, self-help, and energy. Collins’s novels introduce new men (and women) of sensibility who resemble the feeling heroes and heroines of sentimental fiction but are diagnosed as irrational, insane, or useless
dreamers. The emotional illnesses and lack of willpower that are ambiguously presented in his earlier works, moreover, become the protagonists’ most redeeming qualities in the novels of the 1870s and 1880s—a development that culminates in Ovid Vere’s fainting fit in *Heart and Science* (1883). ⁴⁵ In *The Guilty River* (1886), Gerard Roylake returns to England as the heir of an estate, “look[ing] more like a foreigner than an Englishman” after his education abroad. He spends his days catching moths for his studies until he retraces “woodland paths [that are] familiar to [him] in the by-gone time” and meets Cristel, the miller’s daughter. Their meetings are suffused with nostalgia for his boyhood, for a time when his mother was still alive, when he was in good spirits, and when his friendship with Cristel was not considered improper: “Days, happy days that were past, revived. Again, I walked hand in hand with my mother, among the scenes that were round me.” ⁴⁶ His passion for Cristel, his depressed spirits, and his feelings of dislocation and isolation become manifest in the mysterious figure of his nameless rival, a deaf mulatto:

To my thinking, [his eyes] were so entirely beautiful that they had no right to be in a man’s face. I might have felt the same objection to the pale delicacy of his complexion, [and] to his finely shaped sensitive lips, but for two marked peculiarities in him which would have shown me to be wrong—that is to say: the expression of power about his head, and the signs of masculine resolution presented by his mouth and chin. (277)

The nameless villain represents the hero’s feminine characteristics taken to extremes, figuring as his double. His deafness externalizes Gerard’s feelings of isolation in society; his racial origin, Gerard’s inability and unwillingness to reject his foreign education and to con-

⁴⁵ In *The Two Destinies* (1876), Collins’s novel about telepathy, a susceptibility to visions, diagnosed as a form of disease by a renowned physician, is affirmed as spiritual and also practical in restoring the love of the past. In *The Fallen Leaves* (1879), empathy similarly connects the feminized hero to the child prostitute he rescues and then marries. *The Black Robe* (1881) juxtaposes two sensitive, victimized men in love with the same woman. The death of the undeserving suitor facilitates a nostalgic return to the deserving, initially rejected, weaker man, whose drawbacks seem to have been purged through the death of his counterpart.

form to the English interest in hunting and titles. Gerard’s suppressed desire for Cristel further parallels his double’s obsession. His spirits, which he describes as “depressed,” are mirrored in the other’s “nervous irritability,” and the latter’s “burst[ing] into tears,” prompted by his “hysterical passion,” anticipates how Gerard himself “burst[s] out crying” when he finds Cristel gone (246, 292, 281, 343). Gerard’s jealousy and ill humor are externalized as the “demoniacal rage and hatred” that make his too beautiful double look ugly: “Jealous of the miller’s daughter—in my position? Absurd! Contemptible! But I was still in such a vile temper” (259, 283).

Gerard’s feminine susceptibility is both exaggerated and displaced by the androgyny of his double. His languid way of life contrasts sharply with his double’s willpower, which is linked to his “vile temper” and suppressed “demoniacal rage.” Yet he is at once repelled and attracted by the beauty of his double; the recognition of his own features and characteristics in the other frightens, disgusts, and titillates him. As Gerard dwells on the double’s “entirely beautiful” eyes and “pale delicacy,” he remarks that these features have “no right” to be found in a man—a denunciation that articulates his anxiety about his own masculinity. But the “expression of power [that makes] it impossible to mistake the stranger for a woman” (254) also appears to threaten Gerard.

The ambivalent attraction of many men to effeminate men of feeling is, in fact, a theme in many of Collins’s novels. In Man and Wife, Arnold’s homoerotic admiration for Geoffrey, whose superior physical strength has saved his life, is eventually displaced by heterosexual love, but this feeling becomes truly important to Arnold only after Geoffrey has bitterly disappointed him. The relationship of Eustace and Dexter in The Law and the Lady forms two sides of a triangle that leads to the suicide of Eustace’s first wife and almost ruins his marriage to the second. Fascinating to both men and women, androgynous villains embody anxieties about transgressions across gender boundaries by uniting in themselves the worst qualities of the effeminate male and the mannish female. Needless to say, the resolution of the crisis besetting hero and/or heroine depends on the villain’s removal. Eustace’s second marriage can be saved only after Dexter’s death. In The Guilty River Cristel and Gerard return from self-imposed exile and are rejoined at
home after the double's death abroad. The mixture of attraction and repulsion that men of sensibility feel for their doubles articulates their self-conscious struggles with themselves, underlining the complexity of the development of the new sensitive hero.

