

Theatre, Parody and Politics in Wilkie Collins's *No Name*

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December 2021

Abstract

This thesis uncovers a systematic theatrical subtext in Wilkie Collins's 1862-3 novel *No Name*. It aims to demonstrate that *No Name* is created from parodies of plays in imagined performance, including aspects of their live performance and production such as sets and costumes, as well as their characters and plots. Focussing on the detailed parody within *No Name* of the whole of four important dramatic works, the thesis argues that recognition of these parodies suggests new interpretations of this novel and reveals Collins to be a far more sophisticated and ambitious writer than previously supposed. The operation of the parodies within the text seem to articulate critiques and opinions about the fiction, theatre and politics of Collins's world. His use of intertextuality, theatricality and parody highlight the artificiality of fiction, suggesting dissent from the cultural preference for realism. The analogies created between the content of dramas and that of the novel suggest social and political comment, especially on contemporary inequalities, such as the dominance of a privileged male elite and the disadvantaged position of women. Both aspects seem to explore the construction of social norms and the links between the cultural value for certain types of art and the maintenance of the prevailing political and social hierarchy. The subtext also reveals Collins's deep engagement with and knowledge of theatre, its practice and its history. The importance of theatre to Collins as a writer has also gone largely unrecognised.

The four cases presented in this thesis are: *Hamlet*, showing the features and operation of Collins's theatrical parodies and how parody itself functions as a tool for critique; *Prometheus Bound*, exploring the political implications of the use of a Greek tragedy famously associated with tyranny and rebellion; *Cinderella*, showing how the use of theatrical Cinderella from both opera and pantomime reveals the construction of roles for women in society; and *Kynge Johan*, exploring how the use of this Tudor political and allegorical play reveals elite use of ritual and moral control to maintain their dominance.

Acknowledgments

Grateful thanks go to:

The School of English at the University of Nottingham for my tuition fees scholarship.

My supervisors Professor Josephine Guy and Dr Lucie Sutherland for support, advice and guidance throughout.

Dr Joanna Robinson for a helpful and constructive Confirmation Review and the 'Our Theatre Royal' project.

Archivists and Librarians at the University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, The British Library, The British Museum, Cambridge University Library, Library of Birmingham, The Garrick Club, Peter Henderson of the King's School Canterbury.

My husband Chris for unfailing love and support.

Abbreviations

APGRD	Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama online database
BLN	British Library Newspapers online database
BNC	Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Burney Newspapers Collection online database
BP	British Periodicals online database
G&O	Proquest Historical Newspapers <i>The Guardian</i> (1821-2003) and <i>The Observer</i> (1791-2003) online database
H	<i>Hamlet</i> by William Shakespeare
KJ	<i>Kynge Johan</i> by John Bale
Oxford DNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography online database
PB	<i>Prometheus Bound</i> by Aeschylus
TDA	Times Digital Archive 1785-2014 online database
UKP	Nineteenth-Century UK Periodicals online database

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Introduction

Wilkie Collins has long been considered as a masterful storyteller, the 'father' of detective fiction and the leading author of 'sensation' fiction, and more seriously as a writer who used his novels to explore social concerns. He has not really been viewed as a writer of any significant intellectual endeavour in terms of form, style or technique. This thesis attempts to open a new window on his work by uncovering a systematic theatrical subtext in his 1862-3 novel *No Name*. It aims to demonstrate Collins's use of a comprehensive scheme of reference to a series of dramatic works within this novel which has been used to construct the novel's plot and characters; to show that these references take the form of parodies of dramatic works in imagined performance; and that recognition of them opens the novel to new interpretations. These interpretations include new ways of reading the novel itself, but also new evidence of Collins's use of his fiction to articulate critiques and opinions about the fiction, theatre and politics of his world, some of which are known or long suspected. In the following chapters I will attempt to demonstrate the detailed and purposeful parody within *No Name* of the whole of four important dramatic works: *Hamlet* (1600s, Shakespeare), *Prometheus Bound* (460s BC, Aeschylus), *Cinderella* (1817-60, 4 variations) and *Kynge Johan* (1538, John Bale). Incidental similarities to *Hamlet* and possible allusions to folk tale and fairy tale versions of *Cinderella* in this novel have previously been noted; the other two works have not been observed at all. This demonstration provides evidence that Collins was a more sophisticated,

ambitious, creative and serious writer than he has been considered hitherto.

This thesis builds on my MA dissertation¹, which established some of the basics: that *No Name* is created from parodies of plays, including aspects of live performance and production, such as sets, costumes, characters and plots. I noted that parody can be a tool for critique without being able to say what that critique might be in this case. It was clear that the parodies changed how you read the novel, seeming to mock and undermine the story being told.

As the only researcher so far to attempt a full investigation of Collins's intertextual subtexts, the purpose of this thesis is partly to lay out the ground that is involved: to explain what the theatrical subtext in *No Name* consists of, how it operates, and the methods needed to uncover and make sense of it; to provide a body of data and attempt to show the breadth and range of Collins's technique and vision. But I have also attempted to answer some of the wider questions that my observation prompts: What is the significance of Collins's use of a theatrical subtext in 1862? What is likely to have been the purpose of it from Collins's point of view? Why does it matter from ours?

The key to answering these questions is the realisation that Collins was thinking outside the mainstream of his time, which means we need to

¹ See Miriam Jones, *Theatre and Parody in Wilkie Collins's No Name* (Nottingham University MA Dissertation, 2014).

reconsider his reputation. The popular sensation fiction writer with social and political concerns was also, I argue, a highly accomplished writer who had a broad historical vision of his art and sophisticated technical ambitions. I approach this novel as a literary endeavour by a creatively serious, innovating author, who was trying out an intertextual technique that was unusual for the mid-nineteenth century, when realism was culturally valued and preferred. In fact, the use of theatrical works within a novel is unusual full stop and offers an intriguing case for critics interested more generally in intertextuality. Collins was possibly building on his use of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in *The Woman in White*, but although this has been noted by Peter Caracciolo (see below), the extent of it and its purpose and effects have not been investigated. In *No Name* Collins shows an awareness of literary and theatrical history and draws on the greats of the past rather than fitting in with current trends; by extension he is simultaneously critiquing those trends. Reviewers at the time apparently didn't notice what he was doing, probably not expecting such sophistication in a popular novel; this lack of curiosity is also apparent in subsequent criticism of his work. Overall, the findings in this thesis suggest that Collins's art and methods have not to date been fully understood or appreciated.

Literature Review

Known Collins

There are a number of ways in which Collins has been considered as a writer up until now.² Collins is seen as one of the leading writers of 'sensation' fiction, a hugely popular genre of the 1860s, which told tales of mystery, suspense and horror set in the contemporary, usually domestic, world, thrilling and threatening its audience in equal measure. Collins's major novels are still regarded as masterpieces of their type; until the more recent rediscovery of other writers, sensation fiction was sometimes seen as synonymous with Collins.³ Collins is also acknowledged as an early developer of detective fiction. His 1868 novel *The Moonstone* revolves around the solving of a single crime and includes devices that became standard features of this genre, such as the detective figure and multiple suspects.⁴ In modern times, sensation fiction is acknowledged as contributing to debates about some of the social issues of the day, and

² A good guide to the range of approaches to Wilkie Collins is found in the two dedicated websites created by specialists in the field: The Wilkie Collins Website by Paul Lewis (1996-2013) <http://www.web40571.clarahost.co.uk/wilkie/wilkie.htm> (accessed May 2021) and Wilkie Collins Information Pages by Andrew Gasson (1998–2010) <https://www.wilkie-collins.info/index.htm> (accessed May 2021). Both have a variety of collected information, e-texts, bibliographies, pictures and articles about Collins and his life and work.

³ See Anne-Marie Beller's review article "'The Fashions of the Current Season': Recent Critical Work on Victorian Sensation Fiction' in *Victorian Literature and Culture* 45(2) 2017, pp461-73 for a discussion of recent trends. Good general guides to sensation fiction include Andrew Mangham, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013) or Lyn Pykett, *The Sensation Novel: from The Woman in White to the Moonstone* (Tavistock, Devon, Northcote House Publishers, 1994). For discussion of how the print press and Victorian taste for real-life sensation developed in parallel, see Michael Diamond, *Victorian Sensation* (London, Anthem Press, 2004).

⁴ See Ronald R Thomas, 'The Moonstone, Detective Fiction and Forensic Science' in Jenny Bourne Taylor, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp65-78.

this is the way Collins's fiction is usually discussed when taking him seriously as a writer. Sensation fiction typically explored women's position and legal rights, especially around the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act, family law, social mobility and fears about class infiltration, inheritance issues and financial insecurity. Collins is seen as being particularly interested in how the social structure and institutions such as marriage and the law constructed social and moral orthodoxies, and formed identities, especially class and gender ones.⁵ His portrayal of people and situations beyond the social norm has been explored, including more recently from a feminist or trans-gender point of view.⁶ Some studies explore his work through themes such as his interest in art, medicine, science, psychology or the law.⁷

Collins's writing technique and methods have been considered to reveal his awareness of the artificially constructed nature of fiction, an attitude seen as modern, but at the same time aiming to serve a popular audience. He enticed and entertained his readers with a straightforward writing style, coupled with complicated plotting involving mysteries, cliffhangers, traps and games. A good example of this approach is Sue Lonoff's study *Wilkie*

⁵ See, for example, Lyn Pykett, *Wilkie Collins* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005), pp111-46.

⁶ See, for example, Laurence Talairach-Vielmas, *Moulding the Female Body in Victorian Fairy Tales and Sensation Novels* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007), pp133-72, Vicky Simpson, 'Selective Affinities: Non-normative Families in Wilkie Collins's *No Name*' in *Victorian Review* 39,2 (2013); Jolene Zigarovich, 'Transing Wilkie Collins' in *Wilkie Collins Journal* 15 (2018); Beth Leonardo Silva, 'Between Siblings: Performing the Brother in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* and *No Name*' in *Wilkie Collins Journal* 15 (2018).

⁷ See, for example, Graham Law and Andrew Maunder, *Wilkie Collins, A Literary Life* (Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Bourne Taylor, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins*; Andrew Mangham, ed, *Wilkie Collins: Interdisciplinary Essays* (Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007).

Collins and his Victorian Readers.⁸ Collins's reputation in this respect stems from his original reception in contemporary reviews. A selection of these, together with some essays and letters, have been collected by Norman Page in *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage*.⁹ Collins was also a shrewd businessman, adept at handling his fiction through periodical publication.¹⁰ His fiction career was built on his work as a journalist from the early 1850s, at first with *The Leader* and *Bentley's Miscellany* then, from 1856 to 1862, as a staff writer on Charles Dickens's *Household Words* and *All The Year Round*, contributing both fiction and non-fiction. Some of Collins's work on *The Leader* has been traced by Kirk H Beetz and a helpful account of his journalism appears in Graham Law's chapter 'Wilkie Collins and the Discovery of an "Unknown Public"' in *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*.¹¹ Collins's debt to and collaboration with Dickens has also been explored by Lillian Nayder in *Unequal Partners - Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, & Victorian Authorship*.¹²

⁸ Sue Lonoff, *Wilkie Collins and his Victorian Readers - a study in the rhetoric of authorship* (New York AMS Press Inc, 1982), notably 'Collins at Play', pp108-36. See also Dehn Gilmore, "'These Verbal Puzzles': Wilkie Collins, Newspaper Enigmas, and the Victorian Reader as Solver' in *Victorian Literature and Culture* 44 (2016), pp297-314.

⁹ Norman Page, ed, *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1974).

¹⁰ 'a reputation as the master of the mechanics of the weekly serial', Law and Maunder, *Wilkie Collins, A Literary Life*, p46.

¹¹ Kirk H Beetz, 'Wilkie Collins and "The Leader"' in *Victorian Periodicals Review* (15,1) Spring 1982, pp20-29; Graham Law, 'Wilkie Collins and the Discovery of an "Unknown Public"' in Joanne Shattock, ed, *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp328-40.

¹² Lillian Nayder, *Unequal Partners - Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, & Victorian Authorship* (Ithaca NY and London, Cornell University Press, 2002). Also see Sue Lonoff, 'Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins' in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 35,2 (1980), pp150-70.

Collins's relationship with the theatre is usually viewed in the light of his amateur acting with Dickens and his secondary and much less successful career as a dramatist, work which met with a mixed response at the time and which has not endured. A representative account of this is in Jim Davis's chapter 'Collins and the Theatre' in the *Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins*.¹³ His plays have not received major critical attention, although a study by Caroline Radcliffe is in progress, and she has also edited his plays *The Lighthouse* (1857) and *The Red Vial* (1858), directing a production of the latter in 2011.¹⁴ An analysis of Collins's first publicly performed dramatic adaptation, *A Court Duel* (1850), has also been published by Robert C Hanna in 2016.¹⁵

New Aspects to Collins's Work

This thesis attempts to demonstrate that *No Name* is the work of a writer with a complicated and ambitious agenda in terms of both literary technique and political critique. It explores areas of Collins's writing that

¹³ Jim Davis, 'Collins and the Theatre' in Bourne Taylor, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins*, pp168-80.

¹⁴ Caroline Radcliffe, *Wilkie Collins: "A Dramatic Faculty"*, currently in preparation, see [https://research.birmingham.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/caroline-radcliffe\(a659193d-159d-4f7e-9599-e3628d598e25\)/projects.html](https://research.birmingham.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/caroline-radcliffe(a659193d-159d-4f7e-9599-e3628d598e25)/projects.html) (accessed May 2021); Wilkie Collins, *The Lighthouse*, ed Andrew Gasson and Caroline Radcliffe (London, Francis Boutle Publishers, 2013); Wilkie Collins *The Red Vial*, ed Caroline Radcliffe (London, Francis Boutle Publishers, 2017); for details of the production of *The Red Vial* by the Department of Drama and Theatre Arts of Birmingham University 10-12 February 2011 see https://www.wilkie-collins.info/play_redvial_2011.htm (accessed May 2021). For e-texts of some of his plays, see The Wilkie Collins Website <http://www.web40571.clarahost.co.uk/wilkie/etext/sites.htm#Plays> (accessed May 2021).

¹⁵ Robert C Hanna, 'A Court Duel as performed by Wilkie Collins, with an Analysis of the Manuscript, Playbill and Advertisement' in *Dickens Studies Annual, Essays on Victorian Fiction* 47 (2016), pp223-88.

have attracted little attention: the use in his fiction of parody, theatrical works and practices, and intertextuality.

Parody

The following chapters will show that Collins's references to dramatic works take the form of parodies of the originals, translated into the plot, characters and details of his novel. Chapter 1 will focus on how Collins's parodies operate and what effect they have on the reading of the novel, referring to definitions and theories of parody drawn from Simon Dentith's study *Parody*.¹⁶ Collins's use of parody in his writing has received little attention. Sundeep Bisla's article 'Overdoing Things With Words: Pretense and Plain Truth in Wilkie Collins's *No Name*' is a rare example, which argues that *No Name* is a deliberate parody of the realist novel.¹⁷ The article was incorporated into Bisla's 2013 book *Wilkie Collins and Copyright: Artistic Ownership in the Age of the Borderless Word*, which explores Collins's work in relation to Derrida's theories of the 'iterability of the mark.' According to these, the infinite repeatability of a 'linguistic entity' allows it to move beyond its original context, meaning and the control of its author. An iteration of any linguistic entity can 'settle' into a context that retains its initial meaning or 'break' out into one in which its meaning might change.¹⁸ While this had implications for Collins's concerns about copyright, Bisla argues that Collins learned to embrace the

¹⁶ Simon Dentith, *Parody* (London, Routledge, 2000).

¹⁷ Sundeep Bisla, 'Over-Doing Things with Words in 1862: Pretense and Plain Truth in Wilkie Collins's *No Name*' in *Victorian Literature and Culture* 38 (2010), pp1-19.

¹⁸ Sundeep Bisla, *Wilkie Collins and Copyright, Artistic Ownership in the Age of the Borderless Word* (Columbus, The Ohio State University Press, 2013), pp2-4.

concept of iterability as a creative technique, that he perceived the conflict between these two functions of language and that his major fictions show a systematic experimentation with it.¹⁹ Collins found that the movement from settling to breaking or vice versa was the space in which startling effects could be achieved, and this is the real source of his sensationalism and his known fascination with doubles. The material for his novels is therefore derived not from the real world or social concerns but from 'the paradoxical workings of textuality'.²⁰ *No Name's* persistent exploration of mimicry and imitation and its parodies of conventions such as literary realism, marriage or domestic virtue, is seen to stem from this interest in iteration, given that parody involves the repetition or imitation of something into a new context.²¹ Bisla's work stands out in its approach to Collins as a serious and intellectual writer working beyond what has been generally understood as sensation fiction. His investigation of *No Name* will also be discussed more fully in Chapter 1.

Use of Theatre in Fiction

The subtext in *No Name* is constructed from both theatrical works and performance practices, revealing Collins's detailed knowledge and understanding of theatrical culture. Collins's selection of plays from a wide range of periods and genres also demonstrates an engagement with the whole of European theatre history, including theatre's relationship with the

¹⁹ Ibid, pp10-11.

²⁰ Ibid, pp21-3.

²¹ Ibid, pp183-5 and 192-4.

politics and culture of its day.²² There is no published discussion of the use of theatre or reference to plays in *No Name*.²³ More widely, there has been little attention paid to the overlap between theatre and fiction in Collins's work, which is curious when his passion for theatre and career as a dramatist are known, if little explored, and when this kind of approach has been taken for his friend, mentor and collaborator Charles Dickens.²⁴ Theatre and fiction tend to be treated separately by different academic specialists, but this does not reflect the true position of theatre in Victorian culture. As Deborah Vlock explains in *Dickens, Novel Reading and the Victorian Popular Theatre*, the pervasiveness of theatre, the entertainment industry and even the performance skills required by public figures such as politicians and clergymen made it natural for it to appear in fiction. She explores how Dickens made use of recognisable elements from theatre, especially voices and speech patterns, physical gestures, and stereotypical characters.²⁵ There were other professional writers of the time who successfully produced both fiction and drama, such as Edward Bulwer Lytton and Collins's friend Charles Reade.²⁶ Some work in this

²² For the full list of plays that I have identified reference to so far, see Appendix. They range from ancient Greek tragedy to Collins's own dramas.

²³ Apart from a few intertextual references noted by Peter Caracciolo, see below.

²⁴ Beginning long ago, for example S J Adair Fitz-Gerald, *Dickens and the Drama* (London, Chapman and Hall Ltd, 1910), continued by works such as F Dubrez-Fawcett, *Dickens the Dramatist* (London, W H Allen, 1952), and Robert Garis, *The Dickens Theatre: A Reassessment of the Novels* (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1965). Leigh Woods reviewed work in the area in 1991 in 'Dickens and the Theatre: Recent Publications' in *Nineteenth Century Theatre* 19,2 (1991), pp130-9. Recent articles include, for example, Brittany Reid, 'Courtroom Melodrama: Dramatizing Characters and Audiences in A Tale of Two Cities' in *Victorians: A Journal of Culture and Literature* 135 (2019), pp1-12.

²⁵ Deborah Vlock, *Dickens, Novel Reading and the Victorian Popular Theatre* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also Martin Meisel, *Realizations* (Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press 1983) for an exploration of the interrelatedness of theatre, literature and the visual arts in the nineteenth century.

²⁶ Reade wrote interchangeably for both mediums, for example the novel *Peg Woffington* (1852, about the actress) was based on *Masks and Faces* (1852) by Tom Taylor, initially a collaboration between them, and the novel *It is Never too Late to Mend* (1856) was

area for Collins includes Simon Cooke's 'Action and Attitude: Wilkie Collins and the Language of Melodramatic Gesture', exploring how Collins used stereotypes of melodramatic gesture in characterisation and action, which his audience could read as 'visual shorthand'.²⁷ Similarly, Lewis Horne's 'Magdalen's Peril' argues that Collins blends melodrama with the style of ancient Greek tragedy in *No Name*, using Euripides' *Hecuba* for illustration, whilst not spotting the actual Greek tragedies Collins has embedded in the novel.²⁸

Work on Collins's interest in the construction or instability of identity also overlaps with considerations of theatre and performance, especially in relation to *No Name*. For example, Lyn Pykett argues that the novel 'uses acting as a general metaphor for social existence. It also explores the complexities and problems of a concept of identity based on performance.' Pykett argues that Collins uses Magdalen's deliberate impersonation of social roles to demonstrate the instability and contradictions of those roles, and that he is also interested in the psychological consequences, the fragmentation of self and loss of identity.²⁹ Similarly, the physicality of *No*

based on one play *Gold* (1853) and turned into another *It's Never too Late to Mend* (1865), P D Edwards, 'Reade, Charles', Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23224> (accessed April 2020); Edward Bulwer Lytton's most famous works were the novel *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) and plays *The Lady of Lyons* (1838), *Richlieu* (1839) and *Money* (1840). He also wrote the comedy *Not So Bad as We Seem* (1851) for Dickens's amateur dramatics charity tour in which Collins took part. Andrew Brown 'Lytton, Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer [formerly Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer], first Baron Lytton', Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/17314> (accessed May 2021).

²⁷ Simon Cooke 'Action and Attitude: Wilkie Collins and the Language of Melodramatic Gesture' in *Wilkie Collins Journal* 01 (1998), pp1-11.

²⁸ Lewis Horne, 'Magdalen's Peril' in *Dickens Studies Annual* 20 (1991), pp281-94. I see no reference to *Hecuba* in *No Name*, but Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* and Euripides' *Alcestis* are present.

²⁹ Lyn Pykett, *The Sensation Novel*, pp24-6.

Name's characters has been read as characterisation or explorations of identity rather than something that might derive from theatrical performance. For example, Kylee-Anne Hingston's article "Skins to Jump Into": The Slipperiness of Identity and the Body in Wilkie Collins's *No Name*, explores contemporary anxieties about the uncontrollable body, through the abnormal or deteriorating physical states of the various characters in the novel. She reads characters whose bodies betray efforts to maintain an outer identity as revealing the constructed and unstable nature of social identities, rather than perhaps the effort of adopting theatrical ones.³⁰ Construction and transgression of gender identities is also a persistent theme in Collins's work, but explorations of this don't consider the possible reference to theatrical cross-dressing. For example, Deirdre David's discussion of gender politics in 'Rewriting the Male Plot in Wilkie Collins's *No Name*' reads Mrs Wragge throughout as a woman; my research suggests she is sometimes being characterised as a cross-dressed man.³¹

Some work has also been done on how *No Name* might reflect the social and cultural position of the actress, for example Renata Kobetts Miller's recent study of the figure of the actress in literature, *The Victorian Actress in the Novel and on the Stage*. Miller reads *No Name* as an example of a

³⁰ Kylee-Anne Hingston, "Skins to Jump Into": The Slipperiness of Identity and the Body in Wilkie Collins's *No Name* in *Victorian Literature and Culture* 40 (2012), pp117-135. See also Melynda Huskey, 'No Name: Embodying the Sensation Heroine' in *The Victorian Newsletter* 82 (1992), pp5-13.

³¹ Deirdre David, 'Rewriting the Male Plot in Wilkie Collins's *No Name*: Captain Wragge Orders an Omelette and Mrs Wragge Goes into Custody' in Laura Claridge and Elizabeth Langland, eds, *Out of Bounds: Male Writers and Gender(ed) Criticism* (Amherst, U of Massachusetts Press, 1990), pp186-96.

mid-century strategy of trying to neutralise the social threat posed by working actresses, whose profession exposed social identities as performable and broke the respectable female norms of domesticity and dependence. Writers creating actress characters therefore dwelt on their capability for real feelings and restored them to reassuringly domestic settings at the end. In *No Name*, Magdalen similarly suffers for her social transgressions and is married off at the end.³² Miller's reading of *No Name* is a reasonable one when unaware of the subtext, but also a conservative one, in which the novel's underlying purpose is to relieve anxieties about women. As I shall show, especially in Chapter 3 (*Cinderella*), the theatrical subtext attacks contemporary attitudes to women, throwing the 'proper' ending into ironic relief.

Intertextuality

Collins's references to dramatic works within his novel can be described as an intertextual practice. There are a few isolated articles which note Collins's reference to other works. Bisla's article on parody in *No Name* (see above) notes apparently coincidental similarities to *Hamlet* in passing. John Kofron's article 'Dickens, Collins and the Influence of the Arctic' identifies reference to the 1845 Franklin expedition to the Northwest Passage in both *No Name* and the Collins / Dickens play *The Frozen Deep*, without making the connection that *No Name* is referring to the play

³² Renata Kobetts Miller, *The Victorian Actress in the Novel and on the Stage* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2019), pp78-93. See also Lauren Eriks Cline, 'Epistolary Liveness: Narrative Presence and the Victorian Actress in Letters' in *Theatre Survey* 60,2 (2019), pp237-60, for how Collins uses Wragge's narrative to build immediacy into the account of Magdalen's career as an actress.

too.³³ Allan W Atlas also deduces that the Beethoven symphony mentioned in *No Name*'s First Scene must have been Symphony No 7 and relates its associations with the biblical Mary Magdalene to the novel's central character.³⁴

The main critic arguing for Collins's intentional use of intertextuality is Peter Caracciolo. In his article 'Wilkie Collins's "Divine Comedy": The Use of Dante in *The Woman in White*' he traces some detailed parallels between both these works. He suggests that their purpose is symbolic, adding 'both mythic and topical associations [to the novel] so that personal problems of the fictive plot are invested with the weight of public and universal concerns.' The setting of the novel in the years 1848-51 point to the 1848 revolutions and their aftermath, particularly in Italy, as the likely political context. He also puts in a footnote that there are 'In *No Name*...allusions to Shakespeare, Pope, Gay, Smollett and Sheridan', which he does not detail.³⁵ In 'Wilkie Collins and "The God Almighty of Novelists": The Example of Scott in *No Name* and *Armadale*', Caracciolo suggests that Collins is emulating Sir Walter Scott's technique in 'the arts of allusion and analogy'. He sees parallels with tales from *The Arabian Nights Entertainments* in *Armadale*, while in *No Name* he detects allusions

³³ John Kofron, 'Dickens, Collins and the Influence of the Arctic' in *Dickens Studies Annual* 40 (2009), pp81-93.

³⁴ Allan W Atlas, 'Wilkie Collins, Mr Vanstone, and the Case of Beethoven's "No-Name" Symphony' in *Dickens Studies Annual* 33 (2003), pp215-38.

³⁵ Peter Caracciolo, 'Wilkie Collins's "Divine Comedy": The Use of Dante in *The Woman in White*' in *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 25, 4 (1971), pp383-404, p385 and p402. See Appendix for the Shakespeare and Sheridan works that I have identified as being used in *No Name*. I have not investigated possible poetic references, but there are also pointers to George Crabbe and Samuel Garth, both poets and medical professionals.

to *As You Like It*, poems by Pope and various versions of *Cinderella*.³⁶

This second article is not so convincing because he is less precise about the details of the parallels and what might be their purpose.

Articles on Collins's intertextual practices are piecemeal and have not been followed up by much investigation, or have even met with denial, such as Julian Symons's comment in his Introduction to a Penguin edition of *The Woman in White*, which praises Collins's

skill in plot construction and his often remarkable characterisation. [But] ...the limitation of Collins is that his themes rarely have any symbolic implications.... Attempts to suggest that Collins too has his symbolism, like a recent academic article on "the Use of Dante in *The Woman in White*", are conjecture almost unsupported by evidence. ...we consider him in his proper light as a master – one might almost say the master – of melodramatic mystery novels.³⁷

Symons was unwilling to revise his settled ideas about what sort of writer Collins is for the sake of Caracciolo's new evidence. Even Sue Lonoff, in a chapter analysing Collins's game-playing strategies at length, including 'his tendency to play with the names of his characters and to make casual literary references', feels that while some of Caracciolo's suggestions 'are illuminating', others 'strain credulity' because 'as a popular author, his

³⁶ Peter Caracciolo, 'Wilkie Collins and "The God Almighty of Novelists": The Example of Scott in *No Name* and *Armada*' in Nelson Smith and R C Terry, eds, *Wilkie Collins to the Forefront: Some Reassessments* (New York, AMS Press Inc, 1995), pp165-81.

³⁷ Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, ed Julian Symons (London, Penguin Books Ltd, 1974, Penguin Classics reprint 1985), pp17-20.

primary aim was to entertain his audience.³⁸ Popular novels and intellectual complexity are seen to be incompatible.

Contemporary Context

The attitudes of modern critics to Collins's work are partly inherited from the way he was reviewed and seen in the context of the main modes of fiction of his time. My research shows that Collins had adopted an unusual approach to fiction for his time and was thinking outside the mainstream. This section examines the significance of Collins's use of a theatrical subtext in the artistic and political climate in which he was working.

Reviews of No Name

The first significance of Collins's subtext is that it wasn't noticed. It is impossible to know whether any contemporary readers noticed it, but *No Name* was widely reviewed in early 1863 on publication of the three-volume edition, in a good cross-section of newspapers and periodicals,

³⁸ Sue Lonoff, *Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers*, pp130-131.

and none of them give any indication that they are aware of the subtext.³⁹
This omission has guided or restricted the thinking of subsequent critics.⁴⁰

Most reviewers seem to have read the novel with attention and the reviews are sometimes long and detailed. But their reaction to the novel is based on the contents of the surface story, their own attitudes to fiction, and Collins's existing reputation as an ingenious storyteller. They point out his masterful skill at plotting and suspense, either in admiration or disparagement, for example the *Examiner* complains of his 'mechanical art... upon the same principle that a shoemaker... will make a shoe'⁴¹ while the *Reader* complains 'we cannot help thinking that, with its author's unmistakable genius, he might rise to something higher than even a first-rate sensation novel.'⁴² Some think his characters are convincingly drawn, others that they are just artificial and unreal puppets for the plot.

Magdalen is either morally repugnant, or interesting and sympathetic in

³⁹ Reviews consulted were: those quoted in Page, ed, *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage*, pp131-44 (*Athenaeum*, 3 Jan 1863, *Reader*, 3 Jan 1863, *Saturday Review*, 17 Jan 1863, *Quarterly Review*, April 1863, *North British Review*, Feb 1863, *Blackwood's Magazine*, August 1863, *London Quarterly Review*, Oct 1866); *Examiner*, 24 Jan 1863, *London Review of Politics, Society, Literature, Art and Science*, Jan 10 1863, BP (British Periodicals online database)

<https://search.proquest.com/britishperiodicals/index?accountid=8018> (accessed May 2021), *Morning Post*, 3 Jan 1863, *Daily News*, 29 Jan 1863, BLN (British Library Newspapers online database) <https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.nottingham.ac.uk/ps/start.do?p=BNCN&u=univnott> (accessed May 2021), *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, 1 Feb 1863, UKP (Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals online database) <https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.nottingham.ac.uk/ps/start.do?p=NCUK&u=univnott> (accessed May 2021), *Times*, 22 Jan 1863, TDA (Times Digital Archive online database) <https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.nottingham.ac.uk/ps/start.do?p=TTDA&u=univnott> (accessed May 2021), *Observer*, 11 Jan 1863, G&O (Proquest Historical Newspapers, *The Guardian* and *The Observer* online database) <https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.nottingham.ac.uk/hnpguardianobserver/index?accountid=8018> (accessed May 2021).

⁴⁰ Caracciolo thinks that reviewers did notice Collins's references, and that this 'is discernible in the reviews', but the examples he refers to are not from *No Name* and are not convincing. Caracciolo, 'Wilkie Collins and "The God Almighty of Novelists"', p177.

⁴¹ *Examiner*, 24 January 1863, p54, BP.

⁴² Page, ed, *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage*, p135.

spite of her conduct, the latter drawing comments on the author's skill. Collins's writing style is generally praised as succinct and focused on good storytelling, with little sense that he might have had any purpose beyond that. The political issue Collins raises in the story, the plight of illegitimate offspring, is either ignored, glossed over, or, in the case of the clergyman H L Mansel in the *Quarterly Review*, attacked as inappropriate 'special pleading'.⁴³ The reviewer who gets closest to Collins's use of theatre is Alexander Smith who complains:

There never was a young lady like Magdalen, there never was a scoundrel like Wragge, a fool like Vanstone, a housekeeper like Mrs Lecount. Such people have no representation in the living world. Their proper place is in the glare of blue lights on a stage sacred to the sensation drama.⁴⁴

Reviewers and Reviewing

Critics in 1863 were experiencing the same contemporary literary, theatrical and political context as Collins, which would in theory have made his references more recognisable to them, an advantage lost to later critics and readers. All the dramas I consider here had some kind of contemporary relevance, which will be explored in each chapter. While works like *Prometheus Bound* and *Kynge Johan* were only known to specific educated groups in the mid-nineteenth century, both *Hamlet* and

⁴³ Ibid, p140.

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp140-2, Alexander Smith, *North British Review*, February 1863. This short quotation might suggest that Smith had perceived the hidden theatrical parodies and disapproved, but the review as a whole does not.

Cinderella were widely known and popular. This begs the question of *why* there is no sign of anyone noticing Collins's references to them in the contemporary press. There were a number of factors at work here.

The prevailing cultural attitudes to fiction at the time Collins was writing held that there was a clear division between highbrow and popular fiction. Nineteenth-century reviewers were pigeon-holing Collins's novel in the latter. This was a reasonable approach when reviewing was undertaken by non-specialist writers. Reviewers covered all kinds of literature, fiction, poetry, history, politics, science etc, and undertook reviewing tasks alongside other kinds of writing, as Collins himself did, or as a well-paid side-line from another profession, as H L Mansel did. Reviewers had little time to assimilate a book, working at speed, often to a tight copy deadline. Reviews were generally anonymous, or signed with initials or a pseudonym, such as G H Lewes's 'Vivian'. They could be short or long, sometimes using the book under discussion as the pretext for a more wide-ranging essay, sometimes doing little more than summarising the contents.⁴⁵ Reviewers also wrote for their own audience, readers with similar attitudes and opinions about authors and literature. Collins's 1860 novel *The Woman in White* had been a big hit, establishing him as a 'popular' commercial author. Reviewers of his next novel wouldn't have been looking for literary sophistication. They would have read the surface

⁴⁵ 'Reviewing' and 'Reviews' in Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor, eds, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* (Gent and London, Akademia Press, 2009), pp538-9. See also Hilary Fraser, 'Periodicals and Reviewing' in Kate Flint, ed, *The Cambridge History of Victorian Literature* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp56-76.

story, followed their own habits in writing it up, got the job done and looked no further.

Collins's use of intertextuality was unusual in any sort of fiction at the time. Robert Macfarlane's study of nineteenth-century intertextuality, *Original Copy*, traces how attitudes to referencing other texts and plagiarism changed over the course of the century and were very much in flux mid-century. The Romantic ideal of the individual genius was giving way to an understanding, through developments in science, psychology, anthropology and philology, that art and ideas were produced and circulated within culture, not in isolation. Creating work from a judicious selection and skillful transformation of past material had been valid in the eighteenth century and was increasingly argued for from the 1860s onwards.⁴⁶ Interestingly Macfarlane quotes Dickens's novel *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-5) as part of the sea-change, with its central theme of recycling and its unannounced literary references, flagged with 'paper trails for the reader to follow, leading to his numerous sources.' Macfarlane suggests that Dickens was influenced by developments of ideas about recycling in public health and science through the 1850s. Given that Collins produced *No Name* a couple of years before *Our Mutual Friend*, it might be further evidence of the mutual influence and collaboration going on between the two writers.⁴⁷ In any case, in the early 1860s, the technique was new and experimental, potentially inviting

⁴⁶ Robert Macfarlane, *Original Copy: Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth Century Literature* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), pp6-9, fully explored pp18-49, 50-84.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pp51-62. Nayder describes differences of opinion and aims between the two writers during 1861-66, with Collins increasingly pursuing his own, see *Unequal Partners* p129-39.

accusations of plagiarism; critics were not familiar with it and Collins might understandably have been cautious about advertising it.

Collins's references were also overlooked because they were much too subtle. Writers of the time with pretensions to literary scholarship made sure the reader knew about it, filling their works with earnest digressions and literary quotations. For example, Mark Hollingsworth's thesis *Nineteenth-Century Shakespeares* shows how literary works by and for the educated elite appropriated the cultural authority of Shakespeare in pursuit of nationalist and moralist agendas. Quotations were there to support the agenda itself, but also to signal the writer's membership of the educated elite; there was no point making them oblique.⁴⁸ Collins created his novel from 'quotations' of drama but translated them into parodies and presented them as part of the story. This method makes them doubly hidden and not really quotations at all. So, when the *Morning Post* wrote an enthusiastic review of *No Name*, its *lack* of displays of literary scholarship was one of the things it praised. It said that Collins's work showed:

strict self-reliance... his works evoke no associations, they recal [sic] no precedents, they contain no digressions. They are... free from indications of scholarship or extensive reading... independent of all aid from descriptive and didactic adornment. They are essentially prosaic,

⁴⁸ Mark Hollingsworth, *Nineteenth-Century Shakespeares: Nationalism and Moralism* (University of Nottingham PhD thesis, 2007), pp19-20, 27-36.

sometimes dramatic, never poetic. They are purely and simply specimens of story-telling in its perfection.⁴⁹

The theatrical nature of Collins's references, ironically, also made them much less noticeable. Collins's characters are acting the parts of his chosen dramas out, integrating them into the story in a way that is easy for the unsuspecting reader to miss. He didn't even reproduce the written conventions of drama, like stage directions or cast lists, which would have signaled the parody more clearly. As discussed in chapter 1, Collins was treating his characters rather like burlesque actors, but real stage burlesque was also much more obvious. It was exaggerated and comic and took place in a physical theatre to an audience who had knowingly paid entry to see it. None of this is true in *No Name*, where the parodies are hidden in a subtext, for a reader that thinks he or she has bought a piece of sensation fiction, and which can only be evoked in the theatre of the imagination.

Collins seems not to have told anyone his references were there either, not even Dickens, his close friend, collaborator and mentor (but also rival), at least at the time. We can suppose this from the letters Dickens wrote to him as the novel progressed, in which some of his comments make no sense if he had understood that the theatrical parodies were there. For example, he says that when Magdalen discusses her disinheritance with Mr Pendril, and 'checks off the items of the position one by one,' she is

⁴⁹ 'Mr. Wilkie Collins' New Novel.' *Morning Post*, 3 Jan 1863, p2, BLN.

'doing this in too business-like and clerkly a way.'⁵⁰ As I explain in Chapter 2, this moment is an imitation of ancient Greek stichomythia and has nothing to do with business or Magdalen's apparent character.

Collins and the Mainstream

Critics may not have noticed Collins's subtext because he was departing from mainstream literary practice of the time. Contemporary reviewers were part of the mainstream and were measuring Collins's work against it. It is highly likely that most readers would have shared their assumptions. Collins must have known or accepted that this would be the case when he made his artistic choices. So, what was he up to? One possible explanation for his silence is that he was playing a game with the reader, and it would have violated a version of the 'fair play' rule to have given it away, arguably a reason for reviewers to have followed suit.⁵¹ As Julie Sanders puts it, 'part of the pleasure of response for readers in these instances consists in tracing these relationships for themselves'.⁵² This view implies that his subtext is just a parlour game, with Collins showing off his theatrical knowledge and leaving it for the clever readers to spot. To discern whether he might have had a more serious purpose than this,

⁵⁰ Page, ed, *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage*, p128, letter to Collins 24 January 1862. William Baker has assessed Dickens's influence on the progress of *No Name* in 'Wilkie Collins, Dickens and "No Name"' in *Dickens Studies Newsletter* 11, 2 (1980), pp49-52.

⁵¹ See Sue Lonoff, *Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers*, p112: 'the stock-in-trade of detective-story writers... the "fair-play rule" - allowing the reader to play the sleuth by letting him have no more information than the characters themselves have.'

⁵² Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 2nd Edition (Abingdon, Routledge, 2106), p46.

we have to look at what mainstream attitudes to literature were and what difference it made that Collins chose to do something out of the ordinary.

Society and the Value of Literature

Perceptions in Victorian culture that there were divisions between high and low forms of literature were persistent and revolved around certain concepts. Literary value was associated with the written word and by extension a finished or fixed written or printed text, which could be or had been preserved for posterity. The Victorians' interest in history created a drive to edit and preserve historic works, discussed in chapter 4. High value literary work required intellectual engagement, cultural knowledge and a sustained effort of reading. Work was regarded as 'low' if it was ephemeral and considered to appeal mainly to the senses. Both aspects were associated with drama because it was performed. Performance was visual, aural, physical and emotional, its effect on the senses heightened by being witnessed in a crowd, and it existed only momentarily with infinite variations. Drama was rarely published in print at this time. It could only be written down in a limited way, especially in an era which favoured visual spectacle, but it also suffered from a lack of legal copyright protection. These attitudes to art produced two largely separate approaches to Shakespeare, for example. His work was highly valued as written poetry and for its exploration of moral character: editions were produced that were primarily intended to be read and the words were widely quoted in all sorts of contexts. But performances of Shakespeare in the theatre were not valued in the same way, in spite of the efforts of

various actor-managers to restore full texts and present historically researched productions.⁵³ Macfarlane notes that 'authenticity' and individuality in literature also had high cultural value, after the early Victorians had simplified and mythologized the Romantic ideal of the individual genius. These values were explicitly opposed to commercial forces. As Macfarlane notes: 'A crisis of authenticity in literature... was brought about by the advent of techniques of mass production... the promotion of originality was in part a direct response to the growth of the market.'⁵⁴ Literature that was intentionally created to make money, mass-produced, formulaic and derivative, was seen as 'low'. Poetry was valued as the highest form of literature partly because it did not produce large sales and poets could not make a living from it; this was seen as proof of its artistic integrity.⁵⁵ Small quantities meant exclusivity: there was a perception that high forms of literature were only for the educated few who had the ability to appreciate it.

Collins's theatrical parodies challenge these values by revealing his novel to be a complex work, with a subtext that can only be perceived by repeatedly reading with attention, intellectual engagement and cultural knowledge, all aspects associated with high art. Yet he did this by combining two art forms that at the time were regarded as ephemeral and low: sensation fiction and performed drama. The implication is that he was making a case for both these 'low' art forms to be reconsidered as

⁵³ Josephine M Guy and Ian Small, *The Textual Condition of Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2012), pp129-35.

⁵⁴ Macfarlane, *Original Copy*, pp24-5, p33.

⁵⁵ Guy and Small, *Textual Condition of Nineteenth-Century Literature*, pp59-61.

serious art. By leaving the subtext unannounced, Collins was perhaps asking his readers to open their minds and think for themselves outside the mainstream, in a process whereby discovery renders enlightenment more powerful. Once the subtext is observed the novel reads differently and its surface is revealed as a deliberate pretence. This is important because the subtext suggests alternative readings of the novel including a political critique of the world depicted, and with it an understanding that things lie hidden below the surface appearances of society too.

Art and culture are expressions of a society and reflect its wider values or issues. Victorian society was hierarchical and very unequal but also anxious about change. A higher value in literature for history, permanence, intellectualism, authenticity and exclusivity, and a resistance to mass culture and commercialism, speaks of the desire to maintain the long-established aristocratic social order and resist the pressure from a new industrial order based on money. Both industrial magnates and the rising middle classes were using money to encroach on once-exclusive privileges and lifestyle, including access to education, culture and art, and demanding a share of power. Nonetheless, the elite were mainly successful in adapting and thus maintaining their exclusivity throughout the nineteenth century.⁵⁶ Centres of power such as parliament, the civil service, the military, the church and the professions such as law and medicine remained largely occupied by the male upper classes throughout the century, in spite of gradual reforms and professionalisation: access

⁵⁶ Alastair J Reid, *Social Classes and Social Relations in Britain, 1850-1914* (Basingstoke, Macmillan Education Ltd, 1992), pp14-24, 37-8.

simply moved from those with birth and patronage to those with money and the right sort of education; in practice these were largely the same sorts of people. The wealthier middle classes made some inroads over the century, but women and the poorer classes were almost entirely excluded. Government also responded slowly to social problems that affected the poor, such as poor relief, public health, sanitation and working conditions. It addressed them on an ad-hoc basis and on its own terms, aiming to minimise assistance and the resultant taxation.⁵⁷ This situation was reinforced by the moral ideas of the time, which held that individuals were responsible for their own welfare and self-improvement, inevitably favouring those further up the social scale. As Lauren Goodlad explains, Victorian Britain was a 'liberal' society with a deep-seated belief in the self-governing liberties of individuals and communities and their own responsibility to build 'character'. The concept of 'character' included ideas similar to the 'anti-materialist' values associated with literature: virtuous citizenship, 'individuality and diversity' and moral and spiritual obligations. Government reforms were resisted because they had a tendency to encourage economic growth and bourgeois capitalism, bureaucracy and the 'depersonalisation' of administration.⁵⁸ Although the concept of character was a middle-class idea 'the project of moral improvement was refocused on the British ruling class. This shift...

⁵⁷ Michael Hunt, 'Administrative', in Herbert F Tucker, ed, *A New Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture* (John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2014), pp216-229. For education and professional careers in the nineteenth century see, for example, Christine L Kreuger, 'Clerical', pp141-55, Simon Petch and Jan-Melissa Schramm, 'Legal', pp156-63, Lawrence Rothfield, 'Medical', pp172-85, John R Reed, 'Military', pp188-96, Thomas William Heykk, 'Educational', pp197-215, in Tucker, ed, *A New Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*.

⁵⁸ Lauren Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: character and governance in a liberal society* (Baltimore, John Hopkins UP, 2003), pp vii-x, 3-5, 23-6.

enabled upper-class liberals to create a powerful myth of disinterested governance.⁵⁹ The elite adopted middle-class moral values, whilst devaluing the commercial basis of their rise, co-opting them to help reinforce the status quo against any threat from below. Fear of lower-class riot or popular revolution was prompted by the French and American revolutions, which were relatively recent history, while the threat of revolution spreading from Europe was very real in 1848, when Chartism reached its height in Britain. In the event, gradual change prevented violent revolution in England, but throughout the period this insecurity strengthened elite resistance to change.

According to Goodlad, by 1860, there was a stable consensus of 'middle class industry and upper-class statesmanship' in government, but it was built on a 'sustaining material underside: economic prosperity, constitutional conservatism and the informal collectivism of countless philanthropic, voluntary and self-help organizations'.⁶⁰ In other words, the elite's claim to financial disinterestedness was disingenuous. They could remain above commercialism because they already had the bulk of the nation's wealth, in landed estates and investments, kept in the hands of the same families through inheritance. Money was also the basis of their cultural superiority, since it paid for the books, art and elite education that formed it, whilst excluding those who could not pay. Meanwhile, the money the lower orders needed depended on 'character', their own efforts, at a time when labour was low-paid, or on those of charitable

⁵⁹ Ibid, p129.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p192.

organisations, which conveniently obviated the need for alternative claims on taxes or government spending. The concept of 'character' appeared to be a moral position, but it served to protect vested interests and power.

Art and literature were inseparable from these areas of contention. The commercial nature of popular art and literature, and the success of sensation fiction in particular, brought the question of money back into the foreground. Art and literature could be a means to make money. Works of art or literature were products which cost money to produce or buy; therefore engagement in art or literature tended to be limited to those who had money. The mainstream preferred to frame art and literature as a moral, cultural, educational matter. Literature was thought to influence people's ideas and behaviour and was therefore of importance in regulating society. This was especially true for women, who widely wrote fiction, while women readers were thought to be more easily influenced by it.⁶¹ Popular literature's wide audience gave it influence, potentially for social control, but equally for subversion. The critics' preoccupation with dividing literature into 'high' and 'low' forms and showing concern for its moral effect reflected an anxiety to value works in tune with the status quo, whilst discrediting those that challenged it. Critics tended to be drawn

⁶¹ See Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader 1837-1914* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993), pp4, 10-11. See also Jacky Bratton, *The Making of the West End Stage, Marriage, Management and the Mapping of Gender in London 1830-1870* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2011), pp88-90, 94-6, 100-05. Writing itself could be seen as a 'feminine' occupation, frivolous and taking place in the home. Male writers defended their masculinity by excluding women from their accounts. See also John Kucich 'Intellectual Debate in the Victorian Novel' in Deirdre David, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012) pp107-28. Overt intellectual debate was discouraged in novels, by both readers and reviewers, as an inappropriate masculinisation of the form.

from the educated male upper classes; women could and did write articles and reviews, but their participation in this male territory grew relatively slowly and their work was less influential.⁶² Collins was challenging the mainstream by creating a complex work from two 'low' art forms, but in so doing he was also challenging the society that had defined these categories in the first place, exposing its dependence upon money and revealing the way that art was used to maintain the status quo. The mainstream climate in effect sought to restrict artistic expression as well as social and political dissent. The real significance of the theatrical subtext is that, both politically and artistically, Collins was dissenting from and critiquing the mainstream, asserting his independent right to create art in whatever form he saw fit.

Working Against the Mainstream

Collins and Fiction

It is already well-known that Collins was departing from the mainstream in spearheading the emergence of sensation fiction. The mainstream form of fiction in the mid-nineteenth century was the realist novel. Realist novels were concerned with 'truthfulness', plausibility and verisimilitude, and presented a picture of contemporary life that was regarded as authentic, despite sometimes also borrowing from the gothic, supernatural or

⁶² See, for example, Iain Crawford, 'Harriet Martineau: Women, Work and Mid-Victorian Journalism' in Shattock, ed, *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth Century Britain*, pp317-27, which recounts Martineau's pioneering journalism in the face of male resistance and prejudice, enabling later female writers. This work also contains chapters on the conservative Margaret Oliphant (pp341-52) and the exceptionally intellectual George Eliot (pp353-69), both women thus working with the cultural mainstream rather than challenging it.

melodramatic. They were associated with intellectual endeavour, to write or to read, widely exploring social issues and the consequences for individuals of the processes of historical change, stimulating reader empathy and a sense of shared national life.⁶³ The explosion into the market of Collins's *The Woman in White* in 1860 challenged the dominance of the realist novel by creating a vogue for sensation fiction and opportunities for other writers. As a form of fiction that appealed emphatically to the senses, it was quickly categorised as 'low'. Sensation fiction challenged realist fiction's monopoly on the 'truth' by translating plots and characters drawn from gothic horror, mystery and contemporary crime into contemporary domestic settings. Its critics dismissed it as unrealistic, but like the gothic tradition it was articulating views and truths that were not being acknowledged in the mainstream, while its sensational methods also exposed the constructed and formulaic nature of all fiction.⁶⁴

The theatrical parodies in *No Name* challenge realism's apparent truthfulness in a different way. Bisla has already noted that *No Name* seems to parody realism's conventions, highlighting the constructed nature of both the story and the world it depicts. The theatrical parodies exaggerate this effect by revealing a story not based on the 'real' world but artificially constructed from other works. The use of parody, which has always been used historically to 'debunk', is particularly destabilising for the surface meaning, while the use of dramatic works and theatricality

⁶³ Caroline Levine, 'Victorian Realism' in David, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, pp84-106, pp84-8, 95-7.

⁶⁴ Lyn Pykett, 'Sensation and the Fantastic in the Victorian Novel' in David, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, pp211-30, pp211-12, 220-4.

results in a sense of his characters acting out borrowed roles on improvised stages, rather than being 'natural' characters in a believable world. These self-conscious strategies are fundamentally disruptive to any reading of the novel based on the conventions of realism. Collins's choice of method can therefore be interpreted as a pointed critique of realism in fiction. The theatrical parodies also challenge realism's version of the world by bringing the content and context of the borrowed work into play in the text, creating analogies often drawn from a different historical period. The conditions of the contemporary world are revealed as different from past periods and the result of an historical process of change, rather than simply natural. These issues are fully explored in chapter 1.

Sensation fiction's commercial success exposed the financial basis of all fiction, undermining realism's higher-culture associations of disinterested artistic exploration of the truth. Sensation fiction's success had only been possible because of the general growth in the fiction market by mid-century. Population increase, a general rise in literacy and relative leisure time, and the dramatic increase in circulation of newspapers and periodicals had expanded the market. New popular fiction was being widely published in periodicals, such as Charles Dickens's *Household Words* and *All The Year Round*, in weekly or monthly parts, allowing cheap access to it. Widely available fiction in turn created demand from a large and hungry public, raising issues around art, class and gender roles when engagement in literature was no longer an exclusive activity.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ See, for example, Simon Eliot, 'The Business of Victorian Publishing' in David, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, pp36-61. Mass-production of low-quality

Collins fuelled the popular fiction market personally with *The Woman in White*. The novel's ubiquity can be gauged by its mention in an 1861 local tourist *Guide to Aldeburgh* that Collins had and probably used for his research for the Aldborough scenes in *No Name*. This book describes visitors to the beach 'lounging on the shingle to read the "Woman in White" together.'⁶⁶ Collins was already an experienced writer and journalist who knew the market well and had absorbed how to use episodes in periodical publication to make his work exciting. Now his commercial success had given him a huge readership and therefore potential cultural influence.

No Name's theatrical parodies use role-play that reveals the financial motives behind social conventions, implicating realism, which tended to uphold them, in a society that claimed to be motivated by virtue but was really motivated by money. In particular, realist novels tended to reinforce attitudes to women, such as the prevailing 'separate spheres' domestic ideology, men's 'sphere' being public and intellectual, women's being private, domestic and emotional. This ideology was seen as 'natural' and underpinned women's disadvantaged social and legal position. Domestic novels used the 'developmental marriage plot' which could provide young women with a 'sentimental education necessary for marriage.'⁶⁷ Critics such as Lyn Pykett and Kate Flint have already established that sensation

fiction was associated with women, see Lyn Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine, The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (Abingdon, Routledge, 1992), p30-35.

⁶⁶ J Buck, *A Guide to Aldeburgh with a Brief Description of Adjacent Places being a Handbook for Visitors and Residents* ('Pictorial Magazine' office, High Street, Aldeburgh, 1861), p63; William Baker, *Wilkie Collins's Library, A Reconstruction* (London and Westport CT, Greenwood Press, 2002) p74.

⁶⁷ Rachel Ablow 'Victorian Feelings' in David, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel* pp192-210, pp197-201.

fiction challenged domestic ideology by recreating in contemporary settings the female gothic writers' portrayal of nightmare versions of women's domestic experience, and by presenting the points of view of female protagonists who were often active and transgressive instead of passive victims.⁶⁸ Conservative critics were 'apoplectic' at the threat to moral values, and by extension their own privilege, that sensation fiction presented. As one reviewer put it:

Mr Collins is a clever, and... a popular, writer; and the moral tone of his books is, therefore, the more to be lamented. ...the tendency of all of them is to relax rather than to brace the moral tone of the reader.⁶⁹

No Name's theatrical parodies explicitly reveal that domestic ideology was a strategy to keep wealth in elite male hands, including its use of the 'moral' issues of legitimacy and female virtue. The parodies also undermine and render ironic the apparently conventional plot resolution of the novel. These issues are addressed in chapters 2 and 3.

Collins and Politics

It is possible to discern a political agenda or opinion driving Collins's intertextual scheme. His selection of plays that contain political issues, and the way that he applies these to his story in *No Name*, and by

⁶⁸ See Lyn Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine*; Kate Flint, 'The Victorian Novel and its Readers' pp15-35 and Pykett, 'Sensation and the Fantastic in the Victorian Novel' pp211-30, in David, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*; Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader*, pp271-93.

⁶⁹ Unsigned review, *London Quarterly Review* ('a Methodist organ'), October 1866, Page, ed, *Wilkie Collins the Critical Heritage*, p144.

extension to the contemporary world in which it is set, strongly suggests a political critique of that world.

No Name's theatrical parodies are political because they expose the intrinsic connections between finance, fiction and the social and moral issues of the time, together with the political contests over vested interests that lay underneath, making commentary on contemporary political debates. Debates about extending the franchise were current at the time of *No Name's* writing: the 1832 Reform Act hadn't extended it very far, and it was a few years before the 1867 reforms. In 1862, only an average of 1 in 5 men could vote and no women, and eligibility was based on property ownership, a measure of wealth, not citizenship. Democracy itself was a far-distant dream. The Chartist movement had collapsed after 1848, and subsequent attempts by Lord John Russell to introduce further reform bills were defeated by apathy and vested interests. Reform throughout the century was only enacted where it suited the temporary political expediency of the ruling class and was done on their terms. None of the campaigns for the extension of the franchise considered votes for women, while women's legal rights were minimal.⁷⁰ Social pressures steered women into marriage as their only respectable life option, but it cost them

⁷⁰ T A Jenkins, *Parliament, Party and Politics in Victorian Britain* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1996), pp89-101. See also, for example, for the social background to reform, Catharine Hall, Keith McClelland and Jane Rendall, *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000); for Victorian political theory and ideology, Gareth Stedman Jones and Gregory Claeys, eds, *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011); for explorations of Parliamentary reform in Victorian fiction, Chris R Vanden Bossche, *Reform Acts: Chartism, Social Agency and the Victorian Novel* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2014); for women's social, political and legal position, Susie Steinbach, *Women in England 1760-1914: A Social History* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004).

their separate legal existence and rights to their property, children or even their own bodies. Divorce was extremely difficult, even after the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act, by which women wanting a divorce had to claim another cause beyond adultery while men did not.⁷¹ Pykett also notes some contemporary awareness of an analogy between married women and prostitutes, both being economically dependent on men and existing to serve their needs.⁷² Collins was writing *No Name* at a time when the ideology was being questioned, but before legislation was enacted that would later improve women's position, the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882.⁷³ *No Name's* theatrical parodies reveal sharp criticism of elite male rule, presenting it as based on wealth, self-interest and corruption, with devastating effects on the rest of the population, especially women. These issues are all explored in chapters 2, 3 and 4.

Chapter 4 reveals a comparison being made between contemporary aristocratic rule and the corrupt, hypocritical and over-mighty sixteenth-century Catholic church, playing on the fact that religion was important to the Victorians and religious controversies were current. Anti-Catholic feeling had been aroused in England by the recent recovery of Catholicism. Roman Catholics could hold public office after the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, while the restoration of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in 1850 met with widespread hostility and the label 'Papal aggression'. Meanwhile the established Church was failing to serve the

⁷¹ Steinbach, *Women in England*, p44, pp270-3, Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine*, pp55-61.

⁷² Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine*, pp65.

⁷³ Women's control over their assets was still limited, eg the 1870 Act only allowed married women control of their wages, see Steinbach, *Women in England*, pp272-3.

genuine religious needs of a growing population. It was closely associated with the ruling class, holding political power as part of the state and being populated mainly by the sons of the gentry via the universities, but much of the work was delegated to poorly paid curates in overcrowded churches. Religious needs were increasingly met by non-conformist churches, such as Methodists, Quakers, Presbyterians, or Baptists. The Church of England also caused controversy as various factions tried to lead reform: 'Evangelicals' focussed on a 'personal relationship between the believer and God' and 'spreading the gospel', the 'Oxford Movement' (or 'Tractarians') wanted to retain tradition and ritual in almost Catholic style, while 'Broad Church' sought a 'tolerant and inclusive' church.⁷⁴

No Name is set in 1846-48, and sometimes dated precisely, suggesting a context of the 1848 European revolutions and Chartism in Britain. These were attempts at revolution and change from below, which all failed, causing a conservative reaction through the 1850s.⁷⁵ The setting of the novel in this period invited the contemporary reader in 1862 to look at 'today' in the context of what happened then. *No Name* tells the story of a person who is powerless because of her sex and illegitimacy. Her struggles to gain freedom and ownership of her own property fail, because

⁷⁴ Kreuger 'Clerical' in Tucker, ed, *A New Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*, pp141-55. See also M A Crowther, *Church Embattled: Religious Controversy in Mid-Victorian England* (Newton Abbott, David & Charles, 1970); D G Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England* (Stanford, Calif, Stanford University Press, 1992); For explorations of contemporary religious controversy in Victorian historical novels see Miriam Burstein, *Victorian Reformations: Historical Fiction and Religious Controversy 1820-1900* (Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 2014).

⁷⁵ For the 1848 Revolutions see for example Peter Jones, *The 1848 Revolutions* (London, Routledge, 1991); For Chartism, see for example, John Walton, *Chartism* (London, Routledge, 1999).

she cannot overcome the conservative forces of society ranged against her, and she lacks the support and access to law that are available to more privileged sections of society. In political terms, this mirrors the failure of the disenfranchised to bring about change in 1848.

The political views discernible in the subtext suggest an author with reformist or radical opinions. Direct evidence for Collins's personal political sympathies is hard to find in his surviving writings; however, what can be deduced from his life choices suggests an unconventional person. Besides writing for the radical paper *The Leader* in the early 1850s, he developed family life with two women concurrently, marrying neither. He rejected his father's plans for him to become a clergyman and worked to build a career as a writer instead. His social circles were wide and included people seen to be less respectable such as theatre folk. None of these things suggest a person who would have believed in the prevailing social hierarchy.

The introduction to Collins's collected letters comments that on their evidence:

Collins can make no claim to be a great intellectual force and there is little in the way of sustained engagement with contemporary debates in religion and science, philosophy or politics... we see him gamely riding hobby horses... [such as] the rights of authors or married women... but he is never in the vanguard of the active political movement in question. Of course, Collins is always au fait with what is 'in the news'...[but] we

look in vain in the letters for impassioned discussions of Mill or Carlyle, Darwin or Spencer, Newman or Huxley, Arnold or Morris, never mind Comte and Marx.⁷⁶

This comment contains a not unreasonable assumption that a man holding political views would express them in his letters. Such habits, though, are equally a sign of patrician leisure. In spite of his relative privilege, Collins had to earn his living from writing by working at it many hours a day; given his sociable nature and wide social circles he is likely to have held forth at the dinner table instead. He may have been more interested in daily reality and the consequences of politics for ordinary people than intellectual political ideas. But the absence of political discussion in his letters does not mean he had no interest in political issues and nothing interesting to say about them in his other forms of writing.

Some of the few direct expressions of political opinions by Collins survive in a handful of his letters to his friend Edward Pigott⁷⁷ about *The Leader*. This weekly paper was 'founded in 1850 by Thornton Hunt and George Henry Lewes to promote socialism and to present a general review of politics, society, literature and the arts.' Pigott took it over after a year of financial difficulties. Collins contributed stories, articles and reviews for about five years from 1851. With Hunt and Lewes still the prominent

⁷⁶ Wilkie Collins, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins: The Collected Letters*, ed William Baker, Andrew Gasson, Graham Law, Paul Lewis (London, Pickering and Chatto, 2005) Vol 1, p xxi.

⁷⁷ Edward Pigott later became Examiner of Plays for the Lord Chamberlain (1874-95). His politics were by then much more conventional, see Andrew Lycett, *Wilkie Collins, A Life of Sensation* (London, Windmill Books, 2014), p384 and J R Stephens, *The Censorship of English Drama 1824-1901* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1980), pp32-5.

contributors, the paper retained its socialist or radical agenda.⁷⁸ The columnist E M Whitty, for example, provided it with ‘pungent coverage’ of parliamentary business, in contrast with ‘affectionate and even indulgent’ comment found in other publications.⁷⁹ In early 1852 Collins offered Pigott opinions about the paper’s layout. He suggested grouping political articles immediately after political news to give ‘the most important political part of the paper’ more focus and impact. He also recommended giving more space in the paper for ‘legal anomalies and corruptions’ and ‘Law Reform’ which would be both in line with the paper’s politics and popular with ‘King Public’.⁸⁰ These are pragmatic suggestions that don’t necessarily indicate Collins’s political opinions. His contributions to the paper must have been as much with a view to building his writing opportunities as out of conviction. However, he seems to have been aware that writing for a radical paper labelled him accordingly, for on 20 February 1852, in a letter pointedly marked ‘private’, he insists on contributing anonymously thereafter to avoid association with some of the religious opinions appearing in the paper. He argues that religious convictions have ‘no business in a newspaper’, because they cause division between contributors who are otherwise united, distinguishing this from ‘religious politics’ which are ‘fair game.’ As for himself: ‘I go with you, in politics – I go with you (saving one or two exceptional cases) in social matters... I will expose and condemn as heartily as any of you the corruptions and abuses of Church Politics...’ Thornton Hunt’s ‘Political Letter’ ‘mingling the

⁷⁸ Beetz, ‘Wilkie Collins and *The Leader*’, pp21-22.

⁷⁹ Jenkins, *Parliament, Party and Politics*, p21.

⁸⁰ Collins, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, vol 1, p79, 12 January 1852.

Saviour's name with the politics of the day' had offended his own religious sensibilities: 'it outrages my own convictions – and for this reason – and this only – I must beg that my name may never be appended to any future articles...' He expresses his religious belief as 'I am neither a Protestant, a Catholic – or a Dissenter.... but I believe Jesus Christ to be the son of God...' ⁸¹ This is the nearest evidence we get that Collins felt that his politics did tally broadly with *The Leader's* socialist and radical ones; that he disliked all organised churches, especially the 'corruptions and abuses' of the Church of England, but retained a free non-affiliated belief in Jesus and God.

Andrew Lycett's biography of Collins gives more examples along these lines: His religious attitudes are described as ambivalent.⁸² Travelling in 1853 he is repelled by the "sacred Roman Catholic frippery" decorating a chapel in Boulogne, and later, in Italy with Dickens, excuses himself from reading a book of theology sent by his mother.⁸³ On social awareness, Lycett describes him as being 'genuinely touched by the situation of a maid... "dirty work, small wages, hard words, no holidays, no social station, no future."' It moved him enough to comment publicly in *Household Words*: "No human being ever was created for this. No state of society which composedly accepts this, in the cases of thousands, as one of the necessary conditions of its selfish comforts, can pass itself off as civilised."⁸⁴ Such empathy with a person well below his own social class

⁸¹ Collins, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, vol 1, pp83-86, 20 February 1852.

⁸² Lycett, *Wilkie Collins, A Life of Sensation*, pp117.

⁸³ *Ibid*, p122.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p162.

was unusual, while his second 'wife' Martha Rudd was also from a lowly background. On war, he 'despaired of nations being "still ready to slaughter each other, at the command of one miserable wretch whose interest it is to set them fighting"', clearly aware of the consequences for ordinary people of their leaders' ambitions for power.⁸⁵ He was 'generally unsympathetic to gestures of Imperial aggrandisement... Queen Victoria's golden Jubilee...[was] "idiotic."⁸⁶ All these examples suggest an awareness of social inequalities, of the corruption or misuse of power, and a sceptical attitude towards unthinking patriotism. These are the kinds of political views, then, that are likely to emerge from his theatrical subtext.

Collins and Theatre

No Name's theatrical parodies can be interpreted as possible critique of contemporary theatrical methods and conditions, in that the underlying scheme of reference to the span of theatre history brings forward the idea that drama was staged and treated differently in the past. Collins was an author with mainly radical political views who was also passionate about the theatre. This makes it likely that he would have been opposed to contemporary theatre censorship, which worked to prevent contentious material being publicly performed, such as political, religious or social comment, or any attack on public figures and the monarchy. The 1843 Theatre Regulation Act, in exchange for commercial freedom, required plays for public performance to be licenced by the Lord Chamberlain, who

⁸⁵ Ibid, p309.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p393.

could refuse or demand alterations.⁸⁷ J R Stephens argues that there was a ‘widespread middle-class belief that politics were inappropriate in the theatre’, and that public opinion prevented it, rather than the censors.⁸⁸ He describes the mid-nineteenth-century theatre as ‘the closest of all art forms to the mass of the public’, making popular audience reaction potentially dangerous.⁸⁹ Drama’s appeal to the senses did have impact on the large crowds who witnessed it. As Thomas Morton commented in 1832, “I do not know anything more terrible than an enraged audience”, while Robert Southey explained in an 1834 article in the *Quarterly Review*, “the danger is in the *application* which a heated audience may make of it.”⁹⁰ Davis and Emeljanow in *Reflecting the Audience* note that theatres could sometimes erupt as a microcosm of wider politics, citing two examples relevant to Chartism and the 1848 revolutions. At the Surrey Theatre, anti-Chartist references in the 1846 *Cinderella* pantomime were badly received by the audience, and in 1848 the so-called ‘Monte Cristo Riot’ at Drury Lane was caused by performances of Dumas’s play by the Parisian Theatre Historique on the same days as Chartist protests. The rioters were both pro-Chartist and against the foreign invasion of Drury Lane, which was regarded as a kind of unofficial national theatre, at a time when fear of invasion and the spread of revolution from abroad was real.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Stephens, *The Censorship of English Drama*, p10.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, pp37, 78.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p2.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, pp44, 38.

⁹¹ Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow, *Reflecting the Audience, London theatregoing 1840-1880* (Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire, 2001), pp25, 194-5.

No Name's theatrical parodies suggest criticism of censorship restricting theatre's ability to contribute to public debate. The subtext uses dramas that had an overt political agenda written in other historical periods without such censorship. Collins's use of drama to discuss political issues suggests an opinion that this is partly what drama is for. The 'middle class belief that politics were inappropriate in the theatre' was part of their inclination to avoid challenging the existing hierarchy. Davis and Emeljanow have already explored middle-class appropriation of theatre across the period 1840-80, driven by a desire to reframe theatre as respectable and educational. London's West End, in particular, increasingly adapted to serve a middle class and tourist audience that was seeking to purchase culture and status, providing long runs and more comfortable and expensive accommodations that eventually marginalised the local working-class audience.⁹² Theatre's fashion for verisimilitude and historical reproduction at this time also chimed with middle-class desires for culture, education and maintaining outward appearances. *No Name's* theatrical parodies mock visual reproduction while using the content of dramas in a serious way, suggesting an opinion that the focus on appearances detracts from the content of drama and its ability to explore serious issues, as well as from the dramatic skills needed to communicate them to an audience. Collins's selection of dramas that were no longer

⁹² Ibid, pp97-107, 167-225. The West End also developed non-theatrical entertainments viewed as more respectable, see Bratton, *Making of the West End Stage*, pp60-69. Theatre areas had separate entrances to avoid classes mingling, see Michael Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp1-3.

being performed in the nineteenth century also suggests comment on the uses to which they were being put instead.

Women's anomalous position in the theatre was also political. Critics such as Jacky Bratton and Tracy Davis have shown how women exercised both power and freedom in the theatre in a way that flatly contradicted the prevailing domestic ideology. Functioning as executives, managers, administrators and writers gave them power. Actresses enjoyed the freedom of working outside the home and earning their own money; popular ones could wield power too. But life outside family control also meant that actresses did not enjoy conventional protection either and their physical display led to assumptions of sexual availability. Women tended to be seen as either angels or whores, inevitably placing actresses in the latter category, while theatres were assumed to be frequented by prostitutes whether or not they actually were.⁹³ These anxieties could cause confusion when actresses often portrayed respectable women on stage, a problem sometimes explored in novels or dramas of the period.⁹⁴ Just like fiction, theatre could expose the contradictions between the ideologies surrounding women and the reality. *No Name's* theatrical parodies adopt theatre's cross-gender casting to explore the difficulties

⁹³ Bratton, *Making of the West End Stage*, pp6-14, Tracy C Davis, *Actresses as Working Women* (London, Routledge, 1991), especially pp3-35 on working conditions and pp69-104 on issues of female respectability and sexual availability. See also Jo Robinson, 'The Actress as Manager' in Maggie B Gale and John Stokes, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to the Actress* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp157-72.

⁹⁴ See Miller, *The Victorian Actress in the Novel and on the Stage*.

encountered by women trying to occupy any position of power in society and questioning their exclusion.

Theatre's commercialism categorised it culturally as low but without any other source of funding it had little choice but to seek and please a wide paying audience. The 1843 Theatre Regulation Act placed all theatres on a level footing, but also in direct commercial competition with one another. Managers of theatres bore the true costs of production, reaping the consequent profits or losses at their own personal risk of bankruptcy.⁹⁵ A typical evening at the theatre would present several pieces from a variety of genres which were kept or changed in response to audience reaction. Performers were also a draw for audiences, stars or ensemble players in their regular 'lines of business', specific types of roles that played to their individual talents or physical type. This arrangement enabled performers to cope with the ever-changing repertoire and meant that dramatists and composers knew who they were writing for and what their function in each piece would be.⁹⁶ Dramatists at this time also had to produce a large quantity of work rapidly and were paid flat fees, resulting in much adaptation of novels, French plays and other shows, rather than original work. The inevitably ephemeral and formulaic nature of such work made it poorly valued culturally, influencing later views that the mid-Victorian theatre had produced little work of lasting value. Collins was aware that commercial pressures affected dramatic quality. In an 1858 article for

⁹⁵ Davis and Emeljanow, *Reflecting the Audience* pp ix-xi, 222; Michael Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age*, pp27, 31. For full discussion of theatre as a financial business see Tracy C Davis, *The Economics of the British Stage 1800-1914* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁹⁶ Michael Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age*, pp40, 126-27.

Household Words entitled 'Dramatic Grub Street' he argued that the best writers were not writing original material for the theatre anymore because authors could not make a living from it.⁹⁷ Collins was able to compare the French system, under which the legitimate French theatre received state funding; he frequently saw French companies in London or in Paris.⁹⁸ He wrote favourably of the French theatre to the critic Alfred-Auguste Ernouf who asked for details of his career in March 1862: 'If I had been a Frenchman, - with such a public to write for, such rewards to win, and such actors to interpret me, as the French stage presents – all the stories I have written...would have been told in the dramatic form'.⁹⁹ State funding is also in potential conflict with artistic independence, but the English theatres, both censored and commercial, had neither. As discussed in chapter 4, *No Name's* parodies suggest a possible analogy being drawn between Magdalen's struggles under her loss of financial independence and the position of the theatre, both having to conform to middle-class public opinion to survive.

Finally, *No Name's* theatrical parodies reveal just how much Collins knew about theatre, its history, the practicalities of staging and the way that theatre worked on an audience as a means of communication. It was a life-long passion being expressed here in an artistically creative way,

⁹⁷ *Household Words*, 6 March 1858, reproduced on *Wilkie Collins Website* <http://www.web40571.clarahost.co.uk/wilkie/etext/DramaticGrubSt.htm> (accessed May 2021).

⁹⁸ See, for example, Collins, *The Letters of Wilkie Collins*, pp22-8, letters home from Paris in September 1844 and 1845.

⁹⁹ Collins, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, vol 1, p259, to Alfred-Auguste Ernouf, 21 March 1862.

showing what theatre can contribute and how highly he thought of it in contrast to the disregard in which it was held in the cultural mainstream.

Collins's success as a novelist has eclipsed his life-long involvement with theatre. He was a Londoner all his life and knew the London theatre world well. He performed in amateur dramatics as a young man, putting on plays in the late 1840s with his brother and friends in his mother's drawing room, or the 'Theatre Royal, Back Drawing Room, Blandford Square'. He used the experience of playing *The Rivals* in *No Name*, as he told Edward Ward: 'I thought certain old remembrances of ours would be roused by that chapter about the private theatricals. I read "The Good Natured Man" and "The Rivals" again while I was writing it...' ¹⁰⁰ In 1850 he adapted a French play for a charity performance at Miss Kelly's Theatre, Dean Street, entitled *A Court Duel* and starring Charley Collins, while he took the lead in the following farce *Raising the Wind*. ¹⁰¹ He was recruited into Dickens's amateur acting circle in 1851 by his friend Augustus Egg to play Smart the valet in Dickens's production of *Not So Bad As We Seem* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton. He was later given the larger role of Shadowly Softhead for the tour in February 1852, and made a particular hit in Manchester. ¹⁰² Dickens wrote to his wife on 12 February: 'Collins was admirable, got up exceedingly, played thoroughly well, and missed nothing' while the Manchester Examiner praised his 'exceedingly clever

¹⁰⁰ Collins, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, vol 1, p260, to Edward Ward, 1 April 1862.

¹⁰¹ Catherine Peters, *The King of Inventors*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991), pp82-4.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p111.

performance'.¹⁰³ Collins boasted to his mother that 'the audience were all rolling about like a great sea, and roaring with laughter at the tops of their voices.'¹⁰⁴ Later, on 4 September 1852, his performance as 'the comically pedantic Burgomaster Triptolemus Muddlework' in Planché's *Charles XII* was reviewed as "richly comic, and full of breadth and unction" by the *Manchester Guardian*.¹⁰⁵ He seems to have had less talent for serious parts. Catherine Peters notes Janet Wills's reaction to the dress rehearsal of *The Lighthouse* in 1855 that he was 'all the time looking and acting most muffishly. Nothing could be better than the drama as drama, but oh, he makes a most unloving and unlovable actor.'¹⁰⁶ The *Times* reviewer on 12 July 1855 thought that he was 'less able to give expression to his own ideas than any of his friends'¹⁰⁷ But mainly the many positive reviews of *The Lighthouse* and *The Frozen Deep* simply fail to mention him.

Collins's amateur acting activities introduced him into professional theatrical circles. Miss Kelly's theatre was built by the actress Frances Kelly at the back of her house as a dramatic school. Dickens also performed there in the mid-1840s.¹⁰⁸ It is possible to speculate that Collins met Miss Kelly, or was even taught by her, or that this connection helped bring him to Dickens's attention. However, Collins's 1850

¹⁰³ Charles Dickens, *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson and Nina Burgis (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988), vol 6, p596-8, 12 February 1852.

¹⁰⁴ Collins, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, vol 1, p60, to Harriet Collins, 13 February 1852.

¹⁰⁵ Dickens, *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol 6, p793 note 8, 4 September 1852.

¹⁰⁶ Peters, *The King of Inventors*, p151.

¹⁰⁷ Charles Dickens, *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed Graham Storey Kathleen Tillotson and Angus Easson (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1993), vol 7 p669 note 7.

¹⁰⁸ Charles Kent, 'Kelly, Frances Maria [Fanny]' (2008), Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15296> (accessed May 2021).

performance there was 'assisted by Miss Jane Mordaunt',¹⁰⁹ a professional actress, whose career included assisting gentlemen amateurs as well as performing in London and the provinces. The *Era* notes her assisting amateur performances in Brighton in the 1840s.¹¹⁰ The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* records her appearance with her sister Lady Boothby 'at the Marylebone on 21 November 1850', in Collins's local area.¹¹¹ Collins clearly kept in touch with the sisters, writing to Edward Pigott on 19 February 1852 'I have just returned from a very jovial dinner party at Lady Boothby's [sic].'¹¹² Later, when his plays began to appear on the professional stage, he got to know actors who starred in them such as Frederick Robson and Fanny Stirling.

Collins was in theatre audiences frequently. Many of his surviving letters concern arrangements to go to the theatre with his friends, such as Edward Pigott, E M Ward or Dickens. For example (at random) he writes to Ward: 'Are you and Mrs Ward disengaged tonight? And, if you are, would you like a ticket to The French Play? – I expect to have two Stall tickets sent here....'¹¹³ He also went a great deal in his job as a theatre

¹⁰⁹ 'For the Female Emigration Fund', *The Times*, 22 February 1850, p5 and 26 February 1850 p4, TDA (accessed May 2021).

¹¹⁰ For example, 'Provincial Theatricals / Amateur Performance at the Brighton Theatre', 14 July 1844 p6, 'Provincial Theatricals / Fashionable Amateur Theatricals', 27 October 1844, p5 and 'Provincial Theatricals / Brighton' 9 February 1845 p6, *Era*, BLN (accessed May 2021).

¹¹¹ Joseph Knight, 'Nisbett [nee Macnamara; other married name Boothby], Louisa Cranstoun', Oxford DNB <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/20204> (accessed May 2021). Mostly known as Mrs Nisbett, her maiden stage name was Mordaunt, the one adopted by her father.

¹¹² Collins, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, vol 1, p62-3, to Edward Pigott 19 February 1852. The editor attributes the triple 'o' in her name to 'drunken WC', but it also suggests her sexual attractiveness. Her husband Sir William Boothby had died in 1846; she is clearly hosting dinner parties in her own right and inviting single gentlemen along with no particular concern for respectability.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p74, undated letter to E M Ward, date conjectured April 1851 – July 1852.

reviewer for *The Leader*. He was able to get 'orders' (free tickets) from the management for this.¹¹⁴ Some of the theatre reviews identified as his by Kirk H Beetz suggest his personal opinions about the contemporary theatre. In his praise for Kean's production of the melodrama *The Courier of Lyons* at the Princess's Theatre, he explicitly aligns himself with the popular audience against the critics in preferring 'a play with small literary ability and great dramatic interest... we don't go to the theatre to conform to rules or to pay homage to critics... the dramatist who can make his audiences' flesh creep is the dramatist for *our* money.' Similarly in opera, 'the man of genius is the man who can write "a tune"', rather than 'the learned musical humbug who gives us nothing to hum in the morning'. He prefers a natural style of acting – 'truth to nature' is a frequent term of praise – such as Alfred Wigan in *Heads or Tails*: 'He made a character of the part, without once slipping into exaggeration from beginning to end', while Frederick Robson's acting in his 'low-comedy part' was disappointingly 'conventional'.¹¹⁵ As a reviewer he is focussed on the acting and performances, while discussions of the scenery's verisimilitude are notably absent.

Collins's original dramatic works began with Dickens's amateur acting circle, first *The Lighthouse* in 1855, based in part on his own short story 'Gabriel's Marriage', then *The Frozen Deep* in 1857, a collaboration with

¹¹⁴ See Collins, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, vol 1, pp61-4. 'Orders' could be sent or withheld from reviewers by the management; letter to Edward Pigott 18 February 1852 discusses getting them from Charles Ward at Coutts where 'they are sent to the bank as a matter of civility.'

¹¹⁵ 'The Courier of Lyons', 1 July 1854, p619; 'La Sirene', 8 July 1854, p644; 'Heads or Tails', 15 July 1854, p668, *The Leader*, BP (accessed May 2021).

Dickens. Both these plays enjoyed semi-public performances and newspaper reviews only because of the fame of their producer and starring actor, Charles Dickens, but they created professional opportunities for Collins. *The Lighthouse* was staged publicly at the Olympic Theatre in August 1857 starring Frederick Robson. It was well received and ran for more than two months.¹¹⁶ The Olympic commissioned him to write another vehicle for Robson, and he produced a melodrama, *The Red Vial*, which opened in October 1858. This was Collins's first play not to involve Dickens as collaborator or star, his first proper professional commission, so it was a double blow when the play was a failure. The reviews of the opening night were mixed or negative, only really praising the performances of the actors, and reporting adverse reactions in the audience.¹¹⁷ The play closed after less than five weeks. Collins didn't attempt to write another play until 1867's *No Thoroughfare*, another collaboration with Dickens. This has been interpreted as humiliation or a loss of confidence¹¹⁸ but might be more prosaically accounted for by the demands of his next work, *The Woman in White*, which he had already committed to producing serially for *Household Words* by August 1858, before *The Red Vial* was staged.¹¹⁹ Its huge success then refocused his attention. Other indications that his confidence in his dramatic ability remained include his career resumé for

¹¹⁶ Davis, 'Collins and the Theatre', pp170-71. For Collins and Dickens's collaboration on and tussle over *The Frozen Deep*, see Nayder, *Unequal Partners*, pp60-99.

¹¹⁷ Collins, *The Red Vial*, pp12-15.

¹¹⁸ Catherine Peters asserts that he was 'deeply humiliated' and 'refused to allow *The Red Vial* to be printed, or ever performed again.' *The King of Inventors*, p183.

¹¹⁹ Collins, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, vol 1, p168, to F H Underwood, 12 August 1858.

Alfred-Auguste Ernouf, in which he lists his dramatic works as well as his novels, defending *The Red Vial* as ‘not successful with the public, though greatly liked by the actors’, and declaring ‘if I know anything of my own faculty, it is a dramatic one’.¹²⁰ Further pride in his dramatic work is indicated by his inclusion of all three of his original plays to date in the subtext of *No Name*, along with the works of Aeschylus and Shakespeare. But as far as the public were concerned, at the time he was writing *No Name*, Collins had not really made his mark as a dramatist.

Project Methodology

The lack of research to date in Collins’s use of theatre, parody and intertextuality, or his political opinions, has presented a methodological challenge as to how to decipher and interpret the subtext that Collins has created in *No Name* and explain and prove the case to others. This is a process and method that I have had to develop as part of the research.

Challenges

Terminology

Collins’s intertextual method raises issues about how to describe it accurately. The established terminology for intertextuality, ‘quotation’, ‘citation’ and ‘allusion’, does not fit. Quotations and citations refer to references that are clearly signalled, while Collins’s are quite well hidden. His references are also not exact quotations but parodies. The concept of

¹²⁰ Ibid, p259, to Alfred-Auguste Ernouf, 21 March 1862.

allusion, 'an indirect or passing reference', is also inappropriate when Collins's references are specific, detailed and form part of a wider scheme that underpins the whole novel.¹²¹ Intertextual terminology has developed to describe the relationship between two written literary works, when Collins has chosen to set up a relationship between his novel and a series of dramatic works in imagined performance. His references to conventions of theatrical practice, related to but existing outside the written dramatic text, such as actions, costumes, sets, or props, are difficult to describe as 'quotations'. Collins's combination of two related but different types of art is an interesting and little-explored type of intertextuality from a theoretical point of view.¹²² However, my focus in this thesis is primarily historical, theatrical and political. For these reasons I am not proposing new terminology. Where appropriate I will use the generic term 'reference', but in practice I am having to prove the presence of references to dramatic works by pointing out an accumulation of inexact parallels. Hence, it is more appropriate to proceed using terms like 'suggests', 'similarly', 'rather like' etc.

Collins has chosen a wide range of dramatic works and in all the cases I am presenting here he is using the whole plot, is engaged with the narrative and thematic concerns of each work, and with its wider history and connotations. This practice might be appropriately described as

¹²¹ See Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Glossary p213.

¹²² See, for example, Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London, Routledge, 2000), pp174-81: in the short section 'Intertextuality in the non-literary arts', Allen points briefly to the intertextual relationship between actor, character and performance, and to the use cinema has made of literature (but not the other way round). There is no discussion of alternative terminology.

'adaptation' or 'appropriation'.¹²³ Adaptation is usually understood as a sustained engagement with another work, and its acknowledged or fairly obvious reproduction in a related form, such as the film adaptation of a book. Appropriation is usually seen as a more embedded and less acknowledged sourcing, more distant and transformative, and often with critical or political intent, such as reimagining a canonical novel from the point of view of a marginalised character, or in a new time and place, which is closer to what Collins is doing. Such interactions with cultural heritage can multiply over time and serve to perpetuate the place of certain themes or stories in it, such as myths (like Prometheus), fairy tales (like Cinderella) or the work of canonical authors (like Shakespeare, who famously worked from many sources himself). This practice raises issues around plagiarism and its legal remedy copyright, but Sanders argues that adaptation can be seen as 'a form of collaborative writing across time'.¹²⁴ Collins's selection of a range of dramatic works featuring recurring stories, from the whole of theatre history, suggests that his primary engagement here is with the practice of adaptation or appropriation itself, either historically or theoretically, rather than with the desire to adapt particular individual works, even though the subject-matter of each one is relevant to the novel's concerns. I therefore consider it misleading to talk of his 'adaptation' or 'appropriation' of any particular play, preferring the more neutral and generic term 'use'.

¹²³ The systematic nature of Collins's scheme also rules out the intertextual term 'bricolage', which implies a patchwork of fragments, or a 'collection of different quotations, allusions and references.' Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Glossary p213.

¹²⁴ Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, pp24, 35-6, 46, 57-60.

Attention to detail

Caracciolo's approach to Collins's intertextuality is to observe broad suggestive and wide-ranging allusions and to try to recast Collins as a symbolic, poetic, literary artist. This approach is not always convincing, not only because it clashes with Collins's existing reputation but also because the observations themselves lack attention to detail. Examples in relation to the case of *Cinderella*, are noted in chapter 3. I found that deciphering, describing and interpreting Collins's references requires a lot of attention to detail, which makes sense because it is consistent with his known working methods. Collins was and is rightly famed for his skill at creating and controlling complicated plots. The process requires an overall vision and the ability to manage a great number of interconnecting pieces, using them to progress the plot in the right order towards the desired finishing point. This kind of result is not achieved without time, patience and effort spent in detailed planning. As he wrote to Charles Reade in the early planning stages of *No Name* during June 1861:

I am slowly putting up the scaffolding of the book which is yet to be built. My poles tumble about my ears, and my lashings come undone, and my boards won't fit – in plainer words, I have cut myself out a tough job in invention and construction of story this time... Not a line of the book is to be periodically published – thank God – before the end of this year or the beginning of next.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Noted in Lonoff, *Wilkie Collins and his Victorian Readers*, p34, full letter in Collins, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, Vol 1, p235, to Charles Reade, 4 June 1861.

It must be assumed that if there are schemes of intertextual reference in Collins's novels, they were created in the same way, as part of the same process, and that they will be similarly precise and constructed into an over-arching purpose. Proving the scheme is there and deciphering it credibly therefore involves the same systematic approach, working with an accumulation of all the details. This approach, rather than reinventing Collins as a symbolic or poetic writer, reveals him to be a clever, thorough, well-read, calculating and opinionated one, which we already knew.

The method

To demonstrate the presence and decode the potential meaning of the theatrical subtext in *No Name*, the specific plays he used must be identified, their text closely compared with that of the novel, and their theatrical and historical context investigated. Once this is done it becomes possible to read *No Name* in new ways and offer new interpretations as to what Collins might have been trying to do or say.

Identifying the plays

Evidence for which plays Collins was interested in for his scheme, such as in letters, are scant and there are no surviving working papers for this novel. The only way to identify which plays he used is by reading the text with knowledge that engagement with plays underpins the novel and following clues. Some plays, such as *Hamlet*, are still famous and parodies of them are recognisable. Others, such as *Kynge Johan*, are not, and must be identified by noticing clues and reading likely suspects. The

inclusion of *Prometheus Bound*, the first surviving work of Western drama, means that there are 2500 years of theatre history from which Collins may have made selections. On the other hand, understanding that he may have purposefully included a representative range of periods and genres, suggests likely places to look. At the time of writing, I have identified references to 25 dramatic works for which I think a case can be made, but there are many unsolved clues.¹²⁶

The clues are in the details of *No Name's* text, and they often stand out in some way. Names or places can be significant, such as Wragge's name of Horatio (p232) pointing to *Hamlet*, or 'St Crux' hinting at Roman Catholicism in some way. Some details just don't necessarily need to be that way for the story, such as Wragge's meeting with Magdalen on the Walk on the Walls in York (p193). He could have met her anywhere, but it is a good place to stage the opening ghost scenes from *Hamlet*. Another example is the day trip to Dunwich during the Aldborough scene (p383), which is the birthplace of John Bale, author of *Kynge Johan*. This last one shows that clues are not necessarily from the play itself; for this much less well-known play Collins has sportingly included some geographical links to its author who was famous as a historical figure. John Bale was Bishop of Ossory in Ireland, supplying the additional clue 'Ossory, Essex' (p448), a deliberate mistake. Collins uses mistakes or misquotations, often repeated, to draw attention to the clues, especially when he is otherwise factually precise. A lot of the clues are also in themselves theatrical,

¹²⁶ See Appendix for the full list.

suggesting costumes, props, or significant actions or gestures. Examples of this might be Magdalen's brown alpaca dress (p267) or Mrs Wragge's down-at-heel shoes (p210), both pointing to important costume items in *Cinderella*, or Miss Garth beating the table with her hand (p142) and Mr Clare gripping Magdalen's arm in a restricting way (p158) both significant actions in the binding of Prometheus.

Following clues might identify plays, but some details will only make sense afterwards. This might include timescales or dates, for example Wragge and Magdalen's parody of *Hamlet's* ghost scenes happens a couple of months after her father's death ('But two months dead – nay, not so much, not two' (H 1.2.138)). Or it might be clues that have defeated attempts to follow them logically, for example, Mazey's rendition of Charles Dibdin's song '*Tom Bowling*' about the death of a sailor on duty (p627). Instead of leading to any work by Dibdin or his sons¹²⁷, or a naval melodrama, it turned out to be a parody analogous to the Catholic liturgy from *Kynge Johan*, which I could only see after identifying this play by other means. Parodies by omission, missing out something famous from the play that you would expect to be included, are also only observable once you have already found a play.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Charles Dibdin the younger and Thomas John Dibdin. All three Dibdins worked in and wrote for the theatre, see Jon A Gillespie, 'Dibdin, Charles', Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7585> (accessed May 2021).

¹²⁸ There is no good example from the four cases in this thesis. In the parody of *Romeo and Juliet*, Mrs Lecount waits up all night to observe the balcony scene between Noel and Magdalen which never happens (p453).

The version of the play matters too. If there are multiple versions, I have had to consider which version(s) Collins used. If the story exists in non-theatrical forms, I have had to consider them and be sure I can plausibly rule them out. *Prometheus Bound*, for example, was an ancient Greek play based on myth. Was Collins using the myth in general, a specific literary rendition of the myth or the play? In this case, if it was the play, which translation did he use, or did he work from the Greek? This matters when translation from a language like ancient Greek, which is relatively distant from modern English in time, operation and cultural meaning, can produce quite widely varying results.¹²⁹ As should become clear in the following chapters, Collins plays on quite small details as well as the plot and larger themes of the play, so it helps to have access to the same version(s) that he used. In this case, William Baker's reconstruction of Collins's library lists an 1849 edition of Aeschylus's tragedies translated by Theodore Buckley.¹³⁰ There are also details which suggest that Collins worked with the Greek. In the case of *Cinderella*, which is famous as both a fairy tale and a pantomime, I read through most of the British Library's collection of literary versions of the tale published before 1862, printed dramatic versions, Victorian and modern translations of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* and all the surviving Lord Chamberlain's manuscripts of dramatic versions. This established that the literary and dramatic approaches to the tale were quite distinct and after considering a composite dramatic version, I eventually pinned down details from four

¹²⁹ Julie Sanders points out that translation can be regarded as a form of adaptation, see *Adaptation and Appropriation*, p9-10.

¹³⁰ Baker, *Wilkie Collins's Library*, p74.

printed dramatic versions, including *La Cenerentola*. In retrospect it makes sense that Collins would have needed a printed text to refer to when making such specific and detailed references to plays. But I had to go through this process to establish and prove it.

For each identified play, its text needs to be systematically compared with that of *No Name*, identifying the moments in which it appears and the way each one has been transformed into parody, also noting the use of conventions of theatrical practice implied in the text or associated with the play or its genre. For the four cases detailed in this thesis, I have also tried to show that the whole play is being used in each case. This helps to show that the references are deliberate and systematic and cannot be a coincidence. It also shows how the borrowed work is intrinsic to the construction of *No Name*'s plot and characters.

Investigating and interpreting

Once a play has been mapped onto *No Name*, a picture of its theatrical and historical context needs to be built. The play's significance in its own time and the nineteenth century helps to suggest what Collins might have meant by including it.

The play's theatrical context might include: the staging conventions, methods and conditions of its own time, to understand how the play operated in practical terms to convey its meaning; the play's significance, if any, in theatre history, in terms of the development of theatre as an art form; whether or not it was staged in the mid-nineteenth century, the

reasons for this, and the difference that nineteenth-century staging conventions might have made; what was understood, in the theatre or more generally, about its original methods of production, and whether there was any attempt made to reproduce them; how popular it was as a production and who starred in it; what kind of audience watched this play in the theatre or read it at home and what their social context might suggest about their knowledge or attitude. The theatrical context will often reveal more connecting details with *No Name's* text, for example suggesting that Collins had specific actors or contemporary performances in mind.

The play's social and political context might include: any major events or issues of the time being discussed in its story or themes, or any detailed topical references, as far as they can be deciphered; the temporal framework for investigation, which needs to be identified with care, for example a play might be written in one period, set in a previous one and revived in the nineteenth century, and all of these periods might have some relevance; what was generally understood in the mid-nineteenth century about the relevant past periods, and about the cultural or political concerns of the play; what relevance these issues might have had in the culture or politics of the mid-nineteenth century; how the play was known in the nineteenth century, or what alternative part it played in culture, if it wasn't performed in the theatre.

With identified textual parallels and a picture of the play's context it becomes possible to propose an interpretation of its use in *No Name*. I

have indicated above in 'Working against the Mainstream' how the subtext as a whole can be read as interventions in contemporary political and artistic debates. How each chosen drama's characters, situation and plot implant their meaning to those of *No Name* and work towards these kinds of interpretations will be explored further in the following chapters. These readings perhaps offer further light on Collins's own opinions, but precisely because it is a matter of interpretation of this complicated subtext, caution must be exercised. I have tried to offer an interpretation that makes sense of the evidence.

The process I have described is rather like archaeology: you can make educated guesses as to where a structure is buried, but it is sometimes luck that you put your spade in the right place. You then have to uncover the whole structure by following the walls wherever they lead. Interpreting the findings is also conceptually similar, calling on contextual knowledge to situate the evidence, but also being aware that the new evidence might change the picture. The framework for this research is thus a complicated and intersecting historical, cultural, theatrical, and personal (to Collins) one, within which close textual reading can then take place. Abstract theory has played a relatively minor part in the framework. Apart from the studies of parody and intertextuality previously mentioned, I have used Jeremy Tambling's study of allegory in the final case study of *Kynge Johan*, to consider whether *No Name* can be viewed as a political allegory.¹³¹

¹³¹ Jeremy Tambling, *Allegory* (London, Routledge, 2010).

Choice of Plays

While 25 or more plays are being referred to in this novel, this thesis covers just four. In order to show exactly what Collins is doing with these texts and the literary, theatrical and political implications of their presence in the novel, in the limited space of a thesis, a small number of in-depth studies is more effective. The chosen dramas cover a range of historical periods and genres and span the whole novel between them. The first case study focusses on *Hamlet*, attempting to show how Collins is using both theatre and parody to create his subtext, and what kinds of effects that has on the reading of the novel. *Hamlet* is particularly suitable for this kind of discussion, for it is itself a play about acting, and its fame has made it recognizable and much parodied. The three remaining case studies focus on the historical and political implications that each play brings to the novel. Between them they trace the trajectory of Magdalen's journey from the infliction of injustice in the early part of the novel (*Prometheus Bound*) through her discovery that systematic social barriers, especially of gender, block her attempts to seek redress at every turn (*Cinderella*), to her final defeat by way of hypocritical morality (*Kynge Johan*).

Chapter 1 'To Be or Not To Be':¹³² *Hamlet* and Parody

Introduction

In his article 'Overdoing Things with Words in 1862', Sundeep Bisla is the only critic to suggest that there are similarities between Magdalen's situation in *No Name* and that of Hamlet in Shakespeare's play. Bisla mentions this comparison as coincidental, for his article's main purpose is to argue that within *No Name* Collins is offering a critique of realist fiction, one which, by citing and parodying its conventions, reveals 'the artifice at its basis.'¹³³ This chapter extends Bisla's argument by showing that the similarities with Hamlet amount to an elaborate theatrical parody where the use of drama, as an overtly artificial and performed art form, becomes a particularly effective tool for suggesting novelistic artifice. This chapter will demonstrate how the reference to performance practices and conventions and the technique of parody operate together to destabilise the surface text, suggesting alternative readings of the story and its characters.¹³⁴

Hamlet in the Nineteenth Century

In any form of art, a parody can only work for its intended audience if its object is well-known to that audience. After the success of his novel *The*

¹³² H 3.1.58, *Hamlet* in Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, eds, *The Complete Works*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994) pp653-90.

¹³³ Bisla, 'Over-Doing Things with Words in 1862', p2.

¹³⁴ Some of the material in this chapter was previously presented in Jones, *Theatre and Parody in Wilkie Collins's No Name*.

Woman in White, Collins's potential readership for *No Name* was large and wide-ranging, and it would have been a fair assumption that this readership was familiar with *Hamlet*. At the time Collins was planning and writing *No Name* in 1861-62, *Hamlet* was one of the most famous works in the literary and dramatic canon. Many of his readers would have been familiar with the story, its famous phrases and characters. Visual images of *Hamlet* were also widely available in culture, both in pictures and on stage. All of these aspects could have helped to trigger recognition of references to *Hamlet* in *No Name* for its readers.

Hamlet on the Page

Hamlet was popular and familiar as a written text. Plays were read as much as seen on stage by the mid-nineteenth century. As Michael Dobson explains in *The Making of the National Poet*, Shakespeare became part of print culture during the eighteenth century as part of a general effort to separate high and low culture. Adaptations, purged of any unfortunate or theatrical vulgarities, were published for reading, and his literary art was discussed in intellectual magazines.¹³⁵ Mark Hollingsworth argues that by the nineteenth century 'for the first time the way that people interacted with Shakespeare became a primarily text-based experience.' He quotes an opinion in the *Times* of October 1864 that people preferred Shakespeare as poetry and did not so much care to see it acted.¹³⁶ While this may only reflect respectable disapproval of

¹³⁵ Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992), pp100-01, 208-14.

¹³⁶ Hollingsworth, *Nineteenth Century Shakespeares*, p5-6.

theatre more generally, it is nonetheless true that editions of *Hamlet* and other works of Shakespeare proliferated to cater for an increasingly literate public. Hollingsworth's analysis of the publication dates of Shakespeare's works shows that there were many editions of *Hamlet* produced in the 1850s and 1860s, one of the most frequent works published apart from the *Complete Works*.¹³⁷ Quotations of Shakespeare were also a normal aspect of writing or speaking in public, a means of asserting literary or educational credentials. The accessibility of *Hamlet* in printed form meant greater opportunities for the reading public to become familiar with its words and phrases as well as the plot.

The familiarity and quotability of *Hamlet* meant that it was a common source for writers of fiction at this time. Juliet John points out that '*Hamlet* was the play to which Dickens most often alluded.' She suggests, however, that this was to critique the model of 'intellectual and aristocratic disengagement' which Hamlet as a character represented.¹³⁸ In *Great Expectations*, Mr Wopsle's performance of Hamlet's soliloquies is heckled by an audience preferring 'pragmatism and common sense' to 'abstract speculation'. On the question "whether 'twas nobler in the mind to suffer", some roared yes, and some no, and some inclining to both opinions said "toss up for it"; and quite a Debating Society arose."¹³⁹ Dickens wrote assuming that his readers would recognise the quotation and get the joke.

¹³⁷ Ibid, Appendix One. Collins owned *The Stratford Shakespeare*, ed Charles Knight, 6 vols, 1860, see Baker, *Wilkie Collins's Library*, p150.

¹³⁸ Juliet John, 'Dickens and Hamlet' in Gail Marshal and Adrian Poole, eds, *Victorian Shakespeare, Volume 2 Literature and Culture* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan 2003), pp46-60, p46.

¹³⁹ Ibid, pp51-2.

In *David Copperfield*, Dickens 'deliberately forges a model of the artist to counter that of the Romantic Hamlet', one 'who makes practical use of his intellect' rather than 'uses words to evade action'.¹⁴⁰ This treatment of *Hamlet* by Dickens not only reveals its familiarity but also the kind of debate that it provoked. John argues that Dickens felt Hamlet was an 'unhelpful' role model, favouring 'socially constructive action' instead.¹⁴¹

Hamlet in Art

By the mid-nineteenth century, *Hamlet* was increasingly featuring in pictures. Frank Clary notes that by 1842 'Shakespeare's plays had already begun to appear in illustrated editions', such as Charles Knight's *Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare* (1838-1843).¹⁴²

Shakespeare's plays were a source of inspiration for fine art; a famous example of this is *The Play Scene in Hamlet* by Daniel Maclise.¹⁴³ Clary describes how this painting 'dazzled the public's imagination when it was exhibited during the Royal Academy exhibition in 1842.' It provoked excited discussion, but mixed reviews from the art critics, some of whom were put off by its clear links to theatrical production. Clary notes that the composition of the scene is 'recognizable to anyone familiar with the version of this scene by Deveria and Boulanger, which was based on

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p55.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, pp46, 58.

¹⁴² Frank Nicholas Clary, 'Maclise and Macready: collaborating illustrators of Hamlet' in *Shakespeare Bulletin* 25,1 (2007) pp33-59, p39. See also Peter Holland 'Performing Shakespeare in Print: Narrative in Nineteenth-century Illustrated Shakespeares' in Gail Marshal and Adrian Poole, eds, *Victorian Shakespeare, Volume 1 Theatre, Drama and Performance* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan 2003), pp47-71.

¹⁴³ See Tate Images <https://www.tate-images.com/preview.asp?image=N00422> (accessed July 2021).

Kemble's 1827 Paris performances.' Hamlet in the picture resembles William Macready and Clary speculates that he may have been the model. Macready had already modelled for Maclise as Macbeth in two other works: *Macbeth and the Weird Sisters* (1836) and *The Banquet scene in Macbeth* (1840). Maclise and Macready's 'sustained collaborative association' caused mutual influence, Macready aiming for pictorialism in his stage productions, while Maclise's paintings 'evoked the performance moment'.¹⁴⁴ Such artistic interactions between theatre, literature and art was increasingly common. Audiences became accustomed to pictures and performances of familiar works like *Hamlet* evoking each other, and to increasingly sophisticated visual conceptions of the play on stage.¹⁴⁵

Hamlet on the Stage

Pictorial Hamlet

Macready's pictorial approach to staging *Hamlet* was part of a general trend of both visual realism and splendour in nineteenth-century stage design. Classic eighteenth-century productions had put the actors in contemporary clothes in front of stock scenery; the actors were the stars and their performances were the focus. By the nineteenth century, a combination of Romanticism and historicism drove stage designs that were more specific to a play, its imagined time and place and its atmosphere. The creation of pictures coming to life on stage was received

¹⁴⁴ Clary, 'Maclise and Macready', pp34-40, 46-9.

¹⁴⁵ For a full discussion of the interactions between art, literature and theatre in the mid-nineteenth century, see Martin Miesel, *Realizations* (Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1983); chapters 3 and 6 discuss the development of pictorial theatre.

and then encouraged by enthusiastic audiences and critics. Alicia Finkel argues that the Romantic appeal of theatre was essentially escapist: the 'reliance on fantasy, history and the ravaging forces of nature as sources of inspiration' allowed audiences to 'escape into times and places far removed from current reality,' which required increasing attention to creating the illusion of such worlds on stage.¹⁴⁶ Technical and painterly innovations began with Philippe-Jacques de Louthembourg, who worked closely with David Garrick at Drury Lane from the 1770s. He produced atmospheric painted backdrops, experimented with different angles and the layering of views, and worked on visual and lighting effects, including introducing footlights to the stage. By the time both Drury Lane and Covent Garden were being rebuilt in the 1790s, new stage machinery for special effects, scene changes and moving backdrops were an important part of the design.¹⁴⁷ The theatre management career of Madame Vestris from 1830 to 1853 at the Olympic Theatre, Covent Garden and the Lyceum served and contributed to the public taste for fairyland, fantasy and spectacle. She collaborated with playwright and historian J R Planché and painter and designer William Beverley on extravaganzas and Shakespearean revivals amongst other genres, always with notable quality and attention to visual splendour. Beverley's painting style was 'lyrical and romantic' rather than realistic, and he invented the 'transformation scene' that became an essential ingredient of pantomimes. Meanwhile the Grieve family (father and sons) continued to develop the

¹⁴⁶ Alicia Finkel, *Romantic Stages, Set and Costume Design in Victorian England* (Jefferson NC, McFarland & Co, 1996), p1.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pp5-10.

pictorial techniques begun by de Louthembourg 'on a grand scale' from 1805 to 1879, the elder working mainly at Covent Garden, and son Thomas Grieve becoming the chief designer for Charles Kean's historical revivals of Shakespeare at the Princess's Theatre.¹⁴⁸

The approach to production design for historical plays was escapist as well, but it also fed the Victorian passion for education and information, and, as Richard Schoch points out, for their sense of their own glorious past.¹⁴⁹ Serious stage historicism is generally held to have begun with J R Planché's research and designs for Charles Kemble's production of *King John* at Covent Garden in 1823. His serious attempts to reproduce sets and costumes that accurately depicted the places and clothes of King John's times were so impressive, that historical accuracy in stage production became an expected feature. Vestris, Macready and Charles Kean all followed this lead, the latter 'with missionary zeal.' Kean, manager of the Princess's Theatre from 1850-59, created thoroughly researched and increasingly lavish productions of Shakespeare and other historical dramas, starting with *King John* in 1852.¹⁵⁰ Sets and costumes attempted to recreate real historical places and people that were recognisable and convincing. For *Richard II* in 1857, Kean re-created the Jerusalem Chamber portrait of the king on his throne from Westminster

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, pp11, 20, 26. See also Christopher Baugh, 'Stage Design from Louthembourg to Poel' in Jane Milling, Peter Thomson, Joseph Donohue and Baz Kershaw, eds, *The Cambridge History of British Theatre* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp309-30.and Michael Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre 1850-1910* (Boston Mass, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

¹⁴⁹ Richard W Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage : Performing History in the Theatre of Charles Kean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp7, 118.

¹⁵⁰ Finkel, *Romantic Stages*, pp29-32.

Abbey, which had gone on public display that year for the first time since 1775.¹⁵¹

Both Finkel and Schoch note that striving for historical accuracy and pictorial effect sometimes overrode Shakespeare as drama. Kean's revival of *Richard III* in 1854, for example, took 'great pains to re-create the late fifteenth century', but used Colley Cibber's adaptation of Shakespeare's play rather than the original.¹⁵² His production of *The Tempest* in 1857 kept the audience waiting for long periods between Acts for complicated scenery and special effects to be put in place. Schoch argues that Kean was primarily a historian, whose aim was 'to use Shakespeare to represent history' rather than the other way around.¹⁵³ The apparent recreation of the past was an illusion, a staged adaptation created by carpenters and costumes, and an invented version of events by Shakespeare and others, even if it was based on good historical sources. Collins expressed dislike of Kean's productions in *The Leader*: 'we have the most unmitigated dislike of the "healthy" National Drama, because it wearies us past all endurance.' Praising Kean's dual-rolled appearance in an exciting French melodrama, *The Courier of Lyons*, Collins asked 'Could the Mr Kean who once tried to make our heads ache with ancient learning, and the Mr Kean who was now trying to make our flesh creep with modern French horrors, be one and the same man?'¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage*, pp7, 89-91.

¹⁵² Finkel, *Romantic Stages*, p36.

¹⁵³ Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage*, pp3, 34.

¹⁵⁴ 'The Courier of Lyons', *The Leader*, 1 July 1854, p619, BP (accessed May 2021).

These staging developments can be seen in *Hamlet Through the Ages*, a collection of images compiled by Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson. Eighteenth-century images of productions or actors show generic scenery or none, with the actors in contemporary clothes, for example a mid-eighteenth-century production at the Theatre Royal, Bath with 'stock wings and backcloth', and a portrait of David Garrick as Hamlet in contemporary clothes.¹⁵⁵



According to Mander and Mitchenson John Philip Kemble was the first Hamlet to deviate from contemporary costume. In 1783, he wore an

¹⁵⁵ Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, *Hamlet Through the Ages* (London, Rockcliff, 1955), pp28, 23 (note). Image: James McArdell, *Mr Garrick in Hamlet*, print 1754, Victoria and Albert Museum Collections, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1157978/mr-garrick-in-hamlet-print-mcardell-james/> (accessed July 2021), © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

adaptation of Elizabethan costume, which remained the fashion for half a century.¹⁵⁶ Then, in 1838 Charles Kean wore a medieval tunic suggesting the period the play was set, which ‘remained the stock attire for Hamlet until the 1920s.’¹⁵⁷ By this time, Hamlet was conventionally costumed in black, which is indicated in the text: ‘Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother / Nor customary suits of solemn black...’ (H 1.2.77-78). Kean was photographed in this costume in 1838.¹⁵⁸

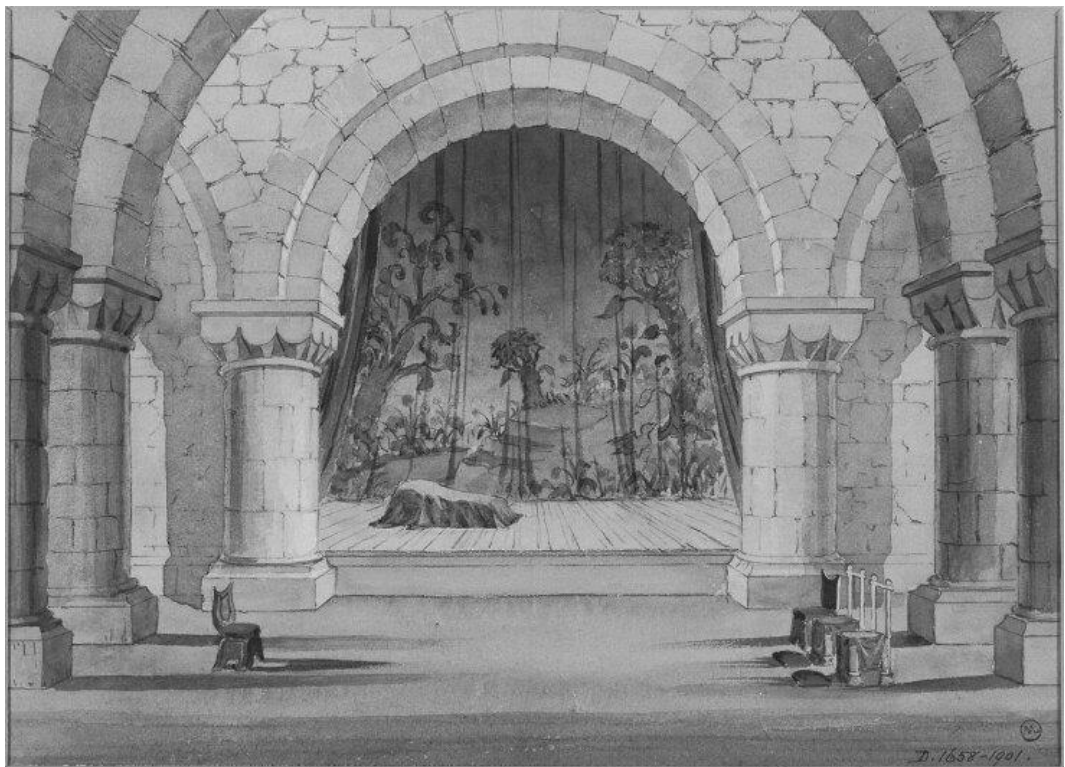


¹⁵⁶ Mander and Mitchenson, *Hamlet Through the Ages*, pp96, 93 (note), see also Edmund Kean in 1814 p29.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, pp27, 48 (note), 51, 104.