The consummate realization of the new fin de siècle antihero is fainting, enervated, nostalgic Ovid Vere in \textit{Heart and Science}. Aply set when the "weary old nineteenth century had advanced into the last twenty years of its life," the novel opens with the delineation of a brilliant young man who has received a "warning from overwrought Nature."\footnote{Wilkie Collins, \textit{Heart and Science}, ed. Steve Farmer (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 1996), 45.} Ovid's nervous exhaustion recalls the sickly heroes of the novel of sensibility while it engages late-nineteenth-century discourses on nervous diseases and psychological theories. Intended to be a novel about vivisection, \textit{Heart and Science} is a mission novel that explores a series of other concerns as well. C. S. Wiesenthal emphasizes that it is, in a sense, about experimental neurophysiology, "addressing issues at the very cutting edge, so to speak, of contemporary Darwinian science." Detailing the heroine's partial catalepsy, paralysis, and amnesia, it displays the entire symptomatology of hysteria posited by contemporary psychiatric thought. To Wiesenthal, Collins "seems to seize upon the reassuring possibility of the organic localization of hysterical disorder as a potential answer to the vexed 'mysteries' of psychosomatic pathology."\footnote{C. S. Wiesenthal, "From Charcot to Plato: The History of Hysteria in Heart and Science," in Smith and Terry, 257, 260.} The propagators of theories of an "organic localization" of sensibility in the novel include the vivisectionist Dr. Benjulia, the aptly named Mr. Null, and the villainous woman of science, Mrs. Gallilee. But Ovid, one of the few good physicians in sensation fiction and a sufferer from nervous exhaustion himself, cures his beloved, Carmina, more with devoted attention than with a vague new deus ex machina cure.

In a novel as tellingly titled as \textit{Heart and Science}, it is not surprising that sensibility is not only reasserted as a symptom of moral superiority but reclaimed from medical narratives. The choice of the protagonists' names contributes to the stark contrast between heart and science and their transcendence in Ovid's treatment of Carmina. Ovid Vere is
named after the Latin poet, probably because of his importance as a writer of love poetry, and the Latin word vere [true]. The name of the half-Italian heroine, Carmina, meaning “song” or “poem,” links her to him. Mr. Null’s name describes his status in the medical profession; Mrs. Gallilee’s indicates her focus on a scientific worldview. Miss Minerva, the mannish governess, whose adoration of Ovid first turns her against Carmina and then induces her to defend her, is named after the Roman goddess of wisdom, poetry, and medicine. Ironically, she is neuralgic and nervous, qualities that place her in opposition to the fleshy, strong amateur scientist Mrs. Gallilee, who is also Ovid’s mother. A staunch defender of love, Miss Minerva is physically frail and on the side of the sickly hero and heroine.49

The hero’s fainting fit carries the promotion of the weepy, virtuously weak man of feeling to its logical conclusion. At the same time, it ties in with the novel’s antivivisectionist mission in that it accentuates the moral difference between the physically strong, heartless, ruthless villains and the men and women of feeling. Shortly after his hysterical outburst over the squashing of a beetle, Ovid swoons in the arms of the heroine, who herself has been taken ill after seeing a stray dog run over in the street. Detailing Ovid’s illness, the novel heavily draws on late Victorian concepts of the exhaustible quantity of energy in nature as well as in the human body, the vis nervosa. His collapse, induced by the killing of an animal as well as by his stuttering attempts to tell Carmina that he likes her, is therefore also attributed to the fact that “physically and mentally he had no energy left” (108). Yet what the novel makes clear is that reserves of vital forces, like those of physical strength, differ and, in sentimental fashion, reflect a reciprocal relationship with moral strength. The “overpowering vitality” of Ovid’s mother, who shares a fondness for coldhearted dissection with the Faustian vivisectionist, Benjulia, contrasts decisively with the high sensibility of the novel’s hero and heroine: “In her eagerness to facilitate [Ovid’s] departure [to Canada], she proposed to superintend the shut-

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49 Collins’s naming of characters is seldom arbitrary. In No Name, as we have seen, Magdalen lives up to her name in the end. In The New Magdalen, the redeemed woman and her false counterpart are named Mercy and Grace, respectively, and while Mercy embodies both qualities, Grace possesses neither. Consider also Hartright (“heart-right”) in The Woman in White.
ting up of his house... She even thought of the cat. The easiest way to
provide for the creature would be of course to have her poisoned; but
Ovid was so eccentric in some things, that practical suggestions were
thrown away on him... Mrs. Gallilee's overpowering vitality was
beginning to oppress her son" (127).