¹⁵⁸ Image: Guy Little Theatrical Photograph, *Charles Kean as Hamlet, Covent Garden*, Photograph 1838, Victoria and Albert Museum Collections, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O164401/guy-little-theatrical-photograph-photograph/> (accessed July 2021), © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

By the nineteenth century, the sense of *Hamlet* as an early medieval story is appearing in set designs featuring Romanesque arches and Norman castle battlements, such as in Macready's *Hamlets* at Covent Garden in 1838 and at the Haymarket in 1849, a Surrey Theatre production in 1849 and the designs by Thomas Grieve for Kean's production in 1850.¹⁵⁹ The designs for Kean are consistently Romanesque, but they pre-date the full archaeological treatment that Kean became famous for.¹⁶⁰



'Pictorial' *Hamlet* is important because this mode of expression dominated visual and theatrical arts in the mid-nineteenth century and was familiar to and expected by audiences. I will show below that Collins tapped into his

¹⁵⁹ Mander and Mitchenson, *Hamlet Through the Ages*, pp29, 33, 51, 89 and others.

¹⁶⁰ Image: H Cuthbert, *Design for Scenery in Hamlet*, drawing 1852-58, Victoria and Albert Museum Collections, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O881779/design-for-scenery-in-hamlet-drawing-cuthbert-h/> (accessed July 2021), © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

readers' visual imaginations by recreating visual elements of the staging of *Hamlet* that he could expect them to recognise.

Serious *Hamlet*

The pictorial approach was part of increasing seriousness in the staging of Shakespeare. Michael Dobson shows how Shakespeare developed into the 'national poet' after the Restoration and through the eighteenth century, as his work, previously disregarded, proved persistently useful in adapted versions to serve a succession of changing political and cultural needs.¹⁶¹ This included supporting the restored monarchy, expressing growing nationalism, or avoiding political contention by emphasising elements of domestic and personal pathos.¹⁶² Early eighteenth-century efforts to separate high and low culture motivated the progressive stripping out of his more vulgar elements.¹⁶³ By the mid-eighteenth century 'Shakespeare' had become the cornerstone of high art in both theatrical and print culture, while his comic elements were still freely plundered for 'low' entertainments; either way he was well-known.¹⁶⁴ By the nineteenth century, productions of Shakespeare were aiming to be worthy of the texts. After the 1843 Theatre Regulation Act, any theatre could put on Shakespeare.¹⁶⁵ Shakespeare was treated as a serious art form by well-known actors and actor-managers, who sought to restore Shakespeare's texts from previous cuts and adaptations and provide well-rehearsed,

¹⁶¹ Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet* pp1-6.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, pp13-14.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, pp13-14, 100-1.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid* pp17-19.

¹⁶⁵ Richard Schoch, *Not Shakespeare, Bardolatry and Burlesque in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), p5.

consistently conceived productions of them. Charles Kean's performance as Hamlet on 8 January 1838 at Drury Lane was 'a theatrical landmark', establishing him as 'England's pre-eminent Hamlet' on the way to becoming 'the leading actor of mid-Victorian England'.¹⁶⁶ Macready also played Hamlet at Covent Garden in 1838. His performances showed his 'intellectual ability to penetrate and to express the psychological nature of his characters.'¹⁶⁷ Samuel Phelps also gave 'well-judged, maturely conceived performances of Hamlet' at the Haymarket in 1837 and continued to play this role during his eighteen-year management of Sadlers Wells from 1844.¹⁶⁸ The range of theatres producing Shakespeare seriously and frequently meant that *Hamlet* on stage was widely seen and familiar.

Interpretations of the role of Hamlet changed over time. The conception of Hamlet as inward-looking that Dickens had critiqued was a Victorian development. Daniel Pollack-Pelzner argues that prior to the nineteenth century, Hamlet was portrayed in manic action, his soliloquies presented as 'rhetorical speeches'. By the mid-nineteenth century these had become 'private meditations', part of a 'nuanced representation of the interior self'.¹⁶⁹ This was epitomised by the French actor Charles Fechter, whose *Hamlet* took London by storm at the Princess's Theatre in March

¹⁶⁶ M Glen Wilson, 'Kean, Charles' Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15203> (accessed May 2021).

¹⁶⁷ Richard Foulkes 'Macready, William', Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/17741> (accessed May 2021).

¹⁶⁸ J P Wearing, 'Phelps, Samuel, Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22092> (accessed May 2021).

¹⁶⁹ Daniel Pollack-Pelzner, 'Shakespeare Burlesque and the Performing Self' in *Victorian Studies* 54,3 (2012), pp401-9, pp403-4.

1861. Untrammelled by 'the accretion of tradition to which English actors deferred', Fechter went, in the words of *The Times*, "'straight from the book to the boards'", an approach felt to be 'revolutionary'.¹⁷⁰ Fechter conceived the character as an ordinary individual rather than the ideal, larger than life figure which was the norm at the time, ignoring conventions of business and 'points', and delivering his lines in a 'restrained, conversational' way. He portrayed Hamlet as an eleventh-century Dane by wearing a tunic and a blond wig.¹⁷¹ His approach caused controversy, with some observers, such as Theodore Martin, disliking Fechter 'dragging [Hamlet] down to common life.' Others admired the performance, G H Lewes comparing it to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*: 'a burden laid on Hamlet too heavy for his soul to bear', George Eliot praising its 'naturalness' and 'sensibility' and Dickens describing it as 'by far the most coherent, consistent and intelligible Hamlet I ever saw.' Kate Field in her 1882 biography of Fechter records Wilkie Collins's response: 'From Macready downward I have, I think, seen every Hamlet of any note and mark during the last five and thirty years. The true Hamlet I first saw when Fechter stepped onto the stage.'¹⁷² Fechter made *Hamlet* the most talked-about production on stage in 1861, just at the time that Collins was planning *No Name*.

¹⁷⁰ Richard Foulkes, 'Fechter, Charles', Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9245> (accessed May 2021).

¹⁷¹ John A Mills, 'The Modesty of Nature: Charles Fechter's Hamlet' in *Theatre Survey* 15,1 (1974) pp59-78, pp66-8.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, pp62, 72-3.

Female Hamlets

Magdalen's comparison with Hamlet is striking because she is female. This suggests her theatrical enactment of the role because there was a long tradition of women playing male roles in the theatre. As Anne Russell notes, while this had begun with comic and musical parts, women were performing serious tragic male roles from the late eighteenth century, first in the provinces, then, from the 1820s and 30s in London. Sarah Siddons played Hamlet from 1776-81 while Elizabeth Inchbald did so in 1780 and again in 1795. Romeo was the most popular tragic role for women in the early nineteenth century, but from the 1850s Hamlet took over. Russell suggests this is because the role was seen as emotional and refined, in other words, more feminine.¹⁷³ Its conceptual move from manic action to inward-looking had made it more acceptable for female performance. Nonetheless, Tony Howard explains how the portrayal of Hamlet by women was still associated with rebellion, subversion and scandal. Critics discussed these actresses' bodies and rumours circulated about their sexuality.¹⁷⁴ Siddons's performances set a 'thrilling precedent', but also illustrated the difficulties: the need for male collaborators in production and the contradictions of cross-dressing, which was both empowering but put the female body on display for male enjoyment. Siddons was pictured for her 1802 performances in Dublin enveloped in her black cloak with only

¹⁷³ Anne Russell, 'Tragedy, Gender, Performance: Women as Tragic Heroes on the Nineteenth-Century Stage' in *Comparative Drama*, 30,2 (1996), pp135-157, pp139-40.

¹⁷⁴ Tony Howard, *Women as Hamlet* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), p76.

one leg showing to the knee, as though trying to evade these problems.¹⁷⁵ Later in 1848-9 Fanny Kemble gave 'phenomenally successful' readings of *Hamlet*, portraying all the characters, male and female, whilst avoiding the complications of male costume. However, the readings were still controversial. Kemble dared to portray men convincingly and gave the readings to raise money for her divorce. Divorce was always scandalous in the nineteenth century, but was even more so in the context of the 1848 revolutions, which threatened political and social change, including the rise of feminist thought, such as Lucretia Mott's *Declaration of Sentiments* which declared that 'all men and women are created equal'.¹⁷⁶ As noted below, Magdalen's portrayal of Hamlet in *No Name* also avoids male costume, but is very much motivated by a desire to act as an equal.

Russell notes that female actresses playing Hamlet usually did so seriously, adhering to tradition in character, stage business and costume, and also tending to be physically tall and strong.¹⁷⁷ This approach was epitomised by Alice Marriott. As Frank Wadsworth notes, Marriott performed Hamlet in Glasgow in 1859 and London in 1861, earning praise for 'intelligent restraint', 'natural' acting and refinement, and her particularly

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p39-42, p37 for the contemporary drawing of Siddons. It is sourced from the British Museum, but there is no way of knowing if Collins could ever have seen it.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p65-69.

¹⁷⁷ Russell, 'Women as Tragic Heroes', p143-5.

beautiful voice and elocution.¹⁷⁸ A photograph of her shows her wearing the conventional black knee-length tunic and tights.¹⁷⁹



Marriott had a tall, imposing figure with a broad face, rather like Magdalen in *No Name*: 'the mouth was too large and firm, the chin too square and massive for her sex and age...Her figure – taller than her sister's, taller than the average of woman's height...her matchless health and strength...' (p14). Alice Marriott's first London performances were at the Marylebone Theatre, near where Collins was living in Harley Street at the

¹⁷⁸ Frank W Wadsworth, 'Hamlet and Iago: Nineteenth Century Breeches Parts' in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 17,2 (1966) pp129-139, pp134-5.

¹⁷⁹ Mander and Mitchenson, *Hamlet Through the Ages*, p33. Image: *Alice Marriot as Hamlet*, photograph 1864, Victoria and Albert Museum Collections, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

time.¹⁸⁰ There is no information that he saw this production, but it is reasonable to assume that he was aware of it. Its timing, in 1861, means that there was another notable *Hamlet* that he could have had in mind besides Fechter's. Tony Howard notes that Marriott's careful, serious portrayal even won over critics hostile to cross-dressing.¹⁸¹ In *The Leader* back in 1854 Collins had criticised the casting of an actress in a serious male role as 'an inexcusable error in taste.'¹⁸² In casting his heroine as Hamlet, Collins could have intended irony, but it is also possible that Marriott's performances had changed his opinion.

Parody and Burlesque *Hamlet*

Hamlet's regular appearances on stage meant that it was a frequent target of burlesque, both reflecting and reinforcing its familiarity. Theatrical burlesque was a very popular form of theatre in the nineteenth century in which comic versions of well-known stories were told through parodies of other stage productions, other forms of art and topical events. They tended to be written in rhyming couplets with endless puns, transposing heroic characters to 'low' situations (sometimes known as 'mock-elevation') or events from past to present. There would be 'the ludicrous re-enactment of classic scenes', 'an emphasis on stage business, sight gags and special effects', topical references and set pieces enacted to popular songs. Burlesque actors had to be tremendously versatile,

¹⁸⁰ Mander and Mitchenson, *Hamlet Through the Ages*, p24.

¹⁸¹ Howard, *Women as Hamlet*, p80-1.

¹⁸² Miss Woolgar in *Hopes and Fears*, 'La Sirene', *The Leader*, 8 July 1854, p645, BP (accessed May 2021).

needing to pass swiftly through a large range of performance skills and imitate many different styles.¹⁸³

Burlesques of Shakespeare were linked to the widespread success of the serious and historical productions and were plentiful in Kean's heyday of the 1850s. According to Richard Schoch, *Hamlet* was 'the most frequently burlesqued Shakespearean play in the nineteenth century', being both familiar on stage and 'responsive to comic rewriting.'¹⁸⁴ Versions known before 1862 include *Hamlet Travestie* (John Poole, 1810), *A Thin Slice of Ham let!* (Anon, c1850) and *Hamlet According to an Act of Parliament* (Barton, 1853). The last of these burlesqued Kean's *Hamlet* in the style of his production of *The Corsican Brothers*, by 'restaging *Hamlet* as a contemporary "cape and sword" melodrama'.¹⁸⁵ Daniel Pollack-Pelzner argues that the burlesques also counteracted the Victorian construction of *Hamlet* as inward-looking. They persistently had other characters intervening in the soliloquies, generating 'social speech, inviting the audience to participate and disagree', rather like Dickens's audience for *Mr Wopsle*.¹⁸⁶ *Hamlet* burlesques were for fun, but their use of parody could also be a vehicle for critique.

¹⁸³ Schoch, *Not Shakespeare*, pp12, 14-15.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, pp 5-6, 10, 12.

¹⁸⁵ Richard Schoch, 'Shakespeare Mad', in Marshall and Poole, eds, *Victorian Shakespeare*, vol 1, pp73-81, pp74-5.

¹⁸⁶ Pollack-Pelzner, 'Shakespeare Burlesque and the Performing Self', pp403-7.

Parody

Burlesque relied for its effect and success on parody. This section looks at what parody is and how it works.

Defining Parody

Schoch describes burlesque as ‘comic misquotation’, which is a useful basic definition for parody. It provokes laughter, making fun of something by imitating it in a new context or style. Simon Dentith in his study *Parody* shows that parody can have more serious purposes. Parody has been practiced since ancient times in many different cultural traditions and this, together with its somewhat elusive nature, makes it difficult to define, causing disagreement among critics. Dentith proposes a wide-ranging and inclusive definition: ‘Parody includes any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice.’¹⁸⁷ Dentith argues that parody is essentially an intertextual practice. It involves repetition, imitation and / or transformation of something that existed previously. This might be a literary text, but Dentith’s preferred term ‘cultural practice’, includes other forms of art or social behaviour, which here can include theatre practice. Parody always situates itself, quite self-consciously and deliberately, in the context of its predecessors.¹⁸⁸ Bisla, in ‘Overdoing Things with Words in 1862’ defines parody in terms of the ‘iterability of language’, focussing on how parody

¹⁸⁷ Dentith, *Parody*, p9.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p5.

arises from the practice of quotation or copying; by his approach the original need not necessarily be misquoted.¹⁸⁹

Gerard Genette's work on intertextuality, *Palimpsests*, carefully identifies distinctions between types of parody, based on formal features. In his analysis, 'parody' is more specifically defined as a text applied literally to a new but analogous purpose, as opposed to other terms such as 'travesty' which is a text transposed into a vulgar style, or 'pastiche' which is a new text written in the style of a parodied genre. Genette identifies two aspects for consideration, the 'relation', whether the reference is transforming the content of a text or imitating its style, and the 'mood', whether the reference is intended to criticise, celebrate or just re-imagine the original.¹⁹⁰ Genette's definitions show that parody works by exploiting the distance between the original and the parody. For a quotation to be a parody, and not a straight quotation or copy, something has to change. This can be the content, the style, the mood or simply the context.

According to Dentith, parody is also fundamentally 'evaluative'. It offers an opinion or an attitude to the object of parody, which is not necessarily a hostile one, hence Dentith's definition as 'relatively polemical'. But parody can be a tool for critique, and so can have relatively serious intentions behind it. Dentith also notes that 'the direction of the attack can vary', meaning that the target of the 'evaluation' may not be the parodied object itself. A precursor text can be parodied to comment on something else

¹⁸⁹ Bisla, 'Over-Doing Things with Words in 1862', p5-6.

¹⁹⁰ Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests*, trans Channa Newman & Claude Doubinsky (London, University of Nebraska Press 1997), p28.

that it relates to instead, such as aspects of the contemporary world.¹⁹¹ If follows from this that the intentions behind such parody can also vary; they can be conservative, to police the boundaries of what is sayable, doable or 'normal' in the cultural practice or contemporary world, or radical, to attack those very conventions. Parody arises partly from its historical and cultural context and seems to flourish more at certain times than others, depending on the conditions.¹⁹² Dentith identifies some factors that seem to contribute to the rise of parody in culture: societies that are very open (allowing free speech) or very closed (needing outlets for dissent), highly stratified societies where there is a great deal of mutual ignorance between groups, or societies where there is either a high level of cultural self-confidence or what he calls 'a sense of cultural belatedness', which is 'a strong sense of a powerful preceding culture'.¹⁹³

Dentith thinks that there is limited value in defining types of parody in the abstract by their formal features, as Genette does, because it is hard to be definitive for such a long-standing practice which has varied its usage over time, place and individual author. He argues that it is more important to examine 'the social and historical ground in which that interaction occurs, and the evaluative and ideological work performed by parody.'¹⁹⁴

However, Dentith's own observation that parody is 'elusive' means it is an indirect critique whose meaning is not stated. Interpreting a parody's 'evaluative and ideological work' therefore depends on two related

¹⁹¹ Dentith, *Parody*, p9.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, pp20-22.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, pp28-32.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p14.

questions: how is the original being parodied? And then, why is it being parodied in that particular way? Genette's approach, and sometimes his categories, can help with identifying which aspects of the original have changed and in what way. As I shall attempt to show below, Collins's theatrical parodies are very detailed, specific and interconnected; the formal features need to be identified with care. The 'why' question depends on a reading of many contexts: artistic, cultural, historical or personal; and with historical examples of parody especially, that reading may only ever be supposition, because the world in which the parody took place and had meaning is gone.

Burlesque and Critique

If parody is a tool for critique, this means that theatrical burlesque could have had serious purposes too. Some views are that burlesques were primarily for fun: Michael Booth points out that the Victorians just loved parody: they 'relentlessly parodied any possible and well-known target they could find'.¹⁹⁵ Stanley Wells, in his edition of Shakespearean burlesques, also agrees that burlesque authors 'are often concerned rather to entertain than to satirize'.¹⁹⁶ Burlesques were popular and therefore good business: historical revivals of Shakespeare were targets simply because they were well-known. However, Schoch argues that burlesques were also a reaction against the serious productions, a 'backlash' against the 'pious pretensions of "legitimate" Shakespeare

¹⁹⁵ Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age*, p196.

¹⁹⁶ Stanley Wells, *Nineteenth Century Shakespeare Burlesques* (London, Diploma Press Ltd, 1977), vol 3, p vii.

culture.’ These ‘earnest’ attempts to ‘educate their audiences in history and morality through Shakespeare’s plays...were simply begging to be ridiculed’.¹⁹⁷ Schoch argues that actor-managers’ motives included self-promotion, as celebrity high-priests of the national bard, and self-interest in both contributing and pandering to Shakespeare’s appropriation by the cult of middle-class respectability. Burlesque could also expose these productions’ spurious claims to authenticity. For example, William Brough’s *Perdita* lampooned Kean’s 1856 production of *The Winter’s Tale*, which he set in Periclean Athens. Shakespeare had left the setting quite vague, but Kean had ‘corrected’ his inconsistencies. The burlesque chorus call the result Shakespeare’s ‘slaughter’.¹⁹⁸ Burlesques could offer serious artistic critique of the fashionable prioritisation of visual reproduction over dramatic skill, in their pointed exaggeration of pompous bombast, parodies of costumes and props and focus on energetic and endlessly updated performance. ‘Burlesque’s distinctive... virtue was that by performing “not Shakespeare” it created an alternative space for thinking about just what performing Shakespeare means.’¹⁹⁹

Burlesque could also offer social and political critique, either in the general sense of attacking such cultural pretensions, or by dramatizing ludicrous fantasy versions of specific political issues. Among Schoch’s examples of the latter is *The Enchanted Isle* (1848), a burlesque of *The Tempest* by Robert and William Brough, which expresses radical views. Robert

¹⁹⁷ Schoch, ‘Shakespeare Mad’, p73.

¹⁹⁸ Schoch, *Not Shakespeare*, pp92-3.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p102.

Brough was a radical and a republican who was opposed to wealth, rank and 'respectability'. As well as burlesques, he wrote *Songs of the Governing Classes* (1855), which explicitly attacked the aristocracy as the source of political injustice. *The Tempest* was a political play in exhibiting a model of limited rather than absolute monarchy. *The Enchanted Isle* made allusions to Chartism, slavery and the Continental revolutions of 1848, depicting rulers as illegitimate or ineffectual. Prospero is a parody of the king of Naples in the style of a stage-conjuror, while Caliban becomes a revolutionary, a parody of the Sicilians trying to expel the British-supported Neapolitans. The revolutionaries have to surrender to the forces of law, led by Ariel, but Prospero then abdicates and grants them liberty. This apparently peaceful ending still highlights the power of rulers to decide who has freedom.²⁰⁰

Burlesque could express political views from across the spectrum, but since writing them required relatively sophisticated literary abilities and educated knowledge, they tended to express a middle-class perspective of some kind. Schoch deduces that stage burlesque's attack on middle-class respectability came from within: successful burlesque writers like Frank Talfourd, F C Burnand and the Brough brothers all came from privileged backgrounds, and played to people like themselves, young single men about town whose response to conventional culture was dissent.

Burlesques are full of slang and references to sex, boxing and drinking, all of which were part of 'bachelor sub-culture'.²⁰¹ This critique of the middle

²⁰⁰ Ibid, pp174-84.

²⁰¹ Ibid, pp130-6.

class was not necessarily articulated in favour of those lower down the scale. Working-class characters in burlesque tended to be stereotypical, and the productions played at theatres in London like the Adelphi, Olympic, Strand and Lyceum, none of which attracted a working-class audience.²⁰²

Collins came from a privileged middle-class background too, and like the burlesque writers he was something of a bachelor-about-town, with radical political leanings. One public comment in *The Leader* suggests that he didn't like theatrical burlesque. In his review of *Sunshine Through the Clouds* in 1854, he writes of 'an English audience – depraved, as to taste, by the doggerel ridicule of all the higher and purer illusions of the stage in which burlesque-writers have been suffered to indulge for many years past'.²⁰³ This might seem curious in a critic favouring popular theatre in general, but his complaint here is essentially about the poor quality or repetitiveness of burlesque ('doggerel'). He wrote parodies himself, such as the one in a review article in 1855 entitled 'A Queer Story'. He gives a scathing account of the publication of a novel '*Moredun: a Tale of the Twelve Hundred and Ten... "ascribed to Walter Scott"*', which he tells as though describing a play: 'Let us begin with the persons of the drama...What is in the writing-desk? Hush! The drop-scene falls to slow music. Eight and twenty years are supposed to elapse; and the curtain rises for the third act'.²⁰⁴ Collins believed the novel was a fraud and is

²⁰² Ibid, pp118-19. Dentith also notes that written parody had long been considered a gentlemanly activity, see Dentith, *Parody*, p117.

²⁰³ 'Sunshine Through the Clouds', *The Leader*, 17 June 1854, p572, BP (accessed May 2021).

²⁰⁴ 'A Queer Story', *The Leader*, 16 June 1855, p584, BP (accessed May 2021).

showing off his ability to make such judgements, based on an implied deep knowledge of Walter Scott, and to express them in parody. Clearly parodies were fine if they were clever. In this chapter I shall attempt to show that in *No Name* he used sophisticated forms of theatrical parody, and that just like burlesque, they can be read for both artistic and political critique.

Parody in No Name

Parody of Realism

Bisla argues that in *No Name* Collins is parodying the conventions of realist fiction in order to expose its artifice, as in the First Scene's impersonation of 'the "homely" style of the domestic novel'. The Vanstones' happy family life turns out to be an impersonation too, a 'parody by omission', in that Mr and Mrs Vanstone are not legally married.²⁰⁵ Bisla argues that citation of any text or frame of reference always creates an artificial copy of it, no matter how accurately done, and always transforms it by the simple act of putting it in a new context.²⁰⁶ Realist fiction's aim to portray faithfully the 'real' world, or what Bisla calls a 'simple citation' of it, enables the reader to forget this artificial construction in the enjoyment or conviction of reading. He argues that what Collins is doing by imitating realist conventions is '*citing* that citation' or parodying it. Such an imitation or parody brings the presence of the

²⁰⁵ Bisla, 'Over-Doing Things with Words in 1862', pp2-3.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p14.

citation, and hence the artificial technique of citing, into the foreground, revealing ‘the evidence of its own fictionality’.²⁰⁷ He also observes that such double or multiple citations create uncertainty of meaning, which can attack the comfortable certainties of realism.²⁰⁸

Bisla suggests that Collins’s motive for parodying realism was as a riposte to critics who complained that his fiction was ‘sensational’. Rather than argue, as other authors did, that life is sensational, Collins is ‘covertly’ pointing out that realism is not real either.²⁰⁹ Bisla argues that this artistic critique also allows Collins to make a political one, revealing the artificial basis of realism’s ‘model’, Victorian society itself, specifically attacking the institution of marriage and the sacredness of the marriage vow. The novel’s various parodies of the marriage ceremony show that the vows and legal formalities of marriage are separate from the domestic relationship they are supposed to embody, and as such can be impersonated or parodied.²¹⁰

If Collins is using parody to critique realist fiction, this would place *No Name* within the scope of what Dentith calls “anti-novels”, in which the very sustaining conventions of narrative, and thus of the novel itself, are parodied.’ Earlier writers such as Rabelais and Sterne used parody in a ‘destabilising’ way drawing on all kinds of parody to suggest that ‘there is no secure ground of knowledge on which we can rest.’²¹¹ Dentith

²⁰⁷ Ibid, pp6-9.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, p16.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, pp1-2, 12.

²¹⁰ Ibid, pp8-10.

²¹¹ Dentith, *Parody*, p78.

observes that although realism tended to dominate in the nineteenth-century novel, there were some writers who drew on this earlier method, giving 'the novels and symposia of Thomas Love Peacock, Carlyle and W H Mallock' as examples. He also cites the work of the critic Margaret Rose, who interprets parodic fiction as 'metafiction', or fiction about fiction; and Robert Phiddian, who sees parody as deconstruction, a reading along the lines of Roland Barthes's ideas about the 'death of the author', in which all writing is intertextual, and its authorship becomes problematic.²¹²

Theatrical parody

Bisla has identified the function and a plausible purpose for parody in *No Name*, without observing the theatrical parodies that I will demonstrate below. These greatly extend the sense of artificiality that undermines any realist reading of the novel. Bisla has observed some apparently coincidental similarities between Magdalen's situation and Hamlet's. Like Hamlet, Magdalen's rightful inheritance has been usurped by her uncle on her father's death. Andrew Vanstone's last letter says 'I should not rest in my grave!' if his daughters are left unprovided for, making him 'a bit like Hamlet's father, doomed to walk the earth decrying the usurpation of his (e)state by his brother and demanding the actualization of his intentions.' Bisla points out Magdalen's psychological struggle with her purpose: 'One is again tempted to compare her with Hamlet as we find her, after a bout of near-madness, once more resolute of heart in her purpose of seeing her father's wishes honoured.' He also notes the double quotation of 'a hit, a

²¹² Ibid, pp14-16.

palpable hit' by Captain Wragge.²¹³ These similarities are not coincidences but hints that Magdalen's purpose in the novel, of recovering her rightful inheritance, has been derived from *Hamlet*. There are other clues to the deliberate presence of *Hamlet* within *No Name*, such as Wragge's first name of Horatio, the same as Hamlet's main friend and helper, and the adopted name Bygrave, which hints at the graveyard scene. Moreover, some details suggest that the correspondences are not merely for imagery. For example, Collins often dates the action precisely, which means we know that Wragge meets Magdalen on 23rd September 1846, after her father's death in late July (pp81, 114, 186). This interval is similar to that between Hamlet's father's death and the opening of the play: 'But two months dead – nay, not so much, not two' (H 1.2.138). This kind of detail suggests that *No Name* is being mapped onto *Hamlet*, that the plot of the play is an underlying source for the plot of the novel. In the sections below I shall attempt to show that *Hamlet* as a whole has been used to underpin and create parts of the plot of *No Name*, steering the direction of the novel and its characters. In addition, the use of *Hamlet*, the most-famous, most-parodied tragedy, automatically implies the use of parody. Hamlet's situation has been copied into the new context of Magdalen's, or in Genette's terms 'applied literally to a new but analogous purpose'. Furthermore, the loss of one family's money is being compared to that of a kingdom, and the setting as a tragedy, which can be read as mock-elevation and therefore comic.

²¹³ Bisla, 'Over-Doing Things with Words in 1862', pp9-11.

The theatrical nature of the *Hamlet* parodies is particularly effective in exposing the artifice in the text. In general terms, they evoke the world of theatre, which is itself artificial. Theatre is a mode of artistic expression that is overtly performed and artificially produced in front of an audience by actors whose job it is to pretend to be people they are not. Bisla has already noted that the division of the novel into eight 'Scenes' suggest that the action is taking place on a stage.²¹⁴ As I shall show below, the parodies refer not only to famous lines from *Hamlet*, but sets, costumes and role-play. Magdalen's role as Hamlet has her reproducing and potentially calling to the reader's mind versions of real productions and performances seen on stage. In addition, this world exists outside the novel, and its intrusion, as it were, into the world of the novel is a reminder of the novel's constructed nature.

To see how theatrical parody extends the sense that the novel is parodying realism, we can look at an example of copying in the text that Bisla identifies, 'the textual extracts that [Magdalen] carries about with her in her little white bag. The narrative makes it clear that these words are citations' and therefore a kind of parody.²¹⁵ Magdalen has reminded herself of her purpose by making copies of 'all that he says of us in the will, and all that he says in the letter...and this is all I want for the future' (p173-4). Her words describing these copies are themselves a copy because they are quoted in Norah's letter, narrated through another character's eyes; this technique places them in a new context, a key

²¹⁴ Ibid, p4.

²¹⁵ Ibid, p11.

feature of parody, potentially undermining the reliability of what is being related. But since these particular citations are of her father's last words, they also parody Hamlet copying down instructions from the ghost of his father: 'And thy commandment all alone shall live / Within the book and volume of my brain...My tables, / My tables – meet it is I set it down' (H 1.5.102-8). The reference is therefore a theatrical one, which creates several more layers of artificiality: Magdalen's purpose is expressed in a fictional quotation of an act of copying other fictional words, that is itself a parody of an act of copying words spoken by a ghost, itself a sort of copy ('the imprint of a departed soul'²¹⁶), or an invention of folk-lore, or a figment of Hamlet's imagination, taking place on stage by actors performing a story based on a re-telling of 'a Scandinavian folk-tale'²¹⁷ that never happened in reality in the first place. It is really, really not real.

In a different way, the theatrical nature of the parodies of *Hamlet* increases the sense of artificiality by creating the impression that Magdalen is acting Hamlet out. For example, since her father does not come back as a ghost, she goes to his grave instead: Norah writes that she 'dropped on her knees at the grave... and said something to herself at the same moment... I asked what those words were... "A promise to our dead father" she answered.' At the same time, she exhibits some of Hamlet's madness: 'she turned on me in such a frenzied manner... with such a fearful wildness in her eyes' (p177). Her actions and distress are based

²¹⁶ J K Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (London, Bloomsbury Publishing plc, 2005) p431.

²¹⁷ Wells and Taylor, eds, *The Complete Works*, p653.

on Hamlet's, which makes them suspect, even ridiculous. Performing a self is a kind of parody of identity; acting out a version of Hamlet is an odd and artificial way for a character to behave, whereas realist characters are assumed to behave naturally. *Hamlet* is partly a play about acting, and the separation of the performing and private self. Hamlet's madness was feigned: he promises to avenge his father but then decides to pretend to be mad: 'As I perchance hereafter shall think meet / To put an antic disposition on' (H 1.5.172-3). All these considerations suggest alternative readings: there is the possibility that Magdalen could be putting on an act in front of Norah, even that she has a melodramatic desire to star in her own tragedy. As Bisla notes, she has proved herself 'mad to act' at the private theatricals, and conducts impersonations of her sister, her governess and her maid.²¹⁸ But there is also the possibility that her artful creator is building a narrative based on performance rather than 'real' life and wants the reader to remember that she does not really exist.

Hamlet in No Name

Alas, Poor York

In the Second Scene of *No Name*, Wragge meets Magdalen on the Walk on the Walls in York. Magdalen has gone there in search of the actor Mr Huxtable, seeking training or work as an actress, while Wragge just happens to be lodging there at the time. York and its walls were chosen for the scene as a good place to re-enact *Hamlet*. Here I will show that

²¹⁸ Bisla, 'Over-Doing Things with Words in 1862', p4.

this scene is closely modelled on the early scenes in *Hamlet* when the ghost of the old King Hamlet is encountered on the castle ramparts.

The Set

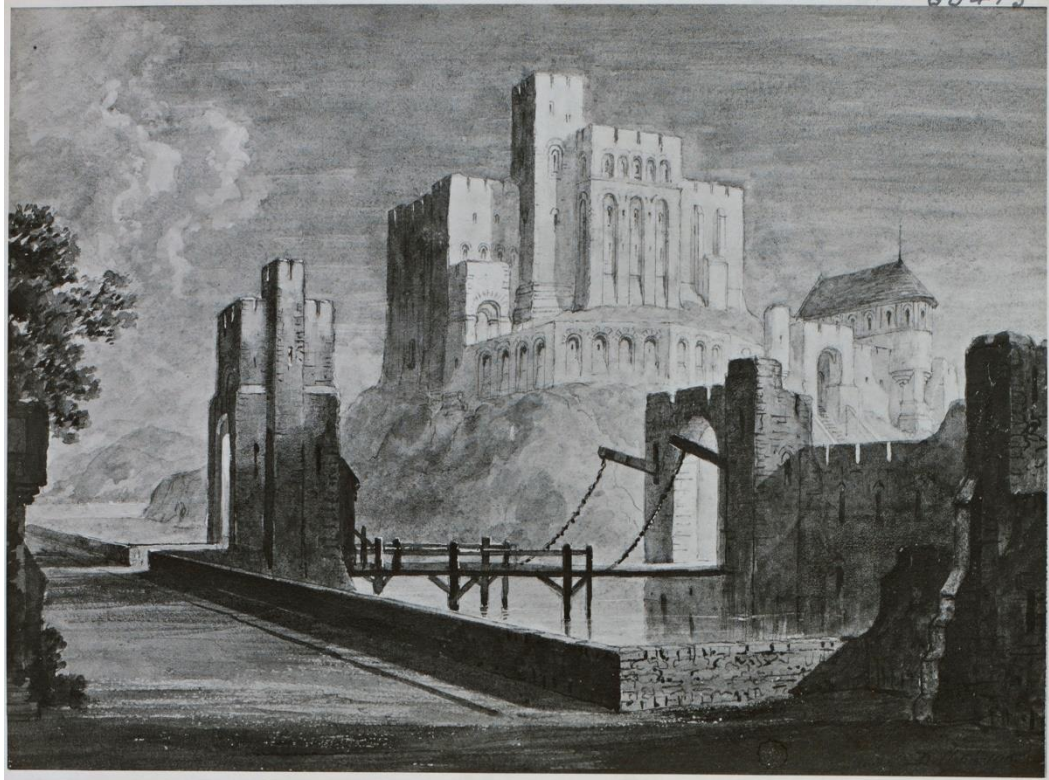
The theatrical parody of these scenes begins with the stage set. As previously noted, *Hamlet* productions at this time conventionally had a realistic Norman or medieval stage setting. *No Name's* version of the scenes adapts a real place, the medieval walls of York, to suggest the ramparts of Elsinore. York possessed one of the few examples of medieval walls remaining in the mid-nineteenth century, and there had been strong local opposition to having them demolished.²¹⁹ Collins visited York in the summer of 1861 when he was researching locations.²²⁰ York is also associated with Viking invasion and Fechter's 1861 production of *Hamlet* overtly depicted Hamlet as an eleventh-century Dane. *Hamlet Through the Ages* shows the set designs for Kean's 1850 production at the Princess's Theatre.²²¹ The designs for the two scenes in which the ghost appears on the ramparts show the same place from two different angles: an authentic-looking medieval city gate and walls, with a tall castle high in the background.²²²

²¹⁹ <http://www.historyofyork.org.uk/themes/the-york-city-walls> (accessed May 2021).

²²⁰ Lycett, *Wilkie Collins, A Life of Sensation*, p226.

²²¹ Fechter's 1861 *Hamlet* also took place at the Princess's Theatre; it is not known if he re-used Kean's sets, but it is likely they were similar. The 1861 photograph and 1850 design for the graveside scene are similar but not the same, Mander and Mitchenson, *Hamlet Through the Ages* pp124, 126.

²²² Mander and Mitchenson, *Hamlet Through the Ages*, pp4, 30. Image: Jones, *Set Design for Hamlet*, by Thomas Grieve, drawing ca 1850, Victoria and Albert Museum Collections, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



The designs are similar in style to York city walls. The tall castle in the background is also similar to the view described in *No Name* as Wragge walks round the walls: 'on his left hand, the majestic west front of York Minster soared over the city' (p192). The setting of the Second Scene in a real place gives it the apparent aura of realism, while the use of features of its surviving medieval past creates an appropriate background for *Hamlet*. This fusion of authentic sources with theatrical requirements was exactly what theatres were doing at the time and what audiences were accustomed to seeing. This could have helped to evoke a 'set' for an enactment of *Hamlet* in the reader's imagination. But it's also a parody of that practice, an imitation of the earnest attention to realistic mise-en-scene that was taking place in theatres. The medium of the novel allows Collins to take this practice to its logical conclusion by setting the action in

a real place; but acting out Hamlet in a real place renders it ridiculous.

York is not Elsinore, Shakespeare's Elsinore is imaginary anyway,²²³ and this scene is imaginary too.

No Name's set for *Hamlet* is also a comic misquotation, for York has been misquoted to fit the scene's requirements. Wragge's progress around York is described in detail (p186-193) and can be followed on foot and with the use of an Ordnance Survey map from 1848-57.²²⁴



The descriptions of Wragge's walk are accurate, apart from on the walls.

He goes up Skeldergate, visits the railway station, uses the nearby ferry across the river from the North Street Postern, and walks up and down the

²²³ Shakespeare is thought to have based Elsinore on Kronborg Castle in Helsingor, Denmark, but it is unlikely he ever visited it or attempted to build a set of it. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kronborg> (accessed May 2021).

²²⁴ Image: detail from 'Sheet 174', in Map of Yorkshire (Southampton, 1848-1857), British History Online <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/os-1-to-10560/yorkshire/174> (accessed May 2021), © British History Online (assumed - to date I have been unable to contact the potential copyright holder).

Esplanade; all details match the map. But as soon as he steps onto the walls, there is one obvious discrepancy. The 'soaring' Minster is not on his left: instead, the map shows some streets and the railway station, which at this time was within this section of the walls. The minster is on the other side of the river, much further away, and would have been in the distance behind Wragge as he begins his walk westwards, rather than dominating the view. The only way the Minster could be on his left at all is after he has turned south, but this occurs after the description of the Minster. One solution to this puzzle is that the description of the Minster is designed to evoke Elsinore, which dominated the backdrop in Kean's designs. The description of York's walls is nearer to a set design than it is to reality. Next, Wragge reaches 'the postern of Mickelgate', where 'the paved walk descends a few steps, passes through the dark stone guard room of the ancient gate, ascends again', and encounters Magdalen 'fifty or sixty yards' beyond it (p193). Mickelgate bar is the main gate of the city facing the road to the south. The paved walk does not pass through the gatehouse building but past its door at the back. According to local information this 'outer passageway defending the main gate' was added around 1350, while people lived over the bar 'as early as 1196, and the last resident left in 1918.'²²⁵ Collins might have made a mistake, or he might be deliberately referring to the situation prior to 1350, when *Hamlet* was set. Either way, he specifically calls it a 'guard-room', which is suggestive of the Elsinore guards from *Hamlet*, who first see the ghost of the old king. Finally, the close description allows the reader to pinpoint the

²²⁵ Plaque on Mickelgate Bar, York, viewed and photographed 12 March 2020.

place where Wragge finds Magdalen, looking out over the 'outlying suburbs... her face set towards the westward view' (p193). At this point in the walls a semi-circular extension to the walls and parapet appears, offering an enlarged space for the scene.²²⁶

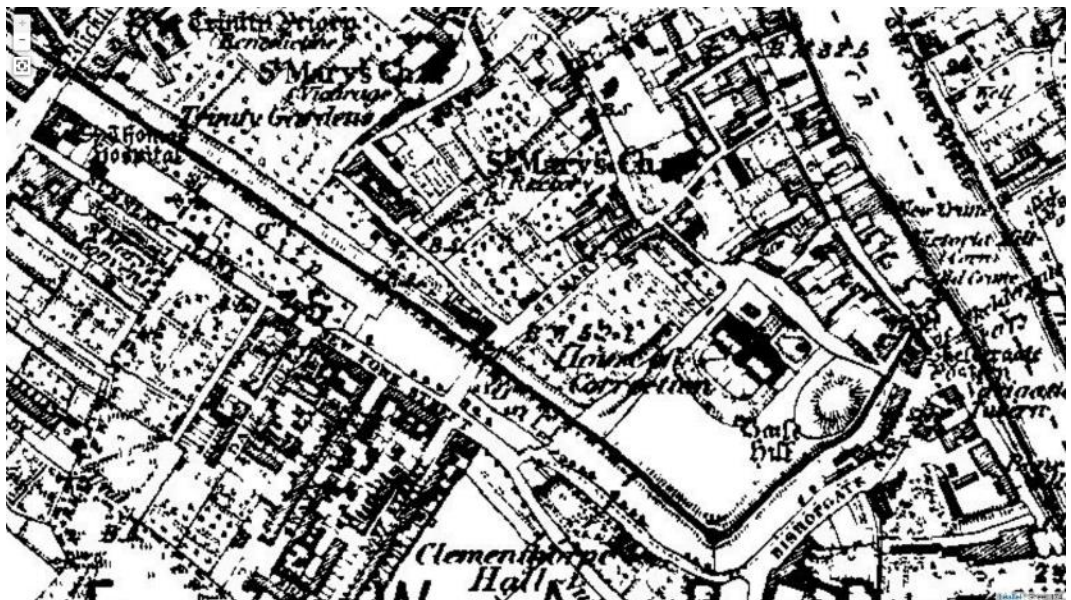


The road beneath Magdalen is called Nunnery Lane, unnamed in the novel but there for the observant or local reader. The name suggests the famous line from *Hamlet* 'Get thee to a nunnery', (H 3.1.123). The tragic heroine who has just been deprived of her marriage draws the reader's attention to it by gazing mournfully over an appropriately named road. Wragge, too, draws attention to the discrepancies or features of the set by his searching view of them, as if to invite the reader to notice them: 'The

²²⁶ Image: photograph © Miriam Jones.

captain looked round him attentively... he paused and peered anxiously into the... guard room' (p192-3).

Rosemary Lane, the place where Wragge lodges, looks like a complete invention. It is described as a narrow lane off the southern end of Skeldergate, leading up to the Walk on the Walls (p185). Today, there are steps leading up directly from the bottom of Skeldergate without any intervening passage, but the area has been developed since Collins visited it. Local information says that a section of the walls to the river was demolished in 1878 to make way for Skeldergate Bridge.²²⁷ However, the 1848-57 map still shows the walls ending on Skeldergate. The nearest feature to a passage just here is a tantalising smudge suggesting buildings outside the walls.²²⁸



²²⁷ Information board on Skeldergate Postern, York, viewed and photographed 12 March 2020.

²²⁸ Image: detail from 'Sheet 174', in Map of Yorkshire.

It is likely that Collins invented Rosemary Lane, making an imaginary extension beyond the end of the walls for his fictional scene. Its name is another reference to *Hamlet*, from the famous phrase: 'rosemary, that's for remembrance' (H 4.5.175).²²⁹

For the scene that is about to play, the text of *Hamlet* has also been misquoted: In the play, the ghost of the old king appears on the castle ramparts in the dead of night, disappearing at dawn 'on the crowing of the cock' (H1.1.138). *No Name's* version of the scene takes place at the opposite end of the night, sunset, an anomaly emphasised by Magdalen facing towards the west. Both versions call to mind theatrical lighting effects, growing progressively dark or progressively light.

Misquotation is what theatres were doing. No matter how 'authentic' theatre set designs were, their composition still had to serve the needs of the play; even the depiction of a real place had to be adapted to the stage size and the action taking place there. *No Name* mimics this practice by pretending to describe York but changing some details to create the set needed for a scene. Just like Yorick, whose living body is reduced to a dead skull, the living city of York has been reduced to a cardboard stage

²²⁹ Rosemary Lane did exist elsewhere. There was a Rosemary Lane in London, near the Tower, now called Royal Mint Street. It was famous for Rag Fair, a long-standing street market for old clothes, including stolen goods, frequented by dealers, vagabonds, prostitutes and the poor, see <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/old-new-london/vol2/pp142-146> (accessed May 2021). The market is the subject of a drawing around 1800 by Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827), see <https://www.rct.uk/collection/913692/rag-fair> (accessed May 2021). At this point in the story, Wragge has gone down in the world, and 'every square inch of the captain's clothing was altered for the worse' (p186), as though he too has had to trade down at Rag Fair.

set. The use of a real place in *No Name* is ironically the very tool with which a 'realist' reading of it is undermined.

The Costumes

Magdalen's appearance in this scene suggests Hamlet in costume: 'There she stood in her long black cloak and gown, the last dim light of evening falling tenderly on her pale resolute young face' (p193). Magdalen's conventional mourning attire might also suggest Hamlet's conventional black tunic and cloak, as worn by Kean, whilst still being modest female dress, a compromise rather like Sarah Siddons' in 1802. Magdalen's appearance can suggest deliberate role-play on her part, because it refers to the moment in which Hamlet points out his black costume and dejected face as an act: They are 'but the trappings and the suits of woe'; 'they are actions that a man might play', whereas 'I have that within [ie grief] which passeth show.' (H 1.2.77-84). Hamlet distinguishes between external appearances, and what he might feel inside. The meaning of Magdalen's costume is therefore uncertain, perhaps genuine sorrow, social respectability - or a claim to the starring role in *Hamlet*.

Magdalen's hair also suggests Hamlet. Charles Fechter wore a blond wig in 1861 to look more authentically Danish. Accounts vary as to its colour: Richard Foulkes gives it as 'flaxen', while Mander and Mitchenson describe it as 'a cross between golden and ginger', neither specifying their

source.²³⁰ A photograph from 1861 shows that it is some darker shade of blond, falling to his shoulders in regular waves.²³¹



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Magdalen's hair is described in much the same way in the novel's opening scene: 'Her hair was of that purely light-brown hue, unmixed with flaxen, or

²³⁰ Foulkes, 'Fechter, Charles', Oxford DNB online, Mander and Mitchenson, *Hamlet Through the Ages*, p1.

²³¹ Image: Guy Little Theatrical Photograph, Charles Fechter as Hamlet, Princess's Theatre, photograph 1861, Victoria and Albert Museum Collections, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O224627/guy-little-theatrical-photograph-photograph-southwell-brothers/> (accessed July 2021), © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

yellow, or red...and waved downward from her low forehead in regular folds – but to some tastes it was dull and dead, in its absolute want of glossiness, in its monotonous purity of plain light colour’ (p13). This description strongly suggests the artificiality of a wig, a kind of parody of hair. Not only is Magdalen costumed as Hamlet, but this description of her hair might have evoked Fechter’s recent performance specifically for contemporary readers.

The Actors

If the Walk on the Walls scene is a parody of the scenes on the ramparts from *Hamlet*, Magdalen is playing Hamlet, while Wragge, as his name suggests, plays Horatio. ‘Here I am unreservedly at your disposal’ he declares later, just as Horatio introduces himself as ‘your poor servant ever’ (p226 and H 1.2.162). But there are other characters involved in these scenes besides Hamlet and Horatio: the ghost of Hamlet’s father and the guards, headed by Marcellus. The ghost comes to tell Hamlet of his murder and to demand that he avenges it, which Hamlet promises to do. This has already been covered in the novel’s First Scene, in which Magdalen’s promise to her dead father and motivation have been established. But the ghost’s presence on the Walk on the Walls is suggested by Magdalen herself. Horatio reports to Hamlet that the ghost was pale and sorrowful, and when asked if it ‘fixed his eyes upon you’, replies ‘most constantly’ (H.1.2.228-32). Magdalen, who has already been described as pale and sad, imitates this action towards her Horatio, when she ‘suddenly bent forward, and for the first time, looked him close in the

face. He sustained her suspicious scrutiny, with every appearance of feeling highly gratified by it.' (p195). Magdalen's action is further a misquotation because she is acting out a moment that is narrated by Horatio rather than shown on stage.

If the ghost is there, what about the guards? Wragge has already walked through the 'dark stone guard-room of the ancient gate...' Apart from 'a solitary workman... no other living creature stirred in the place' (p193). This description might be there to suggest the guards and bring them into the scene in an imaginary way, but it could also suggest that Wragge is picking up their role too. The purpose of the guards in the play is to warn Hamlet of the ghost's appearance and to protect him from it. There is a struggle over whether Hamlet should follow the ghost, both the guards and Horatio try to dissuade him and then follow to make sure he comes to no harm (H 1.4.41-68). Marcellus says 'Look with what courteous action / It wafts you to a more removed ground. / But do not go with it', while Horatio takes hold of Hamlet in some way, for he cries 'Hold off your hand.' Wragge mimics their actions and words when 'She tried to pass him... He instantly met the attempt by raising both hands... in polite protest. "Not that way," he said; "not that way, Miss Vanstone, I beg and entreat!"'(p194-5). But since his default style is courtesy, and his mission is to get her to follow him home, this instantly hints that he is also playing the ghost, the one drawing her into potential danger. Horatio spells out the risks of following the ghost – Hamlet could fall into the sea or off a cliff, or it could render him mad. Wragge similarly warns that "you will walk straight into one of the four traps which are set to catch you..." at Mr

Huxtable's house, the hotels, the railway station or the theatre. He presents the danger of Magdalen's family and friends recovering her as equivalent to Hamlet's death or madness; in a sense this is true because it would put an end to her role as Hamlet through which she is pursuing her mission. Wragge shows Magdalen the handbills that her family have printed to recover her, just as the protecting guards reported the ghost to Hamlet. He is both drawing her away from safety, like the ghost, whilst imitating and pretending to be her protector, like the guards. In this context, his earlier examination of the empty guard room might then suggest a check that no one else was protecting her.

The fact that Magdalen and Wragge both play multiple roles in the scene is important. Noticing this makes it impossible to interpret the correlation of Magdalen's situation with Hamlet's as metaphorical, let alone coincidental. The rapid switching or combining of roles suggests that the characters in this novel are actors. Even more importantly, it suggests that they are on some level being so consciously, engaging in deliberate role-play, understanding that if they are to act out this scene, they have to cover all the parts between them. Magdalen plays both Hamlet and ghost, which could reflect her dual role in the narrative as both the usurped heir and the carrier, as it were, of the spirit of her father. But it is also a chosen response to her situation and an invitation for Wragge to pick up his role as Horatio. It is worth noting that Wragge's first name of Horatio is not revealed until he signs himself as such after this scene when writing down the 'transaction' between himself and Magdalen: 'I must have it down in black and white.... *In account with Horatio Wragge*' (p232). Given that he

is a professional swindler and masquerader, his 'real' name could actually be something else. It is as though he has perceived Magdalen's self-casting as Hamlet and only then offered himself as her Horatio, which could explain his gratification at Magdalen's scrutiny, a most un-Horatio-like response. It suggests pleasure that he has read her role-play correctly and that his own responding role-play has been accepted. He plays along with her, of course, to take advantage of her, in his adroit combination of the roles of guards and ghost, 'wafting her to a more removed ground' – in his own interests.

This deliberate role-play suggests that characters are adopting parodic versions of *Hamlet's* characters, speeches and action in order to negotiate the story they are in. You can read them as characters in *No Name* acting out their story in terms of *Hamlet*, or even as actors acting out *No Name* in terms of *Hamlet*. This makes them very similar to burlesque actors, whose storylines were pursued through parodies and imitations of characters, songs and scenarios from sources outside the main story. Each moment had a dual or even multiple voice, created from the self-conscious play on similarities between that moment in the main story or its characters and something else. The action in the main story then had to play out in relation to the terms of the something else. This type of play on stage was also self-conscious of the business of acting, with no attempt made to create a realistic illusion, or to pretend that the people on stage are doing anything other than acting. If *No Name's* characters are operating as actors, this highlights their artificiality, inviting the reader to recognise deliberate performance and play, rather than imagine them as realistic.

Magdalen's reception at Rosemary Lane echoes the scene from *Hamlet* where the players arrive at Elsinore, suggesting that she is specifically received in the role of an actor. Wragge directs his wife to welcome "Miss Vanstone... Our guest!" "Show Miss Vanstone her room," said the captain... "Offer Miss Vanstone all articles connected with the toilet of which she may stand in need." This is similar to Hamlet directing Polonius to accommodate the actors: 'will you see the players well bestowed? (H 2.2.525-6). Wragge's ordinary courtesy is linked to the *Hamlet* version partly by the context of the ongoing parody of *Hamlet*, but also by giving Mrs Wragge details derived from Polonius. Hamlet had earlier used his feigned madness to insult the fussy old Polonius: '[it] says here that old men... their eyes purging thick amber... have a plentiful lack of wit...' (H 2.2.201-2). Mrs Wragge is dressed in 'a gown of tarnished amber-coloured satin', and her lack of wit is shown when Wragge describes her as 'constitutionally torpid' (p202-4). Wragge is assigning his wife her role in their performance.

Mrs Wragge is a comic character, and her parodies of *Hamlet* are comically literal and overtly ridiculous, making her like a burlesque actor too. Hamlet's insults to Polonius are taken literally: Mrs Wragge fills her eyes with the amber satin she desires ("I like dress; it's a comfort to me." (p206)). She also plays Hamlet reading a book and responding to Polonius with 'Buzz, buzz' (H 2.2.395). 'Mrs Wragge raised the tattered old book which she had been reading... and slowly tapped herself on the forehead with it. "Oh my poor head," said the tall lady, in meek soliloquy; "it's Buzzing again worse than ever!"' (p204). Mrs Wragge acts out a

parody of Hamlet's parody of madness, and of his soliloquies. Her mental confusion is also a parody of Ophelia's, in the play on the street name Rosemary Lane. According to Ophelia, rosemary is for remembrance, but it's also a cooking herb, and so Mrs Wragge's forgetfulness is played out in cookery. The book she has is a cookery book, and she recounts being unable to remember the customers' orders when she was a waitress at Darch's dining rooms: "you had to keep all their orders in your memory... And the trying to do that, confused you?" ... "That's it!" said Mrs Wragge..." (p205). Mrs Wragge is ridiculously tall at 'two or three inches over six feet' (p201), and this seems to be an over-literal interpretation of *Hamlet's* players too. Hamlet's greeting to the troupe includes the comment: 'By'r Lady, your ladyship is nearer heaven than when I saw you last by the altitude of a chopine' (H 2.2.428-30). A 'chopine' is a platform shoe, indicating that the player is playing a female role and has put platform shoes on to make himself taller. Mrs Wragge is not merely a burlesque actor with multiple roles, she also seems to be a cross-dressed one. The use of cross-dressing is further discussed in chapter 3.

The Duel

With Wragge's help, Magdalen embarks on a contest against her usurping uncle and cousin, in a long-drawn-out parody of Hamlet's struggle against the king and those who serve him. As the struggle intensifies, the characters draw on more theatrical role-play devices to gain the upper hand.

The 'Traacherous Instrument'²³²

Wragge lures Magdalen back to his lodging under the guise of helping her, or of being her Horatio. Now, he and Magdalen engage in some verbal duelling as Wragge tries to persuade her that she needs him. Magdalen scores points by reflecting his own words back at him '...meeting him, in her neatly feminine way, with his own weapons', which he acknowledges by quoting 'a hit, a palpable hit', which he has already quoted once before on the Walls, and 'jocosely exhibiting the tails of his threadbare shooting-jacket' (p213). This little duel parodies the one between Hamlet and Laertes, which also begins with Hamlet scoring two hits; Osric's line 'A hit, a very palpable hit' (H 5.2.232) is slightly misquoted. Wragge's display of his clothing draws attention to the weapons of the duel. A 'shooting-jacket' might suggest pistols, but Magdalen and Wragge are duelling in words rather than *Hamlet's* swords.²³³

This reference to Hamlet's final duel at the beginning of their performance perhaps creates a foreshadow of where the plot will end, or, if you read them as self-conscious actors, an invitation from Wragge to begin the action that they both know leads there. Hamlet's duel with Laertes starts out as friendly play between friends, and Wragge's behaviour suggests that he is also inviting her to test him, rather like duellists trying out their weapons before they begin, as Hamlet and Laertes do:

²³² H 5.2.269.