The juxtaposition of the sensitive, delicate young man with a pow-
erful woman—in this case, his own mother—is of course a recurring
topos in Collins's fiction. In *Heart and Science* the contrast between
praiseworthy delicacy and heartlessness is an integral part of the
novel's antivivisection mission and its criticism of amateur scientists in
general. The ruthless zeal of a woman of science brings into focus ide-
obies of energy and willpower as well as the invasion of the home by
the craze for natural science in Victorian Britain. Mrs. Gallilee's "eager-
ness," "practical suggestions," and "overpowering vitality" fulfill the cri-
teria for the enterprising Victorian male, which the men in the novel,
except the villainous vivisectionist, notably lack. The mother's invest-
ment of her energies in amateur scientific events renders the Gallilee
house uncomfortable as a home. That Mrs. Gallilee is styled as "com-
plete a mistress of the practice of domestic virtue as of [science]" (66)
sarcastically refers to her skill as a hostess of scientific dinner parties as
well as to her suppression of her mild-tempered husband. Submerged
"under her powder and paint," she plays the sociable hostess, the per-
fekt mother, and also eagerly seizes the role of Carmina's "second mother,"
"play[ing] the part to perfection" (69, 66). She endorses what is con-
sidered fashionable, and her guests appreciate the scientific events
organized by this "tender nurse of half-developed tadpoles" (127), a char-
acterization that again calls her motherly qualities into question while
parodying her eagerness to play all her parts to perfection for fashio-
nable society.

The scientific, powerful woman is prefigured by Mrs. Lecount,
Noel's "domestic treasure" in *No Name*. This novel and *Heart and Scien-
ce*, in fact, form revealing focus points of the development of Collins's
antiheroes, in that Captain Kirke exemplifies the topos of manliness
tested abroad, while Ovid represents Collins's most outspoken endorse-
ment of the new man of sensibility and sympathy. *Heart and Science*, fur-
thermore, returns to issues central to the earlier novel. In *No Name*,
written in 1862 but set years earlier, Magdalen first encounters Mrs.
Lecount’s aquarium in 1846, when “the art of keeping fish and reptiles as domestic pets had not [yet] been popularized in England”; thus Magdalen recoils, “in irrepresible astonishment and disgust, from the first specimen of an Aquarium that she had ever seen” (200). The headless frogs escaping into the corridors in Heart and Science, on the other hand, are part of a dinner party and only astonish skeptical servants. This novel was written at and is set in a time when amateur infatuation with the natural sciences was a fashion. Mrs. Gallilee’s cold-hearted dissections are not only condoned but admired. While Benjulia attempts to conceal his laboratory, there is no such compunction at Mrs. Gallilee’s dinner parties. As Barbara T. Gates puts it, “Collins seems to have liked Benjulia in the way that Dickens liked Fagin.”

The downfall of Mrs. Gallilee, by contrast, is detailed with farcical relish.

Mrs. Gallilee’s crushing energy allows her to combine her success at scientific social events with strict order at home, yet this energy is her most damning characteristic. In Heart and Science, as in No Name, willpower is a central theme explicitly linked to the writing, influencing, and interpreting of the wills of weak men. The last will of Carmina’s father appoints her aunt, Mrs. Gallilee, her guardian, who will receive her fortune if the girl dies childless. Stout, with “rather a round and full face” (74), Mrs. Gallilee is the strongest woman in the house, indeed the strongest, most vital member of the household, whereas the men in the house are variations of sentimental men of feeling. Mr. Mool, the blushing lawyer—“a human anomaly” (70)—stands in stark contrast to the self-confident lawyers in the earlier novels as well as to his overpowering client, who prefers to dissect the flowers he tends and admires. Ovid, enfeebled by nervous exhaustion, is sentimental and romantic, qualities that his mother has long suppressed in herself. His amiable but powerless stepfather is “a lazy, harmless old fellow” (48). In a household of women, where the father is treated as a child while all the real children are female, Carmina is at the mercy of the strongest woman once Ovid has been sent abroad for his health. Male authority is subverted to make way for a hierarchical matriarchy that at

once accentuates and parodies the concept of the survival of the fittest. The father’s reassertion of power at the novel’s end seems at first a reactionary conclusion to its exploration of gender relations in the Victorian home. Yet it also marks the triumph of an old-fashioned anti-hero of sensibility over a modern woman of science.