²³³ Possibly 'words' might be read as a close parody of 'swords', a difference of only one letter between the two terms.

LAERTES (taking a foil)

This is too heavy; let me see another.

HAMLET (taking a foil)

This likes me well. These foils have all a length?

OSRIC:

Ay, my good lord. (H 5.2.211-13)

Magdalen realises that Wragge himself is a useful weapon: 'A man with endless resources of audacity and cunning... – was this the instrument for which... her hand was waiting?' (p222). The reference to an instrument in the hand is also from this duel. During the fight, Hamlet and Laertes drop and exchange weapons, meaning that Laertes' poisoned blade kills them both: 'The treacherous instrument is in thy hand, / Unabated and envenomed. The foul practice / Hath turned itself on me.' (H 5.2.269-71). Magdalen has already parodied this by meeting Wragge 'with his own weapons.' But it's also a sign that Wragge, too, could change sides at any moment, and fight against her, which he periodically does.

The Conscience of the King: Role Sharing

Hamlet's real opponent is the usurping king, Claudius. Hamlet co-opts the players to re-enact his father's murder in the famous 'play scene', to provoke the king's guilty conscience, asking Horatio to watch his reaction: 'I prithee... observe mine uncle' (H 3.2.76-8). Magdalen mimics this by setting her own loyal Horatio to spy on her uncle, to answer '...the necessity of knowing more of her father's brother than she knew now' (p222). Then, she enacts her own 'play scene' to his son Noel Vanstone,

by masquerading as Miss Garth. Entering his house in disguise, she tries to provoke his conscience directly, asking why he feels 'no obligation to act from motives of justice or generosity towards these two sisters' (p288).

What is noticeable about this is that Claudius is being played by two people, first Michael Vanstone and then his son Noel. Although Michael dies, his son inherits Magdalen's fortune and takes over the role from him. In *Hamlet*, Claudius's death would have restored the throne to Hamlet; in *No Name's* parody, another actor steps in to continue playing him. This is theatrical practice, in that *Hamlet* is played repeatedly, with different actors occupying the roles, the same lines and situations being re-enacted with every performance. But casting two actors to play the king in the novel also burlesques this practice. It means Magdalen has to contrive two play scenes instead of one: she has investigated Michael and come up with a strategy for attacking him, but when he dies, she has to start all over again. To make matters worse, when she confronts Noel, she finds him backed up by Mrs Lecount, who also takes up the role of the king, so that Magdalen has to fight two opponents at once. In *Hamlet*, the king shows flashes of a guilty conscience to the audience when alone, manoeuvres against Hamlet in secret and presents a virtuous royal front in public, features which Noel and Mrs Lecount share between them. Noel shows the pressure of the guilt in Mrs Lecount's supposed absence, 'a nervous anxiety to conciliate her, until Mrs Lecount's return.' Like the king, his desire to keep what he has gained is greater than any guilt: 'I am still possessed / Of those effects for which I did the murder / ...May one be pardoned and retain th'offence?' (H 3.3.53-6). Noel babbles 'nothing

would please me more than to hear that Miss Vanstone's lover had come back, and married her. If a loan of money would be likely to bring him back, and if the security offered was good, and if my lawyer thought me justified –' (p290-91). In *Hamlet*, the king only expresses guilt when he is alone on stage. The theatrical convention of aside or soliloquy allows the audience to hear a character's private feelings, which might contrast with their behaviour when other characters are present. In *No Name's* parody, Noel leaks out his guilt in front of Magdalen when his housekeeper is not there to back him up. It is Mrs Lecount who plays the ruthless side of Claudius. She presents the king's virtuous front, in line with Polonius's observation that 'Tis too much proved that with devotion's visage / And pious action we do sugar o'er / The devil himself', which the king recognises as applying to himself (H 3.1.49-51). Mrs Lecount performs virtue in a similar way: "You are laying me under an obligation – you are permitting me, in my very limited way, to assist the performance of a benevolent action." She bowed, smiled and glided out of the room.' Magdalen furiously tells the toad: "Your mistress is a devil!" (p278). In *Hamlet*, the king's ruthless side overrules his conscience, although the conflict between them is shown. In *No Name's* parody, it is Mrs Lecount who overrules Noel's weakness, understanding that the ruthless side of the role-play is needed to defend Noel's, and hence her own, position. This makes it more difficult for Magdalen to catch Noel's conscience.

Just like Claudius, Mrs Lecount counters Magdalen's pretences with those of her own. The king tries to see behind Hamlet's pretences of madness through Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, in the guise of friends, and then

spies on a contrived encounter with Ophelia. Similarly, Mrs Lecount tries to use the light and seating positions at Vauxhall Walk to see through Magdalen's disguise, pretends to be a friendly outsider and then hides behind Magdalen's chair to overhear her conversation with Noel. Magdalen is trying to uncover Noel's conscience, while Mrs Lecount is trying to uncover Magdalen's disguise. Just as in a duel, they are both trying to expose one another's weaknesses, while keeping themselves covered. Mrs Lecount protects Noel with her machinations, and with the virtuous pretence that he is master. Meanwhile Magdalen foils all her opponent's attempts to see through her disguise.

Mrs Wragge's Ghost: The Costume as Actor

The costume has been Magdalen's cover, but when she returns to her lodging, it stuns Mrs Wragge into thinking she has seen a ghost, parodying the scene between Hamlet and Gertrude, when the ghost appears to Hamlet again. 'I've heard tell of ghosts in nightgowns;" cries Mrs Wragge. "Don't let go of me – whatever you do, my dear, don't let go of me!" (p304). Hamlet's ghost appears in a nightgown, according to the stage directions, while the alarmed Hamlet calls on 'You heavenly guards!' to 'Save me and hover o'er me with your wings' (H 3.4.92-4). This parody neatly plays on the confusion about what Hamlet has seen. He sees the ghost but calls on angels that he can't see. Mrs Wragge calls on the visible Magdalen as protective angel, but it is she who has created the vision of the ghost by having 'glided along the passage' (p302) in a ghost-like manner, and who now swiftly adopts Gertrude's role to deny it, as in

'This is the very coinage of your brain' (H 3.4.128): "Nonsense!" said Magdalen. "You're dreaming."

The ghost is a reminder of Hamlet's purpose, and in *No Name's* parody, the costume is a giveaway of Magdalen's real purpose. She needs to get rid of her disguise, and the costume becomes a parody of Polonius, who is killed off in this scene. She 'tore off her cloak, bonnet and wig; and threw them down out of sight, in the blank space between the sofa-bedstead and the wall' (p302), just as Polonius hid behind the arras in Gertrude's room. Fearing that the disguise will betray her, rather as Polonius was to report back to the king, 'she resolved to be rid of it that evening', packing it into a box, suggestive of a coffin, and sending it off to Captain Wragge (p307). Mrs Lecount, who has not been fooled, tells Noel 'Take my word for it... when our visitor gets home she will put her grey hair away in a box, and will cure that sad affliction in her eyes with warm water and a sponge' (p296). This parodies the moment when Rosencrantz requests Polonius's body from Hamlet for burial – and Hamlet calls him a sponge (H 4.2.14). So, in this world of theatrical parody, Polonius can be played by an empty wig and make-up, a joke playing on Polonius's claim that he 'was accounted a good actor' (H 3.2.97). This highlights the artificiality of even acting itself, as if a role is really embodied by its costume and the actor that merely puts it on is interchangeable. The costume is adaptable and recyclable too, as they were in the theatre: Magdalen uses it to play Miss Garth, the ghost and Polonius in quick succession. Beginning as an 'At Home' costume for 'an old north-country lady' (p246), it proves adaptable

to portray any old or dead person. Finally, like Polonius, it is a dispensable pawn, to be taken off and thrown away in a box.

Hamlet's Naked Return: Skins to Jump Into

After killing Polonius, Hamlet is sent away to England, where the king plots to have him killed. Hamlet foils this plot and makes a comeback: 'I am set naked on your kingdom. Tomorrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes, when I shall, first asking your pardon, thereunto recount th'occasions of my sudden and more strange return' (H 4.7.42-6).

Magdalen, having got rid of her disguise, now makes a 'strange return' by appearing near Noel Vanstone's residence in Aldborough. She plots to attract a proposal from Noel Vanstone under a false identity, but bearing her own appearance - naked, as it were, of any physical disguise. She enlists her faithful Horatio once more writing to him with instructions to make arrangements, just as Hamlet does: 'repair thou to me with as much haste as thou wouldst fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb' (H 4.6.21-3). Magdalen writes: 'We can join you as soon as we know where to go... you shall hear what I propose to do from my own lips...' (p320).

Magdalen's new identity, Miss Bygrave, is stolen from a dead person, but also from *Hamlet's* graveyard scene. Wragge has chosen it from his list of '*Skins To Jump Into*, a list of individuals retired from this mortal scene' (p322). This is a parody of Laertes and Hamlet jumping into Ophelia's grave; Hamlet proclaims his identity as he does so 'This is I, / Hamlet the Dane' (H 5.1.253). Magdalen is once again playing Hamlet in the pursuit

of her purpose, but leaping into someone else's identity at the same time, playing a role within a role. This is a theatrical or burlesque practice too, like an actor who plays one character pretending to be another.

Magdalen now has no costume, depending only on her acting ability to keep her 'Hamlet' skin undetected beneath her 'Miss Bygrave' one. Unlike Hamlet, she does not write to announce herself to the king, but Mrs Lecount senses that the 'graceful and beautiful girl' is 'Miss Vanstone again!!!' (p376-7). Mrs Lecount is taking up Noel's role as the king once again, alert to the danger from 'Hamlet' where Noel is fooled.

Divide and Conquer

As the contest between the king and Hamlet intensifies, both parties scheme to divide each other from their allies. Hamlet has killed Polonius and sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their deaths in his place; all of these were servants or tools of the king. Claudius, meanwhile, co-opts Laertes, who wants to avenge his father and sister, against Hamlet. As previously noted, different sides of a *Hamlet* character can be occupied by different characters in *No Name*. In order to divide and conquer, both contenders in the duel use this to their advantage: they work to separate the people who are sharing their opponent's role.

Mrs Lecount parodies Claudius's co-option of Laertes in her appeal to Norah and Miss Garth, who share the role of Laertes. Mrs Lecount writes to Norah asking for her help in identifying Magdalen. Just like Claudius, she is pretending to be a sympathetic helper whilst really planning

Magdalen's downfall. Norah is the Laertes who is Magdalen's devoted sister and who defends her hot-headedly. She first appears as Laertes early in the novel, warning Magdalen against her intimacy with Frank, like Laertes counselling Ophelia to 'keep... / Out of the shot and danger of desire' (H 1.3.34-5): 'I am sorry to see a secret understanding established already between you and Mr Francis Clare' (p68). When her employers tell her to keep Magdalen away from their house and children, 'Your sister... instantly resented the slur cast on you. She gave her employers warning on the spot. High words followed; and she left the house that evening' (p312). She is also, like Laertes, temporarily absent in France, which exposes her sister to danger: Mrs Lecount reaches Miss Garth instead. Miss Garth is the part of Laertes that wants Hamlet destroyed, in the sense that she has opposed Magdalen's purpose, represented by Hamlet's role, from the beginning. She replies to Mrs Lecount offering Mr Pendril to identify Magdalen, a personal description of her and a statement that she herself had never been near Vauxhall Walk. This thorough reply gives Mrs Lecount more than she asked for, handing her 'a formidable weapon' (p394-6) against Magdalen. This is rather like Laertes deciding to poison his sword, when Claudius had only proposed contriving an 'unabated' foil against Hamlet (H 4.7.108-11).

Meanwhile, Wragge tries to separate Noel and Mrs Lecount, to control the weak king with the money and get rid of the one who is effective and dangerous. He does this by parodying Hamlet's substitution of Claudius's letter to England. The letter ordered Hamlet's death, but Hamlet forges another ordering that of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern instead. Wragge

forges a letter to Mrs Lecount from her brother's doctor in Zurich summoning her to his deathbed. Wragge carefully copies the doctor's handwriting, in French, like Hamlet authenticating the letter with his father's signet, 'the model of that Danish seal' (H 5.2.51). When Horatio expresses some concern at the fate of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, he responds 'Why, man, they did make love to this employment. / They are not near my conscience' (H 5.2.58-9). Similarly, 'Captain Wragge waited with some anxiety... even Noel Vanstone might feel some compunction at practising such a deception as was here suggested, on a woman who had stood towards him in the position of Mrs Lecount. She had served him faithfully, however interested her motives might be.... His apprehensions proved to be perfectly groundless' (p431-2). The heartless Noel exclaims 'I wish Lecount was at the bottom of the German Ocean!' (p434), meaning the North Sea, which Hamlet had to cross to reach England. Wragge counters Mrs Lecount's role-play as the king by working on Noel's assumption that she is just a servant or tool, re-casting her as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Wragge himself is briefly adopting Hamlet's role; just like Mrs Lecount, he shares his contender's role to back her up and do her dirty work for her.

The Final Duel

Magdalen's role-play as Hamlet achieves its purpose with her marriage to Noel. This is brought about in a parody of the final duel between Hamlet and Laertes and ends with Hamlet's death, when his role is no longer needed.

In order to defeat Magdalen, Mrs Lecount needs to prove that 'Miss Bygrave' is really the avenging Hamlet in disguise. The proof hinges on the 'two little moles close together on the left side of the neck' described to her by Miss Garth (p395). The two moles might suggest Hamlet's two 'hits' against Laertes in the duel, especially when Wragge refers to them as a 'mark', which sword-hits might leave: 'Who knows of the mark?' (p412). The 'hits' have been given away by Laertes; Magdalen denies that Norah could have given her description away, but it may have been Miss Garth. Wragge covers up Magdalen's moles and tries to persuade Noel that Mrs Lecount is mad: 'I will lay you any wager you like, there is madness in your housekeeper's family' (p409). Wragge's business is to deny Magdalen's plot, and this is what Hamlet does when he claims to Laertes that his feigned madness is responsible for his crimes:

If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.
Who does it then? His madness. (H 5.2.180-3).

Magdalen's anger at Miss Garth's and Mrs Lecount's treachery provokes her resolve to see the plot through:

"We will take the short way to the end we have in view... How long can you give me to wring an offer of marriage out of that creature downstairs?"
"I dare not give you long," replied Captain Wragge. "...Could you manage it in a week?"

“I’ll manage it in half the time” she said (p413).

Hamlet is similarly provoked to wound Claudius with the poisoned sword when he realises his treachery over the duel and poisoned drink. Laertes tells him ‘Hamlet, thou art slain...In thee there is not half an hour of life’ (H 5.2.266-8). The end of Magdalen’s role-play as Hamlet is signalled by a parody of Hamlet’s death-speech when she tells Wragge she will receive Noel to make his proposal. She seeks out Wragge in the darkened parlour: ‘She...glided into the obscurity of the room, like a ghost.... “Let him [Noel] be shown into the parlour –” Her voice died away in silence’ (p418). The dying Hamlet anticipates Fortinbras’s take-over: ‘I do prophecy th’election lights / On Fortinbras. He has my dying voice’ (H 5.2.307-8). When arrangements have been made, ‘no answering word came from her. The dead silence was only disturbed by the rustling of her dress.’ (p419). Hamlet’s last words are ‘The rest is silence’ (H 5.2.310).

The Mirror of Nature

The presence of the *Hamlet* parodies strongly supports Bisla’s perception that *No Name* is a parody of a realist novel designed to critique the genre by imitating its style. The theatrical nature of the parodies signals far more effectively the artificiality of the surface text that he has already noted, using sets, costumes and the interchangeability of actors to undermine readers’ belief in the characters. The parodies could also be read as critiquing the fashion for historical verisimilitude in the theatre, given that they seem to satirise the attention and priority given to sets and costumes.

The effect of all this can be read as comic mockery of either the main story or realism itself, foregrounding the artfulness of the novelist's work.

Why would this matter, though? All readers and theatre audiences are aware on some level that they are reading or seeing a work of fiction, that it isn't real. The problem lies in the power of fiction and drama to convince you that the action is expressing truth in a larger sense. It presents people and explores issues that are realistic and perhaps relevant to contemporary life, so it is not literally but conceptually true. According to Hamlet's advice to the players, the purpose of acting is 'to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature...' (H 3.2.19-22). The Victorian assumption about 'realism' was that it was true to life, as is revealed by reviews of sensation fiction which persistently objected that it was not. Their assumptions are questionable because the 'truths' involved are just points of view. A story is a selected telling of events, and the selection expresses the values and concerns of the person or society from which it comes. Worse, the stories can reinforce the 'truths' in that selection and their underlying values. If the story's mirror reflects a selected version of society back to itself, it can forget that other versions are possible, its values can seem 'natural'. Bisla notes that domestic fiction played its part in 'upholding the domestic proprieties.'²³⁴ In other words, there is a real connection between the constructed nature of fiction and the constructed nature of society. Exposing this is a good way to express dissent at the artifice of Victorian society, as Bisla suggests Collins wanted to do. The mockery of the realist

²³⁴ Bisla, 'Over-Doing Things with Words in 1862', p9.

style therefore more seriously points out that it carries artificial but believable values along with it. In his Preface to the novel Collins claims that he has applied 'a resolute adherence, throughout, to the truth as it is in Nature' (p5), which is surely a parody. This means we should look at Dentith's other 'direction' of parody, critique of the contemporary world.

The theatrical parodies make a big difference to this, by allowing the text to be double-voiced, just like stage burlesque. There is a surface text and a subtext. The humour and artificiality of the subtext shows up and satirises the surface text as artificial too, prompting the reader to stop believing its apparent meaning. By extension, it suggests that if the surface text depicts society, there are hidden truths beneath society too, and the subtext has got something to say about it. Constructing the subtext from theatrical parodies does something important in this regard, by bringing the content of the parodied dramas into play. *No Name* is being played out like a version of *Hamlet*, so what extra meaning does *Hamlet's* subject-matter bring with it? This shows where Genette's formal distinctions are helpful. My reading of the theatrical parodies so far in this chapter has considered the parodies as taking place in the style of theatrical burlesque. They are a 'travesty' of *Hamlet*, contributing to a 'pastiche' of realist fiction. What happens when the focus is on 'parody', the transformation of content? In addition, *Hamlet* is drawn from a different age, and is expressing different values from those assumed to be normal in the nineteenth century, reminding the reader that they have not always been normal, they may not be 'natural' at all. So, the original context of the parodied text is important too. All these factors allow the

theatrical parodies to challenge the apparently natural and universal values being expressed in the surface text. Just like burlesque, they can critique more than one 'direction' at the same time, realism as an artistic approach, and the society it came from.

Drama can have another powerful effect on the audience, which is to provoke empathy. As well as seeing the truthfulness of the characters and situations, the audience can feel personally affected by it, or sympathetic towards it. Hamlet is baffled by the actor's ability to fake feelings about nothing:

Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his whole conceit
That from her working all his visage waned,
Tears in his eyes, distraction in 's aspect,
....and all for nothing.

For Hecuba!

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,

That he should weep for her?' (H 2.2.553-62)

The actor's skill appeals to the feeling and conscience of the audience, in respect of the larger truth of the situation, even though both actors and audience know that it is a fiction. The written words of a play, or the empty costume, are not enough: performance persuades an audience to think and feel, to relate the drama to themselves or their society, or to see the situation from the character's point of view. Hamlet uses this when he sets

up the play scene: 'I have heard that guilty creatures sitting at a play / Have... been struck so to the soul that presently / They have proclaimed their malefactions' (H 2.2.591-4). The force of acting on an audience can be so great that the truth can be both exposed and, just as importantly, acknowledged. When Magdalen demonstrates her acting to Wragge: 'The essential spirit of the man's whole vagabond life, burst out of him... "Who the devil would have thought it? She can act after all!"' Magdalen notes that 'I have forced the truth out of you, for once'. It is as though Collins is hinting that it is acting that forces out the truth, that if you want to know the truth, look at the acting. There is a serious purpose in Collins turning his characters into actors. Magdalen is a performing actress seeking empathy for her situation through its relationship to similar situations in famous plays, empathy that she would not earn from the surface story when her behaviour transgresses the 'domestic proprieties'. At the same time Collins is satirising the fashion for visual verisimilitude: dazzling sets and costumes might look like the truth, but they draw attention away from the acting and its power to communicate the content of a play and the issues it is exploring. Good drama does not just provoke emotion but also imagination and thought: it can offer critique and contribute to public debate, if it is allowed to. With this in mind, we can examine what difference the inclusion of the content of Hamlet's story makes to the reading of Magdalen's, to see what social or political critique it is possible to read there.

To Be or Not to Be

Magdalen is playing Hamlet because like him she has been deprived of her inheritance. As previously noted, this can be read as mock-elevation or satire – one spoilt middle-class girl loses her money and reacts as though it's a national tragedy. But who, watching or reading *Hamlet*, disputes the basic situation that Hamlet, the rightful heir, has been wrongfully usurped? Perhaps Magdalen's comparison with him actually bolsters her case, implying a similar wrongdoing. Furthermore, it could suggest that the fate of her family's money *is* as important as the loss of a kingdom because the laws and legal technicalities that control it are applicable to the rest of the population, so the dispute has national implications.

Hamlet encapsulates his dilemma in his famous 'To be or not to be' speech. The issue he agonises over is whether to fight back or bear injustice, or whether it is better to die instead of either; except that death might turn out to be worse, because no one knows what happens afterwards. Hamlet's famous words are never quoted in *No Name*, which looks like a parody by omission: but here I want to argue that they are in fact there in a highly significant way, because Magdalen's behaviour acts out this dilemma instead. She chooses to fight back rather than bear the injustice of her disinheritance but ends up wanting to die. The central feature of Magdalen's parody of Hamlet is that she turns all his talk into action, or, if you like, she pays attention to content rather than style. While Hamlet merely discusses acting, revenge and suicide, Magdalen performs

on stage, carries out avenging plots to regain her inheritance and comes close to killing herself. The struggle brings her to a nervous breakdown, an ironic parody of Hamlet's feigned madness. Instead of her theatrical performances undermining the realism of her story, the trajectory of Magdalen's performance of *Hamlet* through *No Name* can be read as *more* real than a theatrical performance: Magdalen tries to re-enact Hamlet in her (real) world, a different implication of a real place being used for the 'set'. If she is literally acting out Hamlet's most famous speech, this means she is engaged in a struggle to fight injustice. So what injustices are we talking about?

The tragedy arises from Hamlet's personal inability to fight back. It explores the different meanings of 'acting', in that Hamlet spends a lot of time acting (as in pretending), but not acting (as in taking action). It seems that he resorts to acting as a way of avoiding action. Magdalen, meanwhile, is quite prepared to take action, but her plots are modelled on Hamlet's ideas and they all ultimately fail. This begs the question: why is she going round in circles acting out his ideas? Why does she resort to acting when she can act? The answer might be found in looking at the political milieus in which the two stories take place. In the medieval world in which *Hamlet* is set, thrones were held by might rather than right. Quite a few of England's monarchs were usurpers, some with fairly spurious claims to the throne, such as William the Conqueror who was illegitimate and one of many claimants and who gained the throne by killing a rival contender; or Henry VII who founded the Tudor dynasty by killing Richard III. Weak kings, such as Edward II, Richard II or Henry VI, were

dominated by powerful nobles and then conveniently killed off in favour of a more ruthless claimant. In Shakespeare's time this was much more recent history and Shakespeare himself explores the issues in his history plays.²³⁵ In *Hamlet*, Hamlet gets usurped by his uncle because he is too weak to enforce his own claim. He is the rightful heir and he is free to act – but he can't. He can't find the will to fight the war or commit the murder necessary *in his world* to get his own throne back. Magdalen can't take the kind of direct action that is needed to get her inheritance back either, but not from any personal inadequacy. The tool she needs in the nineteenth century is not murder but the law, but this decrees that she is not the rightful heir and is closed to her. She can't find the will she needs either – because her father's Will is void.²³⁶ Her relatives take the money and discard her. They are fully backed up by the society in which she lives. Magdalen is helpless to act in a pointed parody of the way Hamlet is.

The contest for the inheritance between Magdalen and her uncle and cousin seems to take the form of a duel based on Hamlet's. As previously noted, this is signalled from the beginning in Wragge and Magdalen's duel of words, foreshadowing the fatal duel later. Another reason for signalling it at the beginning might be because in performance the audience knows from the start of the duel that it is rigged against Hamlet. He is told that it's 'play', a harmless contest of skill, but it's really a plot to kill him. The

²³⁵ Also as a way of exploring contemporary power structures in Elizabethan England, see Michael Hattaway, 'The Shakespearean History Play' in Michael Hattaway, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp3-24, pp11-22.

²³⁶ Bisla describes this as a 'failed performative', or Andrew's 'thwarted "will"ingness', 'Over-Doing Things with Words in 1862', pp9-10.

swords may be 'of a length', but one of them has been poisoned. Laertes allows him two 'hits' to make him think he can win, which draws him on to the far deadlier fight that follows. Magdalen, too, is drawn on by Wragge to think that she can win, using only her willingness to fight and her skill. But the contest is rigged against her if Michael and Noel Vanstone have the whole of society and the law on their side.

The contest is rigged against her in another way, revealed by the theatrical role-sharing noted earlier. Hamlet fights Laertes, but his real enemy is the king who is behind the duel; in this sense Hamlet is outnumbered. *No Name's* theatrical parody has more players outnumbering Magdalen, Michael Vanstone, Noel Vanstone and then Mrs Lecount as the king and Miss Garth and Norah as Laertes. But the way in which she is outnumbered is shown by Noel's succession to the role of the king after his father's death. It reflects not just theatrical, but legal reality. As soon as one opponent dies, the next in line automatically inherits. Magdalen is faced with a succession (literally) of opponents. Similarly, Miss Garth substitutes for Norah to make sure that Mrs Lecount's enquiries are answered and helped. The role of a king might suggest not just an individual but a system of rule; the multiple players suggest in turn that it is a system that perpetuates itself by replacing lost or inadequate individuals with new ones. Just as in the theatre, the show must go on and replacement actors will always be found. Magdalen is not just fighting one opponent, but a whole system of people. Mrs Lecount's adoption of the king's role makes things worse. She is not even the legal owner of the fortune, only his servant. Her behaviour might suggest the kind of person

who supports a system of rule by appropriating its power, in its name, in order to perpetuate the status quo from which they benefit.

Meanwhile, the role of Laertes might reveal the kind of social pressures that also oppose Magdalen, that expect her, like Norah, to accept her fate meekly. Both Norah and Miss Garth relate to Magdalen as Ophelia, the innocent victim who has been deprived of marriage. Norah refuses to believe that Magdalen is anything else, but this insistence is in itself a kind of demand that she fit the role. It is also her own absence in France that exposes Miss Garth to Mrs Lecount's wiles. Her absence seems to be caused by a blameless adherence to duty, because she goes to join her new employer. But sourcing it from Laertes's absence casts another light on it. Laertes is clearly on a pleasure-trip, since his father advises him on his behaviour and Ophelia counters his advice to be careful of Hamlet with a recommendation for him not to tread 'the primrose path of dalliance' himself (H 1.3.50). Laertes is aware of some danger from Hamlet but does not stay to protect his sister from it. The comparison suggests that Norah is likewise prioritising her own needs, even if these are for moral righteousness, leaving her sister to fight the family battles unprotected. Miss Garth's willingness to help Mrs Lecount is apparently motivated by a wish to counter Magdalen's 'immoral' behaviour as an actress. The subtext reveals that she merely disputes Magdalen's chosen role: she would rather Magdalen were the helpless rejected Ophelia, than asserting her place as Hamlet the rightful heir. In assisting Mrs Lecount's enquiries, Miss Garth, like Laertes, wants to defend Magdalen as Ophelia, by blaming and destroying the Hamlet in her. She is trying to divide and

conquer Magdalen, getting rid of the inconvenient active part and restoring her to her proper passive feminine role. Magdalen's own family and allies think they are defending her, but what they are really defending is their ideas about women and morality. This shows how inculcated ideology can get in the way of family ties. People can be conditioned to believe in moral ideas that persuade them to sacrifice their own in favour of a need to feel dutiful. This contrasts with the practices of the powerful who defend each other for mutual interest, as Noel and Mrs Lecount do, and who cynically use moral ideas to divide others. In addition, if you read the role-play as illuminating the reality of society, the fact that the roles are taken from theatre helps to suggest that these morals are social constructions.

Magdalen's fiancé Frank Clare does not help matters. One of her original motives for plotting to get her fortune back was that she needed it to marry him; one or other of them must bring some money to live on. Frank complains that 'In one breath she says she loves me, and in another, she tells me to go to China. What have I done to be treated with this heartless inconsistency?' (p175-6). This parodies Hamlet's rejection of Ophelia (Hamlet: 'I did love you once' / Ophelia: 'Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so' (H 3.1.117-8)). Frank claims to be a helpless victim like Ophelia, rejected as a marriage partner and sent to work in China, his equivalent of the nunnery. But his circumstances, when compared to Magdalen's, don't support his view. He is male and legitimate and free to act – rather like Hamlet in fact. As the descendant of a 'family of great antiquity' (p35), he is more like Hamlet's 'model of aristocratic disengagement'; he has not got the drive to earn the money to keep his

wife, but preys on (and feels entitled to) her assets instead. Frank's abandonment of Magdalen thrusts her into the role of Ophelia too. She suffers a nervous collapse, Mrs Wragge writing that 'the landlord says he's afraid she'll destroy herself,' just like Ophelia.

Before Frank abandons her, Magdalen foresees the possibility of ensnaring Noel instead. After failing to move Noel disguised as Miss Garth, Magdalen admires her real self in the mirror, thinking

"I can twist any man alive round my finger... If that contemptible wretch saw me now –" She shrank from following that thought to its end, with a sudden horror of herself; she drew back from the glass, shuddering, and put her hands over her face. "Oh, Frank!" she murmured, "but for you, what a wretch I might be!" (p306).

This moment parodies the scene where Hamlet arouses his mother's guilt over her second marriage: 'You go not till I set you up a glass / Where you may see the inmost part of you. (H 3.4.19-20). Gertrude begs

O Hamlet, speak no more!
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul,
And there I see such black and grainèd spots
As will not leave their tinct. (H 3.4.78-81).

The 'play scene' devised by Hamlet also has the player king and queen argue about second marriages, the queen declaring that they are motivated by 'base respects of thrift, but none of love', adding 'In second

husband let me be accurst; / None wed the second but who killed the first' (H 3.2.170-4). Similarly, Magdalen plots to marry Noel purely for money, after his usurpation of her fortune has 'killed' her first prospects of marriage. But all this moral condemnation that Magdalen and Gertrude are made to feel is just Hamlet's opinion. What choice does Gertrude have? Hamlet's arrogant moral criticism fails to take account of her powerless position in the usurpation, where she would have been taken over as part of the spoils, and denies his own failure to prevent this and render her marriage unnecessary. Similarly, Frank could have knuckled down to earning a living to support Magdalen, even though she had lost her fortune, or gone to law on her behalf. But for him, what a wretch she is having to be.

The duel ends with Hamlet's death; *No Name's* parody version is Magdalen's engagement to Noel. Hamlet dies when his role is played out, and this is also true when Magdalen achieves her mission of marriage to the owner of her fortune. But comparing an engagement to death is quite a startling image. Once Magdalen's Hamlet role has died, it is as though she can no longer take action in her own cause, no longer be the star of her own story. The nineteenth-century legal reality was that a woman ceased to exist in her own right upon marriage and became the property of her husband, a kind of death. This is why, in Magdalen's parody of Hamlet's death speech, Noel has suddenly become Fortinbras taking over her country. And her achievement in marrying him is a supremely ironic death – she still does not get her money by it. Noel gets to keep the fortune, and to own her as well.

Bisla suggests that Collins's parodies were particularly aimed at marriage and equating it with Hamlet's death would seem to support this. But the parody of Hamlet does not end there as you would expect. It is *after* this point that Magdalen starts to exhibit the despair and suicidal behaviour of Hamlet and/or Ophelia.

She was walking restlessly to and fro, with her head drooping on her bosom, and her hair hanging disordered over her shoulders... "Take me away!" she exclaimed, tossing her hair back wildly from her face. ... "I can't get over the horror of marrying him.... Take me somewhere where I can forget it, or I shall go mad!" (p437).

Unlike Ophelia, she is losing her mind at the prospect of marriage, rather than at its deprivation. Her fiancé, though he possesses her kingdom, is an unattractive, weak older man, and no young prince. She has set up, and will make legal, a completely false identity that she will have to maintain in the private sphere of home for the foreseeable future. After pursuing her purpose with such determination, she now starts to vacillate like Hamlet, unsure she can see it through. She writes to Wragge 'The horror of marrying him is more than I can face', but then pulls out the copies of her father's and lawyer's words, which remind her why she is doing it: 'All the Past rose before her in mute overwhelming reproach' (p489), like the visitation of *Hamlet's* ghost 'to whet thy almost-blunted purpose' (H 3.4.101). When the doubts return, she begins to consider killing herself. Hamlet only toys with the possibility ('Or that the Everlasting had not fixed / His canon 'gainst self-slaughter!' (H 1.2.131-2)),

but once the marriage is 'a certainty' she resolves on taking Ophelia's way out instead. 'If the cruel law will let you, lay me with my father and mother, in the churchyard at home' she writes to her sister (p496), just as the graveside clown asks about Ophelia: 'Is she to be buried in Christian burial that wilfully seeks her own salvation?' (H 5.1.1-2). Only the 'hazard of a chance' (p499) saves her from her deadly purpose. Hamlet's 'to be or not to be' speech speculates that what comes after death could be worse than enduring the injustice of life. It is as though Magdalen is experiencing this: existence after Hamlet's death is the 'horror' of marrying Noel.

The theatrical parodies of *Hamlet* reveal a dual voice at play. They mock both the surface story and realism in the style of stage burlesque. But this is a device to sweep away both as artificial window-dressing and point the reader to how the content of *Hamlet* affects the story. This reveals Collins's deep engagement both with theatre and with the content and detail of *Hamlet* as a work. He used parody in a specific and sophisticated way which can be read as both comic and tragic, revealing artistic or political critique. Collins could have written a more direct critique of these issues, but chose to do something much cleverer, writing a popular novel that appeared to endorse the eventual triumph of conventional values, but with an underlying, much more radical message. He used the techniques of acting to 'hold up the mirror' to society and reveal some of its 'black and grainèd spots'.

Chapter 2 'Honours Beyond What Was Right':²³⁷ *Prometheus Bound*

Introduction

The previous chapter on *Hamlet* and parody has articulated different readings of the theatrical subtext in *No Name*: in general terms, exposure of the theatrical parody tends to debunk fictional realism; more particularly, comparison of the content of the parodied work (*Hamlet*) with the story of *No Name* is suggestive of a sophisticated social and political commentary underlying the sensational plot. The remaining three cases in this thesis develop the latter argument, paying attention to the theatrical and political contexts of the plays Collins has used, both in their own time and the nineteenth century.

We begin with Collins's use of Aeschylus's tragedy *Prometheus Bound*, a work created and produced in Athens in the mid-fifth century BC. The presence of this play in *No Name* has not been observed by critics at all to date. Lewis Horne gets closest in 'Magdalen's Peril'. He suggests that certain features of Magdalen's story might derive from Greek tragedy rather than contemporary melodrama, such as her 'series of transformations', her impetus to keep moving on at all costs and the sense that her downfall comes through valid choices in an indifferent external world, rather than as the punishment of sin. He notes that Magdalen and Norah inherit the consequences of their parents' guilt, a similar concern to

²³⁷ From *Prometheus Bound* in Aeschylus, *The Tragedies of Æschylus* ed Theodore Alois Buckley (London, Bohn, 1849), pp1-35, p3.

the inter-generational guilt in Aeschylus's trilogy the *Oresteia*.²³⁸ As we shall see below, Collins partly uses *Prometheus Bound* to explore the issue of inheritance.

To a modern critic of sensation fiction, *Prometheus Bound* is much less recognisable in the text than *Hamlet*. This would not have been true of Collins's privileged readers in 1862, for whom *Prometheus Bound* was a standard text in an elite education system dominated by the classics. Collins himself studied Greek at school, and an 1849 edition of the tragedies of Aeschylus, translated by Theodore Buckley, is listed in the reconstruction of his library; here I will refer to *Prometheus Bound* in the same edition.²³⁹ As for theatregoers, the Prometheus myth sometimes appeared in burlesque, but *Prometheus Bound* itself was not staged at all in the nineteenth-century theatre prior to *No Name's* creation. Collins's use of it in his theatrical scheme when it was absent from the contemporary stage, implies that he was thinking about what his audience could *not* see on stage as much as what they could. *Prometheus Bound* is generally acknowledged as one of the earliest surviving works of Western theatre.²⁴⁰ Collins opens the action of his novel with it, indicating from the outset that his scheme of reference encompasses the whole of Western theatre history, a strategy that places the theatre of his own time in that context and invites comparisons. The few productions of 'authentic' Greek drama that had appeared on the nineteenth-century stage before

²³⁸ Horne, 'Magdalen's Peril', pp284, 289, 291-2.

²³⁹ Aeschylus, *The Tragedies of Aeschylus*, pp1-35. Baker, *Wilkie Collins's Library*, p74.

²⁴⁰ See Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, ed Mark Griffith (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp31-35 for authorship and dating issues.

No Name tended to approach it as elite literature staged with the prevailing theatrical concern for historic visual reproduction. In these circumstances, Collins's use of *Prometheus Bound*'s content in imagined performance instead shows a remarkable grasp of how ancient drama operated as a form of communication. *Prometheus Bound* was a famously political play which examines the nature and workings of tyranny; it was created in the cradle of democracy and its cultural reception later associated it with revolution. Collins's use of it invites the application of its political issues to his contemporary context. Moreover, his self-conscious observation and adoption of Aeschylus's techniques of dramatising mythical stories in a way that invites contemporary political analogies also points to this practice as being one of the original purposes of drama.

Prometheus in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

Prometheus was a figure of Greek myth, the immortal Titan who stole fire from the gods and gave it to mortals. For this Zeus condemned him to be chained to a rock where an eagle plucked out his liver every day. The Prometheus myth appears in a variety of classical sources with different emphases and details. His name means 'foresight', having the ability to know the future, and he is often depicted as clever and cunning. As well as giving fire to mankind, he is sometimes depicted as the creator of men from clay. Zeus is said to have punished mankind as well as Prometheus, by sending them the first woman, Pandora, who released all the pains and evils of the world from her box.

Aeschylus's adaptation of the Prometheus myth stages the moment when Prometheus is fixed to a rock at the edge of the world on Zeus's orders. Prometheus is the central figure of the drama literally taking centre stage, a static trapped figure visited by a series of other characters and the chorus. Most of these characters don't appear in other versions of the myth and serve the dramatist's own purposes. Zeus's agents Kratos and Bia (Power and Violence) force the reluctant Hephaistos to bind him; the chorus of Oceanids (daughters of Ocean) sympathise but are powerless; Ocean offers to help but is ineffectual and is proudly repulsed; the mortal Io, another victim of Zeus, rushes in suffering madness and stinging and Prometheus tells of her future and Zeus's downfall by marriage; Hermes aggressively demands that Prometheus reveal details of this prediction, but he refuses; at the end, a raging storm gathers to plunge him into Tartarus. The focus throughout is on the implacable revenge of Zeus, while Prometheus repeatedly asserts his defiance and the injustice of his punishment.

The Prometheus myth and Aeschylus's play were both well-known in the mid-nineteenth century. Many educated people were familiar with ancient Greek literature and saw this as a mark of their own high culture. Knowledge of the classical world had been part of elite culture for centuries, but by the late eighteenth century a renewed interest in ancient

Greece had emerged, leading to the nineteenth-century cultural movement sometimes known as Hellenism.²⁴¹

Hellenism and Prometheus in the Nineteenth Century

In his study of English classical education, Christopher Stray explains that European elites had had a long history of using of classical antiquity ‘to make authoritative sense of the present.’ The ancient classical world was seen as a timeless exemplar with which to promote continuity. European cultures would oscillate between favouring the study of Greek or Latin depending on their situation and values. The cultural resurgence of interest in ancient Greece in the early nineteenth century stemmed from Romanticism. Latin and the Roman world tended to be associated with the sacred authority of the church, centralising stability and the balance of power between monarchy and oligarchy. Greek culture, and Athenian democracy in particular, on the other hand, was associated with originality, creativity and the value of individuals, including individual nations and their languages, all of which chimed with Romanticism and the nationalist movements of the early nineteenth century. Nationalists would adopt the symbolism of ancient Greece in their campaign for freedom, although they tended to jettison it afterwards, promoting their own vernacular languages in place of imperialist Latin. Hellenism was particularly strong in Germany, a fragmented country which defended itself against perceived French and

²⁴¹ See Frank M Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1981), including pp15-17 for the range of meanings that the term ‘Hellenism’ acquired in the nineteenth century. Also see Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1980).

Catholic imperialism with a strong nationalist movement, and it was Germany that led Greek scholarship in the nineteenth century. England, though much more cohesive, saw Greek culture as a counter to the threat of the French and American revolutions, both of which appropriated Roman Republican ideas.²⁴² Linda Dowling notes that Hellenism was seen by liberals like John Stuart Mill as an alternative secular ideal to Christianity, an 'enlightened rational progressiveness', in the response to modernity.²⁴³

The Prometheus myth itself was a key influence on the English Romantic poets. Caroline Corbeau-Parsons in *Prometheus in the Nineteenth Century* explains that both Byron and Shelley saw Prometheus as 'a heroic Greek figure under the yoke of an oppressive power', which chimed with the contemporary 'revolutionary spirit'. Both writers, Byron in his poem 'Prometheus' and Shelley in his verse drama *Prometheus Unbound*, depicted Prometheus resisting the oppressive power and representing a new world order based on different values. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, subtitled *The Modern Prometheus*, was also inspired by the myth, although it is not a re-telling of it.²⁴⁴ All these works were still well-known by the mid-nineteenth century.

²⁴² Christopher Stray, *Classics Transformed : Schools, Universities, and Society in England, 1830-1960* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998), pp10-19, 23.

²⁴³ Linda C Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press, 1994), pp56-9.

²⁴⁴ Caroline Corbeau-Parsons, *Prometheus in the Nineteenth Century, From Myth to Symbol* (London, Legenda, 2013), pp57-64.

Classical Education in England

Prometheus Bound as a work was primarily known in mid-nineteenth-century England through elite education. In public schools, the vast majority of classroom time was spent on the classics. Pupils would progress from Latin to Greek, through grammar, translation and eventually composition, all forced into them by grind and repetition. Boys also learned to recite Greek and Latin, and school speech days would feature these orations. The convention of classical learning was so pervasive that few questioned it.²⁴⁵

Through the early nineteenth century, Hellenism's influence filtered through to education, bringing Greek to greater prominence in it. Greek texts had only become available for study relatively recently, compared with Latin ones. The ancient Greek tragedies, for example, only appeared in published editions in Greek from the late seventeenth century in England, and in English translation from the mid-eighteenth.²⁴⁶ It was August Wilhelm Schlegel's 'lectures on Greek tragedy between 1809 and 1811 that first established the high status accorded to the Greek plays throughout Europe in the nineteenth century', lectures that were translated into English in 1815.²⁴⁷ At Oxford and Cambridge universities, classics

²⁴⁵ Stray, *Classics Transformed*, pp46-8. Examples of orations can be found in *The Era*, such as a recital of the scene between Ajax and Tecmessa from Sophocles' *Ajax* at St Paul's school in December 1843, 'News of the Week / St Paul's School', 24 December 1843, p3, or a scene between Oedipus and Tiresias from Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, 'Speech Day at Eton', 9 June 1861, p9, BLN (accessed May 2021).

²⁴⁶ Edith Hall and Fiona Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre, 1660-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), first publications: Aeschylus - Greek 1663, English 1777 (pp100-1, 111); Sophocles - Greek 1663, English 1729 (pp147, 154); Euripides - Greek 1694 (p71), English not given.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pp320, 318.

still dominated because these were Anglican institutions dedicated to turning out clergymen fully conversant with their sacred texts. By the 1850s, greater demand for education created pressure for reforms and more professionalism. A university education slowly opened up to wider groups of people, based on merit; non-Anglicans could take degrees and subjects other than classics could be studied.²⁴⁸ Dowling traces how Benjamin Jowett led developments in the curriculum for classics at Oxford University through the 1850s, changing the emphasis from Latin to Greek and promoting the study of texts from a philosophical rather than philological point of view. Jowett was himself influenced by German scholarship and his own interest in German literature.²⁴⁹ The new methods and level of Greek scholarship then filtered down into schools through Oxford graduates.

Another influence was the eccentric Dr Valpy, headmaster of Reading School, who regularly staged Greek drama there, going far beyond the usual conventions of recital. Valpy staged dramatic productions of whole plays during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. These productions influenced a generation of schoolboys at a time when Greek drama or even serious drama 'had retreated from the public stages of Britain almost altogether'. Valpy brought these texts alive by staging them and inspired his pupils with their beauty and the sense they conveyed of 'common humanity' with 'their cultural ancestors in Greece'. Thomas Talfourd, the radical MP attended this school, possibly taking part in these

²⁴⁸ Stray, *Classics Transformed*, pp46-48 and 60-63.

²⁴⁹ Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, pp61-6.

productions, but certainly reviewing them in the *New Monthly Magazine* after he left.²⁵⁰ Talfourd went on to write the tragedy *Ion*, based on a number of classical sources, which was a success in 1836 at Covent Garden theatre.²⁵¹ Valpy's influence thus extended beyond his school via his famous ex-pupil, who not only absorbed classical knowledge through education, but disseminated it publicly.

During the nineteenth century, demand from the growing middle classes drove an expansion of classical education. As Dowling notes, by mid-century 'culture... [had] replaced property as the qualifying characteristic of the civic elite', culture which could only be acquired by education.²⁵²

The expansion of government in the 1830s and 1840s was also creating a demand for educated men which the old system of patronage could no longer meet.²⁵³ Lauren Goodlad notes that the competitive civil service recruitment that developed seemed meritocratic, but in practice favoured those educated in public schools.²⁵⁴ Both factors drove the demand for education and served to reinforce the dominance of the classics within it, which in turn exposed greater numbers of adults to classical literature. An open education market developed, untrammelled by any state interference; and a hierarchy of schools emerged, based on their attention to classics, with Greek being the highest-status part of the curriculum.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁰ Hall and Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre*, pp250-6, 261-2.

²⁵¹ Ibid, pp282-300.

²⁵² Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, p61.

²⁵³ Stray, *Classics Transformed*, p38.

²⁵⁴ Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State*, p133.

²⁵⁵ Stray, *Classics Transformed* pp19-22, 27-29 and 36-7.

In spite of its high cultural value, the education market meant that classical learning was becoming commercialised and commodified. School textbooks for Greek and Latin study were essential, and some people began to make a living from writing them.²⁵⁶ The growth in this market can be seen in newspaper advertisements for schoolbooks. For example, in advertisements in *The Era* in January 1846, Greek and Latin texts head the list of Simpkin Marshall & Co's wares and are the only items for Whittaker & Co. *Prometheus Bound* cost 5 shillings.²⁵⁷ By February 1858, *The Times* has advertisements for Parker's Pocket Editions of Greek texts 'By Members of the University of Oxford'. Any Parker's Greek play now cost only 1 shilling.²⁵⁸ Theodore Buckley was one of Parker's authors, publishing editions of Aeschylus's tragedies with English notes for schools in Parker's Pocket Classics in 1853 and 1854; copies survive in the British Library.²⁵⁹ Buckley is a good example of the interplay between middle-class upward mobility, classical education and market forces. He was a gifted scholar and 'protégé of the well-known Greek scholar George Burges', but family poverty meant he had to teach himself from the age of twelve. Friends petitioned the dean of Christ Church, Oxford University, to get him a 'servitorship', a 'menial' position in what was an 'aristocratic college', and his library was collected cheaply from old bookstalls. Buckley made a living by producing classical editions for H G Bohn's and

²⁵⁶ Ibid, pp54-8.

²⁵⁷ 'Advertisements and Notices', *The Era*, 25 January 1846, p1, BLN (accessed May 2021).

²⁵⁸ *The Times*, 'Sophocles with English notes', 4 February 1858, p13, TDA (accessed May 2021).

²⁵⁹ British Library Catalogue <http://www.bl.uk>, Theodore Buckley (accessed May 2021).

contributing to periodicals, including Dickens's *Household Words*.²⁶⁰ He produced an edition of Aeschylus's tragedies in 1849 and another of Euripides in 1850.²⁶¹ Buckley had to use middle-class thrift and hard work to gain access to classical knowledge, and his need to make a living drove the dissemination of that knowledge through the market.

For those who were drilled through classical education, *Prometheus Bound* was a standard text. Corbeau-Parsons notes that Byron had to read *Prometheus Bound* at Harrow three times a year.²⁶² Its ubiquity is partly due to its suitability for beginners; as Mark Griffith comments, it 'is one of the more accessible Greek tragedies. Its language is not too difficult, its text not too corrupt; its dramatic conflict is arresting and powerful. It is therefore often read by relatively inexperienced students.'²⁶³ In the mid-nineteenth century it was a fair assumption that anyone who had studied Greek at all had probably encountered it. This attitude can be seen in a little-known periodical called *The Players*, a London weekly journal for theatregoers and amateur dramatic enthusiasts which lasted through 1860 and half of 1861. It features a short series of articles on the ancient dramatists, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. In his article on Aeschylus the writer 'O.B' says:

... and then for sweetness of poetry, **who knows not** that exquisite piece in the "Prometheus Chained", beginning "O God-like firmament

²⁶⁰ James Mew and Rev M C Curthoys, 'Buckley, Theodore William Alois (1825-1856)', Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3868> (accessed May 2021).

²⁶¹ British Library Catalogue, Theodore Buckley.

²⁶² Corbeau-Parsons, *Prometheus in the Nineteenth Century*, p57.

²⁶³ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, ed Griffith, p vii.

above / And ye swift-pinioned blasts, / And countless rippling smiles / Of
Ocean's waves" [my emphasis].²⁶⁴

'O.B' is quoting the first lines of Prometheus's opening speech, with a clear implication that his readers will know this passage from school.

Collins's own formal schooling was brief but did include Greek. He attended local private schools from age eleven, interrupted by his family's travels in Italy, and never went to university, rejecting his father's ambitions for him to become a clergyman. He spent two years at the Reverend Henry Cole's school from 1838 to 1840. A few of his surviving letters home talk about lessons he has had in Latin and Greek. Biographer Andrew Lycett records that Collins regarded school as a 'prison' after the freedom of Italy. Cole was a Tractarian ('a Biblical fundamentalist of extreme opinions'), favoured by Collins's father who was a fervent believer with high church leanings.²⁶⁵ Collins probably reacted against his father's and Cole's ideas, but that does not mean that he rejected his education. On the contrary, his selection and use of *Prometheus Bound* shows the value he placed on the cultural knowledge, and his own intellectual ability to use it creatively, that his education gave him.

Greek Drama on the Nineteenth-Century Stage

Although Collins could rely on his readers' knowledge of *Prometheus Bound* through education, he was treating it in his novel as a theatrical

²⁶⁴ *The Players* (London, G Abingdon etc, 1860-61), Vol 1, p109, 31 March 1860.

²⁶⁵ Lycett, *Wilkie Collins: A Life of Sensation*, pp26, 41 and 44.

work, putting thought into how it could be acted and staged. This approach required imagination, given that his main, perhaps only, experience of it was as a reader. Unlike *Hamlet*, which was frequently staged, there were few public productions of ancient Greek plays for him to draw on, and none at all of *Prometheus Bound*.²⁶⁶

Contemporary Productions of Greek Tragedy

The history of the production of Greek tragedy on the British Stage has been traced by Edith Hall and Fiona Macintosh in *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre, 1660-1914*. Productions of straight translations of Greek tragedy didn't become fashionable until the later nineteenth century, when theatre had adapted to cater for a richer and more cultured audience. At mid-century, Greek tragedy was associated with elite culture while theatre was not. However, there were some important pioneering productions of Greek tragedy beginning in the 1840s. These received a great deal of critical attention, and were much talked about, but there were only a few of them. As potential influences on *No Name*'s creation in 1861, there were only a handful of such productions in London during the previous two decades that Collins possibly had the opportunity to see.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ There were no performances of Shelley's famous drama *Prometheus Unbound* either, which was written to be read by the intelligentsia, see Linda M Lewis, *The Promethean Politics of Milton, Blake and Shelley* (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1992), pp177-8.

²⁶⁷ Miriam Jones research data. Production data 1840-62 compared with Collins's whereabouts, if known, suggests that he only had the opportunity to see 12 productions, all in London. Even if he saw them all, it is an extremely small proportion of his frequent theatregoing.

Hall and Macintosh show that until the 1840s Greek tragedy usually only appeared on the British stage in adaptations. Until a concern for authentic revival developed from the 1820s, adaptations of plays were normal theatrical practice anyway, but Greek drama and the world it depicted was deemed too alien for a contemporary audience. Dramatists would use elements of tragedies to create new plays instead, with the culturally unacceptable parts, such as strong female protagonists, frankness about sexual matters or morality based on ancient religion, expunged or changed. For example, two successful early eighteenth-century plays, Charles Gildon's *Love's Victim or the Queen of Wales* in 1701 and James Thomson's *Edward and Eleanora* in 1740, were based on Euripides' *Alcestis*, retold in a new medieval setting with the heroines expressing contemporary ideas about female virtue.²⁶⁸ By contrast, one attempt to stage a straight translation of Euripides' *Hecuba* at Drury Lane in 1726, with its strong female protagonist left intact, was driven offstage by audience protest.²⁶⁹

The state-funded legitimate French theatre found it easier to produce closer adaptations of Greek tragedy, not having the same pressure to please a popular audience as the English commercial theatre. According to Peter Arnott, the French deliberately modelled their theatre on the spare, focussed style of ancient drama, with a small cast, in contrast to the more discursive, multiple-plotted English style epitomised by Shakespeare. Racine, 'the supreme master of this kind of dramatic

²⁶⁸ Hall and Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre* pp115-24.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, pp97-8.

economy,' produced two successful adaptations, *Iphigénie* and *Phèdre*.²⁷⁰ French theatre routinely visited London, where it was influential, and both these plays appeared at the St James's Theatre several times between 1846 and 1853, starring Madame Rachel.²⁷¹

In the nineteenth century, it was German scholars who took the lead in investigating Greek culture, and the first successful attempts to produce reconstructions of Greek tragedy, rather than adaptations, took place in Prussia. From 1841 to 1845, King Frederick William IV, a man of artistic and antiquarian interests, commissioned and oversaw revivals at Potsdam and Berlin of Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonus* and Euripides' *Medea*. The scholars Bockh and Donner provided German translations, archaeologists and architects designed the costumes and sets, and the music was specially composed by Mendelssohn. The Prussian productions led to imitations in other countries. *Antigone* was produced in Paris in 1844, swiftly followed by an English version at Covent Garden in January 1845.²⁷² The English production used a translation of Donner's German translation, rather than a direct one from the Greek, but the *Times* reviewer asserted that it 'seemed to accord fairly with the original Greek.' The production, he said, 'succeeded most triumphantly', despite the chorus, who 'sang so miserably out of tune that they frequently periled the

²⁷⁰ Peter D Arnott, *An Introduction to the French Theatre* (London: Macmillan, 1977), pp52, 145.

²⁷¹ APGRD <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/productions/production/9475>

and <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/productions/production/9476> (accessed May 2021). Hall and Macintosh note that the English were torn between admiration of the French theatre and rejection of their ideology and politics, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre* pp33-5.

²⁷² Hall and Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre*, pp318-21. The Paris production was also mentioned in the *Era*, 'Music and the Drama', *Era*, 14 April 1844, p5, BLN (accessed May 2021).

drama when at the height of its dramatic success.’ Apart from this, ‘the impression left on the whole of the audience at the fall of the curtain seemed to be that they had witnessed a great work, new to them from its extreme simplicity, and striking by its deep solemnity.’²⁷³

The Covent Garden production of *Antigone* attracted much critical attention and lasted for ‘forty-five performances (an exceptional success in those days)’, but it did not lead to many other productions of Greek plays.²⁷⁴ For the period 1840-62 I identified only 32 productions in Britain in total, 13 of *Antigone*, 6 of *Medea*, 1 *Alcestis*, and some of these were adaptations or readings. There were no productions of *Prometheus Bound*.²⁷⁵ Clearly productions of Greek tragedy lacked popular appeal. Surviving responses to it are mixed. Hall and Macintosh note that Adelaide Ristori’s 1856 performances in Legouve’s adaptation of *Medea* was ‘admired by all who enjoyed neoclassical theatre, including George Henry Lewes’, who expressed himself “‘completely conquered.’”²⁷⁶ Dickens, however, who saw the production in Paris that April, found it ‘hopelessly bad’.²⁷⁷ When it came to London, Henry Morley, too, expressed his astonishment ‘that the powers of Madame Ristori as an actress, such as they are, should have been expended chiefly upon worthless plays, “*Medea*”, “*Camilla*”, and the like – all this is a marvel.’²⁷⁸

²⁷³ ‘Covent Garden Theatre’, *The Times*, 3 January 1845, p6, TDA (accessed May 2021).

²⁷⁴ Hall and Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre*, p322, 332-3, 351.

²⁷⁵ Miriam Jones research data.

²⁷⁶ Hall and Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre*, p404.

²⁷⁷ Charles Dickens, *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed Madeline House, Graham Storey and Kathleen Tillotson (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995), Vol 8, p89, 13 April 1856.

²⁷⁸ Henry Morley, *The Journal of a London Playgoer: From 1851 to 1866* (London: George Routledge, 1866), p148, 9 August 1856.

With such reactions as these, productions of Greek tragedy were a commercial risk. The reviewer of a production of Gluck's opera *Alceste* in Paris in 1861 seemed to regret this, commenting that 'classical subjects...have been too much neglected in England. The production of a good Greek play, of one kind or the other, would certainly be somewhat of a novelty now-a-days for the majority of the play-going public.'²⁷⁹

Journalists making these kinds of comments and writing favourable reviews of productions were partly asserting their own cultural credentials. Greek tragedy's high cultural value was part of the impetus for its production on stage, but also may have got in the way of its impact. Rather like Shakespeare, the cultural value for Greek tragedy was as poetry, not drama. 'O.B' from *The Players* illustrates this attitude when he attempts to imagine ancient Greek productions. Despite contributing to a journal for drama enthusiasts, he can only conjure up the speeches and an elite audience, possibly reflecting experience of school recitals:

The clear soft blue Athenian sky spread o'er them as a canopy; the magnificent building crowded with keen, sharp-witted spectators, the harmonious roll of the Grecian tongue, as in the most refined Grecian dialect it conveyed soft poetry or lofty rebuke to the attentive ear...²⁸⁰

He does not imagine any dramatic action or other staging aspects. In a later article on Euripides, 'O.B' considers him to be 'nearer the standard of

²⁷⁹ 'Foreign Dramatic Intelligence', *Era*, 10 November 1861, p10, BLN (accessed May 2021).

²⁸⁰ *The Players*, Vol 1, p109, 31 March 1860.

dramatic superiority than either of his more highly-gifted fellow countrymen,' but, again rather like Shakespeare, this is for the exploration of character: no matter how heroic or lofty the characters are, 'we recognise our common humanity at once, and in their highest flights or most extravagant passages enter fully into their inmost feelings, and make ourselves one with them.'²⁸¹ This effect is not 'dramatic' as such: it can be perceived by reading the play as much as watching it, or be found in a good novel or narrative poem. Assumptions about Greek tragedy as literary, alien and elite may have put off a popular theatre audience. Unlike Kean's equally earnest productions of Shakespeare, Greek tragedy lacked the elements of familiar patriotic history and visual colour to offset the 'wearies us past all endurance' reaction felt by theatregoers like Collins.

Staging Matters

The English *Antigone* was produced within the mid-Victorian fashion for trying to bring pictures of the past to life. Like its Prussian forebear, it was a serious attempt to produce an authentic version of the full text, with set and costume design based on historical research. According to Hall and Macintosh, the spectacle was probably its main appeal at the time, judging by the space given it in the *Illustrated London News*.²⁸² Archaeological research from the mid-eighteenth century had produced resources such as Stuart and Revett's *The Antiquities of Athens* (1762), Thomas Hope's

²⁸¹ *The Players*, Vol 2, p163, 24 November 1860.

²⁸² Hall and Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre* p324-5, citing ILN vol 6 no 142, 18 Jan 1845.

Costumes of the Ancients (from vase paintings, 1809) and the British Museum collections from the early nineteenth century.²⁸³ A set design for *Antigone* by Stevens and Alexander shows a grand and elaborate palace design based on classical architecture, with three curtained doors, fluted columns and statues.²⁸⁴



The pictorial approach to production also influenced the acting style and how it was perceived. The *Times* review of the production praises Charlotte Vandenhoff as Antigone for ‘sculptural elegance of gesture... she formed a series of really beautiful pictures, - or shall we say, statues?’²⁸⁵

²⁸³ Ibid, pp268, 280, 290.

²⁸⁴ Image: Charles D Laing, *Scene from the Greek Tragedy of “Antigone”, Covent Garden Theatre*, 1845, print, Victoria and Albert Museum Collections <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1138484/scene-from-the-greek-tragedy-print-laing-charles-d/> (accessed May 2021), © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

²⁸⁵ ‘Covent Garden Theatre’, *The Times*, 3 January 1845, p6, TDA (accessed May 2021). Charlotte Vandenhoff repeated this effect in her portrayal of Alcestis in 1855: ‘every

Hall and Macintosh note that ‘the Victorian theatrical aesthetic was... obsessed with the equation of statues and beautiful women.’²⁸⁶

A picture of what was understood about the Greek theatre is included in the *Times* review:

The proper place for the chorus in a Greek theatre was called the “orchestra.” It was a large circular space, not altogether unlike the “ride” at Astley’s. A segment of this circle was devoted to the stage, which had very little depth, and which was raised above the level of the orchestra. In the centre of the circle stood the altar of Bacchus, round which the chorus is supposed to have performed its orchestral dance. Whenever the chorus took part in the action, it is supposed to have ascended from the orchestra to the stage... Although the theatre has not been converted into an antique one for the occasion, the stage has been approximated to the Greek sufficiently... The entrances from the palace are from curtains hung in the centre, and there are doors correctly placed, leading to the interior, and the country abroad. The part of the stage in which the principal characters stand is elevated above the rest, which forms an orchestra, with a Thymele [altar of Bacchus] for the chorus.²⁸⁷

This knowledge pre-dated textual and archaeological research in the later nineteenth century, which showed that these types of stage buildings, as

movement seems a living reproduction of the finest works of Phidias and Praxiteles’, ‘Theatres &c’, *The Era*, 21 January 1855, p10, BLN (accessed May 2021).

²⁸⁶ Hall and Macintosh *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre*, p328.

²⁸⁷ ‘Covent Garden Theatre’, *The Times*, 3 January 1845, p6, TDA (accessed May 2021).

well as most of the ancient commentary on drama, were from later in antiquity than the fifth century BC. Most scholarship on the subject in the mid-nineteenth century was in German, not a language widely read in England.

Modern understanding of ancient Greek drama is that it took place outdoors as part of religious festivals. In Athens, this began in the agora (marketplace), the 'hub of the city', and moved to the south slope of the Acropolis 'at some point early in the fifth century', where people could view the action from above, sheltered from the north wind. This later became formalised as built seating. The theatre was redeveloped many times over the centuries, complicating archaeological research into its features at any given time. In the fifth century, the orchestra, or dancing space, wasn't circular, but comprised the irregularly rectangular space already there. The first definitely circular orchestra that can be identified is at Epidauros, from the late fourth / early third century BC. There is no evidence for a raised stage in Aeschylus's time. Analysis of the extant tragedies suggests that a raised stage would have interfered with the free interaction between actors and chorus required, and that the centre of the orchestra was the strongest acting area, both visually and acoustically. The backdrop was a simple, probably wooden, building (the 'skene') with a central door, where the actors could also change unseen. The roof of the building, which became a conventional area for the appearance of gods, was strong enough to hold two or three actors, and a crane device (the 'mekhane') was used for flying entrances. A wheeled trolley (the 'ekkyklema') was later invented to roll 'indoor' tableaux out of the door of

the stage building, often used to display deaths that conventionally took place offstage. Actors could enter through the door or use the long thin side paths ('paradoi' or entrance paths 'eisodoi'), leading up to the orchestra on either side; both methods of entrance made an actor highly visible. Lacking physical stage resources for creating realistic illusion, the Greek theatre's most powerful resource was the imagination of the audience.²⁸⁸ This would have been particularly difficult for the Victorian theatre to appreciate or reproduce, when visual verisimilitude was the convention that had developed.

The ancient Greek acting style and methods were also very different from the Victorian. In Aeschylus's time there were two or three actors and a chorus. The actors played all speaking parts between them, using masks, a convention that assisted character recognition and visibility in a large space. They are likely to have adopted very emphatic and possibly symbolic or coded body language in the cause of communication, rather than imitating statues.²⁸⁹ The *Times* review of *Antigone* notes the weakness of the chorus, which was partly down to inadequate rehearsal, but also to lack of experience in using this form. The ancient Greek chorus played a collective role, such as town citizens, and worked in an integrated 'combination of poetry, song and movement'. They were a theatrical resource of great flexibility, interacting with the drama or offering lyric and metaphorical commentary on it, able to operate in unison, groups or singly, and provide an expressive backdrop of emotion and movement

²⁸⁸ Rush Rehm, *Greek Tragic Theatre* (London, Routledge, 1992), pp31-42.

²⁸⁹ See Oliver Taplin, *Greek Tragedy in Action* (London, Routledge, 1989), pp14-15.

that could 'influence the audience as much as the action'. The nearest Victorian equivalent would have been an operatic chorus, but 'the apparent similarities are superficial and misleading.'²⁹⁰

Staging differences meant that some of the original dramatic impact of Greek tragedies must have been lost in Victorian reproduction. Even though the Covent Garden production of *Antigone* was based on historical research, the original architecture, conditions and practices under which these tragedies had been produced were imperfectly understood and were contrary to the Victorian practice of prioritising pictorial effect over content. Even if genuine reproduction had been possible, its impact may still have been lost on an audience not trained by exposure to read and understand it. All these factors may help to explain the mid-Victorian audience's lack of appetite for Greek tragedy on stage.

Burlesque

However, the main factor, as Hall and Macintosh point out, is that audiences at this time preferred humour to tragedy. They note that humour became an essential part of English self-definition during the nineteenth century, and writers for the theatre tended to avoid tragic drama. The reproductions of Greek tragedy could and did connect with serious contemporary political issues, but the mid-nineteenth-century theatre generally avoided these 'harsher aspects' by concentrating on the comic potential, a process Hall and Macintosh call 'moral distancing.'²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ Rush Rehm, *Greek Tragic Theatre*, pp52, 60.

²⁹¹ Hall and Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre*, pp382-3, 385.

Collins found this out to his cost when his melodrama *The Red Vial* failed in 1858, chiefly because of its unrelieved gloom. Henry Morley commented: 'it needs the highest and the truest exaltation of the language of the drama to keep an audience in an English playhouse in a state of unbroken solemnity for two hours at a stretch.'²⁹² Greek tragedies were impressive but had a similar unappealing intensity, lacking the comic relief included in other forms that audiences were used to, such as melodrama.

The mid-Victorian theatre habitually burlesqued any production that took itself seriously, so the main presence of Greek tragedy in the theatre was in burlesque. Hall and Macintosh note that the Covent Garden *Antigone* prompted parody and burlesque instead of other tragedies, beginning with E L Blanchard's *Antigone Travestie*, which parodied the Covent Garden production within the same month.²⁹³ The popular periodical *Punch* ran a couple of spoofs of it as well, a rhyming mock-report of the production with cartoons entitled 'Antigone Analysed' and a letter of complaint from Sophocles:

I can stand as much as most men, and have seen my plays murdered in some of the provincial Greek cities, with great equanimity. But I was not prepared for that dreadful chorus!²⁹⁴

At the Olympic Theatre, Madame Vestris and J R Planché had been producing extravaganzas on classical themes since *Olympic Revels* in

²⁹² Morley, *The Journal of a London Playgoer*, p225.

²⁹³ Hall and Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre*, p336-41.

²⁹⁴ 'Antigone at the Garden' and 'Antigone Analysed', *Punch or the London Charivari*, 11 January 1845, p34 and 18 January 1845 pp42-3, UKP (accessed May 2021).

1831, and they responded with *The Golden Fleece*, parodying the chorus by Charles Mathews playing it on his own.²⁹⁵

Edith Hall in 'Classical Mythology in the Victorian Popular Theatre' argues that the sheer volume of classical content in burlesques shows that classical knowledge must have been more widespread than previously thought, including in the lower class audiences, otherwise the jokes would not have worked.²⁹⁶ Other factors might be that Vestris and the Olympic were seeking and playing to a more refined audience anyway, or that burlesques and extravaganzas mixed esoteric jokes with contemporary references and context that less-educated audiences would have understood perfectly well. Planché's 1831 *Olympic Revels*, subtitled 'or, *Prometheus and Pandora*', seems to have been the only version of the Prometheus story on stage until 1865, after *No Name* was published.²⁹⁷ In this parody, Prometheus is 'an eminent *Man*-ufacturer' who creates men from clay in a workshop on earth, doing 'a roaring trade.' Jupiter, annoyed that he has 'pilfered coals' 'from our kitchen range' 'to heat their passions, and light up their souls', takes revenge by creating Pandora as a wife for him. Pandora was played by Vestris herself, who was really the star of the show; most of the fun centres around her attractions. Prometheus is lightly characterised as a money-making trader who falls for Pandora despite her lack of cash. Basic well-known aspects of his legend are there but as

²⁹⁵ Hall and Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre*, pp342-5.

²⁹⁶ Edith Hall, 'Classical Mythology in the Victorian Popular Theatre' in *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 5,3 (1999), pp336-366, p340. See also Laura Monros-Gaspar, *Victorian Classical Burlesques, A Critical Anthology* (London, Bloomsbury, 2015), pp8-12.

²⁹⁷ R Reece burlesque, *Prometheus, or the Man on the Rock*, New Royalty Theatre 1865. APGRD <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/productions/production/1213> (accessed May 2021).

incidental jokes, such as Jupiter condemning him to ‘a liver complaint. (*A vulture descends and fastens on the side of Prometheus*)’.²⁹⁸ The extravaganza is full of aspects of contemporary life and standard plot and romance devices. The audience would not have needed a great deal of classical knowledge to enjoy it.

Hall and Macintosh argue that stage burlesque could even have spread classical knowledge. In 1850, Frank Talfourd²⁹⁹ produced a burlesque at the Strand Theatre based on *Alcestis*, entitled *Alcestis: The Original Strong-Minded Woman*, which was a parody of Euripides’ play, not of any production. If Talfourd was relying on knowledge of the original work in the audience, the *Times* reviewer obligingly said, ‘He has followed pretty closely the outline of Euripides’ tragedy’.³⁰⁰ The burlesque proved popular, and Hall and Macintosh argue that this may have facilitated 1855’s serious production of *Alcestis*, by ‘initiating audiences into the form of the original’.³⁰¹ They note that authors of classical burlesques for the theatre were often educated but rebellious types who enjoyed parodying Greek literature after the dreary toil of translating it at school.³⁰²

Burlesque’s dominance wasn’t always welcomed: Theodore Buckley’s preface to his 1850 edition of Euripides’ tragedies comments rather acidly

²⁹⁸ T F Dillon Croker and Stephen Tucker, eds, *The Extravaganzas of J R Planché Esq* (London, Samuel French, 1879), vol 1, pp43 46-7, 54, 57 and 59.

²⁹⁹ Son of Sir Thomas Talfourd, author of *Ion*.

³⁰⁰ ‘New Strand Theatre’, *The Times*, 5 July 1850, p6, TDA (accessed May 2021).

³⁰¹ Hall and Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre*, p438. This version of *Alcestis*, by Henry Spicer, survives in the British Library and is a free adaptation bearing little relation to the text by Euripides. Henry Spicer, *Alcestis, a Lyrical Play, adapted from the Greek of Euripides and the French of Hyppolite Lucas* (London, Thomas Bosworth, 1855).

³⁰² Hall and Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre*, pp372-7.

that the audience's preference for parody was 'by no means confined to the days of Aristophanes.'³⁰³ Burlesque's popularity attracted, but could also be transcended by, the performance of the most skilled artists. In 1856, Frederic Robson starred in Robert Brough's *Medea; or the Best of Mothers with a Brute of a Husband*, a close parody of Adelaide Ristori's recent performance. Dickens paid tribute to 'the extraordinary power of his performance... which has more passion in it than Ristori could express in fifty years.'³⁰⁴ The role became one of Robson's most celebrated.³⁰⁵

In creating parodies of *Prometheus Bound* for *No Name* Collins could assume classical knowledge in a reasonably wide section of his readership. His close and detailed use of the text in his parodies also advertise his own knowledge and experience of elite education. He shows some awareness of ancient Greek staging matters, but mainly seems to have used the text and his imagination. Oddly, or perhaps logically, the results can be read as closer to fifth century staging than the attempts being made in the theatre. This can be seen in the novel's opening scene.

Prometheus Bound in No Name

The Binding of Prometheus

Aeschylus's tragedy opens with Zeus's henchmen Power and Violence bringing Prometheus to the edge of the world to be bound. They recount

³⁰³ Ibid, p431.

³⁰⁴ Dickens, *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, Vol 8, p171, 8 August 1856.

³⁰⁵ See Monros-Gaspar, *Victorian Classical Burlesques* pp23-8 for an account and illustrations of Robson's performance.

his crime of sharing the gods' privilege of fire with mortals and enjoy forcing the sympathetic Hephaistos to fetter him. They assert that Prometheus deserves his punishment and describe the new tyrant Zeus as implacable in revenge. The opening situation in *No Name* reflects this scenario. Andrew Vanstone's brother Michael legally usurps his fortune in revenge for past events, claiming that his accidental death is a 'Providential interposition' (p155), a deserved punishment for sharing his life advantages with his illegitimate daughters, rather like Prometheus sharing god's privileges with mortals. Michael is implacable in refusing to allow the sisters more than a hundred pounds each of their father's money. The parody of Prometheus's situation plays out in details that follow Aeschylus's text closely, rather than deriving from the myth in general. There are indications that Collins was using Buckley's translation and that he also worked with the Greek. For the purposes of this discussion, I will use Buckley's translation, which uses the Latin god names rather than Greek.³⁰⁶ I also refer to Mark Griffith's 1983 Greek edition.³⁰⁷

In the opening scene of *No Name*, Andrew Vanstone is described in a way that identifies him with Prometheus from the start. His first act on coming downstairs is to flourish 'his stick at the hall door in cheerful defiance of the rain; and set off through wind and weather for his morning walk' (p9). Prometheus is characteristically defiant and he is bound to a 'weather-

³⁰⁶ The equivalents are: Zeus / Jupiter, Hephaistos / Vulcan, Hermes / Mercury; the personifications are also variously translated: Bia / Strength or Power, Kratos / Force or Violence. When quoting sources, I sometimes have to use these names interchangeably.

³⁰⁷ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* ed Griffith.

beaten ravine' (PB p2). On Andrew's return, he flourishes his stick again (p12). The stick suggests the hollow fennel stalk in which Prometheus stole fire from Zeus: 'I am he that searched out the source of fire, by stealth borne off enclosed in a fennel-rod' (PB p6). Andrew's return signals the dramatic performance of his role by imitating Prometheus's first entrance in the tragedy. First, the 'set' is created, seen through Norah's eyes:

the view overlooked a stream, some farm buildings which lay beyond, and the opening of a wooded rocky pass (called in Somersetshire, a Combe), which here cleft its way through the hills that closed the prospect. A winding strip of road was visible, at no great distance, amid the undulations of the open ground; and along this strip the stalwart figure of Mr Vanstone was now easily recognizable, returning to the house from his morning walk (p12).

Buckley notes 'In regard to the place where Prometheus was bound, the scene doubtless represented a ravine between two precipices rent from each other, with a distant prospect of some of the places mentioned in the wanderings of Io' (PB p1). Buckley imagines that there was an 'Athenian scene-painter', which is unlikely.³⁰⁸ But Collins seems to have used Buckley's description to suggest the 'set' for Prometheus. Io's wanderings ended in the Nile's fertile delta 'the triangular land of the Nile' (PB p27); Collins's stream and farm buildings appear to stand for this, while the

³⁰⁸ 'The poetry draws upon larger resources than the Athenian scene-painter could have possessed', Aeschylus, *The Tragedies of Æschylus* ed Buckley, Introduction, p xiv.

wooded rocky pass would suggest Prometheus's ravine and precipices. Collins's version is a parody in miniature, a mundane or mock-heroic rendition of a cosmic scene. Andrew's entrance along the 'strip of road' evokes Prometheus's entry along the 'Scythian track', most likely to have been enacted via one of the side walkways, or *paradoi*, in the Greek theatre. The actors would have been very visible and their characters recognizable from their masks: hence Andrew is 'easily recognizable' as he walks in along the road.

Once Prometheus is on stage he is bound for his crimes, which are described during the process. The first scenes of *No Name* uncover Andrew's crimes: his previous marriage and the imposition of his present lady on society as his 'wife'. Prometheus is brought to 'the distant boundary of the earth, to the Scythian track, to an untrodden desert' (PB p1-2). According to Griffith, "'the Scythian wasteland" was almost proverbial, and could include the whole expanse to the north of the civilised world', about which little was really known.³⁰⁹ The process of uncovering Andrew's past begins with the arrival of a letter from America – another far distant wild place. The letter takes his imagination, and that of the reader, there, instead of his body. When it arrives, Andrew's 'face changed colour... his cheeks fading to a dull yellow-brown hue, which would have been ashy paleness in a less florid man' (p19). Similarly, Vulcan tells Prometheus he will be exposed, and 'slowly scorched by the bright blaze of the sun thou shalt lose the bloom of thy complexion' (PB

³⁰⁹ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, ed Griffith, p81.

p2-3). 'Yellow-brown' also suggests a suntan rather than pallor. The translations here possibly indicate that Collins consulted the Greek. The words which Buckley gives as 'lose the bloom of thy complexion' are 'χροιας ἀμείψεις άνθος'. 'ἀμείβω' literally means to change, rather than lose, while 'άνθος' means a flower or flowering, or brightness of colour. Collins has used all these terms in describing Andrew's face as 'florid' and changing colour. Another example is the 'Σκύθην ες οἶμον', which Buckley gives as 'Scythian track'. Griffith's note explains the word 'οἶμον' as 'properly a "way" or "road", but here apparently "strip"'.³¹⁰ Liddell and Scott also give a possible meaning as 'a strip of land'.³¹¹ Andrew's entry along 'a strip of road' is closer to the Greek than Buckley's translation.³¹²

Prometheus's binding prevents him from giving any more benefits to mortals. Similarly, Andrew's accidental death before he can make a new will renders him helpless to give anything further to his daughters. Andrew dies on the railway, otherwise known as the 'iron road', just as Prometheus is fettered with Vulcan's skills in metalwork, in Scythia, described as the 'iron-teeming land' (PB p11), literally 'the mother of iron.'³¹³ With rare exceptions deaths in Greek tragedy take place offstage and are either reported on by a conventional messenger character, or the

³¹⁰ Ibid, p81.

³¹¹ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon (Abridged)*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989), p479 'ΟΙ'ΜΟΣ, ου, ό'.

³¹² It is also the shape of the parados; Collins need not have necessarily known this.

³¹³ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, ed Griffith, p143.

bodies are brought on afterwards. Andrew's death is staged in this manner, not shown but announced by a railway clerk.³¹⁴

Prometheus's binding is followed by the entrance of the chorus of the daughters of Ocean, drawn by the sound of him being fettered. Collins's description of the sounds and smells of Combe Raven just before and after the announcement of Andrew's death (p102 and 105) accumulates details strongly suggestive of this scene. The 'clock-bell of the village church', heard 'with a clearer ring, a louder melody than usual' evokes the sound of metallic hammering that the chorus have heard ('the echo of the clang of steel [which] pierced to the recess of our grotts'). The 'sweet odours from field and flower-garden', smelt rather than seen, is close to Prometheus's 'what sound, what ineffable odour hath been wafted to me?' as he hears and scents the chorus that he cannot yet see. The 'light western breeze' suggests the 'swiftly-wafting breezes' that bring the chorus to the edge of the land, both phrases suggesting wind coming from the direction of the sea. Prometheus cannot see the chorus and they sound like birds to him, arousing his fear because he knows of the eagle that will pluck out his liver: '...what can this hasty motion of birds be which I again hear hard by me?' (PB p6). Collins's description suddenly introduces an aviary at Combe-Raven, out of sight upstairs when it might be expected to be outside: 'the birds in Norah's aviary upstairs, sang the song of their happiness.' Collins seems to have created a parody chorus of actual birds. The singing of a song, rather than random chirping,

³¹⁴ The railway clerk comes on 'the up train' (p104), possibly a parody of the 'winged chariot' that the chorus describe themselves flying in on.

suggests a chorus. Aeschylus's chorus is of young maidens, who would normally in ancient Greece have been confined to the women's quarters of the house, which might also suggest caged birds in Norah's room.³¹⁵

Michael Vanstone is characterised like Jupiter, who does not appear in the action, his will carried out by Strength and Force.³¹⁶ Michael never appears, even though he could easily have been portrayed throwing the sisters out of their home; he communicates only by letter through his lawyers. The identification suggests that Michael employs the law as a violent force to ensure his own takeover. Michael's letter expresses the harshness of his attitude in a similar way to Strength's pronouncements about Prometheus. Prometheus 'stole and gave to mortals... the brilliancy of fire...' says Strength; Michael Vanstone regards Andrew's money as something stolen from him: 'the inheritance that ought always to have been mine', and wrongly put to the support of Andrew's daughters. Michael accuses Andrew of a 'vile intrigue by which he succeeded in disinheriting me', which suggests (in reverse) Prometheus's intrigue with Jupiter to overthrow Saturn by advising him that 'by craft the victors should prevail' (PB p8). Vulcan acknowledges that Prometheus has betrayed his own kind for mortals: 'Thou, a god... hast imparted to mortals honours beyond what was right' (PB p3). Similarly, Michael says that Andrew has helped his illegitimate children 'to take a place in the world to which they are not entitled', a betrayal of his own order. The transfer of Andrew's estate to Michael is therefore 'a proper penalty paid by my younger

³¹⁵ See Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, ed Griffith, p114.

³¹⁶ Buckley's translation. Griffith gives them as Power and Violence.

brother', echoing Strength's comment: 'I behold this wretch [Prometheus] receiving his deserts.' Michael ends his letter with the assertion that 'my decision on this matter... is positive and final', an attitude similar to Jupiter's, in Vulcan's words: 'every one that has newly acquired power is stern.' After she has read the letter, Magdalen questions Mr Pendril repeatedly about his attempts to persuade Michael Vanstone to alleviate the sisters. Mr Pendril responds 'I put all those considerations to him... I left none of them out.' 'Many laments and unavailing groans shalt thou utter;' says Vulcan, 'for the heart of Jupiter is hard to be entreated.'

Prometheus the Benefactor

The opening scene of *No Name* has close parallels with *Prometheus Bound* in a way that suggests deliberate parody. To decipher any political or social comment that might be intended by this relationship, we need to consider the significance of the play in both the Greek and Victorian worlds. Andrew Vanstone seems to have been modelled not only on Prometheus but on Aeschylus's version of him, presenting him as the benefactor of mankind suffering tyrannical injustice. This is important because in ancient Greek times, Prometheus was not generally viewed as a heroic figure. In other versions of the myth in the ancient world, Prometheus is portrayed as a rebel who defies the social order unjustifiably. Linda M Lewis, in *The Promethean Politics of Milton, Blake and Shelley*, explains that Prometheus was 'an object lesson against defiance of the gods, an upstart who gets just what he has coming'. In Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, Prometheus is 'Forethought', a

trickster full of wiles. His gifts to humankind are unselfish, but still unjustified because of the attack on established authority. A parody of Prometheus appears in Aristophanes' comedy *The Birds*, where he is ineffectual and cowardly, 'hiding from Zeus, and freely giving advice on how to undermine' him. As well as rebellion itself, some authors criticise Prometheus for the results of his crime. In Plato's *Protagoras*, Prometheus steals fire for humans because he can't get at political wisdom. Humans then fight and kill each other, so Zeus has to send them justice and respect; Zeus is the 'father of civic wisdom', the opposite of Aeschylus's portrayal of him as a harsh tyrant. In Horace's *Ode to Virgil*, the gift of fire led to fever, decay and pollution. In Euripides's *Phoenician Women*, Prometheus is a symbol of destruction, depicted on a shield bearing a torch to burn the city.³¹⁷

Aeschylus was making an unusual artistic choice to present his central rebel figure as heroic, and the father of the gods as a tyrant, one that is inconsistent with his conventional presentation of Zeus in his other surviving plays, and it was quite possibly startling to his audience. His play explores the nature and consequences of tyranny, suggesting that Aeschylus's purpose was political. The political context of the play can't be easily identified because it has never been possible to date it precisely or even confirm Aeschylus as the author.³¹⁸ The play may also have been part of a trilogy, which means that any political 'message' it contains would

³¹⁷ Lewis, *Promethean Politics*, pp16-21.

³¹⁸ See Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, ed Griffith, Introduction pp31-5. The inconsistent portrayal of Zeus is one of several factors casting doubt on Aeschylus's authorship. Griffith argues that the business of dramatists is drama, rather than consistent theology. Aeschylus is generally accepted as the author by default.

only be part of the story.³¹⁹ However, taken on its own terms *Prometheus Bound* has been seen through history as a 'commentary on tyranny and rebellion.'³²⁰ Anthony Podlecki notes that the play is highly relevant to the development of Greek political theory; it 'anticipated what was to become the standard philosophical view of the tyrant.'³²¹

Tyrants and Rebels

Prometheus Bound explores the issues exposed by a violent usurpation of power by a tyrant. A tension is set up between new ruler and rebel, in which, as Griffith puts it, 'both parties have some claim to being in the right.'³²² Zeus sees himself as a legitimate ruler who is justified in harshly punishing a traitor who has violated the social order. Prometheus sees his 'crime' as protecting the weak against arbitrary rule and annihilation. As the play develops, Zeus's claim to obedience and loyalty is undermined by repeated revelations of his harsh and self-serving behaviour, corroborated in one way or another by all the other characters in the play. The sympathetic responses of the chorus guide the audience to sympathise with Prometheus as the victim of tyranny, despite his similarly unbending and vengeful nature. Zeus's rule is based on power as an end in itself; any

³¹⁹ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, ed Griffith, pp31-5. The evidence for a trilogy is inconclusive, but three-part dramas were normal. See also D M Carter in *The Politics of Greek Tragedy* (Exeter, Bristol Phoenix Press, 2007), p86, who notes that Aeschylus's surviving trilogy, the Oresteia, has a political background that 'moves through several hundred years of Greek history, from kingship to tyranny to democracy.' *Prometheus Bound* anticipates Prometheus's release and reconciliation with Zeus, while the newness of Zeus's rule is emphasised, suggesting the possibility of a trilogy of political progression.

³²⁰ Lewis, *Promethean Politics*, p1.

³²¹ Anthony J Podlecki, *The Political Background of Aeschylean Tragedy* (University of Michigan Press, 1966), pp115, 121.

³²² Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, ed Griffith, p10.

threat is ruthlessly put down. This forces everyone else to behave according to self-interest or fear. Aeschylus's decision to cast Zeus as the bad tyrant was crucial to his exposure of tyranny precisely because it was unexpected. An accepted figure of just authority is juxtaposed with the selfish misuse of power in his behaviour. Possessing power and exercising it are distinguished as separate matters, with an implicit assertion that any rule should have a moral basis.

Tyrants were a phenomenon that affected much of the early Greek world, as rising wealth and civil unrest precipitated takeovers from the old aristocracy by new men in the seventh and sixth centuries BC. The term 'tyrant' simply meant a usurper of power, rather than a despot as such, but the insecurity of their claim to rule meant they were dependent on some combination of force and popular consent. By the fifth century tyrants had given way in most Greek cities to 'some form of oligarchy, in which the rule of law was observed but only a wealthy class of citizens participated fully in government.' Athens had adopted a more radical solution by inventing the earliest form of democracy. The city was run by a council of 500, an assembly which could accommodate 6000 people at a time, and the courts were judged by hundreds of jurors. Any citizen could serve, speak or vote, appointment to most public offices was by lot, and council members and jurors were paid. In practice, leaders still emerged, many of whom came from the elite, but they had to lead by persuasion. The ideological principle of rule by the citizens was adhered to; it promoted free speech, which in turn facilitated the exploration of political issues in tragedy. Athens's wealth and prestige meant that the audience for tragedy

included foreigners, and that the tragedians were concerned with politics beyond their own city.³²³ Athenians knew that their political system was different and special, while tyranny was a recent memory. D M Carter notes that 'to a mid-fifth-century Greek theatre audience, tyranny was the shared political experience of their parents and grandparents.'³²⁴ Aeschylus was setting up this comparison, spelling out the horrors of tyranny, in the context of the democracy that most of the audience lived in. Prometheus's theft of fire for mortals can be interpreted as giving power to all citizens. Griffith notes as well that Prometheus was a celebrated figure in Athenian religion: he was patron deity of potters, with his own annual festival and torch race, whereas he was a minor figure elsewhere in Greece. This makes him less surprising as an Athenian democratic hero.³²⁵ Tragedies were mainly performed at the larger of Athens's two annual festivals, the Dionysia, which functioned as an assertion of the city's prestige.³²⁶ It is possible, then, to read this play as a reminder of the dreadfulness of tyranny and an affirmation of the democracy that had replaced it.

Carter points out that there is not enough surviving biographical or contextual information to interpret any Greek tragedian's politics or intentions from his work. Tragedy explores political issues, but it does so

³²³ Carter, *Politics of Greek Tragedy*, pp10-20. It should be noted that the Athenian democracy was based on a men-only citizenship and was underpinned by slavery, military and naval-based foreign domination and wealth acquisition and the domestic confinement and labour of women. It had an enlarged elite, but still an elite, with freedom of speech, ability and opportunity to discuss political issues, only taking place (as far as we know) within it. There were many parallels, therefore, with Victorian Britain.

³²⁴ Carter, *Politics of Greek Tragedy*, p85.

³²⁵ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, ed Griffith, p2-3.

³²⁶ Carter, *Politics of Greek Tragedy*, p35.

by presenting several points of view without necessarily indicating which is intended to be read as the 'right' one. Tragedies were not political in the modern sense of political critique or protest and did not operate as 'full-scale political allegory'.³²⁷ Ancient Greek city states formed the only basis for freedom and security, when the alternative was conquest, death and slavery, so there was no incentive to attack the authorities. Instead, Greeks would have seen it as quite normal and right to put the interests of the city above those of the individual.³²⁸ While comedies could and did satirise public figures, tragedy simply offered 'an opportunity, once or twice in the year, for political reflection', on 'questions important to the life of the Greek city-state.' This gives us 'a sense what [the tragedian] wanted [the audience] to think about.'³²⁹

However, this didn't stop the play being read as or adapted for political critique or protest by subsequent cultures. Aeschylus portrays a very new usurping tyrant, but in other contexts the identification of accepted authority figures with tyranny can also function to critique a longer-established rule, by startling the audience out of their comfortable assumptions about, or brainwashed acceptance of, the rightness of the world as it is. This aspect of the play was particularly resonant for artists in the Romantic period. Shelley's drama *Prometheus Unbound*, for example, is a continuation of *Prometheus Bound's* story, but Shelley's politics are different from those suggested by Aeschylus. In Shelley's

³²⁷ Ibid, pp22, 26.

³²⁸ Ibid, pp107-8.

³²⁹ Ibid, pp142,159-60.

version, Prometheus has become a Christ-like figure who relinquishes his passion and rage in favour of 'the liberating power of love'; in this sense he frees himself. Jupiter is a traditional despot, but Shelley makes a case for him being the real rebel. Thinkers such as Rousseau argued that 'sovereignty is the exercise of the general will.'³³⁰ Despotic tyrants who seize power for their own gain are therefore rebels against the general will and sovereignty of the people. Jupiter is a kind of slave, because he is a prisoner of his own hatred and greed. 'Shelley repeatedly illustrates [that] both monarch and men are enslaved by mental assent to slavery and tyranny.' These are mental constructs, so liberation can only really occur in the mind. 'Thus, the work reverses the rebel/tyrant power myth that would reconcile rebel and tyrant, as Aeschylus intends.' Shelley envisages instead a slow development away from the need for such rulers as kings or gods, in which all men become equal and are ruled only by the law of Love. Slow development was necessary because Shelley recognised that violent overthrow of tyranny only bred more violence. Most of Shelley's work is political in some form, advocating reform along liberal lines. Shelley hoped that *Prometheus Unbound* would influence the thinking of the few intellectuals who would read it.³³¹

Apart from its political implications, artists have often been attracted to Prometheus as a symbol of the artist or intellectual. His gift to man, fire, 'aids all arts' (PB p2), it is the source of all creative activity. Lewis

³³⁰ Lewis, *Promethean Politics*, p160, referring to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans Frederick Watkins (Edinburgh, Nelson, 1953), p25.

³³¹ Lewis, *Promethean Politics*, pp158-63 and 175-78.

observes that 'Prometheus's story fuels the imaginative arts – in some senses the poet or artist is the ultimate thief of fire.'³³² Caroline Corbeau-Parsons examines how this idea arose in the work of Goethe and subsequently influenced the Romantic writers. Goethe approached Prometheus as symbol of 'man's power of creation' in an unfinished 1773 drama *Prometheus* and an ode 'Prometheus' in 1774. Goethe felt that Prometheus's isolation demonstrated the solitude that artistic creation requires, while his intelligence shows mankind's 'sensitivity.... in opposition to the coldness and cruelty of the gods.' The idea emerges that mankind created the gods and gave them their power by worshipping them. Goethe's purpose was to explore artistic creation rather than its political implications, but his ode was taken up in both ways by later writers and was very influential in the nineteenth century.³³³ Corbeau-Parsons identifies Nietzsche and Marx as influenced by its political ideas, while the figure of Prometheus was 'increasingly used to represent the artist' by artists and writers such as Hugo, Liszt and Balzac.³³⁴

Prometheus Bound's historical association with both the creative artist and political critique is highly relevant to Collin's parodies of it. It strongly suggests that he had a political purpose in mind and was using his own art, like Aeschylus, to suggest to his audience what issues he 'wanted them to think about,' and apply to their own society. The subject-matter of his chosen play was, very famously, tyranny; this suggests that he was

³³² Lewis, *Promethean Politics*, p2.

³³³ Corbeau-Parsons, *Prometheus in the Nineteenth Century*, pp38-50.

³³⁴ *Ibid*, pp70-82, 102-8.

pointing to tyrannies that existed in his own time, as illustrated in his story. Michael Vanstone's takeover of the Vanstone fortune is presented as a parody of Zeus's tyrannical usurpation, greedy, violent and morally hypocritical. It succeeds because both the law and society's moral attitudes are on his side, values that Collins's readers were likely to have shared or viewed as normal. This suggests that Collins was trying to adopt Aeschylus's techniques to startle his audience out of their comfortable beliefs, showing those values up as part of a system of tyranny.

Gods and Mortals: the Ideology of Tyranny

In *No Name*, Michael Vanstone's letter claims a moral position, which is that Andrew's daughters are not entitled to inherit his money because they are illegitimate. They have benefitted from Andrew's money like Prometheus's mortals, enjoying 'honours beyond what was right' (PB p3).

At the heart of this is an assumption that there are two distinct and fundamentally different types of being in the social order, gods and mortals; and that this is the right and proper order of things. In a 'gods and mortals' world order, gods enjoy a privileged rich lifestyle and have the power to rule over everyone else, while the mortals must obey the gods and exist on much less. In political terms, the analogy with a ruling class and the rest is clear, especially when the Greek gods were conceived in culture as super-humans. Such divisions are often presented as 'natural', or even justified by a claim that it is ordained by the gods or a higher authority: everyone has a place in the social order. In nineteenth-

century Britain, aristocratic rule meant that the privileged few kept the lion's share of wealth and political power to themselves, like gods, with everyone else disenfranchised and subject to their laws.

Prometheus Bound's politics undermine this kind of elitist ideology. It was written in the context of a democracy that had superseded tyranny, giving power to a much wider citizenry. Zeus's usurpation draws attention to the constructed nature of the social order. His tyrannical behaviour is selfish and undermines his moral claim to rule. The 'gods and mortals' analogy is a critique in itself, satirising the segregation of people on the basis of imaginary differences. The 'gods' are really just privileged humans who have ordained these arrangements in their own interests. Privilege and power are exclusive by definition: they require the contrasting existence and exclusion of the poor and the ruled to have any meaning. Privilege and power are also interdependent, the privileged needing to keep power to maintain their position. Collins's parodies of *Prometheus Bound* in *No Name* create a reading that implicitly critiques the artificial divisions between the 'gods' and 'mortals' of his own time as tyranny. The direct political context at the time of *No Name's* writing was the ongoing debate about extending the franchise.³³⁵

Collins's parody also pinpoints the source of the artificial divisions. The crux of the definition of a god, as Michael Vanstone points out, is not wealth itself but legitimacy. Collins is highlighting a key, but additional and

³³⁵ See Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, pp204-44. The Athenian constitution was seen as a potential analogy for Britain in the franchise debate. Turner argues that the Victorians tended to project their own world onto the Greek one.

artificial, condition that nineteenth-century Britain required for the inheritance of property and money. By this condition, natural descent by birth was not enough; a legal control was added, to define what sort of birth counted. It had to take place within a 'marriage', a union of the parents that had been legally recognised and recorded. Laws were made excluding the illegitimate from inheriting from their parents automatically. This was backed by moral ideology, which said that having children out of wedlock was a crime.

Legitimacy was not a personal issue but the basis of the system of aristocratic rule. It maintained elite wealth and privilege, by controlling the passing on of wealth within exclusive groups, thus perpetuating 'inherent' superiority through its advantages. Inheritance works as a kind of immortality, keeping a family and their position in the world stable, even when individual members die. In rich or noble circles, often only the eldest son would inherit, keeping the wealth in the hands of the head of the family and preventing it from being distributed and its advantages diluted. A legal requirement for legitimacy ensured that a man's wealth could only go to the children of his wife, whom he was socialised to seek from within his own circle. The two combined meant that large amounts of wealth were kept exclusive to a few special families, like gods.³³⁶ The situation was not 'natural' at all, and neither was the apparent superiority or moral worth of the gods. Legitimacy liked to masquerade as a moral issue, but it

³³⁶ For further discussion on the concentration of wealth in the hands of circles of families by intermarriage, see Adam Kuper, *Incest and Influence, The Private Life of Bourgeois England* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, Harvard University Press, 2009).

was really about money. In lower-class cultures it had long been normal to delay marriage until after the birth of a couple's first child. Legitimacy wasn't a concern when there was no property to inherit; establishing fertility was much more important.³³⁷

New industrial wealth was allowing newcomers to acquire godlike status, exposing the fact that it really depended on money. The Vanstone family are social upstarts, their fortune originally created in manufacture by the elder Mr Vanstone. This makes Michael's claim to godlike status on aristocratic principles rather ironic. The Vanstone money also enables Andrew and his family to masquerade as respectable when according to prevailing social mores they are not. By the standards of aristocratic rule, both brothers are travesties of gods.

Andrew's identification with Prometheus suggests that his punishment for crimes against legitimacy are unjustified, the result of a hypocritical tyranny shoring up its own interest. The parodies of the moral behaviour associated with both Prometheus and Zeus underline the case. Andrew is the benefactor of mankind, saving them from annihilation: his children are raised in a loving family unit, when they could have been destitute outcasts. He carries out the traditional duties of the old aristocracy, by giving financial support to his poorer neighbours. By contrast, his brother's takeover is based on Zeus's violent usurpation of power, taking

³³⁷ See Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994), pp64-7. In parish records of baptisms and marriages, marriages often followed (rather than preceded) baptism of the first child, while in some areas studied, 'around 40 per cent of brides in the first half of the nineteenth century were pregnant'.

all the money for himself. *Prometheus Bound* questions the legitimacy of the tyrant's rule; *No Name's* parody of it points out the irony of Michael justifying his takeover by his nieces' 'illegitimacy'. The term 'legitimate' can mean conforming with the law or it can mean valid and justified.³³⁸ The parody highlights the fact that they are not one and the same.

A Match the Very Noblest: Marriage

The intrinsic connections between legitimacy, marriage, god-like status and money appear in *No Name* in the case of the proposed marriage between Magdalen and Frank Clare. Frank is legitimate, and from a 'family of great antiquity' (p35), which ought to qualify him as a god. But with no family wealth for him to inherit, he needs to make or marry money to get a godlike lifestyle. Gods are supposed to marry other gods, so he duly falls in with Magdalen's romantic designs on him. She, however, is illegitimate, hence only a mortal. Collins offers a clue to this ahead of its revelation by mapping the romance onto the story of Io, as told in *Prometheus Bound*. Io is a mortal cast out for being tempted by marriage with a god. Her story is not part of the Prometheus myth; Aeschylus has included it for thematic purposes. Io is another victim of Zeus's tyranny, but she is also the ancestor of Hercules, who will eventually release Prometheus. Collins's use of this part of the play is further evidence that he is using this text specifically.

³³⁸ The Oxford English Dictionary also records a meaning of 'real... genuine, not spurious', now rare but still in use in the mid-nineteenth century, see 'legitimate, adj., adv. and n.', Oxford English Dictionary online, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/107112> (accessed January 2021).

Io tells Prometheus how she was haunted by dreams, a conventional means by which gods communicated with humans, tempting her with visions of a noble marriage with Zeus, who wanted to seduce her. An oracle advised her father that he must expel her from his house to avoid bringing a curse on it, and she is now forced to wander through the world as an outcast. The jealous Juno has transformed her into a cow and stings her with a gadfly, driving her mad. Magdalen's desire to marry Frank Clare closely follows Io's. Io is tempted by 'nightly visions thronging to my maiden chamber', which tell her "It is in thy power to achieve a match the very noblest... For Jupiter is fired by thy charms." ...at length I made bold to tell my sire of the dreams' (PB p22). Similarly, Magdalen beguiles Frank with her charms and then tells her father of her desire to marry him: 'He might marry Me.... Have I disappointed you, papa?... Who am I to tell my secret to, if not to you?' (p87). The result in both cases is the same: Io's father is forced 'unwilling' to cast her out from her home; Magdalen's desire leads indirectly to Andrew's death and the revelation of her illegitimacy, and thanks to it she, too, is cast out from her home.

Io's dreams, like Magdalen's, are of marriage, but Aeschylus makes it clear how Zeus takes advantage of her innocence. 'Why dost thou live long time in maidenhood....?' says the dream, an effective appeal to the desires of a young girl on the brink of adult life. She is told 'not [to] spurn ... the couch of Jupiter; but go forth to Lerna's fertile mead, to the folds and ox-stalls of thy father...' a clear indication that sex alone is what Zeus has in mind: "grassy meadows" are conventionally symbolic of sexual

encounters.³³⁹ Had she gone to the grassy meadow, her romantic dreams would have been roughly disabused, while Zeus took what he wanted from her and left her with no prospect of a better marriage with anyone else. Her purpose should be 'that the eye of Jove may have respite from its longing', as though she has some sort of moral duty to gratify the god's desires. Magdalen's romance with Frank also involves secret meetings with him in the garden: Norah finds them 'arm in arm' in the shrubbery (p67), while Miss Garth catches them kissing in the 'summer house commanding a view over the fields from a corner of the lawn' (p83), quite close to those grassy meadows. Even though they have not got as far as sex, the parallels with Io colour their behaviour with the connotations of illicit relationships, the kind that result in illegitimacy, foreshadowing the revelation of Magdalen's own illegitimacy to come.

Linking Magdalen to Io implies that she is an innocent victim of tyranny, specifically tyrannical sexual appetite. The ineffectual Frank Clare makes an unlikely tyrant, however, despite his selfish motives. There are parallels between him and Io too. Frank is persistently described as womanish: for example, 'his gentle wandering brown eyes would have looked to better advantage in a woman's face' (p41). These eyes are suggestively cow-like as well as 'wandering', both images hinting at Io. Frank is also cast out to wander the world, much like Io, when Magdalen's fortune is lost, and he is sent to China to make money instead. Magdalen is herself the principal seducer who drives the romance from start to finish.

³³⁹ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, ed Griffith, p207.

It is as though she is wilfully enacting Iago, casting the malleable Frank as her godlike temptation. So, who or what is the tyrant here? Magdalen is driven by her romantic dreams of marriage, while the brutally pragmatic Mr Clare insists that the marriage cannot take place without money (p165). The elite marriage market is a tyrannical force that demands money to maintain godlike status, while the personal feelings of the couple lose out.³⁴⁰ Worse, those feelings are exploited: the parallel with Iago shows that this market was partly served by the normal dreams of young girls, which put them in a state of readiness to consent to marriages. But those marriages, without a legal settlement, were the means by which men usurped women's property. Women then ceased to have any separate legal identity, with no power to leave or get their property back, no matter how they were treated. The tyranny here is a social system which has established usurpation of women's assets as standard practice.

The requirement for legitimacy and marriage helped to keep wealth in the hands of men. Ideology underpinned this by persuading society that illegitimacy was women's fault. Zeus seduces Iago for selfish reasons, but she is the one punished. Greek myth contains lots of stories of gods seducing or attempting to seduce human maidens; this was also a preoccupation in Victorian literature.³⁴¹ Such stories illustrate male sexual appetite, but it is the women's morality that is at issue; they are either blamed or their

³⁴⁰ Other examples of marriages for money in the novel are Frank's later marriage to a much older woman for her fortune, and Andrew Vanstone's original marriage to a woman who had preyed on him for the sake of his money. Her success meant that he could not marry the mother of his children, leaving them illegitimate.

³⁴¹ Fiction dramatised resistance to inter-class marriage or cases of fallen women, and framed men as active and women as passive. See Sharon Marcus 'Sexuality' in *The Cambridge History of Victorian Literature*, pp422-43, pp427-8, 430-2.

suffering is made clear, and their children are excluded from respectable society. The ideology is important because, as both *Prometheus Bound* and *No Name* show, respectable women have somehow been convinced to do the punishing too. Juno's revenge is on Io, not Jupiter, she protects her own position with him by driving off her rival. In *No Name* this role is played by Mrs Lecount. Io's hornet stings her and sends her mad: 'the sting of the hornet...envenoms me....my heart throbs violently... I am carried out of my course by the raging blast of madness, having no control of tongue' (PB p29). Similarly, 'the sting of Mrs Lecount's pity had nearly irritated [Magdalen] into forgetting her assumed character' (p286). Eventually she is provoked into speaking 'violently': 'Mrs Lecount had planted her sting in the right place at last.... Those rash words of Magdalen's had burst from her passionately, in her own voice' (p289). Mrs Lecount is the source of the sting, but whether she is the jealous Juno or the hornet itself is left ambiguous. As Juno, she is protecting her own association with Noel. As the hornet, she appropriates godlike authority to punish the social transgressor, even though she is not her victim. Mrs Lecount's behaviour is unattractive, but it reveals the insecurity of her dependent position. Her identification with Juno suggests her similarity to a wife: although not married to Noel, she depends on him for her living, while he is withholding her assets, the fortune that is owed to her by his father, and which would make her independent. She must keep him happy, or risk being thrown out with nothing, while he can behave as he likes. This insecurity inclines her to drive off other women as threats to her place, rather than see them as allies or fellow victims. Keeping women

financially dependent meant that they were more likely to turn on each other than challenge the men who had appropriated their money in the first place. The weak and ineffectual Noel is a travesty of the all-powerful Zeus; and yet his identification with Zeus underlines his absolute power in law to hold and control the money. His weakness of character, instead, begs the question of why power is invested in the hands of men without reference to their fitness to exercise it.³⁴²

Telling *No Name's* story through parodies of *Prometheus Bound* exposes society's structural and arbitrary class and gender inequality, transforming what look like domestic difficulties into political ones. The position of married women was not the result of men's personal dominance; it had been enshrined in the law, along with laws controlling inheritance of wealth. Laws were made in Parliament by the gods in their own favour. In the mid-nineteenth century neither women nor ordinary mortals had any access to law-making in Parliament and no say in who did. Collins is creating a parallel with a political play to make a political comment, in the context of contemporary debates about the franchise.

Prometheus the Rebel

After her father's death, Magdalen identifies herself with the newly bound Prometheus, as though Andrew's role as Prometheus is what she and Norah have inherited instead of his money. When Miss Garth wonders how she can tell the sisters about their situation, Magdalen appears and

³⁴² Similarly, Frank Clare's weak and selfish nature makes a point about the arbitrariness of power assigned on the basis of birth and gender alone.

says 'There is no need to tell them... They know it already' (p143), imitating Prometheus's foresight: 'I know beforehand all futurity exactly, and no suffering will come upon me unlooked-for' (PB p5). The final action used to pinion Prometheus is: 'by main force rivet the ruthless fang of an adamantine wedge right through his breast' (PB p4). 'My heart is numbed', says Magdalen (p144). Michael's letter redefined Magdalen as a mortal, but she claims still to be a god, based on her birth. The difference is that without her wealth, she is unable to function as one; she is 'bound', like Prometheus.

Andrew Vanstone played Prometheus as the benefactor of mankind. Magdalen harnesses the role, with all its pride, rage and refusal to compromise, to rebel against the injustice of her situation. She feels Prometheus's sense of entitlement to 'retribution for this outrage' (PB p7). As she says to Noel, when disguised as Miss Garth: 'The resolution to right that wrong burns in her like fire ... she would resist, to the last breath in her body, the vile injustice...' (p291). She tells him there is a plan to overthrow him, but not what it is, just as Prometheus refuses to divulge the means of Zeus's future downfall to Hermes.

Rebellion against the social order requires stepping outside it and taking action. To do so implies an argument that 'crimes' against the social order are not genuinely crimes but have been defined that way in the interests of the powerful. Magdalen deliberately adopts the role of Prometheus to take action against the way that the rules of the social order have played against her. The role-play includes adopting ancient Greek theatrical

practice. Immediately after reading Michael's letter, Magdalen 'put her hands on a sudden over her face. When she withdrew them, all the four persons in the room noticed a change in her...something which made the familiar features suddenly look strange...' (p156). Magdalen imitates the action of placing a mask on her face to signal that she is assuming a tragic character. Then she interrogates the lawyer Mr Pendril about Michael Vanstone's implacability, imitating the discussion of Zeus's implacability between Power and Hephaistos as they bind Prometheus. Magdalen's version imitates the style as well as the content, creating a kind of pastiche. The original dialogue is in 'stichomythia', a feature of Greek tragedy meaning a dialogue of short speeches, one or two lines each. Griffith comments on this passage: 'characteristic of tragic stichomythia is the way in which Kratos picks up Hephaestus' words and throws them back at him in scorn.'³⁴³ In Magdalen's version, Mr Pendril picks up and re-uses Magdalen's words throughout: 'Did he know...?' / 'He did know it'; 'Did you tell...?' / 'I told him...'; 'Did Mr Michael Vanstone know that my father's great anxiety was...?' / 'He knew it in your father's own words' (p156-7). Magdalen's dialogue highlights her isolation among forces that ought to be on her side. She picks up the role of Hephaistos, Prometheus's only sympathiser, which she is having to play herself, casting Mr Pendril as Power. The other role in the scene is the silent but active Violence, who probably takes part in the binding physically: Hephaistos says: 'this arm at all events is fastened inextricably' (PB p4). Just after Magdalen's dialogue Mr Clare 'caught her fast by the arm...

³⁴³ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, ed Griffith, p91.

forcing her to bend to him.’ (p158), suggesting he has taken this role. Power and Violence thrive on tyranny, because it gives them more scope for the exercise of their natures. Mr Pendril’s behaviour is correct and conscientious, but he represents the law, suggesting that the law is one of the tools that tyranny misuses to maintain power. Mr Clare’s pragmatic response to the situation is still brutal and not negotiable. Both men seem sympathetic, but these castings are a reminder that in practice they are ranged on the side of the new tyranny.

Having established the injustice of the social order that has condemned her, Magdalen rebels by stepping outside it, taking up professional acting, which was a direct challenge to social norms for a young lady. Miss Garth has already illustrated this in guarding Magdalen at the private theatricals ‘in the interpolated character of Argus’, who stood guard over Io (p54). She sees the threat to social norms that acting presents: ‘Magdalen, in the character of a born actress, threatened serious future difficulties’ (p57). As a professional actress, Magdalen travels round the country touring her entertainment, beyond the knowledge or control of her family, a parody of Io’s wanderings as an outcast. Io is unusually mobile for a Greek maiden, both in the sense of her mythical travels and in acting out her madness physically on stage, emphasized by her contrast with the static figure of the bound Prometheus. Just like her Greek counterpart, Magdalen should have been safely at home under the control of a male relative; it is pointedly ironic that her entertainments are styled ‘At Homes’. Historically, actors were seen as ‘rogues and vagabonds’ because they were mobile rather than part of a fixed community. Freedom made them outcasts.