Both *No Name* and *Heart and Science* set feeble men against powerful women who dictate and reinterpret the last wills of other feeble men. In both novels these women’s intriguing plots are unsuccessful, but whereas in *No Name* the disputed inheritance is eventually restored to a good (male) cousin, who happens to marry the passive sister, in *Heart and Science* a group of feeble men rises up against the domineering society woman, who has attempted to misuse another feeble man’s will for financial gain. The crushing of Mrs. Gallilee’s willpower—and the battle of willpower is closely linked to the battle over last wills—is not so much the domestication of a strong woman as a prison break from the ideologies of energy, will, and power. Both weak men and weak women reclaim their right to sentimental indulgence. While susceptible heroes and, more frequently, heroines are obvious choices as the most useful protagonists in sensation novels, the significance of firm willpower and overpowering vitality in the characterization of strong villains, whatever their sex, also highlights the rejection of enterprising, muscular, assertive men.

In subsequent novels desirable, admirable men are unambiguously sentimental, sensitive, and full of exquisite sensibilities. In *I Say No* (1884), Alban Morris, a drawing teacher like Hartright in *The Woman in White*, is the heroine’s lovesick lover, although his effeminate rival’s pitiful end shows that the development of the sensitive hero is not straightforward. Mirabel, an “effeminate pet of drawing-rooms and boudoirs,” is a “weak womanish creature,” with rings on his little white hands; he “looks a poor weak creature, in spite of his big beard.” Yet he is only a coward, not a villain, and, as a pet parson, has much in common with Godfrey Ablewhite, the hypocrite in *The Moonstone*, including a booming voice. Mirabel’s fainting fit is out-

done by the lovesickness that induces Alban to shed “hot tears” (1:82). In *The Evil Genius* (1886), a sentimental lawyer counterpoises the selfishness exhibited by all the other protagonists. He saves a “wretched little fish” by putting it back into the water “with humane gentleness of handling”—although a little girl protests that “that’s not sport!” His contemplation of the adulterous love at the center of the tortuous plot brings into focus a recurring condemnation of conventions, of “the rules of society”: “Is there something wrong in human nature? Or something wrong in human laws? All that is best and noblest in us feels the influence of love—and the rules of society declare that an accident of position shall decide whether love is a virtue or a crime.”

The development of the new sentimental hero can be nicely traced in the succession of Collins’s novels. The creation of new heroes of sensibility is helped by the continual defense of socially unacceptable behavior, lack of willpower, love at first sight, and nostalgic lovesickness. Fining and harking back to the unrealized possibilities of the past are reclaimed from conceptualizations of effeminacy as well as distinguished from pathologies; instead, they are praised as the virtues of the new heroes. Ovid falls in love with Carmina at first sight during their chance meeting in the middle of the street, as Basil does on an omnibus in the earlier novel; unlike Basil, however, Ovid does not err. In *The Legacy of Cain* (1888), nostalgic love is celebrated as an “all-powerful counter-influence.” In *Blind Love* (1890), completed by Walter Besant after Collins’s death, it is Lord Harry’s endearing helplessness, when the heroine finds him in a pool of blood after his suicide attempt, that makes her nurse and marry him. Unlike a sentimental hero, he is of “coarser fiber than herself,” which makes her regret that she seems to have “wrecked [her] life in a blind passion.” Nonetheless, even her marriage to his dull rival after his death does not kill her love for Lord Harry. Collins’s last novel registers the death of his men of tender feeling in the figure of a man of consuming passion. The hero-

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ine’s nostalgia, however, reaffirms a defense of both nostalgic heroes and heroines and of nostalgia for men of feeling: “She has one secret—and only one—which she keeps from her husband. In her dark desk she preserves a lock of Lord Harry’s hair. Why? I know not. Blind love doth never wholly die.”