Containing Rebellion

Rebels against the social order are punished harshly like Prometheus because they challenge the organisation of power, which the existing authorities want to maintain. Victorian elites were fearful of the mob and the examples of the French and American revolutions. Some of *No Name's* parodies are drawn from *Prometheus Bound's* exploration of how a tyranny operates to counter rebellion.

Prometheus's punishment equates to the loss of life; being a god he cannot actually die. Griffith notes that in ancient Athens 'death by exposure, whether through crucifixion, impaling or fastening to a board, seems to have been a familiar punishment for low-class criminals and traitors.'³⁴⁴ Andrew Vanstone is a traitor to his own class, while the removal of his wealth from his children amounts to a loss of life for them, too. From the tyrannical point of view, dramatic downfalls like this serve as a deterrent to everyone else, keeping them afraid and making it clear what they will lose if they challenge the existing system. *Prometheus Bound* shows how such fear forces or invites everyone into a position of having to consider their own interests.

Oceanus is a god who is not directly threatened by the new regime but is therefore afraid to endanger his comfortable position. He offers Prometheus sympathy, but advocates moderation and appeasement rather than rebellion. Prometheus's proud intransigence gives him the

³⁴⁴ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, ed Griffith, p88.

excuse to withdraw. Mrs Lecount's parody of the scene shows that apparently sympathetic inaction can be hypocritical. Oceanus assures Prometheus that: 'I sorrow with thy misfortunes... it is not in me vainly to do lip-service' (PB p10). Mrs Lecount uses pretend sympathetic terms, such as 'the poor things' (p278), 'these poor girls' (p280), 'harrowing' (p287). Oceanus offers to intercede with Jupiter to gain a peaceful negotiated solution, urging Prometheus to adopt a humbler attitude: 'dismiss the passion which thou feelest, and search for a deliverance.... I for my part will go, and will essay, if I be able, to disenthral thee from these thy pangs' (PB p11). Similarly, Mrs Lecount 'rising with the friendliest anxiety to make herself useful' says, 'I have the influence of an old servant over him; and I will use that influence with pleasure on your behalf. Shall I go at once?' (p278). She advises Magdalen to 'soften his resolution, ma'am, by entreaties; don't strengthen it by threats!' (p285). Both Oceanus and Mrs Lecount want to avoid challenging the new regime, having a lot to lose if they do; this leads them to support tyranny passively, hiding behind a show of assistance and personal virtue. They claim that submission to the social order is the proper attitude for all, while offenders or the excluded must beg, not claim rights. Mrs Lecount's dependent female position is contradicted by her identification here with a male god, which carries implications of having more power to act if she chose. She paints Noel as the all-powerful resolute Jupiter, whilst clearly manipulating him.

Tyranny also works to separate rebels from friends or allies that might otherwise be expected to help them. In *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus's

fellow gods Hephaistos and Hermes side with the new regime. In the Greek world, the concept of 'philoï', ties of kinship and allegiance, was a strong one.³⁴⁵ As Hephaistos puts it 'Relationship and intimacy are of great power' (PB p3). Abandoning their natural allegiance to Prometheus was a serious matter, indicating the strength of the pressure posed by the new tyranny. Hephaistos has been influenced by moral ideology. His compassion makes him reluctant to help punish Prometheus, but he does so because he accepts that Prometheus has committed a crime. Miss Garth plays this role in *No Name*, reluctantly persuaded that the sisters cannot have their fortune if they are illegitimate. When she realises that she must tell them it is lost: 'Miss Garth... tried to face the necessity which the event of the morning now forced on her' (p140). 'Alone, she sat there... her head bowed over...her face hidden in her hands... and tried to rouse her sinking courage' (p142). This echoes Hephaistos's words: 'I have not the courage to bind perforce a kindred god to this weather-beaten ravine. Yet in every way it is necessary for me to take courage for this task' (PB p2). Then, Miss Garth 'raised her head and beat her hand helplessly on the table.' This description suggests the actions of putting on a mask, and then hammering Prometheus's fetters into the rock. Putting on a mask might indicate a choice or consent, however unwilling, to undertake a role. Miss Garth has been influenced to favour abstract morality over the interests of her long-term pupils, her 'philoï'. There is moral pressure in the idea that the good of the whole community depends on maintaining the existing social order and its definitions of crime. This

³⁴⁵ See Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, ed Griffith, p14-15.

pressure dissuades good people at all levels from challenging the social order or assisting rebels. In the Victorian era, the rise of middle-class respectability and religious revivals probably contributed to this sort of moral compliance, playing into the hands of an elite who often themselves maintained power through personal allegiances.

Hermes is the messenger god, who has been taken over by the new regime and now delivers in its style. He aggressively demands that Prometheus reveal the future marriage that will bring about Zeus's downfall. His attitude is pragmatic rather than principled, working for Zeus because he is the one in power. Hermes sees Prometheus's defiance against the prevailing power as madness: 'Resolutions and expressions... such as these... one may hear from maniacs' (PB p34). Prometheus taunts him with being 'a lackey of the gods' (PB p31) and the chorus reject him too, for they have 'learned to abhor traitors' (PB p34). Captain Wragge briefly plays this role in the scene where Magdalen tells him of her plan to marry Noel Vanstone. He is one of Magdalen's 'philo'i', being some sort of relative and a previous ally, but is already a traitor in having betrayed the existence of her plot to Noel. Unlike Hermes, he is all courtesy, but Magdalen still understands that Wragge always puts his own interests first. She echoes the abandoned Prometheus's final words as the mighty storm builds around him, 'mother Earth... thou beholdest the wrongs I suffer' (PB p 34), in her melodramatic 'I have lost all care for myself.... Mother Earth! The only mother I have left now!' Wragge's reaction is a parody of Hermes's, he 'looked at her in silent surprise... "Has the loss of her lover turned her brain?"' (p334). Humorous as this is,

it also makes Wragge's detached self-interest clear. Tyranny also relies on people like Hermes and Wragge, who will always side with the winners.

The chorus are sympathetic to Prometheus, but here they are young girls, powerless and sometimes fearful bystanders. If they were facilitating the viewpoint of the audience, young girls were appropriate types to express the helplessness of ordinary citizens under tyranny. *No Name* appears to include a chorus in the form of the birds in Norah's aviary. They are caged and their voices are sweet and decorative, but without human language. This could echo the powerless situation of young Victorian girls, but also of the disenfranchised at this time, especially women.

Prometheus the Symbol of Progress

If Collins wished to critique structural inequalities, the story of Prometheus is also useful because he is a symbol of progress. His gift of fire to mortals enabled them to improve their lives with technological progress. Aeschylus's play goes further, saying he gave all kinds of knowledge and skills to men: skill with ships, horses, mining, numbers and the alphabet, medicine, divination, and Hope (usually attributed to Zeus). For Lewis, fire is 'in Aeschylus's work, the very key to knowledge and power' and 'is thus the symbol for all sorts of enlightenment'.³⁴⁶ In the nineteenth century, industrial progress was improving the materiality of people's lives, especially for the growing middle classes, and creating fortunes that enabled some ordinary mortals to become gods. The poorer classes,

³⁴⁶ Lewis, *Promethean Politics*, pp18, 21-22.

shifting from hard agricultural or service labour into industrial work, were not much better off. But there was an awareness that acquisition of knowledge and skill could generate social progress and the Victorians were keen on the notion of self-improvement.³⁴⁷

The Sacred Fire of Acting

Magdalen's acting career is a form of rebellion, but through it she also acquires skills that enable her to progress her purposes, earn money and gain freedom. The Prometheus helping her acquire this knowledge is Wragge: 'I have trained others – I can train you' (p229).³⁴⁸ Acting is described in terms of Promethean fire: 'How came you to think of the theatre at all? I see the sacred fire burning in you; tell me, who lit it?' (p227). When Magdalen first demonstrates her acting to Wragge, 'She dashed at it, with a mad **defiance** of herself – with a raised voice, and a **glow like fever** in her cheeks.' The result is like an industrial process isolating a mineral ore: 'The native dramatic capacity that was in her, **came, hard and bold, to the surface, stripped** of every softening allurements which had once adorned it' (p228, my emphasis).

Acting, like fire, creates transformation. Theatre transforms actors into different people and the stage into different worlds. Magdalen transforms

³⁴⁷ Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help* (1859), 'one of the best-selling works of the nineteenth century', advocated a 'radically individualist' approach to improvement independent of social hierarchies. Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State*, pp145-6.

³⁴⁸ Wragge also provides another Promethean art: medicine. In the same scene he offers the upset Magdalen 'Cold Water? Burnt feathers? Smelling salts? Medical assistance?' (p228). His Pill is advertised in Promethean terms: "Before she took the Pill, you might have blown this patient away with a feather. Look at her now!" (p711). 'For lack of medicines they used to pine away to skeletons' says Prometheus of mankind (PB p16).

herself into an actress and then into false identities that she takes on throughout the novel. Transformation, like an industrial process, can create riches from raw materials. These riches might include the meaning or truth that can be brought to light by exploring stories on stage. Collins's parody aligns acting with the sacred fire used for divination; as Prometheus explains: 'I brought to light the fiery symbols that were aforesaid wrapped in darkness' (PB p17).

In social terms the transformation of a humble actor into a star on stage could generate more worldly riches, a kind of social progress in the money and notice they could command off it. Social progress is a potential threat to an elite. In Greek culture, Prometheus was criticised for raising the quality of life for mortals above their allotted place in the universe, potentially angering the gods, as well as risking practical dangers in uncontrolled technology. In the nineteenth century, middle-class upward mobility and the Victorian enthusiasm for self-improvement raised similar tensions. Elites resisted both social and industrial progress as violations of the 'natural' order.³⁴⁹

Politically, *Prometheus Bound* dramatizes the case for progress and the resistance to it, which Collins's parody transforms into a nineteenth-century setting. Using the play in this way could imply a comment on the ability of drama to contribute to public debate. Aeschylus, working in a democracy and funded by public benefactors, had been able to use drama

³⁴⁹ For example, see Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State* pp120-3, 129-35. Civil service competitive recruitment was designed to favour the upper classes and maintain their domination of government administration.

to discuss political issues openly. In Collins's time, under aristocratic rule, political issues were censored out of the theatre, which had to fund itself through popular entertainment. Collins's hidden theatrical parodies compare with Aeschylus's extremely public mode of working, implying that the theatre's critique has been silenced, to the detriment of the public good. Ancient Greek drama had also disappeared from public view in the theatre into the schools and libraries of the elite. *Prometheus Bound* was a familiar written text to upper class schoolboys but was never performed publicly as drama. Collins's restoration of it as drama implies that its succinct analysis of the way that tyranny works to gain and keep its own power had been suppressed, and that this might have occurred precisely because the nineteenth-century elite used similar tyrannical means to maintain their own power and privilege and resist political progress. It is also worth noting the irony that Frederick William IV, who had begun the fashion for reconstructions of Greek tragedy in 1840s Prussia, was a traditional conservative. Although these plays were created in the Western world's first democracy, he was personally opposed to any form of it. He played a key role in both the causes and failure of the 1848 revolutions in Germany.³⁵⁰ He perhaps epitomises how classical culture had been taken over as a bastion of the elite, instead of challenging either their status or their consciences. This was also true of that most basic means of progress, education.

³⁵⁰ Jones, *The 1848 Revolutions*, pp39-41, 80-81, 86-87.

Vulcan's honour: Education

Michael Vanstone claims that his inheritance had been stolen and wrongly put to the benefit of his nieces. In the opening of *Prometheus Bound*, Strength makes it clear that it is Vulcan's 'honour' that has been stolen, 'the brilliancy of fire [that aids] all arts' (PB p2). Miss Garth is identified with Vulcan, so it is her aid for the arts, education, that has been stolen.³⁵¹ Prometheus's gifts to mortals enabled or took the form of knowledge and skills, especially in Aeschylus's version. Prometheus is sometimes seen as symbolising the intellect: 'Bold and daring, [Prometheus] represents intellectual curiosity, the desire not only to know, but to spread enlightenment'.³⁵²

The idea that education can be stolen stems from the notion that it rightly belongs with godlike status. For most of the nineteenth century, education was only available to those who could pay. Prometheus was 'pillaging the prerogatives of the gods [to] confer them on creatures of a day' (PB p5). Michael is similarly expressing the elite view that the Vanstone sisters have been educated to 'a place in the world to which they are not entitled' (p155). Andrew has stolen Miss Garth's skills in the sense that she taught his daughters whilst unaware that they were illegitimate. Miss Garth is the source of vital cultural training that enabled and signified a godlike lifestyle, allowing the sisters to present themselves as upper class. However, their education was a ladies' one. When their parents go off to

³⁵¹ Like Wragge, Miss Garth also provides medicine, giving remedies to the servants (pp10, 23). Medicine was also only available to those who could pay.

³⁵² Lewis, *Promethean Politics*, p25.

London without explanation, Miss Garth sends Norah to 'your work [sewing] and your books' and Magdalen to the piano (p23). Education for women was designed to maintain their social inferiority, dependent and decorative. Miss Garth later takes the disinherited sisters to her own sister's school to retrain as governesses, the only acceptable genteel occupation for them.³⁵³ It is notable that Collins links the novel's educator with the god who has to bind and immobilise Prometheus for spreading knowledge to mortals, suggesting that, far from opening minds and enabling progress, education has become a force for social compliance. Miss Garth's other role as Argus, guarding Magdalen within the role of proper young lady, underlines this.

Prometheus Bound was an important text in nineteenth-century education, but not for women. Classical education was the preserve of men. There were a few exceptions, such as Elizabeth Barrett-Browning, who learned Greek sharing her brother Edward's tutor. Once Edward had disappeared to Charterhouse school, however, she had to use him as her 'postal tutor' so that she could keep up.³⁵⁴ She translated *Prometheus Bound* in 1833, revising it in 1850.³⁵⁵ Lewis notes that 'Nineteenth-century feminists adopted... Prometheanism as a metaphor for sexual politics, thereby stripping away its attractiveness for male writers.' In her *Vindication of the*

³⁵³ Magdalen sees Norah's occupation as a governess in terms of Prometheus's 'brother Atlas... sustaining on his shoulders the pillar of heaven and earth, a burthen not of easy grasp' (PB p12). She is outraged at 'Norah made an object of public curiosity and amusement; Norah reprimanded in the open street; Norah the hired victim of an old woman's insolence' (p273).

³⁵⁴ Margaret Forster, *Elizabeth Barrett Browning* (London: Flamingo, 1993) pp19, 31-2.

³⁵⁵ Ian Ruffell, *Aeschylus: Prometheus Bound* (London, Bristol Classical Press, 2012), p124.

Rights of Woman in 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft argued that ‘women are inferior to men only in education and opportunity, not in inherent capacity’ and called for ‘nothing less than a revolution in female manners and female education.’ Her arguments are ‘Promethean in seizing the celestial fire of reason... from the discourse of men.’³⁵⁶

Education in the nineteenth century was an exclusive business: women and the lower classes were excluded.³⁵⁷ People believed that women and the labouring classes were intrinsically incapable of undertaking classical education, but some of this arose from the need to keep them exactly where they were. As Stray notes, ‘classics played a role in maintaining the solidarity of elite social groups and the exclusion of their inferiors’, while the public schools especially were ‘seedbeds of social exclusion.’³⁵⁸ Elite solidarity was created by shared experience and socialization in schools and universities and continued as adults in the upper professions and London clubs. It was normal for these elite groups to use classical allusion in communication. When ‘O.B’ in *The Players* asks ‘who knows not’ Prometheus’s opening speech, he is really signalling his own membership of the educated elite.³⁵⁹ Classical knowledge’s uselessness in practical or business terms was part of its appeal as a

³⁵⁶ Lewis, *Promethean Politics*, pp194-95. Wollstonecraft’s views were inconsistent, her feminism contradicted by class prejudice. Her earlier work *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) included advice on how to treat servants who ‘are in general ignorant and cunning.’ Biographers detect her ‘insistent testing out of attitudes and roles suited to her “peculiar” character’, see Barbara Taylor, ‘Wollstonecraft [married name Godwin], Mary’, Oxford DNB online, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10893> (accessed May 2021).

³⁵⁷ In theory, the expansion of the textbook market could have opened up classical learning to groups excluded from schools, such as women, who could nonetheless buy Greek texts, lexicons and translations.

³⁵⁸ Stray, *Classics Transformed*, pp11-12.

³⁵⁹ It is tempting to read ‘O.B’ as standing for ‘Old Boy’.

status symbol. Gentlemen didn't need to work, or if they did it was in gentlemanly ways in the recognised professions like the civil service, which valued the reasoning and intellect that classical education developed. Gentlemen's families could afford the luxury of years of expensive specialist training to develop useless knowledge, which created a clear differentiation between the educated (gods) and the rest.

The middle class rise through classical education might have looked like a threat to the social status of the elite, but it suited the elite as a way of controlling middle-class incursion: if you can't beat them, allow them to join. Education at least turned these people into the right sort, and then they were absorbed into the business of running the country and the empire. Leadership and real power remained in the hands of the elite. The definition of 'gentlemen' came to mean public-school and Oxbridge-educated and created the 'mythology of liberal governance by an enlightened administrative class.'³⁶⁰ Aeschylus's play revealed the ability of tyranny to harness people's self-interest to support its own rule. The hierarchical structure of the nineteenth-century education system reflected the social structure, and pupils were educated to believe in it and know their place within it.

Collins himself experienced this influence. Among his surviving letters home from school is what looks like a complete lesson or essay plan on the subject of political systems. It is worth quoting entirely:

³⁶⁰ See Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State*, pp119-22, 130-5.

‘Θύχ ἀγαδὸν ωολνχουρανίη

Homer

Proposition What a profitable lesson may be drawn from this maxim of the Grecian poet: “The government of many is not good”!

Reason. Because, different men have different sentiments on systems of government; and if they were all to enforce their own opinions, nothing but confusion and every evil would ensue.

Confirmation – How many kingdoms, after having prospered under the government of one, have been exposed to the horrors of anarchy and revolution, through the government of many.

Argument. The happiness of a nation depends on the government of the state; diverse nations require different forms of government; but the most perfect and most happy form of government has generally been found to be a wise and good monarchy.

Comparison. As the calmness of a river is diminished by its [mixing] with many and different streams: so is the calmness of a state disturbed by many and various rulers.

Example. When the Roman Empire was attempted to be governed by the great Triumvirate, it was distracted by their destructive dissensions.

Testimony – Our poet is supported, in this wise sentiment, by Bias, one of the Seven Sages of Greece, whose maxim was: “Θι πλαιους κακοι” too many are bad.

Conclusion. Nations, armies and societies, have most painfully proved the truth of this assertion of the immortal bard.'³⁶¹

This is the entire letter apart from address and signature; the purpose of its creation therefore can't be determined. The essay itself contains no exploration of contrary ideas, and some of the assertions and arguments are spurious. Does Collins believe this at fifteen? Was it, rather, one of Rev Cole's lessons? There is a small clue in the letter of 14 October 1839, less than a month later, in which he tells his mother (in Italian) 'I have had to do that penalty of "writing out", so I have not been able to write a letter before now.'³⁶² Had the rebellious adolescent been airing revolutionary opinions, which landed him with the 'penalty' of having to send this essay to his parents? Whatever the circumstances, and whether or not Collins agreed with what he wrote, it does show that only a few years after the 1832 Reform Act, the sons of the middle classes were being inculcated in schools with the notion that democracy really wasn't a good idea; power was best left in the hands of the few good and wise people at the top. And this was partly achieved by their teachers calling on the cultural authority of the classics.

In Collins's case at least, the lesson didn't work. In making parodies of *Prometheus Bound* within *No Name*, Collins shows he was well aware of the irony of a key text on rebellion and progress being used, through education, to uphold the status quo. He used it instead to illuminate the

³⁶¹ Collins, *The Letters of Wilkie Collins*, vol 1, pp5-6, to [Mrs Harriet Collins] 18 September 1839.

³⁶² *Ibid*, p8 To Mrs Harriet Collins, 14 October [1839].

plight of his female heroine who is faced with the tyranny of elite male power. In Promethean style, he would take the tools his privileged education gave him – intellectual development, knowledge of Greek and the Greek world – and use them to expose his self-serving and deeply unequal society for what it was.

Chapter 3 'Does it Fit?':³⁶³ *Cinderella*

Introduction

The presence of *Cinderella* in *No Name* has already been noted by Peter Caracciolo, who has pointed out possible allusions to various versions of the story. Although Perrault's version is 'almost exclusively the variant of the Cinderella story that we now know', Caracciolo argues that Collins's references to *Cinderella* are closer to folk tale versions, using details such as Mrs Wragge's down-at-heel shoes rather than glass slippers, and that Collins was departing from the 'passive' example of 'Perrault's resigned heroine'. His list of suggested sources comprises Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, the ninth-century 'Chinese version' (*Yeh-Shen*), *Aschenputtel* (brothers Grimm), Madame d'Aulnoy's *Finetta*, the Italian 'Pentamerone version' (Giambattista Basile's 'Cinderella Cat') and the Scottish *Rashin Coatie*. Caracciolo takes the view that Collins's 'arts of allusion and analogy' allow such references to be multiple, wide-ranging and suggestive rather than explicit. The trouble with this approach is that the connections he makes to such a variety of sources are slight or don't quite match the situation in *No Name*, which weakens his case for intentional allusion on Collins's part, especially when the purpose for doing so, or what Collins achieves by it, is not explained.³⁶⁴

³⁶³ Collins, *No Name*, p547.

³⁶⁴ Caracciolo, 'Wilkie Collins and "The God Almighty of Novelists"', pp168, 176-77. Examples he suggests are: Wragge's first appearance 'probably derives from an incident in *La Cenerentola*', not specifying which one or explaining how it correlates. Magdalen's battles with Norah and Mrs Lecount 'echo the breakdown in sisterhood observed by Madame d'Aulnoy' in *Finetta*. A conflict between two female characters is too general a

Britain's long-standing and vibrant tradition of pantomime based on fairy tales is an obvious omission from Caracciolo's list of sources, *La Cenerentola* being the only theatrical version considered at all. His approach also fails to account for the parodic nature of the references to *Cinderella*. While noting that Magdalen, Norah and Mrs Wragge are all Cinderella figures, he makes no comment on the curious presence of three Cinderellas instead of one. Mrs Wragge's down-at-heel shoes and dreams of an oriental cashmere robe are clearly comic parodies of Cinderella's slippers and ballgown. A darker effect is achieved in one of the clearest clues to the presence of Cinderella, namely Mrs Lecount proving Magdalen's identity by a clothing item, the irregular scrap of fabric cut from her dress, uttering the significant phrase: 'Does it fit, sir?' (p547). The proof loses Magdalen her husband instead of gaining him, a pointed irony. It is also notable that no critic has convincingly accounted for Mrs Wragge's personal oddities. Just why is she so tall, so clumsy and so very foolish? Why does she have 'a large, smooth, white round face – like a moon'? (p202). She is clearly a comic character, but articles that discuss her at all tend to do so from a feminist perspective, taking her seriously as an oppressed woman, without noticing her relevant similarities to Cinderella. In this chapter I will attempt to address some of these questions from the basis that Collins's references to *Cinderella* are primarily theatrical, including the use of cross-dressing.

situation from which to suppose any intended literary allusion. Miss Garth 'could derive from' Basile's *Cinderella Cat*, whose heroine plots with her governess against her stepmother. When Magdalen and Miss Garth don't plot together, how is Miss Garth derived from Basile?

Proposing theatrical sources of *Cinderella* does not solve the chief practical problem in this investigation: which version(s) of *Cinderella* is Collins referring to? Unlike the cases of *Hamlet* and *Prometheus Bound*, where the dramatic version is the one that has eclipsed all others to become the default, *Cinderella*'s default, is, as Caracciolo notes, the literary version by Perrault. Theatrical versions of the tale are countless: in nineteenth-century England alone, *Cinderella* appeared regularly on stage in a variety of genres, pantomimes, extravaganzas, burlesques and comic operas. Versions created for the London theatres survive in the Lord Chamberlain's Collection of manuscripts and there are a few published versions. I have been able to establish references to the details of three published versions: Rossini's comic opera *La Cenerentola* (1817), Rophino Lacy's *Cinderella, or The Fairy Queen and the Glass Slipper, a Comic Opera in Three Acts* (1830) and H J Byron's *Cinderella, or the Lover, the Lackey and the Little Glass Slipper, a fairy burlesque extravaganza* (1860). A fourth published version, Smith and Taylor's *Cinderella, a Burlesque Extravaganza* (1845), may also have been used, but the connections are weaker.³⁶⁵ It is mainly important to note that for *Cinderella* Collins seems to have chosen to use multiple versions. What

³⁶⁵ *La Cenerentola* was published in Italian from 1817. Here I have used the first English translation, Giacomo Rossini and Giacomo Ferretti, *La Cenerentola, Cinderella, A Comic Opera in Two Acts, As Represented at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, Trans W Jos Walter, Italian and English* (London, W Winchester & Son, 1820) (reprinted 1849 by H G Clarke & Co), and a modern version, Giacomo Rossini and Giacomo Ferretti, *Rossini's La Cenerentola*, ed Burton D Fisher (Coral Gables FL, Opera Journeys Publishing Ltd, 2006). Collins may not have needed a translation when he could read Italian. M Rophino Lacy, *Cinderella, or the Fairy Queen and the Glass Slipper, A Comic Opera in Three Acts* (London, Lacy's Acting Edition of Plays, vol 18, 1830). H J Byron, *Cinderella, or the Lover, the Lackey and the Little Glass Slipper, A Fairy Burlesque Extravaganza* (London, Lacy's Acting Edition of Plays, vol 49, 1861). Albert Smith and Tom Taylor, *Cinderella, or the Fairy Glass Slipper, a Burlesque Extravaganza* (London, Hodson, 1845).

became clear from reading many published and manuscript versions of *Cinderella* is that, while theatrical versions make free use of the famous features of Perrault's tale, such as the prince's ball, Cinderella's transformation and the glass slipper, they also have many other features in common which derive, not from Perrault's tale, but from established elements of the theatrical genres that it has been translated into. Tracing the history of how *Cinderella* developed on stage shows that the operatic and popular stage traditions interacted and were less separate in the mid-nineteenth century than they are considered today. Collins uses features common to both. At the same time, Perrault's version cannot be conclusively described as absent from *No Name*, when some of the features being parodied from staged versions were of Perrault's own invention. Here I argue that Collins deliberately referred to multiple theatrical versions knowing full well that Perrault's version was the default in the minds of his readers, drawing attention to the comparison. In social terms, Perrault's *Cinderella* functioned insidiously in the nineteenth century as a reactionary social model, which subtly pressured women to conform to standards of virtue and dependence that were in the interests of men and the powerful. Collins's juxtaposition of multiple theatrical versions challenges this model by revealing that male and female social roles are adopted, constructed and interchangeable. The trajectory of theatrical *Cinderella* through the plot exposes the social powerplay at work and how the pressure on women to conform operated, revealing that the roles women were obliged to play were not natural but forced on them.

The History of Cinderella

Theatrical versions of *Cinderella* differ fundamentally from literary ones, differences that arose historically.

The Cinderella Fairy Tale

As Caracciolo has noted, versions of the *Cinderella* story exist in many cultures, probably because its basic elements, such as the motherless child, the step-family, the rags-to-riches plot, are archetypal.³⁶⁶ Folk tales in Europe began to be preserved in literary form from the seventeenth century. As Armando Maggi has shown, a version of *Cinderella* first appeared in 'Giambattista Basile's *The Tale of Tales (Lo Cunto de li Cunti, 1634-6)*, the first collection of literary fairy tales of the Western tradition.' These tales were written in Neapolitan dialect and called 'entertainments'. In Basile's version, the 'Cinderella Cat' plots with her governess to kill her hostile stepmother, only to have the governess replace her and become worse.³⁶⁷ Caracciolo suggests that Collins may have been acquainted with this version, thanks to his 'childhood immersion in Italian culture.'³⁶⁸

³⁶⁶ For discussions of transcultural archetypes in literature and art, see for example, Northrop Frye, 'Third Essay, Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths', in *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957), pp131-239.

³⁶⁷ Armando Maggi, 'The Creation of Cinderella from Basile to the Brothers Grimm' in Maria Tatar, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Fairy Tales* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp150-165, pp151-2.

³⁶⁸ Caracciolo, 'Wilkie Collins and "The God Almighty of Novelists"', p176. Collins's family spent two years (1836-38) in Italy so that his artist father could study. Collins later wrote letters home from school in Italian, see Collins, *The Letters of Wilkie Collins*, vol 1, p7, to Harriet Collins September 1839.

Charles Perrault's much more famous *Cinderella* appeared in his collection of fairy tales, *Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé. Avec des Moralités*, in 1697. Perrault was a courtier of Louis XIV of France, where he made an 'extremely successful career' in administration and literature. He wrote the tales late in life within the fashion for storytelling in aristocratic salons, some of which were based on folk or fairy tales. Some of these tales were published, mostly by women writers, establishing the literary fairy tale as a genre. Perrault, who had prestigious court connections, published his tales through the leading literary publisher Claude Barbin, and dedicated them to the King's niece, who was 19 at the time. He intended them to be moral tales for the young and wrote them in a more simple and colloquial style than the other elite salon writers.³⁶⁹ These factors may have ensured the immense popularity of Perrault's tales at home and abroad. In England they were published in several translations throughout the eighteenth century.³⁷⁰ In Perrault's version of *Cinderella*, good kind Cinderella humbly accepts her unkind treatment by her selfish stepsisters and her demotion to a servant. She is rescued by her fairy godmother who gives Cinderella the aristocratic trappings she has been denied, sending her to the ball where her beauty and sweet

³⁶⁹ Charles Perrault, *Charles Perrault, The Complete Fairy Tales*, trans Christopher Betts (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009), Introduction pp x-xv. Marina Warner described many of the female salon writers as 'loquacious, whereas Perrault is laconic', Marina Warner, *Once Upon a Time, A Short History of Fairy Tale* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014), p47.

³⁷⁰ Translations by Robert Samber or Guy Miegé, for example translation by Samber advertised as 'just publish'd' in 1729, 'Books', *Flying Post or the Weekly Medley*, 7 June 1729, p4, BNC (Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection online database) <https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.nottingham.ac.uk/ps/start.do?p=BBCN&u=univnott> (accessed May 2021). The British Library has editions from 1764, 1785 and 1796, British Library Catalogue, Perrault, *Contes des Fées* (accessed May 2021).

nature capture the heart of the prince. Perrault invented many of the details that came to be regarded as integral to the tale, the pumpkin and mice being transformed into the coach and horses, the glass slipper and the fairy godmother. The popularity of Perrault's tales consolidated his version of *Cinderella* in the public's imagination. As Marina Warner notes, the process of turning oral folk tales into works of literature preserved them, but also fixed them in particular versions. These created 'a corpus, even a canon [with] established standard elements.' Subsequent artists 'were consequently aware of a template in ways that a medieval storyteller might not have been.'³⁷¹

According to Christopher Betts, by 'Victorian times... the classic fairy-tale text became the Grimms' collection.'³⁷² The Grimm brothers' collection of tales were first produced in 1812 and were available in English translation from 1823.³⁷³ An 1853 edition illustrated by Edward Wehnert was advertised and reviewed as a notable work for several years afterwards.³⁷⁴ The Grimms' tales superseded Perrault's versions of some tales, such as

³⁷¹ Warner, *Once Upon a Time*, p50.

³⁷² Perrault, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, ed Betts, Introduction p xxxvii.

³⁷³ The Grimm brothers published seven different repeatedly reworked editions of their tales between 1812 and 1857 in German, see Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm: The Complete First Edition*, trans and ed Jack Zipes (Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2014), introduction p25. British Library catalogue shows English translations including *German Popular Stories, translated by Edgar Taylor from the Kinder und Hausmarchen, collected by MM Grimm from oral tradition* (London, C Baldwyn, 1823) and *Household Stories collected by the Brothers Grimm. Newly Translated. With illustrations by E H Wehnert* (London, Addey & Co, 1853) (accessed May 2021).

³⁷⁴ For example, the collection is described as 'well-known and universally admired', 'The Magazines & Children's Books', *Morning Post*, 3 February 1853, p2; it is advertised as a 'world-renowned book. Every collector of stories has borrowed from its treasures – hundreds of artists have illustrated it – plays have been founded on many of its tales – and learned essays of deep research have been written upon it by men of literary eminence', 'Multiple Classified Ads / Grimm's Household Stories – New Edition' *Morning Post*, 5 Oct 1860, p1 BLN (accessed May 2021).

Little Red Riding Hood.³⁷⁵ But this does not seem to be the case with the tale of *Cinderella*. The Grimm version of *Cinderella*, '*Aschenputtel*' is distinctively different from Perrault's version – Cinderella's magic dresses and other aids are supplied by a tree she plants on her mother's grave, watered by her tears. 'The spirit of Cinderella's dead mother flows through nature', an idea that is 'recognizably Romantic'.³⁷⁶ Maggi notes that the Grimm brothers also reworked this tale at least twice.³⁷⁷ However, all nineteenth-century English editions of *Cinderella* prior to 1862 that I have seen follow Perrault's version, either in direct translation, similar telling or in retellings in prose or verse that still use all his plot and features.³⁷⁸ *Aschenputtel* might have been overlooked as an alternative *Cinderella* because the Grimms' tales were known as a collection, in which *Aschenputtel* was only one tale among many. For example, the *Manchester Times*' review of the collection in January 1861 printed a selection of the tales with illustrations – and *Aschenputtel* is not among them.³⁷⁹ But it is likely that Perrault's *Cinderella* retained its precedence over the Grimms' version because of its prior development on the stage,

³⁷⁵ Perrault, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, ed Betts, Introduction pp xxx.

³⁷⁶ Warner, *Once Upon a Time*, p23.

³⁷⁷ Armando Maggi compares three different versions of *Aschenputtel* from 1812, 1819 and 1857, 'The Creation of Cinderella', p154-7.

³⁷⁸ I read 19 versions in the British Library, dated between 1790 and 1861. Examples are *Cinderella, or the Little Glass Slipper, in verse* (London, John Evans 1810), a simple children's chapbook version, *The History of Cinderella and her Glass Slipper* (London, Orlando Hodgson, 1830), which follows Perrault with additions of character descriptions and much moralising, *The Lady Ella, or the Story of Cinderella in Verse* by Jane E Leeson (London 1847), a re-telling of Perrault in verse with many elaborations, *Cinderella and the Glass Slipper* (London, David Bogue, 1854) in *Cruikshank's Fairy Library* no 3, which follows Perrault with elaborations including warnings about the evils of drink, and *Cinderella* (London, George Routledge & Co, 1856), part of a series of *Aunt Mavor's Picture Books for Little Readers*, re-telling Perrault's version.

³⁷⁹ *Manchester Weekly Times*, Illustrated Supplement, 12 Jan 1861, pp7-8, BLN (accessed May 2021). *Cinderella* features instead in a review of *Popular Nursery Tales and Rhymes* in the same issue, 'Nursery Tales', p4.

which began in France in the mid-eighteenth century and found its way onto the English stage in the 1790s. Staged versions of *Cinderella* all used at least some elements of Perrault's, which helped to extend its popularity and reinforce its position as the 'template'.³⁸⁰

Cinderella On Stage

Perrault's tales were sources of stage material because they were well-known and recognisable to the audience. But the process of adapting *Cinderella* to the stage produced features which differed from Perrault's original tale. These include:

- A larger role for the godmother figure. In Perrault she appears without prior introduction on the night of the ball to transform Cinderella. In staged versions she causes the prince to fall in love with Cinderella in advance of the ball, bringing him to the baron's castle, sometimes showing him a vision of Cinderella first. She explains Cinderella's goodness and situation to the audience, sometimes disguising herself as a beggar whom the sisters reject, but Cinderella offers food to. A non-magic or male character is sometimes substituted for this figure, such as minister to the prince.

³⁸⁰ M O Grenby notes that opportunistic early nineteenth century publishers such as John Harris and Benjamin Tabart 'routinely advertised their fairy tales as being inspired by current theatrical productions [including] *Cinderella; or the Little Glass Slipper* (1804)'. M O Grenby, 'Tame Fairies Make Good Teachers: The Popularity of Early British Fairy Tales' in *The Lion and the Unicorn* 30,1 (2006), pp1-24, pp1-2. Staging features sometimes appeared in literary retellings of Perrault, for example, *Cinderella, or the Little Glass Slipper, with thirteen illustrations by M J R* (London, Addey & Co, 1852) includes the fairy godmother disguised as a beggar (6th and 7th pages of narrative, no page numbers).

- The creation of the baron as Cinderella's chief oppressor. Perrault's Cinderella has a widowed father and unkind stepmother who disappear from the story after the first page. The baron is either Cinderella's real or step- father and is often a comedy buffoon, drunk, impecunious, craven or pompous. There is very rarely a stepmother; I only encountered one example, and then she seems to exist only to hen-peck the baron.³⁸¹
- The sisters' mean natures are usually played for comedy, sometimes by men, with elaborate dressing scenes, and a convention whereby they call for Cinderella from on or offstage.
- The prince plays a larger part. In Perrault he exists only as Cinderella's reward for virtue: he does not appear until the ball and is never given any speech. In staged versions he is much more active, wooing Cinderella, defending her and seeking her after the ball. His attractions are personal, not of position: in some versions he swaps places with his valet so that Cinderella falls in love with him for his own sake, before knowing who he is. Often, motivation for the ball is heightened by the prince needing to marry within a certain period or lose his throne.
- Servants become characters. In Perrault they are only mentioned by function or not at all. The prince's valet, often given the name Dandini, has a substantial part. The baron and sisters ingratiate themselves

³⁸¹ In Smith and Taylor, *Cinderella*, (1845).

with him as the bogus prince and he may woo one or both sisters in his own right. The baron's household sometimes also contains a servant character who is sympathetic to or in love with Cinderella. This character later developed into Buttons.

- Cinderella herself does not bear her suffering patiently like Perrault's heroine. She might plead with the baron to be allowed to go to the ball or answer the sisters in witty ripostes.

Adapting a story for the stage is bound to result in some alterations, for example because of the need to structure the story into coherent acts, or to explain everything either visually or in the spoken words of the characters. But this does not account for many of the differences described above. This is illustrated by an 1857 children's acting version of *Cinderella* published by Julia Corner with pictures by Arthur Crowquill, which follows Perrault's tale quite closely. It has suggestions on how to stage the various effects in the drawing room, such as imagining the pumpkin coach offstage, and Cinderella wearing her ball gown under her poor dress 'made open in front...that it may be easily thrown off'.³⁸²

The changes that developed in the staging of Cinderella were shaped by the conditions and established genres of the commercial theatre. The most noticeable difference is in the larger parts for men. Perrault's tale is mainly about women, with the prince and other men relegated to non-speaking parts. This would have needed to be rebalanced for most

³⁸² *Cinderella and the Glass Slipper, or Pride Punished*, 'By Miss Corner', in *Little Plays for Little Actors* No 3 (London, Dean & Son, 1857), pp6, 15.

theatres who had a standing cast of regular performers and stars of both sexes whom audiences came to see. Although women could and did exercise power in the commercial theatre, they did so from a position of relative equality rather than dominance.³⁸³ Managers with an eye to their profits, or their own stardom, would have instructed dramatists and composers and shaped the productions to the available cast. As *The Era* comments on H J Byron's forthcoming *Cinderella* extravaganza in December 1860, it 'will be found to embrace all the members of the company, whose respective specialities have been, of course, carefully regarded in the treatment.' *The Era's* subsequent review says further: 'this piece is amongst the happiest efforts of Mr H J Byron, and is admirably adapted to the excellent Burlesque company now performing at the Strand Theatre, and who have established for themselves a reputation for this species of entertainment.'³⁸⁴ Performers' 'lines of business' were therefore partly a function of genre, in which certain character types or musical numbers were expected, requiring any story to be reworked to include them. The history of *Cinderella* on the stage is one of constant adaptation and change, subjecting Perrault's original tale to the needs of physical staging, genre and performer talent, all driven by a commercial requirement to attract and keep a paying audience.

³⁸³ See Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*, p18: equality arose from the nature of the theatrical business where both sexes were needed and did not compete against each other, while pay depended on star quality.

³⁸⁴ 'The Forthcoming Christmas Novelties' 9 December 1860, p10 and 'Theatricals in the Christmas Week / Strand' 30 December 1860, p11, *The Era*, BLN (accessed May 2021).

***Cinderella* and Theatrical Genre**

Staged versions of *Cinderella* first appeared in comic operas in France in the mid-eighteenth century and then in English popular entertainment from the 1790s. Both French comic opera and English pantomime drew on the Italian *commedia dell'arte* which had been around since the sixteenth century and had toured in other countries in Europe, making its characters and format well-known and recognised. In Italy it was a popular art form appealing to all levels of society, playing anywhere from royal courts to the streets, while Italy's political situation as a collection of autonomous states meant that its performers were itinerant rather than established at any centre. The *commedia* combined features that were associated with elite culture, such as verbal virtuosity and a wide range of erudite and literary source materials, with elements from popular entertainment, such as physical comedy, audience interaction, disguises and cross-dressing, parody and a focus on performance skills. It built its entertainments on outline scenarios, rather than literary scripts, which were improvised in rehearsal and performance, and on stock character types, some with masks, which the players would occupy according to their lines of business.³⁸⁵ Some of these plots and character types bear similarities to those found in ancient Roman comedy, such as plays by Plautus and Terence.³⁸⁶ A typical scenario would include a core of parts for two vecchi (old men, typically Pantalone and Il Dottore), two zanni (servant

³⁸⁵ Kenneth Richards and Laura Richards, *The Commedia dell'Arte, A Documentary History* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1990), pp1-10, 82-93, 105-13, 141-44. See also John Rudlin, *Commedia Dell'Arte, An Actor's Handbook* (London, Routledge, 1994).

³⁸⁶ Richard and Richards, *The Commedia dell'Arte*, p13.

characters, Arlecchino the most iconic, but also Pedrolino), two pairs of innamorati (lovers) and a servetta (female servant, such as Columbina). All these features were strategic, for they allowed for great adaptability and flexibility. The companies of players were wholly commercial and had to adapt to play in any setting where they could make a living, often at short notice.³⁸⁷ The physical and visual comedy came to dominate their impact in other European countries: linguistic barriers meant that the verbal and literary elements were lost anywhere but at royal courts. The work of artists, notably Watteau, also established their fame visually, consolidating certain character types and their associated costume, especially Arlecchino or Harlequin, in the public imagination.³⁸⁸ Their influence on theatre was particularly potent in France, where touring Italian companies established themselves as a semi-permanent presence in Paris, became known as the Comédie Italienne and adapted themselves to French requirements. Some stock characters continued to develop as types in France, notably Pierrot (based on Pedrolino) and Columbine. They were also rivalrous with and a strong influence on native drama, as in the work of Molière and Marivaux, and themselves began to rely more on scripts.³⁸⁹ Later genres such as pantomime and opera buffa drew on the *commedia dell'arte's* visual iconography and famous stock characters.³⁹⁰ This can be seen in the development of *Cinderella* on

³⁸⁷ Ibid, pp40, 185-97.

³⁸⁸ Ibid, pp281-8.

³⁸⁹ Ibid, pp258-62.

³⁹⁰ Ibid, pp287-8.

stage, with the addition of the Baron, Dandini and Buttons, which were rooted in the Pantalone and Pedrolino types.

Cinderella in Comic Opera

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Opera*, the first surviving *Cinderella* opera was *Cendrillon* by the French composer Jean-Louis Laruette, with libretto by Louis Anseaume, in 1759.³⁹¹ The libretto was published and a copy survives in the University of North Texas digital library. The music for the 'pastiche-style comic opera' was arranged rather than composed by Laruette from popular songs, the text indicating the 'air' to which each section is sung, a practice later the norm in English burlesque and pantomime. *Cendrillon* premiered in Paris at Foire St-Germain on February 21 1759.³⁹² Comic operas in France originated at seasonal fairs; the Foire St-Germain originally lasted from 3 February to Palm Sunday. Vaudeville-style pieces appeared on makeshift stages, mixing spoken dialogue and song, well-known music with new composition, topical jokes and other broad humour, and parody including parodies of work at the official theatres, the Opéra and Comédie Française. The pieces were ephemeral and used a wide variety of subjects and styles. Later, the fair theatres developed into semi-permanent structures outside the fairground, which extended their season, and a permanent theatre building at Foire St Germain was constructed in 1735. This new permanence allowed for

³⁹¹ 'Cinderella' and 'Laruette, Jean-Louis' in John Warrack and Ewan West, eds, *The Oxford Dictionary of Opera* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), pp143, 395.

³⁹² Jean-Louis Laruette, Louis Anseaume, *Cendrillon* (Paris, France, Chez N B Duchesne, 1759), text and item description viewed online at the University of North Texas Digital Library <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc39252/> (accessed May 2021).

more ambitious pieces. The Parisian fair theatres negotiated with the Opéra in 1714 to be known as the Opéra-Comique and eventually merged with the Comédie Italienne, moving to Paris proper in 1762.³⁹³ By the mid-eighteenth century, French opera was also being influenced by Italian *opera buffa* and *intermezzo* (comic interlude). The *opera buffa* style developed when comic scenes and characters ceased to be used in the high Italian operatic form, *opera seria*, forming their own comic opera genre instead. *Opera buffa* drew heavily on the *commedia dell'arte*, its stock characters among other comic stereotypes and its balance of 'lines of business' in the cast, a range of voice types, each with a serious or romantic lead and a comic secondary part. In the bass voice, the *basso buffo* was an important secondary character, typically an older comic man or drunkard.³⁹⁴ The story settings were everyday rather than magical, the typical focus being 'the sly observation of human foibles within the context of contemporary society.' *Opera buffa* was so popular that it became the dominant form of opera by the later eighteenth century, with the Mozart / Da Ponte collaborations, and, in the early nineteenth century, Rossini and Donizetti as the most notable exponents.³⁹⁵

Laruelle and Anseume's *Cendrillon* adapted Perrault's *Cinderella* using the informal features typical of French comic opera at the time. It was staged simply in only one act, a restriction creatively addressed by placing all the action after the ball. *Cendrillon* is distressed because she forgot

³⁹³ Stanley Sadie, ed, *New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (4 vols) (London, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1992), vol 3, pp688-90 and p863.

³⁹⁴ 'Bass' in Sadie, ed, *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, vol 1, p339. Also, Richards and Richards, *The Commedia Dell'Arte*, p282 and 288.

³⁹⁵ 'Opera Buffa' in Sadie, ed, *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, vol 3, p687.

her godmother's warning about midnight, and the prince has summoned all women from the ball to return to the palace to try on the slipper. The vain sisters are shown ill-treating Cendrillon while she helps them dress for this, rather than the ball, and the godmother supports her and gets her to the palace without the need for a transformation scene. While the prince is shown anticipating the slipper test, he recognises Cendrillon in her rags and abandons it.³⁹⁶ This adaptation avoids the need to stage magic and focusses instead on the human interest of the story.³⁹⁷ Comic opera conventions have shaped the range of characters and voice types in the cast and the musical numbers through which the story is told. There is ensemble singing in the form of duets and trios between the characters, with solos for Cendrillon to express her feelings. There is a mix of serious and comic parts. Cendrillon and her godmother are balanced with the comic sisters. The sisters express their rivalry for the prince in dialogue sequences of alternate sung lines, a common comic duet feature.³⁹⁸ This is extended into a comic trio when they are dressing for the palace, and repeatedly call Cendrillon while she rushes from one to the other. This device became established as a *Cinderella* scene convention in later versions. The prince is balanced by his right-hand man, an adaption of Perrault's nameless 'gentleman' who conducts the slipper test, here called Pierrot. It was common to balance a male tenor hero figure with a bass comic one, who was often a servant or other low figure.³⁹⁹ Laruette was a high tenor who played Prince Azor himself. He was a popular singer at

³⁹⁶ Laruette and Anseaume, *Cendrillon* pp4-53.

³⁹⁷ 'Opera Buffa' in Sadie, ed, *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, vol 3, pp685-6.

³⁹⁸ 'Duet' in Sadie, ed, *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, vol 1, p1268-70.

³⁹⁹ 'Bass' in Sadie, ed, *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, vol 1, p339-40.

the Theatres de la Foire from 1752 with a good acting ability.⁴⁰⁰ Pierrot's voice type is not indicated in the libretto, but the name connects him with a servant type from *commedia dell'arte*, an innocent and faithful rather than devious one. His function in the plot is to be both supporter and doubter, a comic foil for the prince's attitudes and decisions. Pierrot fears the prince's love is an illusion, wonders how the slipper test can possibly work but faithfully produces it for the trial anyway. The prince also asks him to get rid of the encroaching sisters. Pierrot is clearly a forerunner of the valet or 'Dandini' figure. Parody was an important part of comic opera, and here court life is mocked. Royal patronage supported the official theatres and the Comédie Italienne, while the fair theatres had to be commercial. The spectacle of the sisters and court ladies vying for the attentions of the prince exposes the self-serving hypocrisy needed to get on at court. The treatment of the slipper test is clearly also a parody. The prince has already declared his choice of Cendrillon when Pierrot tries to insist on the test, declaring that a small foot is the primary criterion for the prince's bride.⁴⁰¹

The next *Cinderella* opera of note was created for the Opera-Comique by Nicholas Isouard in 1810, with libretto by Charles Guillaume Etienne.⁴⁰²

This version was a success, until it was overshadowed by Rossini's opera,

⁴⁰⁰ 'Laruelle (La Ruelle), Jean Louis' in Sadie, ed, *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, vol 2, p1103.

⁴⁰¹ Laruelle, Anseaume, *Cendrillon*, pp49-50. The meaning of the parody is lost, but could refer to the practice of arranging marriages between royal children for the purposes of foreign alliance. The future Louis XVI and his elder brother were young children in 1759.

⁴⁰² 'Isouard, Nicolo' in Warrack and West, eds, *Oxford Dictionary of Opera*, p353.

and it became reasonably well-known in England.⁴⁰³ It had specially composed music, but still featured spoken dialogue in between the musical numbers. Audiences in Paris could now see Italian Opera at the Theatre Feydeau, which had a good orchestra and virtuoso singers. This meant that the Italian *opera buffa* style was familiar to audiences and raised their expectations of quality.⁴⁰⁴ Isouard 'excelled in ensemble writing in *buffa* tone and style.' Now considered musically lightweight, Isouard's *Cendrillon* is important for adding *opera buffa* features that were taken up more famously in Rossini's version.⁴⁰⁵ Cinderella's stepmother and godmother have been replaced with male-voice roles, the stock-comic Baron Montefiasco and Alidor, the prince's minister who aids Cinderella without magic. The prince's right-hand man has become the valet, now named Dandini. These changes produce a conventional *opera buffa* balanced cast, having three soprano (Cinderella and sisters), two tenor (prince and Dandini) and two bass (Alidor and baron) roles, with a serious and comic part in each voice. Isouard also added the plot devices whereby the prince swaps with Dandini to test Cinderella and her sisters, while Alidor appears as a beggar in disguise.

Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (1817, libretto by Jacopo Ferretti) is probably the most famous *Cinderella* opera, but in fact it used an adaptation of Etienne's libretto. Italian composers like Rossini had to produce new work

⁴⁰³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cendrillon_\(Isouard\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cendrillon_(Isouard)) (accessed May 2021). Isouard's 'Bolero for Cendrillon' was included in a State Concert given by the Queen at Buckingham Palace, 'Her Majesty's State Concert', *Morning Chronicle*, 19 June 1858, p5, BLN (accessed May 2021).

⁴⁰⁴ 'Opera Comique' in Sadie, ed, *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, vol 2, p691-2.

⁴⁰⁵ 'Cendrillon (i)' in Sadie, ed, *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, vol 1, p797.

constantly, resulting in collaboration and recycling of material.⁴⁰⁶ The Roman ecclesiastical censors had raised so many objections to Rossini's previous project that *La Cenerentola* was substituted in haste, one month before the planned premiere, and Rossini employed an assistant Luca Agolini to compose some of it.⁴⁰⁷ Rossini's version is similar in plot and features to Isouard's, with Dandini, the baron and Alidoro the prince's tutor. The baron is called Don Magnifico, linking him explicitly to his *commedia dell'arte* ancestor, Pantalone, who was known as Il Magnifico, an ironic comment on his miserliness. Pantalone is rich, entirely motivated by money and is usually the father of one of the innamorata, whose romances he opposes. Rossini's Don Magnifico is also motivated by money and ruthlessly denies his daughter Angelina's (Cinderella's) pleas to attend the ball. Rossini avoids all magic in his version, in line with *opera buffa* conventions, substituting a pair of bracelets for Cinderella's slippers as tokens of recognition.⁴⁰⁸ *La Cenerentola* is sometimes classified as an opera '*semiseria*', or half-serious opera, which is applied to otherwise comic operas 'with a strong element of pathos'.⁴⁰⁹ Rossini's adaptation of *Cinderella* may not have been very original, in being quite close to Isouard's treatment, but his version far surpassed it in artistry and both it and its key 'numbers' became very famous.

⁴⁰⁶ Christopher Headington, Roy Westbrook and Terry Barfoot, *Opera, A History* (London, The Bodley Head Ltd, 1987), p155-6.

⁴⁰⁷ 'La Cenerentola, ossia La bonta in trionfo' in Amanda Holden, ed, *The Viking Opera Guide* (London, Viking, 1993), p900-1.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, 'probably to placate the Roman censors, who would not wish to see an unshod feminine foot on stage.'

⁴⁰⁹ 'Opera semiseria' in Sadie, ed, 'New Grove Dictionary of Opera, vol 3, p697.

The development of *Cinderella* as a stage piece through French and Italian opera indirectly influenced popular stage adaptations in England. While French and Italian opera were either unknown or rather elite forms of entertainment in England, those who were adapting the story into native forms of popular entertainment, such as pantomime, were familiar enough with the operatic versions to borrow key features from them, either straightforwardly or in parody.

***Cinderella* in Popular Entertainment**

Fairy tales began to appear on the English popular stage in the 1790s. *Cinderella* was first staged in the 'musical piece' of *Cinderella, or the Little Glass Slipper*, which appeared for several weeks at Astley's Royal Saloon, in July and August 1794.⁴¹⁰ The *Morning Chronicle*'s brief review commented that it was: '...among the few favourite Pieces of the present day... never was... an entertainment more calculated to please... owing principally to the attractions of Cinderilla.'⁴¹¹ Its success ensured a repeat run at the Royalty Theatre, Well-Close Square in October and again at the new Astley's Amphitheatre in October the following year.⁴¹² *Cinderella* then appeared as a pantomime in 1804 at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane. The extraordinary success there of George Colman's *Bluebeard* in 1798 had started a vogue for fairy tale pantomimes.⁴¹³

⁴¹⁰ 'Advertisements and Notices' *Oracle and Public Advertiser* 17 July 1794, p1 and 13 August 1794 p1, BNC (accessed May 2021).

⁴¹¹ 'News', *Morning Chronicle*, 31 July 1794, p3, BNC (accessed May 2021).

⁴¹² 'Advertisements and Notices', *Morning Chronicle*, 20 October 1794, p1 and 5 October 1795, p1, BNC (accessed May 2021).

⁴¹³ The 'dramatic romance' of *Blue Beard* opened on 16 January 1798, 'Business / Theatre', *Evening Mail* 15-17 January 1798, p4 (accessed May 2021). It was still

Pantomime as a genre had been around for much longer. It was developed in the early eighteenth century by John Rich, the theatre manager at Lincoln's Inn, who devised performances in which 'what had previously been understood to be several different types of performance – dance, opera, *commedia dell'arte* scenarios – were organized into a single action.' Rich deliberately adapted Italian opera, previously an entertainment only for the wealthy, to English taste, popularising it and bringing classical myth to the masses. Rich adopted a format similar to Italian *opera seria*, presenting serious scenes, usually based on classical myth or other familiar stories containing songs in operatic style but in English, alternated with comic scenes depicting the 'escapades of Harlequin', who used stage trickery, disguises and the transformation of objects and players.⁴¹⁴ Rich played Harlequin himself, developing all the role's physical comedy, and establishing it as the central character of the comic scenes.⁴¹⁵ Rich courted audience popularity by being somewhat subversive. The comic plot was often a 'burlesque or parody' of the serious one, and the whole pantomime frequently parodied a current opera or ballet.⁴¹⁶ Samuel Richardson attacked Harlequin as a servant figure who humiliated authority figures. He saw this as a dangerous identification for servants and apprentices in the audience.⁴¹⁷ Harlequin was sometimes played by a woman as 'Harlequine', establishing cross-

appearing on the bill in 1800, 'Advertisements and Notices', *Albion and Evening Advertiser* 17 Nov 1800, p1, BNC (accessed May 2021).

⁴¹⁴ John O'Brien, *Harlequin Britain* (London, The John Hopkins University Press, 2004), pp3, 4, 12.

⁴¹⁵ Phyllis T Dircks, 'Rich, John', Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23486> (accessed May 2021).

⁴¹⁶ O'Brien, *Harlequin Britain*, p17.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid*, p138.

dressing in the genre, and the 'comic sections consistently mock[ed] and satirize[d] authority'.⁴¹⁸ Pantomimes appealed to 'theatre-goers of all classes' who 'were often impressed by it, admiring the skill of its performers, the grandeur of its scenery, and the convincing quality of its special effects'. O'Brien identifies this as the birth of 'the modern conception of entertainment as a form of diversion directed to a mass culture'.⁴¹⁹

Jeffrey Richards relates how pantomime slowly but constantly evolved. By the early nineteenth century the alternating serious and comic scenes had been reorganised into an 'opening' story followed by a harlequinade, with the latter dominating the show.⁴²⁰ This mirrored the separation of comic scenes from *opera seria* to form *opera buffa*.⁴²¹ The two halves of pantomime were linked with a transformation scene, which changed key characters from the opening into the harlequinade ones. Actors wore giant head masks, or 'big heads' in the opening story and removed them in the transformation scene, until theatres took to having two separate casts instead in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴²² The harlequinade was slowly eclipsed by the 'opening' story, which had been developed by other popular forms. Burletta had appeared in the 1760s, a blend of ballad opera and burlesque, which presented stories in 'jokes, rhymed couplets and... recitative in place of spoken dialogue'. In the 1830s J R Planché

⁴¹⁸ Ibid, pp24, 27.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid, p2, Introduction p xiii.

⁴²⁰ Jeffrey Richards, *The Golden Age of Pantomime* (London, I B Tauris Ltd, 2015), p2.

⁴²¹ 'Opera Buffa' in Sadie, ed, *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, vol 3 p687.

⁴²² Richards, *The Golden Age of Pantomime*, p15. However, big heads were still being used in 1862, the mask modeller 'Dykwynkyn' made the Drury Lane Big Heads from 1852 to 1867-8, *ibid*, p182.

invented what became known as the 'extravaganza', a more tasteful entertainment than pantomime, with fun created from puns and wit on literary and cultural sources. Planché defined his invention as 'the whimsical treatment of a poetic subject', as distinct from the burlesque, which was 'the broad caricature of a tragedy or serious opera'.

Extravaganza and burlesque had their 'heyday' in the 1850s and 1860s and were so successful that the pantomime opening slowly took on this form.⁴²³ All these genres told their stories through comedy, parody, topical references, slapstick, magic and special effects. They were immensely popular. Theatres found that they had to keep putting on entertainments of this kind to stay afloat financially. Pantomimes would appear in every theatre and play to packed houses for weeks. They were also taken seriously by the critics who reviewed them. They could appear at any time of year, but by the mid-nineteenth century the tradition of the Christmas pantomime as an annual family show had become established.⁴²⁴

Despite pantomime's origins in the use of classical myth and other magical stories, fairy tales weren't used until the 1790s. Richards suggests that cultural interest in fairyland was renewed by Romanticism, with its emphasis on 'imagination, the emotions, dreams and fantasies'. In addition, 'literary fairy tales were being aimed specifically at children [and being] carefully purged and sanitised'.⁴²⁵ Fairies started to replace gods and goddesses on stage as sources of magic. The earliest fairy tale stage

⁴²³ Ibid, pp2-5, p69.

⁴²⁴ Ibid, pp1, 41.

⁴²⁵ Ibid, pp57-60.

production seems to have been Covent Garden's successful pantomime *Blue Beard or the Flight of Harlequin* in December 1791, which 'has uniformly drawn great houses ever since it came out'.⁴²⁶ After Colman's *Bluebeard* was a big success at Drury Lane in 1798, reviewers anticipated more fairy tale productions: 'If the present rage for dramatizing the tales of our younger days should continue, Cinderella, or the Glass Slipper, will hardly be overlooked.'⁴²⁷

The first *Cinderella* pantomime finally appeared in 1804 at Drury Lane. An illustrated description of it survives, *An Accurate Description of the Grand Allegorical Pantomimic Spectacle of Cinderella*.⁴²⁸ The pantomime was produced by 'Mr Byrne', who also starred as the prince, with music by Michael Kelly.⁴²⁹ Kelly was an Irish-born singer and composer whose roots were in opera. He had trained in Italy and sung secondary roles in *opera buffa* in Vienna, including 'the double role of Don Curzio and Don Basilio in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* in 1786,' its premiere. He was director of music and a performer for many years at Drury Lane and also became joint manager (with Stephen Storace) of the Italian Opera company at the King's Theatre from 1793. He was a popular performer but apparently undistinguished as a composer. 'He had a lyric gift but little

⁴²⁶ *Diary or Woodfall's Register*, 5 January 1792, p3, BNC (accessed May 2021).

⁴²⁷ 'Arts and Culture', *True Briton* (1793) 20 January 1798, p7, BNC (accessed May 2021).

⁴²⁸ *An Accurate Description of the Grand Allegorical Pantomimic Spectacle of Cinderella, as performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, to which is added a Critique on the Performance and Performers, by a Lover of the Drama* (London, John Fairburn, 1804).

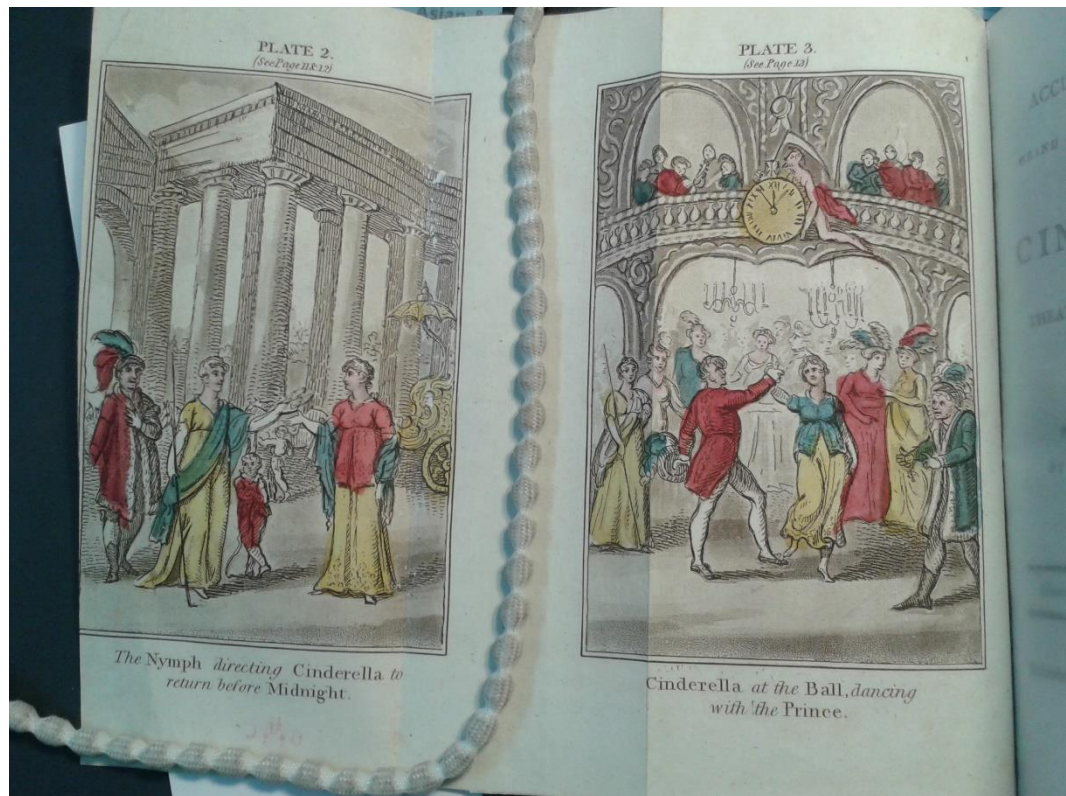
⁴²⁹ *Ibid.* James Byrne is described as 'an actor and a ballet master' in the biography of his son Oscar Byrne, who played Cupid in this pantomime. Joseph Knight, 'Byrne, Oscar (1795? – 1867)' in Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, eds, *The Dictionary of National Biography* (London, Oxford University Press, 1921-22), 21 vols, vol 3, p580.

technical skill, and sometimes allowed others to harmonize or orchestrate his melodies. Kelly was an adherent of the simpler style of English opera, in which the action takes place in the spoken dialogue and is interspersed with songs and simple ensembles.⁴³⁰ This is the format he used for this *Cinderella* pantomime, interspersing action and songs in a style directly borrowed from comic opera.

The pantomime is interesting as a transitional example of pantomime which is still using features from the genre's roots in classical myth, *commedia dell'arte* and opera. It opens with the goddess Venus deciding to take revenge on the prince for preferring to worship the chaste Diana rather than her. He is brought in, shown a vision of Cinderella and shot with Cupid's arrow. This is baffling as an approach to Perrault's tale, but reveals how overriding genre conventions were when adapting a story source. The vision scene initiates the story, giving the prince a reason to hold the ball in the hopes of seeing his love; this strategy for opening the story was recreated in later pantomimes. The classical elements continue in the use of Venus's nymph in the role of fairy godmother, who leads the prince to Cinderella. Allegorical figures of Love and Time dispute over the setting of the hands of the ball-room clock. The pictures of the *Accurate Description* show set designs with classical temples, and the performers in

⁴³⁰ Jane Girdham, 'Kelly, Michael', Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15303> (accessed May 2021).

the dress of the time which was fashionably influenced by the classical world.⁴³¹



There is a servant named Pedro who supports Cinderella and assists the sisters when dressing for the ball. The name Pedro may derive from *commedia dell'arte*'s Pedrolino, fitting the type he represents as the lowest servant, honest and faithful and secretly in love with Columbina.⁴³² Pedro is thus the link between the *commedia dell'arte* and Buttons. The part was played by Joseph Grimaldi, later pantomime's most famous clown. There is also a beggar scene: Venus's nymph and Cupid twice appear at the door disguised as beggars, who are repulsed by the sisters, but fed by

⁴³¹ *Accurate Description of Cinderella*, pp5-8, 11-15 and plates 1-4. Image: *Accurate Description of Cinderella* © British Library Board, General Reference Collection C.194.a.508, plates 2 and 3.

⁴³² See Rudlin, *Commedia dell'Arte, An Actor's Handbook*, pp134-8.

Cinderella. This scene pre-dates its use by both Isouard and Rossini, but it is unlikely that they got the idea from seeing this English pantomime. Kelly also included a trio the sisters and Cinderella sing where the sisters call her from offstage, as Rossini does.⁴³³ The similarities suggest that Kelly's experience in Italy and Italian opera exposed him to a similar cultural repertoire. This pantomime contains the embryonic form of features that later became pantomime conventions for *Cinderella*.

Unlike opera, which had conventions that focussed on the human interest, English pantomime and other popular forms regarded visual spectacle and magic or stage effects as important. Early nineteenth-century adaptations of *Cinderella* in England therefore stayed closer to the magic of the original tale, which might help to explain the initially cool reception to Rossini's *La Cenerentola* when it premiered in London in 1820. A disgruntled reviewer complained that it

omits the essential points of the fairy tale. Thus none of the pageantry that should have graced it is introduced; - not that we mean to insist that a pumpkin ought to have been converted into a state coach, or mice into cream-coloured horses, upon the stage; but we did expect a little splendour, instead of almost empty boards, old dresses and worn-out scenery; and, above all, our early prejudices were extremely shocked by the entire omission of the glass slipper, and all allusion to it.⁴³⁴

⁴³³ *Accurate Description of Cinderella*, pp9-10.

⁴³⁴ 'The Mirror of Fashion', *Morning Chronicle* 10 January 1820, p3, BLN (accessed May 2021).

La Cenerentola later became a popular opera in England, but one of the reasons for this was its English adaptation in 1830 by Rophino Lacy for Covent Garden. Lacy's adaptation reworked it into three acts to produce a hybrid blend of the opera with the pantomime *Cinderella*. This blend brought *La Cenerentola* to a wider audience than the more elite opera-going one. When Mme Albertazzi made her debut in *La Cenerentola* in 1837, *The Examiner* reviewer commented:

The music of this opera is for the most part known to the British public by a piece called *Cinderella*, which contains all the best of the music of *La Cenerentola*, with other selections from Rossini made by Rophino Lacy, and therefore the present opera enabled the great mass of the audience, by comparison, to form a better idea of Madame Albertazzi's merits than most other operas could have allowed.⁴³⁵

Lacy was well-versed in both opera and the popular stage, having worked as both musician and actor and then specialised in adapting foreign librettos for the English stage.⁴³⁶ Lacy's stage director for *Cinderella* was Charles Farley, who was a specialist in pantomime.⁴³⁷ Farley was especially interested in spectacle, machinery and tricks, and had produced many shows and pantomimes at Covent Garden from 1797 to 1834, including collaborating with Thomas Dibdin on the famous 1806

⁴³⁵ 'Theatrical Examiner', *The Examiner* 23 April 1837, p6, BLN (accessed May 2021). Lacy used music from *Guillaume Tell*, *Armida* and *Maometta*, to cover the parts added from pantomime, according to the review in 'Covent Garden Theatre', *The Standard*, 14 April 1830, p3, BLN (accessed May 2021).

⁴³⁶ David Golby, 'Lacy, Michael Rophino', Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15859> (accessed May 2021).

⁴³⁷ Lacy, *Cinderella*, p2.

pantomime *Mother Goose*, and coaching Joseph Grimaldi in his Clown roles.⁴³⁸ Although he is not mentioned in the credits in the *Accurate Description* of the *Cinderella* pantomime in 1804, he is highly likely to have known it. Lacy's additions to Rossini are therefore recognisable from the 1804 pantomime. There is both the vision scene and beggar scene, with the queen of the fairies in place of Venus. The servant Pedro is there, creating comic scenes with the sisters' finery, assisting the fairy godmother's transformation of Cinderella, and suffering his own unclenching at midnight at the ball. The slipper is restored as token of recognition. From Rossini's version the piece has the baron, the prince swapping with Dandini, Cinderella being called from on or offstage and her arrival at the ball in a veil. Lacy's version seems to have begun the convention that the prince must marry within a certain time, in this case a month after the date of his father's will. The condition appears in *La Cenerentola* as a parody: Dandini, when disguised as the prince, claims that his father had ordered him on his deathbed to marry or be disinherited. Lacy adopted this seriously, possibly in error, and it continued into later versions.⁴³⁹ Lacy's combination of developments in both opera and pantomime traditions of staging *Cinderella* consolidated and popularised them. His version became a kind of new template on which later popular stage versions were built, and whose features could be recognisably parodied.

⁴³⁸ J R Stephens, 'Farley, Charles', Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9163> (accessed May 2021).

⁴³⁹ Rossini, *La Cenerentola*, ed Fisher, pp 10, 15.

For Wilkie Collins's readership, *Cinderella* had appeared regularly on stage and its features would have been familiar. *La Cenerentola* became popular after its initial disfavour, the part of Angelina becoming associated with certain singers especially Mme Alboni in the 1840s and 50s.⁴⁴⁰ Although Italian opera in general was a rather elite art form, its music was published, and adapted into popular forms such as English musical theatre, concert repertoire, keyboard music and 'even hymns. So [operas] became a truly popular part of the English musical experience and exercised a profound influence, reaching even those large classes of people whose religion or sense of propriety would never have allowed them to enter a theatre.'⁴⁴¹ Lacy revived his version of *Cinderella* in 1839 at Drury Lane, and again in 1843 and 1844, to showcase his daughter in the starring role.⁴⁴² It was also revived by the Surrey Theatre in 1851.⁴⁴³ These productions kept the music and scenes from this opera well-known. Popular entertainment versions of *Cinderella* appeared regularly, particularly in the 1840s when there were frequent productions in London, such as E L Blanchard's burlesque at the Olympic Theatre in 1844 and Smith and Taylor's pantomime at the Lyceum in 1845. Two versions appeared during the Christmas of 1860, the winter before Collins began work on *No Name*. The pantomime *Cinderella, or Harlequin and the Fairy of the Little Glass Slipper* appeared at the Surrey Theatre, and H J Byron's

⁴⁴⁰ For example, 'Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden', *Morning Chronicle*, 3 May 1848, p5, BLN (accessed May 2021).

⁴⁴¹ 'Great Britain' in Sadie, ed, *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, vol 2, pp523-5.

⁴⁴² 'Drury Lane Theatre', *Morning Post*, 13 November 1839, p3; 'Advertisements and Notices', *The Era*, 29 September 1844, p4, BLN (accessed May 2021).

⁴⁴³ 'Theatricals etc', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 15 June 1851, p10, BLN (accessed May 2021).

burlesque *Cinderella, or the Lover, the Lackey and the Little Glass Slipper* appeared at the Strand. Byron's burlesque was a popular hit and stayed on the bills until March 1861. In this version, both the prince and his valet Dandini were played by women, while the star turn was James Rogers as the elder sister Clorinda. Baron Balderdash is Cinderella's father and his page is called Buttoni, the earliest instance of this name that I have observed. The production set out to parody opera and other current productions. *Bell's Life* reported that 'all the incidents of the time-honoured fairy-tale, according to its operatic version, are parodied... Miss Charlotte Saunders [as] Dandini...gives the imitation of the primo tenore and leading tragedians which the author has introduced into her role', noting the 'extraordinary and ridiculous puns'.⁴⁴⁴

The history of Cinderella on stage shows how pantomime and opera shared roots and developed in relation to one another, a process still underway in the mid-nineteenth century. It also shows that the *Cinderella* story was constantly developed and reinvented along with the theatrical genres in which it appeared, and in response to audiences and the times. Theatrical versions adapted a very famous story, but by prioritising the needs of their own genres and the commercial theatre over the story itself they also changed and undermined it. This is important because in the process they also subverted Perrault's moral purpose in writing his fairy tales.

⁴⁴⁴ 'Christmas Amusements', *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* 30 December 1860, p3, UKP (accessed May 2021).

Cinderella as a Cultural Model

As critics such as Jack Zipes have argued, fairy tales are age-old methods of exploring everyday social situations. 'Fairy tales have always been part of culture or a civilising process. They incorporate a moral code', which aims to channel basic human instincts towards 'personal and communal happiness.'⁴⁴⁵ Fairy tales are sources of archetypes for literature and other types of art. The Victorians were also aware of these functions of fairy tales. In 1853, Dickens wrote an article in *Household Words* extolling the lessons they provided: 'forbearance, courtesy, consideration for the poor and aged, kind treatment of animals, the love of nature, abhorrence of tyranny and brute force'. He argued that 'In a utilitarian age, of all other times, it is a matter of grave importance that fairy tales should be respected.' The tales should 'be as much preserved in their simplicity, and purity and innocent extravagance, as if they were actual fact.'⁴⁴⁶ However, Dickens's comments show a nostalgic tendency to assume that the values fairy tales encompass are universal and natural. In an era of great industrial and social change, fairy tales seemed to hark back to a better past and their preservation was desirable as a bastion against modernity. As part of a wider Victorian interest in recovering and preserving the past, fairy tales were the subject of serious study by academics and antiquarians.⁴⁴⁷ But Richards points out that 'Fairy tales were not

⁴⁴⁵ Jack Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick, The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (New York, Routledge, 2006), pp130-31.

⁴⁴⁶ Quoted by Richards, *Golden Age of Pantomime*, p60.

⁴⁴⁷ The Grimm brothers were serious collectors seeking to recover German cultural history, followed later in nineteenth century England by Joseph Jacobs and Andrew Lang. Warner, *Once Upon a Time*, pp54-61, 67-70.

universal, timeless and ageless. They derived from specific social and cultural contexts and they changed to accommodate changes in value systems.⁴⁴⁸ The oral origins of fairy tales meant that they could be constantly adapted to changing needs. As has been seen, this changeability was also characteristic of theatrical versions. Preserving fairy tales in a fixed literary form also preserves their associated moral code beyond their own time and context; if the tales are 'respected' for this, they can operate as conservative or even reactionary cultural models, part of the resistance to change. This resistance might include avoiding the scrutiny of and challenge to established and embedded power structures in society. Zipes argues that 'every moral code in every society is constituted by the most powerful groups in a community or nation-state and serves their vested interests.'⁴⁴⁹ It is therefore in the interests of those in favour of maintaining the status quo to 'respect' fairy tales that express values from the past and harness their psychological power as a social influence against change.

Perrault's Cinderella Model

Perrault intended his tales to teach morals. He titled them as 'Stories or Tales of Bygone Times, with their morals', and included a verse pointing out the moral at the end of each one. His dedication of the tales to the King's niece claims that 'the moral lessons that they all contain are extremely sensible', intending her and her peers to be guided by them.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁸ Richards, *Golden Age of Pantomime*, p59.

⁴⁴⁹ Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, p131.

⁴⁵⁰ Perrault, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, ed Betts, p81 and introduction p xiv.

According to Jack Zipes, Perrault originally conceived his tales as ‘an aesthetic and social means through which questions and issues of civilité, proper behaviour and demeanor...were mapped out’. He specifically ‘sought to portray ideal types to reinforce the standard of the civilising process set by upper-class French society.’⁴⁵¹ The moral appended to *Cinderella* is that ‘Cinderella had learned from her [godmother] how to behave / With such grace and such charm it made her a queen.’ In other words, Cinderella had learned to behave beautifully by paying attention to the advice of her elders.⁴⁵²

Perrault’s *Cinderella* reflects the dominant ideology about class and gender that existed in Perrault’s late seventeenth-century elite culture. It provides a model of virtuous, submissive womanhood whose goal in life is marriage. Virtue in women is defined as passivity, which Cinderella displays in her patience and humility, choosing not to fight back against her oppressors, despite opportunities to do so. Cinderella’s virtue motivates the fairy godmother to sponsor her presentation to the prince and motivates the prince to choose her as his bride. This constructs a view of a world where the powerful value virtue and reward it. The powerful are specifically male: it is the prince who has the real power to alter Cinderella’s circumstances. Cinderella does not exercise any power or act in her own right. The godmother’s role as a mature woman is to enable and guide Cinderella towards marriage, playing her part in

⁴⁵¹ Richards, *Golden Age of Pantomime*, pp59-60, referring to Zipes, *Fairy Tales as Myth / Myth as Fairy Tale*.

⁴⁵² Perrault, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, ed Betts, pp139-41 and p203.

perpetuating the system. This model requires women to please men with their goodness and humility and accept their inferior dependent position, all of which keeps power and wealth in the hands of men. *Cinderella* also provides a model of a hierarchical society, with everyone in their proper place. Cinderella is not a humble person being elevated to high rank, but a well-born person being restored to her rightful position, from which she is eligible to be chosen by a prince. This model requires people to accept the hierarchy, rather than push for social mobility, and leave power and wealth in the hands of the aristocracy. Finally, the wicked stepmother and ugly sisters are bad women who do not value virtue and misuse their power over others. It is bad women who are responsible for the oppression of virtuous ones, who can only be rescued by men. This model leads people to believe that women are unsuitable to exercise power and even their domestic power is ultimately best subject to male control. It is notable that no criticism is directed at Cinderella's father for allowing his wife and stepdaughters to mistreat his own child. The prominence of women in the tale is not a sign of their importance or of any consideration of their reality or point of view. It is a tale written by a man, holding women's behaviour up to inspection and laying down the terms under which favour will be granted or withheld. Men's behaviour is not subject to question; it is women who are seen and judged.

According to Christopher Betts, Perrault's views were not especially misogynistic by the standards of his time. Compared with the adverse views of women being expressed by other writers, Perrault is speaking up for female virtue and expressing his faith in it. Betts argues that five of the

tales are clearly designed to help young girls negotiate the dangers of the world they lived in, at a time when men's rights and power over women were virtually unlimited.⁴⁵³ Nonetheless, Perrault's *Cinderella* provides a cultural and social model that is entirely in the interests of male dominance. Zipes quotes Pierre Bourdieu's arguments that male dominance depends on a view of the world as 'organised according to the division into relational genders, male and female, with the male arbitrarily designated as superior to the female.' These divisions are created and reinforced by 'the social ordering of the family, work, education, government, and cultural institutions' resulting in 'customary behaviour, dress, attitudes, beliefs and postures that we assume to distinguish our roles in society and that become integral to our identities and appear to be natural.'⁴⁵⁴ Fairy tales are part of this in that they are products of culture but appear to be expressions of natural values. Perrault's *Cinderella* advocates and rewards humility and passivity. In a strongly Christianised culture, *Cinderella's* message of turning the other cheek in the face of misfortune or abuse, and its promise that the meek should inherit the earth, had deep resonance. But this tale translates the concept into a structure whereby this definition of virtue is applied exclusively to women. The human figures who are judged virtuous or wicked are all women, while *Cinderella's* heavenly reward is marriage to the male prince. Women are encouraged to comply with their own exclusion from power as a matter of virtue. The assertion that princes value virtue best bears no

⁴⁵³ Perrault, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, ed Betts, Introduction pp xviii.

⁴⁵⁴ Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, p166, citing Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*.

relation to the way power is created and exercised in the real world.

Aristocratic men can only have gained their dominant position by valuing their own interests most highly, and by excluding as many other people from power as possible. They had to be active, proud and selfish to stay powerful and rich.

Perrault's moral intervention also took place in the context of the genre in which he was writing. As Marina Warner points out, fairy tales at this time were mainly written by 'independent-minded women of courtly, elite society... [who wrote with] biting satire about domestic cruelty and political tyranny.' They would 'speak out against arranged marriages and the double standard, which allowed men to enjoy love affairs and punished women for adultery, which gave men an education and denied women the freedom that follows from knowledge... Several of these women suffered legal penalties – prison, house arrest, exile – for their views'.⁴⁵⁵ Perrault, whose whole life had been dedicated to, and had profited from, the regime of Louis XIV's court, stands out as a sole male reactionary force among fairy tale writers; while women mobilised this literary genre to advocate change, Perrault's tales expressed traditional male aristocratic values. Since his were the tales that became famous, it was his version of *Cinderella* that became the template. Possibly its reassertion of mainstream Christian values and faith in established power structures was part of its appeal: he presented a world view with which people were comfortable, rather than challenging it.

⁴⁵⁵ Warner, *Once Upon a Time*, pp46-47.

The danger of Perrault's *Cinderella* model lies less in the author's own views and intentions, which were moderate for his time, but in the model's being regarded by later readers as archetypal and universal instead of an expression of the values of a particular historical moment. The fame of Perrault's *Cinderella* meant that it survived beyond its own time and played its part in influencing attitudes to women's role in society. By Victorian times the model had found its way into domestic fiction. As previously noted, part of the function of domestic fiction was to provide women with a 'sentimental education necessary for marriage', in other words to help prepare them psychologically for their socially prescribed role in life. Kate Flint notes a persistent 'formula of a woman placed in adverse social or emotional conditions finally having her qualities, her forbearance, her attractiveness rewarded by marriage to a suitably sensitive yet manly husband.'⁴⁵⁶ Flint does not name *Cinderella*, but the parallels are clear. Laurence Talairach-Vielmas notes that 'Fairy tale motifs enabled writers to enhance their heroines' beauty and above all to encode a patriarchal ideology... conventional happy endings... demanded that the heroines be married and securely locked up in their homes.'⁴⁵⁷

Theatrical Cinderella and the Cultural Model

The theatrical versions of *Cinderella* changed Perrault's story to fit their genres. This undermined his story's function as a social model in some important ways. They derive from the fact that theatrical *Cinderella's*

⁴⁵⁶ Flint, 'The Victorian Novel and its Readers', p23.

⁴⁵⁷ Talairach-Vielmas, *Moulding the Female Body*, p1.

purpose is commercial, not moral. Perrault's tales were created as moral lessons; he had no need to make a living from them. The purpose of theatrical *Cinderella* is to earn money by providing entertainment to a paying audience. The story provides a framework for performing stars to do their business in the theatre and genre in which they work. These considerations take priority over the terms of the story itself and any moral message it may contain, which may get altered, diluted or parodied. The commercial need to offer continually new productions results in multiple versions in multiple genres, starring multiple performers. These endless variations can move with the times and their audience, overriding or ignoring the morals of Perrault's fixed single version from the past, reconnecting the story in this sense to the popular basis of fairy tales in folk and oral culture. In addition, popular genres tended to have subversive elements anyway, which encouraged the expression of very different ideas from Perrault's. Popular theatrical genres could express social dissent, which had few other outlets under aristocratic rule. As O'Brien explains, pantomime arose in the eighteenth century with the broadening of theatre's audience from the Restoration court circles to a more socially diverse audience from an urban commercial population.⁴⁵⁸ Heather Hadlock argues that '*opera buffa*'s master narrative is the carnivalesque one of "uncrowning the king": exposing the ruler's selfish motives and the arbitrary basis of his power.'⁴⁵⁹ *Opera buffa* servants like Figaro, who was based on Harlequin, are cleverer than their arrogant

⁴⁵⁸ O'Brien, *Harlequin Britain*, Introduction pp xiv-xvi.

⁴⁵⁹ Heather Hadlock 'Opera and Gender Studies' in Nicholas Till, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Opera Studies* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp257-75, p267, summarising Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*.

masters and were created to express dissent at their reduced standing in a society stratified by inheritance. Despite censorship, popular theatre's physical and visual expression, improvised 'business', parody or simply a much less submissive Cinderella, could all chime with the opinions of a less deferential audience.

The performing nature of theatre exposes the constructed nature of social roles. *Cinderella* is an archetypal domestic story, but theatrical *Cinderella* is overtly acted out in an exaggerated fantasy world full of stereotyped roles. The role of virtuous Cinderella is exposed as just another stereotype, a part to be played. The distinction is made more obvious when the virtuous role model was being embodied by actresses who were not regarded as respectable role models off-stage. These tensions and contradictions suggested that social roles are created, changeable and controllable, by the individual player or by outside forces that control the social world. Women can choose to play Cinderella, or have the role forced on them, but either way the role is not natural.

Theatrical *Cinderella* also challenges gender norms. The consequence of the addition of male parts to the story is that male behaviour is restored to visibility and scrutiny. The baron emerges as Cinderella's chief oppressor rather than the sisters, bringing the misuse of male power back into view. The prince must display good personal qualities to win Cinderella, rather than relying on his position. This is emphasised when the baron and sisters court Dandini because they believe he is the prince, inviting the contempt of the audience. Cross-dressing by the actors also allows men

and women to occupy roles they would not normally do in society. When a woman plays the prince on stage and is seen exercising power it publicly transgresses this taboo in society. When a man dresses up as an ugly sister for comedy, it can either undermine the seriousness of the 'bad' behaviour or suggest that the bad women of Perrault's tale are male inventions.

The case of *Cinderella* reveals the use of and struggle over artistic genres for social and political purposes. The success of Perrault's tale usurped the rebellious fairy tale genre to reinforce traditional values instead. Theatres in turn usurped his tale, and, by prioritising genre and their own performance and audience requirements, opened up its moral message to other possibilities.

Cinderella in No Name

Collins's use of theatrical *Cinderella* in *No Name* reveals through role-play how Perrault's Cinderella operated as an insidious role model for women. I will show this by examining *No Name* in the light of Perrault's model, and then looking at what the theatrical parodies reveal instead.

Perrault's *Cinderella* Model in *No Name*: Does it Fit?

No Name shows two women who are deprived of their inheritance but get it back through their marriages to the legal possessors of their fortune. This story basically correlates with Cinderella's, whose rightful place in society is restored through marriage. At first, Magdalen rejects Perrault's

Cinderella model of passive virtue. She proudly claims entitlement to her father's money, appeals directly to her uncle and cousin and the law, to no avail. Then she violates the model by dressing up and acting the role cynically to entrap her cousin into marriage. This fails too, because he eventually finds her out and disinherits her. She is being active and proud instead of humble and passive. Norah adopts the *Cinderella* model of behaviour, accepting her disinheritance humbly. Her virtue wins her the right marriage and the restoration of her father's fortune. Magdalen then humbly agrees that Norah deserves this and marries Captain Kirke. On the surface, Collins seems to be endorsing the *Cinderella* model by this resolution. What he is actually showing is that women do not have any other option. Magdalen spends the novel trying to get her fortune back by every means within her power, both fair and foul, and failing.

The *Cinderella* model is an ironic one for Norah and Magdalen because they are illegitimate. Cinderella is gently-born, unjustly reduced to poverty and then restored to her proper place. As illegitimate children, the Vanstone sisters are not entitled to that place, regardless of the social status of their parents. They are both, even the virtuous Norah, travesties of Cinderella.

As discussed in chapter 2, legitimacy, marriage and wealth were intimately connected and the means by which wealth remained in the hands of men. The whole structure depended on female virtue. Social pressure persuaded women that marriage was their only proper course in life. The law disinherited children born outside marriage, in the absence of a will.

Illegitimate children were blamed on 'fallen' women and their situation met with no compassion or legal support. To keep her own social place and protect and legitimise her children, a woman had to marry and give up control of her own property to men. After marriage, men wanted their property to descend to their biological children only, not those fathered by someone else. Female virtue was crucial for this too.⁴⁶⁰ In this way, a concern for power and property could masquerade as a moral issue.

Henry Mansel's review of *No Name* in the *Quarterly Review* illustrates the moral attitude to these issues:

The stage trick of exhibiting the **virtuous concubine** in contrast to the **vicious wife** is brought forward... Let us suppose that a heartless husband has deserted an innocent and amiable wife to live with an abandoned mistress... and that... he is enabled, by a marriage with his paramour, to provide himself with a **ready-made family** of lawful children, and to ruin the prospects of some exemplary and ill-used brother or nephew, upon whom the property is settled in **the absence of direct heirs**... all the virtues... and all the vices... are simply so much dust thrown in the eyes of the reader, to blind him to the real merits of the argument... can any law be contrived...which may not be made to appear oppressive by this sort of **special pleading**? Does not the **punishment of a felon inflict a stigma on his children**? And should there be, therefore, no punishment for felony? (my emphasis)⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶⁰ See, for example, Steinbach, *Women in England*, pp119-21, 267-8.

⁴⁶¹ H L Mansel, *Quarterly Review*, April 1863, reproduced in Page, ed, *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage*, pp138-40.

Look at the language here: the 'virtuous concubine' or the 'vicious wife': it is the woman's morality that is important, not the man's; the 'ready-made family' and 'absence of direct heirs': Mansel writes as though the children did not really exist until the marriage took place; 'punishment', 'felon', 'stigma': having children outside marriage is a *crime*;⁴⁶² 'special pleading': as though Collins is arguing for letting illegitimate children inherit if they and their family show good behaviour. Collins is in fact revealing that legitimacy is *already* separate from virtue. Legitimate descendants inherit regardless of their or their family's character. Illegitimate descendants don't. In Mansel's view the character of an illegitimate child is irrelevant, automatically trumped by a narrow definition of virtue as sexual virtue specifically applied to his mother only.

Collins reveals the *Cinderella* model to be an insidious one, designed to lead women towards marriage, at a time when marriage deprived women of their property. This is an issue that persistently concerned Collins.⁴⁶³ *No Name* emphasises the insecurity of women's financial dependence on men. Norah and Magdalen's uncle and cousin take their property and refuse to provide for them from it. Mrs Wragge's story plays alongside Magdalen's, showing a humble good wife who remains ill-treated. Men required their women to be submissive and virtuous but weren't required to take care of them in return. Noel Vanstone can bequeath his wife's

⁴⁶² This point is reiterated in another, anonymous, review in the *London Quarterly Review*, 'a Methodist organ': 'In *No Name* he has employed all his genius so to gild one of the greatest offences a man can commit against the laws of morality and the well-being of society, as to hide its real character and excite sympathy for that which should be visited with stern reprobation.' Page, ed, *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage*, p144.

⁴⁶³ For example, *The Woman in White* revolves around the tussle over which man gets to control Laura Fairlie's fortune.

fortune away from her and leave her destitute. Its restitution by Norah's marriage is the unlikeliest of coincidences. Collins's story unmasks Perrault's *Cinderella* as a hollow rescue fantasy; it does not fit contemporary women.

The Theatrical *Cinderella* Model in *No Name*: Does it Fit?

Theatrical *Cinderella* already undermines Perrault's model in ways outlined above. Collins further uses it to expose how social pressures organise women into marriage.

The Baron, the Prince and the Valet

The theatrical *Cinderella* model restores the male characters to scrutiny in their exercise of power and their treatment of women. The baron is a comic figure who is nonetheless corrupt and entirely motivated by money and self-interest. Collins casts Wragge in this role. Wragge already belies the *Cinderella* fantasy by his treatment of his wife, but Collins creates this aspect of his behaviour from a specific theatrical model. One of the effects of this is to show how the selfish, neglectful or greedy man is an intrinsic part of *Cinderella*'s story. Wragge isn't just a bad individual, he represents a social type, one that goes back to *commedia dell'arte*'s Pantalone and Roman comedy before that. These sorts of men have been around for a long time and they always try to thwart women's interests in favour of their own. Collins highlights Wragge's self-serving hypocrisy by parodying the famous 'Un segreto d'importanza' duet from *La Cenerentola*, where Dandini tells Don Magnifico that he is the valet not the

prince. The number was famous enough for H J Byron to parody it in his version of *Cinderella*, beginning the equivalent scene with: 'Un segreto d'importanza / Which affects this extravaganza'.⁴⁶⁴ In *La Cenerentola*, Magnifico welcomes the disguised Dandini to his home, courting and flattering him, hoping that the prince will solve his financial problems by marrying one of the sisters. He is outraged and claims injury when Dandini tells him the truth: 'For such an injury and such an affront, the true prince will recompense me.'⁴⁶⁵ These details are closely mirrored in *No Name*: Wragge, who has fallen on hard times, persuades Magdalen to accept his hospitality, hoping to make money out of her in some way. He is appalled to discover that she is not the wealthy young lady he took her for:

'Both my sister and myself must depend on our own exertions to gain our daily bread.'

'What! ! !' cried the captain, starting to his feet.... 'Impossible – wildly, extravagantly impossible!' He sat down again, and looked at Magdalen as if she had inflicted a personal injury on him. (p223-4)

The actions of sitting and rising also mimic the original scene, in which Dandini invites the baron to sit to hear the secret. Lacy's translation has: Baron: 'For this secret I'll prepare / ...I'll remain upon this chair.' When Dandini tells him the truth:

⁴⁶⁴ Byron, *Cinderella*, p31.

⁴⁶⁵ Rossini, *La Cenerentola*, ed Walter, p51.

Baron. (*who has been listening to him with astonishment, starts back with dismay*)

Are you serious?

Dan. The farce is o'er, Sir.

Baron. (*rising*)

All has been, then,---

Dan. (*rising also*)

A jest, no more, Sir.⁴⁶⁶

This parody casts Magdalen as the valet Dandini masquerading as the prince. Byron's Dandini covets the throne, which will be his if the prince fails to marry by the deadline, thinking he will make a much better prince than the real one. The analogy here is that Magdalen wants to be the prince of her own wealth. This role has been usurped by her uncle, leaving her to play Dandini in the prince's clothes instead. Magdalen desires to exercise the same power over her life and money as a man, while in society's eyes no woman can do this, and her attempts to act the role make her an imposter. Collins has here selected a moment that appears in both the opera, where the prince and Dandini are male roles, and in the Byron extravaganza, where they are played by women. This dual reference juxtaposes the same roles being played by either sex, suggesting that women could occupy positions of power. Moreover, the extravaganza actresses did not thereby lose their femininity. Richards

⁴⁶⁶ Lacy, *Cinderella*, p34.

explains the principal boy role by quoting Kathy Fletcher on Planché's work:

Nothing in the available evidence suggests a sustained realistic attempt on the part of the extravaganza actress to recreate or mimic adult male behaviour... While endearing boyish characteristics were appreciated... it was important to retain certain feminine attributes.⁴⁶⁷

Collins uses the portrayal of the baron in theatrical *Cinderella* to suggest that it is men who are responsible for the oppression of women, rather than other women. *No Name* parodies the baron rejecting Cinderella's pleas to be allowed to go to the ball in Wragge's refusal to allow his wife to go shopping. Both Cinderella and Mrs Wragge are forbidden to leave the house. In Lacy's version, the baron orders her back to the kitchen: 'To thy cinders hence away!...Begone I say.'⁴⁶⁸ Wragge barks similar orders: "Sit down!" shouted the captain... "Stop where you are!" (p234).

Cinderella 1: Mrs Wragge

Wragge's mistreatment of his wife in the role of the baron shows that she is our first Cinderella figure. The three Cinderella figures in *No Name* seem to be based on Cinderella's song in the first scene of *La Cenerentola*. She sings of a king, who desires to marry:

'Twas ordained his choice should be

⁴⁶⁷ Richards, *Golden Age of Pantomime*, p30, referring to Fletcher, 'Planche, Vestris and the Transvestite Role: Sexuality and Gender in Victorian Popular Theatre' in *Nineteenth Century Theatre* 15 (1987).

⁴⁶⁸ Lacy, *Cinderella*, p26.

Limited to maidens three;
Wealth and beauty he despised
And innocence and goodness prized.⁴⁶⁹

Of the three women in the song, Mrs Wragge is 'wealth'. Wragge has married her for her money: 'I had my trifle of money, and I had my pick, and I picked the captain... He took care of me and my money. I'm here, the money's gone' (p206). Wragge has spent his wife's inheritance, just as Don Magnifico has wasted Cinderella's: 'you do know what a scandal there would be if someone found out that I have squandered her inheritance!'⁴⁷⁰ Mrs Wragge's Cinderella dream is not of the ball but of shopping and buying beautiful clothes. In London she desires '*Elegant Cashmere Robes; strictly oriental, very grand*' (p264). These robes are advertised in 'circulars', which have been 'flung in at the cab windows' (p261), suggesting the pumpkin and carriage. She is a victim of the commercial side of the Cinderella dream, the material glamour being sold by commercial art forms like story books and theatre shows and shops that played on these dreams to sell their wares.

Mrs Wragge's connections with the commercial theatre are evident in the details of her *Cinderella* characterisation. Her large head is reminiscent of a pantomime 'big head', the whole-head masks worn by pantomime actors. She has 'a large, smooth, white round face – like a moon... dimly irradiated by eyes of mild and faded blue, which looked straightforward

⁴⁶⁹ Rossini, *La Cenerentola*, ed Walter, p5.

⁴⁷⁰ Rossini, *La Cenerentola*, ed Fisher, p29.

into vacancy' (p202).⁴⁷¹ Just like all theatrical Cinderellas, she is called from off-stage: 'the captain's mellifluous bass notes floated upstairs... "Mrs Wragge!" cried the captain. "Mrs Wragge!"' (p208). The 'mellifluous bass notes' suggests an operatic role, while Don Magnifico is a bass part. In both *La Cenerentola* and Lacy's version, Cinderella is called just as she has met the prince who is disguised as a valet, here played by Magdalen. However, Byron's parody of this moment has the prince calling Dandini from offstage, just as he has proposed to Clorinda. Collins could also be referring to this version of the scene, because shortly before her husband calls her, Mrs Wragge explains her valet-like duties: 'I shave him. I do his hair, and cut his nails – he's awfully particular about his nails. So he is about his trousers. And his shoes.' (p206). This is similar to Dandini's explanation to the baron in Lacy's version:

'I'm a *valet*, Sir, by station,
Brushing clothes my occupation;
Of the wardrobe I take care,
Shave my master, and dress his hair.'⁴⁷²

Giving Mrs Wragge the valet's duties instead of Cinderella's is itself parodic, but it also recasts this scene in terms of Byron's parody: Wragge claims the prince's role and the real power, treating Magdalen and Mrs Wragge somewhat interchangeably as Dandini, the servant, and Clorinda,

⁴⁷¹ See also Morley, *Journal of a London Playgoer*, p130, reporting 'A vast posting-bill... requiring "two hundred young women, none under the height of six feet two, for the pantomime at Covent Garden."'

⁴⁷² Lacy, *Cinderella*, p34.

the unsuccessful bride, reducing them both to imposters. More specifically, Collins seems to have used Byron's Clorinda as a source for Mrs Wragge. For example, the mean and selfish Clorinda claims that 'For useful work I'm much too weak and gentle.'⁴⁷³ Mrs Wragge is described as genuinely gentle, submissive and meek (p202-3), unable to manage the simplest household task without firm orders from Wragge. Clorinda is a parody of the 'gentle' refined female, Mrs Wragge is a parody of this parody. Clorinda's attempt to try on the glass slipper hurts her heels:

'CLORIN (*crying out as if hurt*) My heel! my heel!

BARON (*aside to her*) Think of the prince's tin.

Come, give your heel a stamp, and *he'll* go in.

(CLORINDA *gives it up in despair*)

To grow such heels when you've lived so genteelly

You might have rusticated down at *Ely*'⁴⁷⁴

This play on 'down at heel' is the same way Mrs Wragge's shoes are described: "Down at heel again!" shouted the captain... "The right shoe..." (p210), and "Down at heel again! The left shoe, this time" (p233).

Byron's Clorinda was played by James Rogers; Mrs Wragge's enormous height and features, as well as her personal oddities, make much more sense if she is imagined as played for comedy by a man. Clorinda likes to dress well: '(*arranging dress*) Come, has my new *modiste* succeeded? ...I... / Dress myself in the latest fashions out.'⁴⁷⁵ This is obviously a joke,

⁴⁷³ Byron, *Cinderella*, p13.

⁴⁷⁴ Byron, *Cinderella*, p43.

⁴⁷⁵ Byron, *Cinderella*, p14-15.

for the *Era* describes Rogers's 'short-waisted dress of several centuries back.'⁴⁷⁶ Similarly, Mrs Wragge says 'I'm nicely dressed, though, ain't I? I like dress; it's a comfort to me.' (p206), which is comic, if she is indeed 'played' by a man, with 'heavy flat feet' (p210) and man-size physical features. Her omelette recipe requires "'a piece of butter the size of your thumb"... Look at my thumb, and look at yours! Whose size does she mean?' (p207). Byron's script does contain the exchange: 'Fairy Q: '...and you've been under, as, poor child, you know, Clorinda's thumb. Cind: both thumbs.'⁴⁷⁷ Collins's focus on Mrs Wragge's thumb could possibly be sourced from this detail.

There was a long stage tradition of men playing women's roles for comedy. If Collins wanted to suggest that Mrs Wragge was being played by a man, it would make sense to work in details from a recent prominent example, and James Rogers had a huge hit as Clorinda. Men would usually play the ugly sisters in a production of *Cinderella*, but there is one precedent for Cinderella herself being played by a man. In E L Blanchard's 1844 burlesque *Cinderella, or the Great Fairy and the Little Glass Slipper* at the Olympic Theatre, 'the principal female characters [were] personated by men', including the lessee, Mr George Wild, as Cinderella, under the name of 'Mademoiselle Georgina Wild'.⁴⁷⁸ This production's conventional *Cinderella* script became parody with the cross-

⁴⁷⁶ 'Theatricals in the Christmas Week / Strand', *The Era*, 30 December 1860, p11, BLN (accessed May 2021).

⁴⁷⁷ Byron, *Cinderella*, p34.

⁴⁷⁸ 'Olympic Theatre', *Morning Post*, 10 April 1844, p5. The *Era* advertisement for the production in May tantalisingly describes it as the 'Eastern burlesque', suggesting that Wild might have worn an oriental costume. 'Advertisements and Notices / Royal Olympic Theatre', *The Era*, 12 May 1844, p4. BLN (accessed May 2021).

dressed casting, for example the prince being entranced by a vision of Cinderella through a waterfall, conjured up by the chief fairy Butterflynda.⁴⁷⁹ The production played for several weeks in April and May 1844; the twenty-year-old Collins was based in London at this time, working in Antrobus & Co tea merchants, so it is possible that he saw it.⁴⁸⁰

Mrs Wragge's identification with a cross-dressed man is comic, but also raises a problem. If Collins is using *Cinderella* to comment on the iniquity of women's position, does it undermine his case to have one of them played by a man? Jeffrey Richards explains the pantomime dame by quoting Peter Ackroyd in *Dressing Up*: 'the dame is never effeminate... she always retains her male identity. The performer is clearly a man dressed as an absurd and ugly woman, and much of the comedy is derived from the fact that he is burlesquing himself as a male actor.'⁴⁸¹ A lot of feminist critique of Mrs Wragge's situation (eg, Deirdre David's reading, that she feels 'deprived of identity by the incessant discipline of male directions'⁴⁸²) is invalidated if you realise she is a man dressed up and meant to be a joke. However, that could be the point: Collins is showing how women's issues are invalidated. Creating Mrs Wragge as a cross-dressed male role from the world of theatre demonstrates how

⁴⁷⁹ E L Blanchard, *Cinderella, or the Great Fairy and the Little Glass Slipper*, Olympic Theatre 1844, Lord Chamberlain's Plays Collection, British Library Add MS 42974 ff 242–255. The sisters, Clorinda and Thisbe, have large parts and Butterflynda appears at appropriate moments to control the action.

⁴⁸⁰ Letters from Collins only survive for January and August 1844, but his travels to Paris that year did not take place until September, making it plausible that he was in London for at least some of April and May.

⁴⁸¹ Richards, *Golden Age of Pantomime*, pp30-33.

⁴⁸² Dierdre David, 'Rewriting the Male Plot in Wilkie Collins's *No Name*', in Claridge and Langland, eds, *Out of Bounds: Male Writers and Gendered Criticism*, pp136-48, p144.

constructions of femininity are male-derived and have nothing to do with real women at all. Mrs Wragge is an exaggerated and unflattering picture of a brainless, helpless woman, and her difficulties are thereby rendered laughable and trivial, even though they are in fact serious, and this is revealing as a presentation technique. Nobody rescues the ridiculous Mrs Wragge. This allows Collins to show how women's plight can be turned into comedy by men and thus be ignored.

Mrs Wragge's Cinderella dreams of magical transformation are particularly ludicrous, in contrast with her lack of physical beauty and her inability to make the oriental cashmere robe fit or finish it. Her unrealistic dreams make her vulnerable to advertisements that promise fulfilment. While comic, this portrayal also illustrates social attitudes that women were weak victims of their own desires. Cultural disapproval of commercialism and its temptations made a good excuse for keeping women's money out of their control. And yet Perrault's romantic dream of winning Prince Charming with beauty and virtue had also been sold to women, taking advantage of their gullibility in much the same way, and with a similar aim of parting them from their money. Laurence Talairach-Vielmas notes that the rise of consumer culture in the mid-nineteenth century enabled the Victorian cult of female beauty to flourish and encouraged conformity to ideals designed to please men. This cult also drew on fairy tale archetypes of beautiful heroines. Sensation novels often interrogated this by debunking or reworking fairy tale archetypes, exposing the artificiality and consumerism

behind it.⁴⁸³ Talairach-Vielmas suggests that in *No Name* both Magdalen and Mrs Wragge are victims of male control in seeking the archetypes of beauty and marriage in the first place.⁴⁸⁴ If Cinderella is a male-derived image and role-model, and Mrs Wragge is its theatrical parody, she perhaps dramatizes the contrast between the dream of Cinderella that enticed women and the reality of how men actually saw them. Her alignment with the 'wealth' maiden from Cenerentola's song implicitly reveals their motive for this: money. The comment seems to be that social conditioning is a form of selling, an unscrupulous one that encourages women to buy into a fantasy deal for the greater profit of men, whilst revealing the contempt in which men hold them when they do. This comparison points to the hypocrisy of a middle and upper-class society that liked to pride itself on being morally above commercialism, when takeovers of women's assets were normal practice. As Mrs Wragge shows, once married, and with no further rights to their own money, women could be abused and ignored with impunity. Without any legal rights their physical attractions (if they had any) or their moral character made no difference.

The Beggar Scene

The beggar scene is a theatrical addition to many staged versions of *Cinderella*, in which the fairy godmother figure begs at Cinderella's house in disguise. The ugly sisters repulse her, but Cinderella gives her her own

⁴⁸³ Talairach-Vielmas, *Moulding the Female Body*, pp 1, 4-6.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid*, pp133-46. She does not note that Mrs Wragge's dream is specifically of Cinderella.

food. Collins reconstructs this scene in *No Name* by having Magdalen arrive at Rosemary Lane bereft of her 'things'. Wragge then offers her his 'pauper's meal', but in doing so he identifies himself with Cinderella. Wragge cannot get a carriage to leave York without money to hire it and pay his bills, so Magdalen supplies it, a play on the fairy providing Cinderella's carriage to the ball: Wragge suggestively describes Magdalen's undetected disappearance from York as 'the fairy has vanished' (p231). At the end of the Second Scene, they drive away in the carriage 'as the clock of York Minster struck nine' in the morning (p234), rather as an act of *Cinderella* will usually end with Cinderella driving off to the ball at mid-evening.

Wragge has been playing the baron, but here he takes Cinderella's role, seeing Magdalen as his fairy godmother. He reallocates the roles with some force and in his own interests, suggesting the power men have to misappropriate resources that rightly belong to women, and require women to play supporting roles and serve male needs first. He has persuaded her to come back to his house, rather than receiving a beggar who has chosen to knock at the door. The 'pauper's meal' is provided by the landlady, whom he has not yet paid, and who is eventually paid with Magdalen's money. Magdalen is not destitute, but he insists that she abandons her left luggage: 'We must sacrifice the box – we must indeed' (p233).

Magdalen has been denied the role of prince and now has been manipulated into being fairy godmother. In this role she takes Mrs

Wragge to London, arranging for her to go shopping after all ('here is a holiday and no mistake!' p262). But her enactment of the role is a corrupt one: the fairy acts only for Cinderella's benefit, but like Wragge Magdalen is motivated by her own gain. She puts off Mrs Wragge's shopping trip until it suits her to have her out of the house. She intends to re-enact the beggar scene at Noel Vanstone's house. Disguising herself as Miss Garth, she presents herself as an old humble woman: 'I make no claim to be treated with any extraordinary consideration. I am a governess, and I don't expect it' (p284). The fairy only pretends to beg to test the virtue of Cinderella and her sisters, but Magdalen is in earnest, seeking a substantial sum of money from Noel Vanstone, so that she can resume her superior social status and wealth. By misappropriating a role in her own interests, she is still trying to behave like a man.

Magdalen's actions still test the virtue of Noel Vanstone and Mrs Lecount and they duly respond in the roles of ugly sisters, rejecting her pleas to share their wealth, and showing her the door. In Lacy's version of the scene, the sisters complain that 'ours is become a regular house of call for all the vagabonds in the county', and 'We shall be robbed some day or other.'⁴⁸⁵ This is echoed in Noel Vanstone's fear of robbery: 'If she can't get my money by fair means, she threatens to have it by foul' (p292), and 'Lecount, I'm to be robbed!' (p297). Two further versions, Smith & Taylor's 1845 Lyceum production and C S James's at the Queen's in 1850, have the sisters offering the beggar a soup-kitchen ticket. This was a topical

⁴⁸⁵ Lacy, *Cinderella*, p13-14; Rossini, *La Cenerentola*, ed Walter, pp7, 9.

reference that would have clearly meant hypocritical meanness to the audience.⁴⁸⁶ Mrs Lecount's suggestion that Noel make good his father's offer of a hundred pounds to each sister (p289) may be a version of this. A hundred pounds is much less than the forty thousand Magdalen is seeking but is generous in comparison with a soup-kitchen ticket, which suggests Magdalen's corruption of the terms of the role she is playing.

Cinderella 2: Magdalen

Having failed in her attempts to occupy roles with any power, the prince and the fairy godmother, Magdalen resorts to the only plan left to her: marriage to the man who has her fortune. She is finally reduced to playing Cinderella, a role she does not really want, to get a prince she does not want, just to recover her own money. She plays a deliberate and false imitation of Cinderella to entrap Noel Vanstone into marriage, presenting him with a performance of Cinderella's innocence and loveliness, using her clothes and her personal attractions. With this strategy she has selected the second attribute from Cinderella's song: beauty. After casting off her 'Miss Garth' disguise and admiring herself in the mirror, she thinks 'I can twist any man alive around my finger... as long as I keep my looks!' (p306).

Magdalen plays Cinderella by adopting her clothes. Cinderella's clothes are important in Perrault's tale, where the transformation from 'ragged

⁴⁸⁶ Smith and Taylor, *Cinderella* 1845, p24; C S James, *Cinderella and the Fairy Glass Slipper, or Harlequin and the Silver Lily, the Naiads of the Golden Grot and Fay of the Magic Fountain*, Queen's Theatre 1850, Lord Chamberlain's Plays Collection, British Library Add MS 43031 ff 616-636 b, p631.

clothes' like a servant to a dress of 'cloth of gold and silver, gleaming with jewels' for the ball symbolises her change of status.⁴⁸⁷ Being a theatrical Cinderella, Magdalen has already been seen by her prince in her poor clothes, her 'Miss Garth' disguise: an 'old gown... of a dark brown colour, with a neat pattern of little star-shaped spots in white' (p267) made from alpaca, a common mixed-wool fabric at the time.⁴⁸⁸ The Bygrave's house-servant later describes the dress as 'this dowdy brown thing... Why it's hardly fit for a servant!' (p504).⁴⁸⁹ Magdalen transforms herself into the picture of radiant innocent beauty with 'two bright, delicate muslin dresses' which belonged to her at Combe-Raven, evoking her old innocent identity. She chooses to wear the 'blue and white – the shade of blue which best suited her fair complexion', to maximise her beauty (p355). Noel, like the prince, is instantly captivated by her: 'There was no mistaking the sudden flutter and agitation in his manner' (p361). Wragge advises her to adopt Cinderella's ball scene vanishing tactics: 'make him feel the charm of your society [and then] drive him distracted by the loss of it' (p390). Under pressure to secure him before the deception is discovered, she clinches the marriage deal in a final charm offensive at 12 noon, a parody of Cinderella at midnight (p418-20).

⁴⁸⁷ Perrault, *The Complete Fairy Tales*, ed Betts, pp130,134.

⁴⁸⁸ 'Alpaca' fabric was developed by Sir Titus Salt (1803-76), who found a way to make fabric 'made from alpaca and mohair combined with cotton or silk...by 1839. The resulting cloth proved very popular for women's dress fabrics.' David James, 'Salt, Sir Titus', Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24565> (accessed May 2021).

⁴⁸⁹ At St Crux Magdalen appears beautiful as a servant, like Cinderella. She wears 'a lavender-coloured stuff gown... the evening costume of a servant' in which 'no admirer of beauty could have looked at her once, and not have turned again to look at her for the second time' (p621).

Collins may have drawn Magdalen's clothes from real productions of Cinderella, but there is little information on Cinderella costumes before 1862; the newspaper reviews don't often mention such details, and preserved designs this early are also rare. Printed plays sometimes have costume instructions: Lacy's version calls for a 'plain dark wrapper' and 'rich double dress, [and] embroidered veil'.⁴⁹⁰ Cinderella wore gingham for Smith & Taylor's 1845 Lyceum production, although the colour is not specified: 'two sweet costumes the prince is going to bring 'em / I've nothing but my serviceable gingham'.⁴⁹¹ H J Byron's stage directions contain the simple instruction: 'Cinderella's shabby clothes vanish, and she appears clothed in the most brilliant manner.'⁴⁹² A few contemporary pictures of Cinderella survive in the Victoria and Albert museum, for example an 1830 drawing of 'Miss Inverarity as Cinderella' shows her in a grey dress holding bellows.⁴⁹³ Miss Paton (star of Lacy's version) is shown in a white ballgown with gold trimmings and deep pink roses.⁴⁹⁴ A black and white print of Mme Alboni as Cenerentola which appeared in the *Illustrated London News* in 1848 shows her in a white or very pale ball dress decorated with lace.⁴⁹⁵ All these variations suggest that there was

⁴⁹⁰ Lacy, *Cinderella*, p2. Mrs Wragge does appear in a 'voluminous brown holland wrapper' at Rosemary Lane (p223), as if hopefully waiting for her cue to discard it and reveal the grand dress.

⁴⁹¹ Smith and Taylor, *Cinderella* 1845, p23. Two dresses for the ugly sisters might have prompted Magdalen's two muslin dresses. Gingham fabric was typically blue and white: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gingham> (accessed May 2021).

⁴⁹² Byron, *Cinderella*, p35.

⁴⁹³ <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O766550/drawing-of-madame-inverarity-as-caricature-portrait-sketch-chalon-alfred-edward/> (accessed May 2021).

⁴⁹⁴ <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1152756/h-beard-print-collection-print-unknown/> (accessed May 2021).

⁴⁹⁵ <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1151290/h-beard-print-collection-print-baugniet-charles/> (accessed May 2021).

no fixed tradition for Cinderella's 'rags' outfit or ball dress on stage, it was only important that the contrast was clear.

Magdalen's strategy of playing Cinderella by dressing up in her clothes illustrates the other side of the commercialisation of the Cinderella dream in society. Attractive dress and beauty aids could be used to ensnare men and enable social mobility. As critics such as Rosy Aindow have noted, there were cultural anxieties about the democratisation of dress resulting from technological and economic advances. People could adopt appearances associated with a higher class.⁴⁹⁶ The *Cinderella* story derived from an older model, where only landowners had money and clothing was an unambiguous sign of status. Cinderella's ballgown is a symbol of restoration provided by the powerful, after they have approved of her, not a dress she has bought for herself. Aindow also explores the contradictions facing bourgeois women, who needed to display wealth in dress, as a sign of class, but also Cinderella-like modesty and virtue, which included a lack of interest in appearance and vanity.⁴⁹⁷

Two Princes

In *No Name*, Magdalen treats clothes as symbols of status, but ones that she controls. Her appearances in humble clothes are deliberate acts of disguise, asserting in effect that they do not represent her true status. Her target, Noel Vanstone, just like Perrault's prince, is won over by her

⁴⁹⁶ Rosy Aindow, *Dress and Identity in British Literary Culture 1870-1914* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2010), pp1, 89-118.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid*, pp55-88.

appearances. But Magdalen has not counted on a second prince, Mrs Lecount, who is a theatrical prince: more active and well aware that Cinderella's situation is a humble one. As far as Mrs Lecount is concerned the alpaca dress does represent her true status. She uses it to prove Magdalen's identity as the beggar at Vauxhall Walk, by snipping a 'little irregular fragment of stuff from the inner flounce' (p292) of the dress, actively seeking a clothing identifier rather than picking up an accidentally dropped slipper. She later gets Noel Vanstone to match the fragment back up to the dress in his wife's wardrobe, asking 'Does it fit, sir?' (p547). Mrs Lecount is using Magdalen's own Cinderella masquerade against her. She penetrates Magdalen's disguise in a parody of the prince's recognition of the veiled Cinderella at the ball in *La Cenerentola*. The prince recognises her voice before she removes her veil: 'That voice sounds to my heart / Not like a voice unknown; / Why swells hope in my breast...?'⁴⁹⁸ An operatic Cinderella has a beautiful voice rather than face. In Vauxhall Walk, Magdalen had worn a veil to conceal her real face, blocking all Mrs Lecount's attempts to see through it. When she appears at Aldeburgh in her second disguise without it, Mrs Lecount feels that 'there was something vaguely familiar to her in the voice of this Miss Bygrave' (p375). It is Mrs Lecount who tracks Magdalen down when she mysteriously disappears with Noel Vanstone in tow, like Cinderella after the ball.

Two princes in the story highlight the differences between the versions in Perrault and in the theatre. Noel Vanstone is Perrault's prince,

⁴⁹⁸ Rossini, *La Cenerentola*, ed Walter, p37.

Cinderella's prize, but both Noel and Magdalen are hollow travesties of their roles. She is a scheming Cinderella, while he is vain, selfish and weak, making him susceptible to those schemes, but what Magdalen wins through them is a loveless and false marriage. Mrs Lecount's prince is based on the theatrical version, which means among other things that a woman can play him. This begs the question why Mrs Lecount is able to play the prince when Magdalen could not. The answer might be that Mrs Lecount is playing the prince in support of the real one, not in her own right. She picks up the theatrical side of his role that Noel has neglected to play, the active part of seeking Cinderella and proving her true identity. She highlights the vigilance and action needed by the wealthy to maintain their position, made visible precisely because Noel neglects it. She is really protecting her own position, which is one dependent on Noel's employment and favour, shown by her enactment of the fitting of Cinderella's clothing scrap. She has to prompt Noel to see for himself that the scrap fits. Her job is to convince the real prince to reject the false Cinderella; she does not have the power to do it herself. She can only be a theatrical prince, not a real one, just as an actress could play a powerful role on stage but had no more legal rights to control her money and affairs in real life than an ordinary woman. Despite theatrical *Cinderella's* subversion of male dominance, it shows that Perrault's values still prevailed in the real world. Like the fairy godmother, the mature woman is supposed to use her power to support the status quo and in reality that is her best option. Both Magdalen's and Mrs Lecount's pretences are

unattractive. But their role-play reveals that neither of them has much choice in a world where all the real power is wielded by men.

Cinderella 3: Norah

Magdalen's clothes are like Cinderella's, but her imitations of her actions are ironic and self-serving, lacking Cinderella's virtue and heart. The only way that Cinderella can be successfully played is sincerely. Norah plays the role of Cinderella superbly. She has taken proper note of her song and correctly selected the third characteristics, innocence and goodness. She adopts Cinderella's behaviour and acts consistently and convincingly in the role. George Bartram is attracted by this: 'she has borne her hard lot with such patience, and sweetness and courage, as not one woman in a thousand would have shown in her place' (p648). When George meets her trying to trace Magdalen, he 'set to work with might and main to assist her' (p519). George is here playing the theatrical fairy godmother, describing Cinderella's virtue, and stating his/her intention to help. At the same time he plays the theatrical prince. Norah is attracted to George before she has any idea that he will inherit her wealth, just as Cinderella and the disguised prince fall in love in the kitchen: 'The kindness which he showed in devoting himself to my assistance, exceeds all description. He treated me, in my forlorn situation, with a delicacy and respect, which I shall remember gratefully...' (p520). Noel Vanstone's will, dictated by Mrs Lecount, requires George to marry within six months of his death or the money will go elsewhere, similar to conditions placed on the theatrical prince by his father's will. When time is running out, the Admiral

pressurises him to consider the 'round dozen of nice girls... all at his disposal to choose from' (p646), suggestive of the ball. The Admiral is trying to get George to follow Perrault by holding a ball to choose a wife, but George is a stage prince: he is already in love with Norah.

Norah's behaviour is modelled on Cinderella's, not just her appearance, and this makes her succeed where Magdalen failed. But the fact that these correlations are drawn from staged versions, not Perrault's, shows that she is *acting*. She appears to behave according to the aristocratic literary model, but she is actually using the theatrical one. Her ability to play this role convincingly allows everyone to forget that she is still illegitimate and not eligible for a place in society, just as an audience might forget that Cinderella is a disreputable actress off-stage. She is so convincing that there seems to be no contradiction between the role of virtuous bride and her own desires.

Norah is unseen for much of the novel, but Magdalen shows the price women pay for the Cinderella dream by revealing the gradual suppression of her desire to control her own life. She is denied the role of prince, forced to play valet and fairy godmother (roles which serve others), left with no option but Cinderella (passive and virtuous), which does not work when her heart isn't in it, so she is finally forced to believe in it. Caracciolo suggests that her eventual husband's name derives from the Scottish version of Cinderella: instead of the ball, 'at Yuletide Rashin Coatie needs fine clothes for the kirk.'⁴⁹⁹ But in *No Name*, Magdalen only marries Kirke

⁴⁹⁹ Caracciolo, 'God Almighty of Novelists', p177.

after all her schemes fail, and she has repented and confessed. She must capitulate psychologically before she is allowed to have her place back. The kirk, which might represent religious humility, is not where she wanted to go at all, but society has inexorably led her there by blocking all other avenues. She shows her capitulation to society's values by voluntarily tearing up the Secret Trust, the last hope for the sisters being able to challenge Noel Vanstone's will and gain control of their own wealth. As Caracciolo notes, Norah eventually finds the Trust by stirring the ashes of the tripod pan at St Crux, rather like Cinderella sitting by the fire. By exercising Cinderella's humility, her wealth presents itself to her again. Magdalen's destruction of the Trust leaves the wealth in the hands of George, the inheritor after the Admiral's death. Norah regains her position by marrying him, just as Cinderella is not restored within her own family but by marriage to the prince. Perrault's values prevail in the end.

In 'No Name: Embodying the Sensation Heroine', Melynda Huskey argues that Magdalen's progress to a respectable identity involves her body becoming gradually less visible, until by the end it is only fleetingly described: 'she is now permanently disembodied, recreated as a woman without the rampant physicality of the bad girl.' When dressed as a servant at St Crux, she 'takes on the attractiveness of her clothes, of the generic space filled by the admirer's expectant eye'.⁵⁰⁰ This is suggestive of the Cinderella costume in a theatre, which makes her identity clear to the audience. Huskey's observation suggests the cost of Magdalen's

⁵⁰⁰ Melynda Huskey, 'No Name: Embodying the Sensation Heroine' in *Victorian Newsletter* 82 (1992), pp5-13, p9.

acting: she herself must disappear. She has become more of an actress occupying costumes by the end of the novel than at the beginning. Huskey places *No Name* in the context of the sensation novel's exploration of how women had to hide their true natures to play the roles that society demanded. They had to be actresses and behave dishonestly in order to be considered morally respectable. What Collins is showing us here is that costume and acting is in fact not enough: Magdalen fails as Cinderella because she does not believe in her role. The real pressure on women was far more insidious. They had to be convinced that their proper role was passive and virtuous, or they could not function in it properly, and as Magdalen and Mrs Wragge both show, this is far more psychologically distressing than having to wear certain clothes. Collins's bleak ending shows that women must not only disappear physically but psychologically too, so that they will refrain from claiming the power and wealth controlled by men. His use of theatrical *Cinderella* in *No Name* reveals how this pressure operates, and its consequences for women.

Chapter 4 'Loke to the State of England!':⁵⁰¹ *Kynge Johan*

Introduction

Our last case in this study concerns *Kynge Johan* (c1538), probably the best-known of the plays by the Tudor scholar, bibliographer and dramatist John Bale, which is extensively parodied in the final scenes of *No Name*. This play is the most obscure of the four works I have chosen, in terms of reader recognition. It is little known today except to Early Drama historians and was only known in the mid-nineteenth century to antiquarians and educated circles as a recovered historical work. There were no attempts to stage the play in the mid-nineteenth century that I can discover. It is in many ways as alien as Greek tragedy, with its Tudor language and spelling and its allegorical 'morality play' form, but while Greek tragedy had broad cultural worth and a sense of the exploration of universal human issues to prompt Victorian productions, *Kynge Johan* was a pointedly topical piece of Reformation propaganda. Its obscurity is probably behind the number of extra-textual clues to Bale in *No Name*, the chief of which is the puzzle of Admiral Bartram's address 'Ossory, Essex', a deliberate mistake emphasised by repetition, including in a scene where Wragge goes to the post office to check the address on Mrs Lecount's letter there (p471-2). Ossory is not in Essex but in Ireland, a clue to Bale who was Bishop of Ossory. This chapter argues that *Kynge Johan* was

⁵⁰¹ John Bale, *Kynge Johan* in *The Complete Plays of John Bale*, ed Peter Happé (Cambridge, D S Brewer, 1985), vol 1, p43, line 527.

recognisable to educated audiences as an important milestone in the history of theatre and the Reformation and suggests that Collins was using both its propaganda and form in *No Name* to create an allegory of dispossession and corrupt power that this audience would have been able to read.

Bale and *Kynge Johan* in the Sixteenth Century

Kynge Johan was an explicitly political play created for the purposes of propaganda some time before 1538. Bale and his patron Thomas Cromwell harnessed the drama of their day to advocate the Reformation and royal supremacy in England. This political context offered opportunities for Collins to draw contemporary analogies.

Cromwell, Cranmer and the Reformation

The Reformation in England took place in the 1530s when Henry VIII wished to replace the Pope as head of the Church in his own kingdom. There was a wider European movement towards Protestantism and a rejection of the Catholic Church on the grounds of its excessive power and corruption. Henry VIII wanted to remain Catholic in religion but exercise 'royal supremacy.' He was primarily driven by his need to ensure the succession, by putting aside his first wife Katharine of Aragon, who hadn't produced male heirs, in favour of Anne Boleyn. He wanted the freedom to decide such matters with his own Church without needing the Pope's agreement. The Catholic Church in England was a powerful force, answerable to the Pope rather than the king, and very rich with vast

landholdings. After the fall of his devoted chief minister and Cardinal, Wolsey, Henry turned to Wolsey's protégé Cromwell to facilitate his ambitions. Cromwell's reforms also gained the king wealth and lands from the dissolution of the monasteries.

Thomas Cromwell rose from modest beginnings through his legal, administrative and linguistic abilities, which brought him into the service of first Wolsey, then the king. It was his job to support the royal supremacy, but he also had genuine 'evangelical' (the contemporary term for reformist) convictions. He worked for reform using a combination of political machination, force and intimidation, and propaganda. Under the pressure of Anne Boleyn's pregnancy in 1533, Cromwell pushed through legislation which declared the king as supreme head of his kingdom over all his subjects, restricting the right of appeals to Rome. Cromwell then ensured that the reformist Cranmer was installed as Archbishop of Canterbury, who quickly declared the king's marriage to Katharine of Aragon void, enabling him to marry Anne. These changes were radical and Cromwell had to be ruthless to enforce them. He employed a variety of measures including a propaganda campaign to discredit the Pope through sermons and pamphlets and a new Act of Supremacy to which all subjects now had to swear an oath, with refusal defined as treason. Most complied whatever their private convictions, and only 63 people died for speaking against the supremacy, albeit some of them high-profile victims like John Fisher and Thomas More. As vicegerent or vicar-general of the king, Cromwell's power overrode even Cranmer's in the Church. From 1535 he demanded that all clergy preach the royal supremacy and harnessed an ongoing

rationalisation of the monasteries to dissolve many of them by exaggerating charges of corruption. Cromwell worked to reduce the Church's landholdings and power by seeing that the confiscated assets were given to the king rather than being reassigned to other charitable purposes. Cromwell also oversaw the preparations of Coverdale's Great Bible of 1539, in which he had invested his own money.⁵⁰²

Archbishop Cranmer put together the theological case for the annulment of the king's marriage and suggested that canvassing theological opinions could break the impasse in the legal one. He had spent the years 1503-29 at Jesus College, Cambridge as student and fellow, being made Doctor of Divinity in 1526. The college was traditionalist in religion but had a 'deliberate bias...towards theology' and an 'early emphasis on Biblical study.' Cranmer showed no evangelical sympathies for many years. He was introduced to Cromwell and prominent circles when Wolsey selected him for overseas diplomatic missions in 1527. By 1530 Cranmer had converted to an evangelical position and was writing and editing material in support of the royal supremacy.⁵⁰³ As Archbishop of Canterbury from 1533, he oversaw the trial of the king's marriage to Katharine of Aragon, pronouncing it void. In politics, Cranmer balanced Cromwell's ruthlessness with a preference for theology and diplomacy. His main motivation was religious; by 1536 he was denouncing the Pope as

⁵⁰² Howard Leithead, 'Cromwell, Thomas, Earl of Essex', Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6769>, (accessed May 2021).

⁵⁰³ Notably the *Collectanea satis copiosa* (1530, not published) and *The determinations of the most famous and most excellent universities of Italy and France, that it is unlawful for a man to marry his brother's wife; that the pope hath no power to dispense therewith*, (1531).

Antichrist, preaching against chantries and masses for the dead and supporting the dissolution of the smaller monasteries. Cranmer forged links with reformers in Germany and Switzerland, notably Heinrich Bullinger, leader of the Zurich Reformation, and met and married his wife there, breaching the required priestly celibacy.⁵⁰⁴

By 1536 both Anne Boleyn and Katharine of Aragon were dead and the political need for religious reform was receding. Jane Seymour produced the longed-for male heir in 1537. Cromwell pushed ahead with reform policy, but this placed him increasingly at odds with the king and powerful conservative factions at court. In the autumn of 1536, rebellions broke out in the north, collectively known as the Pilgrimage of Grace. The rebels protested against the suppression of the monasteries, blaming Cromwell and Cranmer as the architects of unwanted changes. The king and leading members of the nobility responded with truces followed by exemplary executions. Henry drew these temporary alliances into a permanent privy council, which, together with his unpopularity, weakened Cromwell's political position. By 1538 the king was turning away from reform, fearing that it was encouraging radicals and heretics. Cromwell and Cranmer's diplomatic talks with the Lutheran Schmalkaldic League of German Princes fizzled out, and Henry presided personally over the trial and execution of the evangelical John Lambert in November 1538. In 1539 the Act of Six Articles essentially restored a traditional form of

⁵⁰⁴ Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'Cranmer, Thomas', Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6615>, (accessed May 2021).

religion including reasserting the requirement for celibacy of the clergy, forcing Cranmer's wife and daughter to flee England.⁵⁰⁵

The English Reformation swung backwards and forwards with the king's favour and interests from the 1530s, and in the following decades through the succession and beliefs of all three of his children (Edward VI staunchly Protestant, Mary I fervently Catholic, Elizabeth I moderately Protestant). In 1538 it was still very new and at a particularly insecure juncture as the king turned against it. To reformers of the time, including Cromwell, the return to the old ways must have seemed a very real threat.

Bale the Reformation Dramatist

One of Cromwell's key strategies in promoting the Reformation was propaganda in sermons and pamphlets. But, as the stakes rose through the 1530s, he also turned to the potent medium of drama. As Paul Whitfield White notes in *Theatre and Reformation*, Cromwell's secretary Richard Morison advised him to use drama for communication and persuasion as the Catholic Church had long done. It worked because: 'Into the comen people thynges sooner enter by the eies, then by the eares: remembryng more better that they see then that they here.'⁵⁰⁶ Drama could be persuasive, but it was also embedded in the society and culture as an expression of authority. As well as religious drama produced by the Church, secular drama was staged under the patronage of powerful

⁵⁰⁵ Leithead, 'Cromwell' and MacCulloch, 'Cranmer', Oxford DNB online.

⁵⁰⁶ Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation, Protestantism, Patronage and Playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), p14.

men in their houses or in public civic spaces. White argues that the Reformation eventually succeeded because it was sanctioned and promoted by the authorities, rather than because of a popular movement and 'noble patrons exercised considerably greater control over the activities of Tudor playwrights and playing troupes than is traditionally supposed.'⁵⁰⁷

At some point, John Bale came to Cromwell's notice. He was a Carmelite friar who rose in the Church but then converted to Protestantism. He was not primarily a dramatist, producing many other polemical writings in favour of Protestantism, and works of history and bibliography, which aimed to counteract 'the destruction of libraries resulting from the dissolution of the monasteries.'⁵⁰⁸ Educated at Jesus College, Cambridge, he was there from 1514 to 29, contemporaneous with other reformers such as Cranmer, John Lambert, Hugh Latimer, Miles Coverdale and William Tyndale. Bale converted to reform in the early 1530s. After he became Prior at Ipswich in 1532/33, he fought with his Archbishop over articles of belief and left the Carmelites in 1536. Bale seems to have had an uncompromising personality and became a zealot on behalf of Protestantism. He antagonised local Suffolk conservatives with his preaching so much that they had him imprisoned at Greenwich around the end of 1536. He later claimed that Cromwell 'secured his release on account of the comedies he had written.'⁵⁰⁹ The Catholic Church's

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid, p6-7, quoting Suzanne R Westfall, *Patrons and Performance: Early Tudor Household Records* (Clarendon, 1990).

⁵⁰⁸ John N King, 'Bale, John', Oxford DNB online, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1175> (accessed May 2021).

⁵⁰⁹ Peter Happé, *John Bale* (New York, Twayne Publishers, 1996), pp1-8.

common use of drama makes it very likely that Bale got his theatrical training and experience as a friar.⁵¹⁰ He listed *Kynge Johan* as one of his plays in his autobiographical work the *Anglorium Heliades* of 1536, suggesting that his experience as a dramatist was well-established by this point.⁵¹¹ Cromwell saw how useful a zealot dramatist would be for propaganda and took Bale under his patronage. Bale wrote, produced and possibly took leading parts in plays, touring the Midlands, the North and East Anglia with his works between 1537 and 1540.⁵¹²

Kynge Johan

The plot of *Kynge Johan* concerns the contest for power between King John and the Catholic Church, resulting in the king's death, poisoned by a priest. John takes action to protect England, which is suffering from the greed and abuses of the Church. The Church characters, infiltrated and led by Seditio, use their power and influence to isolate the king from all his traditional sources of support, Nobility, Clergy and Civil Order (the law), and seek to appropriate all his wealth. John is left with little option but to surrender to the Church, whose leaders exact heavy penalties, and then, still unsatisfied, collude in his poisoning by absolving the culprit in advance. After his death, Verity makes Nobility, Clergy and Civil Order ashamed of abandoning their king and they swear allegiance to Imperial

⁵¹⁰ White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p20.

⁵¹¹ Happé, *John Bale*, pp5-6.

⁵¹² White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p13-18, 22-27.

Majesty. Imperial Majesty makes Seditio confess his crimes in exchange for a pardon, but then has him hanged anyway.

Kynge Johan loosely adapts historical events to the play's real purpose, to attack the Catholic Church's power in England and discuss indirectly Henry VIII's struggles for religious and political supremacy in English affairs. Bale's play claims that the Catholic Church's greed and falsehood debilitates England and prevents its rightful ruler from exercising proper authority. It advocates Protestant ideas that salvation can only be attained by faith and scripture while Catholic doctrines and rituals are irrelevant. There is a sustained attack on the confessional as the misuse of priestly influence over innocent citizens, but worse, as the shelter of traitors, who can claim absolution and protection from the Church.

Peter Happé notes two possible known performances of *Kynge Johan* in 1538: 'September 1538 at St Stephen's in Canterbury' and 'Christmastide 1538 in Cranmer's house.'⁵¹³ As a propaganda move, performances at sites associated with the Archbishop of Canterbury implied approval of the play and its message at the highest levels. Bale later revised *Kynge Johan* around 1558-61, possibly for performance to Elizabeth I, who visited Ipswich in August 1561, also implying the approval of authority.⁵¹⁴

Bale's propaganda was only partially successful. White notes the only surviving response from the Christmastide 1538 audience, recorded in

⁵¹³ Happé, *John Bale*, p90.

⁵¹⁴ Bale, *The Complete Plays of John Bale*, ed Happé, vol 1, p7.

Cranmer's writings: 'a deposition by John Alforde, age eighteen', also containing the views of 'Thomas Brown, a man of fifty' and 'a shipman, Henry Totehill'. Alforde explicitly makes the connection between its subject matter and contemporary politics: "'it ys petie that the Bisshop of Rome should reigne any lenger, for if he should, the said Bishop wold do with our King as he did with King John.'" But Alforde also records dissent from Totehill who thought the 'mistreatment of the Pope and St Thomas Becket... "was petie and nawghtely don... for the Pope was a good man..." Alforde's deposition reveals *Kynge Johan's* 'demographically diverse audience' and the 'controversy and division of opinion' it caused. Deep-rooted Catholicism proved resistant to Protestantism, especially in the provinces, as much because of its many familiar rituals as beliefs. People lived according to religious practice, with the sacraments, saints' days, ceremonies and feasts comprising 'a ritual method of living' that was not easily or quickly displaced.⁵¹⁵

A New Form of Drama

Kynge Johan as a play is of interest to theatre historians because it constitutes a hybrid form of drama, a development of the 'morality' play and a precursor of the later 'history' play, such as those by Shakespeare, who wrote his own version of *King John*. Surviving Medieval and Tudor drama is varied, but falls broadly into three categories: 'morality' plays, which were allegorical pieces designed to offer moral lessons based on points of doctrine; plays based on Biblical narratives or saints' lives, known

⁵¹⁵ White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p29-30.

as 'mystery' or 'miracle' plays, which mostly survive in the play cycles created for city festivals; and the later 'interludes' which were 'often directed towards a particular contemporary situation' although they may have had 'moral content'. The biblical plays in particular, with their associated doctrine, 'formed a major part of the Church's teaching of the laity', and throughout the period drama was seen as a form of religious and moral instruction.⁵¹⁶

Morality plays are allegorical in form, using characters that personify concepts, and often revolve around a representative 'mankind' figure, such as Everyman. This method invites the viewer to apply the analogy to themselves, or to other people or circumstances known to them. Like the mystery cycle plays they were useful for social control by the Catholic Church. However, their plots often showed a central human figure whose soul is at stake. In this sense, morality plays were on the side of the individual against the corrupt temptations of the world and invited the empathy of the audience. Happé observes that 'there is every evidence that the plays worked through the emotions... by allowing the plot to isolate emotional moments.'⁵¹⁷

Bale adapted this form in *Kynge Johan* by blending it with history and features of contemporary society. There is a mixture of allegorical figures, such as Sediton or Dissimulation, historical figures like King John, and figures that represented parts of society, like Nobility or the common

⁵¹⁶ Peter Happé, *English Drama Before Shakespeare* (London, Longman, 1999), pp8-9, 25-30.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp80, 84.

people. King John is the central human figure with whom the audience is invited to empathise. As a real historical figure his struggle against treachery is brought closer to reality for the audience, with the additional twist that his fate as king affects all of England too, demonstrated by the suffering characters of Widow England and the common people. The Church's presence in every aspect of life at that time is expressed in the Church characters, who exhibit mutable identities, sometimes conceptual like Private Wealth, sometimes named individuals, or types of church official like cardinal or friar, endlessly adaptable in their efforts to maintain power. Happé notes that the characters, Nobility, Clergy and Civil Order 'are social types rather than abstractions... it looks as though one of the purposes of the play was to influence different groups within the nation. The action of the play reveals all three as vulnerable.'⁵¹⁸ The combination of social group responsibility, the personal pathos of King John's downfall, and the blatant corruption displayed by the Church presented a powerful appeal for the audience to do their duty and support the king. Bale's adaptation of the morality play form was driven by 'his homiletic or polemical purpose', rather than by a concern for theatrical innovation.⁵¹⁹ Nonetheless, his political motives drove modifications to an existing dramatic form, so it was simultaneously a development in both drama and politics.

⁵¹⁸ Happé *John Bale*, p98.

⁵¹⁹ White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p31-32. Theatre as a profession or industry did not exist at this point.

Staging Matters

Drama of this period was staged in a flexible way that made use of available resources, rather than in a purpose-built theatre. The 'mystery' cycles were usually presented on wagons that could be drawn through the city streets. Other open-air performances could take place in any available space, perhaps with one or more temporary stages, usually known as 'place and scaffold' staging, or in any space where a set of itinerant actors could command attention. This approach also applied to indoor spaces, which were often the halls of aristocratic households, abbeys or colleges.⁵²⁰ Scaffolds could be dressed up to represent particular places, such as Hell, but flexible use of available space made for many possibilities of significant movement and action. In a hall, for example, the actors might make use of the exits to the kitchens, or the musician's gallery. Off-stage space could become imagined places relating to the drama. Surviving plays also suggest that actors could have moved through the audience and there are scripted interactions with them, such as requesting the resident lord's sanction to play the next section.⁵²¹ Costumes, masks and props were commonly used to make characters and types instantly recognisable to the audience.⁵²² There was often a

⁵²⁰ Happé, *English Drama Before Shakespeare*, p48.

⁵²¹ Ibid, pp54-58.

⁵²² *Kynge Johan* required a variety of garb and props relating to the clerical characters, king and his 'estates' characters, and the poor. White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p23. Masks were used in the mystery cycles for supernatural characters or those played by multiple actors on successive wagons. Happé, *English Drama Before Shakespeare*, p52.

chief 'Vice' character, a cross between villain and buffoon. Actors often played multiple roles; *Kynge Johan* could be performed by five actors.⁵²³

***Kynge Johan* in the Nineteenth Century**

As a play for Collins to use in *No Name* to make social and political analogies, *Kynge Johan* had many advantages. It was an example of a play explicitly created to attack existing power-structures and campaign for political change. It had useful features drawn from the morality play such as the central human figure inviting compassion, and the use of allegory signalling the presence of an agenda beneath the surface story. But *Kynge Johan* was a relatively obscure play, compared with *Hamlet* or *Cinderella*, both famous in popular culture, or *Prometheus Bound*, which was taught in schools. There is no copy of *Kynge Johan* in Collins's reconstructed library, either.⁵²⁴ This section aims to construct some circumstantial proof for its selection by Collins for his novel, beyond the textual parallels argued for below, demonstrating how the play may have been available and known to Collins and his more educated readers and how it was culturally topical enough to suggest its inclusion in his scheme.

⁵²³ Happé, *English Drama Before Shakespeare*, pp15-16, 137-9; John Bale, *Kynge Johan, A Play in Two Parts*, ed John Payne Collier (London, Camden Society, 1838), p XV.

⁵²⁴ See Baker, *Wilkie Collins's Library*.

***Kynge Johan* and the Camden Society**

Harnessing the Great and Good

Kynge Johan was known to nineteenth-century educated circles because it was one of the two works published as part of the launch of the Camden Society in 1838. This antiquarian society's founding was part of a growing public interest in the importance of preserving and editing historical texts and documents and conducting proper historical research. The Record Commission, founded in 1800 to edit such texts, had produced poorly edited publications that did not sell. F J Levy in *The Founding of the Camden Society* explains that its launch aimed to be as public as possible, deliberately recruiting a membership from the great and good. Thomas Wright, founding secretary, felt that 'publications cannot be too widely circulated...I hope we shall become a powerful and influential Society'. To achieve this, the founders 'sensibly...decided that members of the Council had to be men with prestige or men able to command large followings – preferably both'. 547 members were successfully recruited from these circles, men in public life, noblemen, antiquarians, lawyers, and clergymen.⁵²⁵ *Kynge Johan's* manuscript, some of it in Bale's own hand, had been discovered by the scholar and antiquarian John Payne Collier, who edited it for the society. Nearly 500 copies were issued to libraries and members. This process put *Kynge Johan* on the map, and into the libraries of 500 important people. Consequently, 'Bale has figured in

⁵²⁵ F J Levy, 'The Founding of the Camden Society' in *Victorian Studies* 7,3, (1964), pp295-305, pp301, 303-5.

histories of literature and the drama, and in influential anthologies... [and] this one play has become one of the chief ways by which the drama of the sixteenth century has been perceived, located and taught.⁵²⁶ This method of seeking the patronage of powerful and influential people aptly mirrors the means by which Bale and Cromwell sought to spread the new Protestant knowledge. It also suggests the kind of readership that Collins might have expected to recognise the presence of *Kynge Johan* in his novel.

Kynge Johan's 1838 publication might suggest that it was old news in 1861, possibly sitting unread in a lot of people's collections. However, the play is still being listed as an important publication years later in press pieces about the Camden Society. For example, the *Times* report of its annual general meeting in May 1859 remarks that 'The Camden Society has been the means of placing in the hands of historical students nearly 90 publications, all of very considerable importance', listing 'Kyng Johan' [sic] first under 'literary history'.⁵²⁷

This general fame of the publication shows that it would have been present in enough private and public libraries for Collins to have been able to borrow a copy, even if he didn't at that time possess his own. Collins moved in wide social circles with literary and intellectual interests, and it is possible that some of his personal contacts had copies.⁵²⁸ The Camden

⁵²⁶ Happé, *John Bale*, p140.

⁵²⁷ 'The Camden Society', *The Times*, Wednesday 4 May 1859, p5, TDA (accessed May 2021).

⁵²⁸ See Collins, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, vol 1, pp xxiv -xxx for an analysis of his contacts as revealed by his surviving correspondence.

Society's public library members included the London Library (1842), the Marylebone Public Library (1854) and the Westminster Public Library (1857) as members, any of which Collins could have used.⁵²⁹ Less likely sources are the Garrick Club library, of which he was a member, but its present catalogue does not list *Kynge Johan* among its holdings, and the British Museum Library, where he intermittently read, though he is not recorded there after 1850.⁵³⁰

Antiquarians

The Camden Society and others that followed it were both raising and serving an interest in early texts, including drama, that had arisen in the nineteenth century. Richard Foulkes argues that a renewed interest in English Medieval drama at this time was influenced by growing access to the Oberammergau passion plays from the 1840s which featured in the press and reminded the English of their own religious drama heritage. Another factor was the rise of pantomime as a link between theatre and a major religious festival. Foulkes notes that many features of pantomime resembled medieval drama, such as allegory, good and evil characters, and heavenly or diabolical scenes.⁵³¹

⁵²⁹ Royal Historical Society, Camden Society archive collection description. http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cgi-bin/vcdf/detail?coll_id=7224&inst_id=78&nv1=search&nv2=basic (accessed May 2021).

⁵³⁰ Garrick Club catalogue <https://garrick.ssl.co.uk/home> (accessed May 2021). Enquiries to archivists at the British Museum Central Archive CentralArchive@britishmuseum.org November 2016.

⁵³¹ Richard Foulkes, *Church and Stage in Victorian England* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp117, 120-21.

Philippa Levine's study of Victorian antiquarians, historians and archaeologists explains that the Victorians' fascination with the past was part of their belief in their own time: history was viewed as a narrative of progress leading to English pre-eminence in the world. National pride drove a sense of duty to explore, record and make the past publicly available. As this work was inevitably pursued by the educated, it also served class interests in helping to reinforce and justify the status quo.⁵³² Antiquarians were amateur enthusiasts, typically professional middle-class men pursuing historical interests in their leisure time. They collected artefacts and sources, edited and published manuscript material and produced works of local history and topography. They had wide interests, often each belonging to several different societies.⁵³³ They were often dedicated, self-motivated and largely self-taught: there was no professional employment or training, which meant that the quality of output was very variable.⁵³⁴ But they believed in the importance of their work as 'rescuing the nation's past glories from oblivion.' Coming from the same sort of background, many knew each other, supported each other's work and socialised at society meetings and on excursions.⁵³⁵ The success of the printing clubs, of which the Camden Society was only one, showed that there was a demand for 'affordable and readable editions of ancient manuscripts.' The government slowly assumed some responsibility, the

⁵³² Philippa Levine *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England 1838-1886* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp1-4.

⁵³³ Ibid, pp7-10, 13.

⁵³⁴ Ibid, pp40-45. In 1870 the Rev A B Grosart complained that the Camden *Kynge Johan* 'literally swarms with errata.' Ibid, p45.

⁵³⁵ Ibid, pp19-23.

Public Record Act of 1838 beginning the process of creating a national repository.⁵³⁶

Antiquarianism was another manifestation of the dominance of the upper classes in public life. Antiquarian societies had a strong sense of social identity and could be snobbish about who they admitted as members. This kind of work could only be done by those with both education and leisure.⁵³⁷ The community was also strongly Anglican, including many members of the clergy, who often had 'a wealth of antiquarian information in their direct keeping', such as parish registers, church buildings and artefacts. Clergymen tended to promote the conventional view of history, and their work in recovering it, as all part of God's plan.⁵³⁸ The Cambridge Camden Society, founded in 1839, led the 'ecclesiological movement' of the 1830s and 40s, which devoted itself to the study and preservation of the architecture of the Middle Ages (mainly churches) as an embodiment of Christianity and its virtues. It was an exclusively Anglican society and was seen as the 'aesthetics' arm of the Tractarian or Oxford movement, which aimed to restore some of the ritual and mysticism of religion to the Church of England.⁵³⁹ Interest in the Middle Ages stemmed from a romantic view of them as simpler, purer times when faith in God and mutual obligation held society together, which had a powerful political appeal for the ruling classes. Many antiquarians were also interested in the Anglo-Saxon period as revealing the country's German or Teutonic

⁵³⁶ Ibid, pp40-45.

⁵³⁷ Ibid, pp22, 54.

⁵³⁸ Ibid, pp55-6.

⁵³⁹ Ibid, pp46-8.

roots, which had strong associations with Protestantism. Both the Reformation and the English Civil War were hot topics for historians, reflecting contemporary controversies over religion and Parliamentary reform.⁵⁴⁰ In 1859 the Public Record Office appointment of the Catholic William Turnbull to calendar the foreign state papers from the Reformation to 1688 was controversial, eventually exploding into uproar in the press in January and February 1861. The *Daily Telegraph* of 16 February editorialised that ‘the Roman Catholic principle of dealing with history is one of systematic falsification’, while the prime minister Palmerston felt the appointment of a ‘bigoted pervert’ for such work was ‘unfortunate’. Despite a petition in his support signed by many other intellectuals, Turnbull resigned.⁵⁴¹ Whatever other professional motivations existed, antiquarian and historical work was inextricable from its practice by the right sort, whose efforts promoted a view of England – glorious, ancient, wisely hierarchical and Anglican – that helped to maintain their own privileged position. The Camden Society’s production of the edition of *Kynge Johan* in 1838, therefore, was just as much establishment propaganda as its staging three hundred years before.

John Payne Collier and Forgery

This turned out to be unfortunate in 1860, when *Kynge Johan*’s first editor and publisher, John Payne Collier, was exposed as a forger. He forged annotations to an early edition of Shakespeare, which became known as

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid, pp77-9.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid, pp113-14.

the 'Perkins Folio'. These were doubted from the first and finally proved false in 1860, with the experts forced to conclude that Collier himself was the perpetrator. This controversy was very public, conducted from the beginning in the press, from Collier's first announcement of his 'find' in the *Athenaeum* in 1852, through doubting articles and letters and Collier's replies, to the experts' pronouncement of his forgery in the *Times* in July 1859. Finally, an entire book on the case was published by C M Ingleby in 1861, just at the time when Collins was researching *No Name*.⁵⁴² Jim McCue describes this as 'an eight-year paper and pamphlet war.'⁵⁴³ This controversy inevitably cast suspicion on all Collier's previous publications. His entry in the 1921-22 edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, decades after the event, reads, damningly: 'the taint of suspicion necessarily rests upon all his work. None of his statements or quotations can be trusted without verifying, and no volume or document that has passed through his hands... can be too carefully scrutinised.'⁵⁴⁴ Collier's exposure was an embarrassment for the antiquarian community; one of their number had been indulging in that 'systematic falsification' deemed to be the preserve of Catholics. *Kynge Johan* had previously been valued as a founding Camden Society publication, and as an important historical text promoting England's break from Rome, in other words as an assertion of the rightness of the establishment; now it was

⁵⁴² George Frederick Warner, 'Collier, John Payne (1789 – 1883)' in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, vol 4, pp804-9, pp807-8. C M Ingleby, *A Complete View of the Shakspeare Controversy* (London, Nattali and Bond, 1861).

⁵⁴³ Jim McCue, 'John Payne Collier, the Scholar Forger' in *Essays in Criticism* 57.4 (2007), pp287-300, p291.

⁵⁴⁴ Warner, 'Collier, John Payne', *The Dictionary of National Biography*, vol 4, p809.

potentially a forgery by a man who had brought the establishment into disrepute.

No one now seems to doubt the authenticity of *Kynge Johan*. Peter Happé does not mention the forgery issue but remarks that there is 'no reason to doubt that the whole of what survives represents Bale's work', based on internal evidence of style and Bale's handwriting.⁵⁴⁵ Collier had published his *History of Dramatic Poetry* in 1831, several years before he found *Kynge Johan*, in which he shows an understanding of Bale's role in drama and the Reformation from other surviving plays. He would, theoretically, have been in a good position to have forged *Kynge Johan* or parts of it. In the introduction to his edition of the play, Collier states that he found the manuscript in the Duke of Devonshire's library among papers 'probably once belonging to the Corporation of Ipswich.' 'The name of Bale nowhere occurs; but there can be no doubt of his authorship' [partly from Bale's own bibliographical work, but also] 'The copy of the *Summarium*, &c in the British Museum, which belonged to Bale, has many notes in the same handwriting as the MS from which the ensuing impression has been taken.'⁵⁴⁶ However, his reliance on handwriting as proof of authenticity was his undoing in the case of the 'Perkins folio' in which British Museum experts detected 'recent fabrications, merely simulating a seventeenth-century hand.'⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁵ Happé, *John Bale*, p90

⁵⁴⁶ Bale, *Kynge Johan*, ed John Payne Collier p v-vi.

⁵⁴⁷ Warner, 'Collier, John Payne', *The Dictionary of National Biography*, vol 4, p807.

The publicity surrounding Collier at the time could have drawn Collins to this play, and the sense of it being potentially a forgery may have appealed to him. The authenticity or otherwise of documents and testimony was a persistent interest for him throughout his writing career.⁵⁴⁸ Even if the text is authentically by Bale, though, it is already unreliable as a version of history, driven by Bale's propaganda and dramatic needs rather than the facts of King John's reign. It is also, arguably, a corruption of the morality play form to use it for political propaganda when it was intended to guide the soul. Even without this, to adapt historical events into a drama necessarily involves selection and invention. This is what nineteenth-century historians were also doing when they narrated England's glorious past as a path to the celebrated present. *Kynge Johan* was itself selected by establishment figures in the Camden Society as part of promoting this view of the past, even if Collier did not actually invent it. The appeal of *Kynge Johan* for Collins may thus have included the opportunity it provided to weave together layers of unreliable narrative: its associations suggested that no story can be relied on as true or real, or in other words 'trusted without verifying' or 'too carefully scrutinised'. Even though the issue of forgery as such is not addressed in *No Name*, *Kynge Johan's* connotations of unreliability fit into Collins's strategy of using a subtext to suggest there are alternative readings to the surface one.

⁵⁴⁸ For example, *The Woman in White* explores 'the fallibility of witness testimony' and 'the idea that perceptions were not always what they seemed.' Lycett, *Wilkie Collins, A Life of Sensation*, p193.

Knowledge of Bale

Educated people in the nineteenth century were aware of Bale as a figure in history, of his participation in the Reformation and his authorship of dramas. Bale appears in the history books concerning the Reformation, for example Gilbert Burnet's *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England*, mentions his appointment as Bishop of Ossory by Edward VI and his advocacy of clerical marriage.⁵⁴⁹ Press reports can also be found which name him in a way that assumes the reader will have heard of him, such as the *Standard's* report on Irish court cases in October 1859:

After three centuries of effort to reduce certain districts of Ireland to the usual observance of the habits of civilisation, we are still treated at intervals to glimpses which show that there are still surviving the manners which prevailed in the sixteenth century.... which recall some of the incidents related by Bishop BALE, when, at the time of the Reformation, he attempted to assume his bishopric of Ossory, the history of which he wrote in his "Vocaycion".⁵⁵⁰

This comparison also suggests the Victorian sense of history relating to the present, in this case playing to their prejudices about the troublesome (and Catholic) Irish.

Bale's association with the development of English drama is mentioned in Robert Dodsley's 1744 *Select Collection of Old Plays*, a collection

⁵⁴⁹ Gilbert Burnet, *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England* (London, J Read, 1737), pp150, 236 and 349.

⁵⁵⁰ 'Multiple News Items', *The Standard*, 17 October 1859, p4, BLN (accessed May 2021).

designed to preserve old plays and show the development of drama. Bale's *God's Promises* is the 'first and oldest play in the collection.'⁵⁵¹ Dodsley's work became a standard source for later historians of the theatre, allowing Bale's contribution to filter into general knowledge. For example, the *Era* had, in a column of snippets of interest:

FIRST PLAY PRINTED IN ENGLAND – God, Hy's Promises... This play (says Baker) was written by Bishop Bale, and is the first dramatic piece printed in England. It is printed by Dodsley, in his collections (see "Biographia Dramatica"). It was printed by Charlewood, in 1577, and was acted by the youths upon a Sunday at the Market-cross of Kilkenny.⁵⁵²

Collins could have looked this up himself in his own copy of *Biographica Dramatica*, by David Erskine Baker, 1812 edition, in his library.⁵⁵³

Staging Matters

Knowledge of the Staging of Early Drama

Books on early drama or theatre history were relatively rare in the mid-nineteenth century. The main early theatre historian of this period was John Payne Collier, whose *History of English Dramatic Poetry* covers drama before Shakespeare, including the 'miracle play' cycles, 'moral

⁵⁵¹ Richard Schoch, *Writing the History of the British Stage, 1660-1900* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2016), p206.

⁵⁵² 'A Snapper-Up of Unconsidered Trifles', *The Era*, 14 November 1858, p9, BLN (accessed May 2021).

⁵⁵³ Baker, *Wilkie Collins's Library*, p76.

plays', court entertainment and travelling players. Collier researched the topic through the records of court and noble household expenses. He states that plays were written and acted by 'ecclesiastics' and notes that Bale made the 'first extant attempt, by means of the stage, to promote the Reformation'. Moral plays 'allegorical, abstract or symbolic...[were] intended to convey a lesson'.⁵⁵⁴ Collier does not show much interest in matters of staging. 'It is not necessary to enter at all at large into the manner in which Moral plays were represented. The temporary scaffolds, pageants or stages required for miracle plays, were used'. He describes plays being staged in churches and cemeteries as well as the streets on 'temporary erections of timber, indifferently called scaffolds, stages and pageants', sometimes 'placed upon wheels in order that they might be removed to various parts of large towns and cities, and the plays exhibited in succession.' Stages could be two-storey with the lower used for changing or to represent Hell.⁵⁵⁵ Interludes were explained as pieces played in the intervals of banquets and entertainments.⁵⁵⁶ Although this is less precise than modern understanding, it does show the basic sites of dramatic staging: churches, two-storey stages and banqueting halls. All these sites appear in the St Crux episode of *No Name*.

General knowledge of medieval and Tudor drama among educated people might be gauged by the following article in the *Daily News* in April 1855:

⁵⁵⁴ John Payne Collier, *The History of English Dramatic Poetry*, (London, John Murray, 1831), pp141, 239, 258-60.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp151-3, 270.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid* p271.

ROYAL SOCIETY OF LITERATURE. Professor Christmas concluded yesterday his course of lectures... by an account of early dramatic amusements and literature. He began by some observations on the miracle plays and mysteries... They had a purely religious origin, and were employed as a means of religious instruction. ... The subject of “moralities,” interludes and “masques” ...was concluded by some observations on what may be called modified mysteries, written by Bale, Bishop of Orrery [sic].⁵⁵⁷

Henry Christmas was an antiquarian too, an ordained churchman who combined clerical appointments with lecturing and writing on historical and theological subjects. He was Professor of history and archaeology to the Royal Society of Literature 1854-9, and fellow of the Royal Society and Society of Antiquaries.⁵⁵⁸ Like many antiquarians he had multiple interests, editing and publishing manuscripts, including an edition of *Selected Works* by Bale published by the Parker Society in 1849.⁵⁵⁹ For those who received or sought education, Bale, the Reformation and medieval drama were available topics of general knowledge, even though familiarity with *Kynge Johan* itself is likely to have been confined to those with antiquarian interests.

⁵⁵⁷ ‘Royal Institution’, *Daily News*, 25 April 1855, p5, BLN (accessed May 2021).

⁵⁵⁸ H J Spencer, ‘Christmas [later Noel-Fearn], Henry’, Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5372> (accessed May 2021).

⁵⁵⁹ British Library catalogue search, ‘Henry Christmas’. http://explore.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?dscnt=1&dstmp=1487774119246&vid=BLVU1&fromLogin=true (accessed May 2021).

King John on Stage

While *Kynge Johan* and its sixteenth-century political and dramatic context were known about in educated circles in the mid-nineteenth century, it seems not to have been produced as a play on the Victorian stage. Newspaper searches for the play produce only lists of Camden Society publications. Medieval plays were valued as part of the written record of history, not as drama. According to Richard Schoch, they could not be performed on stage because they 'remained morally bankrupt instruments of a Catholic social order', seen, in the words of one essayist, as 'a mix of frivolity, buffoonery and blasphemy.'⁵⁶⁰ Both the religious values and modes of performance contained in them were out of step with nineteenth-century culture. While audiences enjoyed depictions of the medieval world on stage, that world's own means of theatrical and religious expression was just too alien.

The story of King John did appear on stage in Shakespeare's version, however. *King John* was one of the more popular Shakespeare plays in the nineteenth century, appearing regularly, especially after Charles Kemble and J R Planché's landmark production in 1823. Planché, an antiquarian as well as a man of the theatre, published his proposed costume designs in advance of the production with historical notes.⁵⁶¹ Later productions followed its historicist lead, notably that by Macready in 1840, while Charles Kean began his series of antiquarian productions at

⁵⁶⁰ Richard W Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage, Performing History in the Theatre of Charles Kean* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p9.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid, pp75-7, referring to James Robinson Planché, *Costumes of Shakespeare's Historical Tragedy of 'King John'* (London, John Miller, 1823).

the Princess's Theatre with *King John* in 1852, reviving it in 1858.⁵⁶² The historicist approach to stage design was part of the fashion for pictorial and spectacular theatre, but with nationalist and educational motives. Its apparent ability to bring the past to life had advantages for popular education about national history.⁵⁶³ Schoch argues that because of this, historicist productions played their part in forming and expressing 'Victorian cultural mythology.' Kean's antiquarian productions of Shakespeare's history plays especially chimed with nationalist sentiment. Shakespeare was the 'national drama', his account of English political history seen as both accurate and culturally worthy, while each of his history plays 'recovered an authentic moment of nation building.' Kean himself thought, for example, that Shakespeare's Henry VIII 'merited its 1855 revival because it dramatized the Reformation, an event "intimately associated with our strongest national feelings."⁵⁶⁴ Schoch argues that 'theatre-going was an informal act of mass public patriotism, a chance to luxuriate in the display of English virtue.' But there is a contradiction in trying to see national glory through reproductions of medieval England, which was Catholic and steeped in different ideas about virtue, while Shakespeare was also the product of a different age. As Schoch points out, the medieval world was being seen through a sort of double mediation, through the lens of Shakespeare and then again through that of nineteenth-century production and its audience.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶² Ibid, p37.

⁵⁶³ Ibid, p1-2.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid, pp7-10.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid, pp10, 15.

This can be seen in the reviews of Kean's productions of *King John*, which were appreciative of the efforts that had gone into the staging. The *Morning Post* in February 1852 enthused: 'We were fairly carried back to the reign of King John. ...we have a series of stage paintings, every one of which is a masterpiece in its department of art. ...the magnificence of general effect... the scrupulous accuracy with which every detail of architecture and landscape is maintained... the rich costumes that add splendour and truth to the whole.'⁵⁶⁶ The *Morning Chronicle*, meanwhile, was convinced of the truth and importance of the splendour: *King John* 'calls for pomp and appanage. It deals with kings and dynasties. ...We see the deliberation of monarchs... John is "England" ...Philip is "France." They speak as nations'.⁵⁶⁷ Both reviewers are looking for magnificence in England's glorious past, to visually express the importance of their own nation, and that is what Kean provides. Real conditions in medieval times may not have been so splendid. Kean used J R Planché's book of costume for *King John*, which itself used sources such as cathedral effigies of the various characters like 'King John's Effigy in Worcester Cathedral.'⁵⁶⁸ Effigies, as lasting memorials of important personages, were magnificent, even propagandist, versions of them, rather than realistic ones. Only 'Vivian's' (G H Lewes) review in *The Leader* signalled any faint doubts of authenticity: 'The spectacle is truly pictorial and striking. I am not so learned in costume as to be able to say whether all the appointments are as accurate as they pretend to be; but I can assure

⁵⁶⁶ 'Princess's Theatre', *Morning Post*, 10 February 1852, p5, BLN (accessed May 2021).

⁵⁶⁷ 'Princess's Theatre', *Morning Chronicle*, 10 February 1852, p5, BLN (accessed May 2021).

⁵⁶⁸ Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage*, pp37, 76-7.

you they look very learned and medieval.’ He then went on to criticise the acting as appropriate to melodrama rather than tragedy.⁵⁶⁹

Although Shakespeare’s play is also telling the story of King John, it does not look like Kean’s productions were a source for Collins. The magnificence and splendour of Kean’s production of *King John* can be contrasted with the shabby half-ruined world of St Crux in *No Name*. The plot of *King John* is also different from Bale’s drama, focussing on the legitimacy of John’s rule in place of his nephew Arthur, while the chief threat is declaration of war from France. Arthur’s mother Constance is a prominent figure. Cardinal Pandolphus plays one side against the other to gain John’s submission to Rome, but then is unable to stop the war he has provoked. John dies after falling ill on the battlefield.⁵⁷⁰ Bale’s version of the story is shaped by the fact that he is really talking about Henry VIII and the Reformation. The appearance of Bale’s version in the text of *No Name* rather than Shakespeare’s suggests that Collins was also thinking about the Reformation, but that ‘our strongest national feelings’ may have been exactly what he wished to challenge.

⁵⁶⁹ ‘King John’, *The Leader*, 14 February 1852, p161, BLN (accessed May 2021).

Collins’s article on magnetism appears ahead of ‘Vivian’s’ Arts reviews in this issue.

⁵⁷⁰ For a fuller discussion of the relationship between Shakespeare’s *King John* and Bale’s *Kynge Johan*, see, for example, A J Piesse, ‘*King John*: Changing Perspectives’ in Hattaway ed, *Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare’s History Plays*, pp126-40, referring to J H Morey, ‘The Death of King John in Shakespeare and Bale’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45 (1994), pp329-31.

Kynge Johan in No Name

Clues to Bale and the Reformation

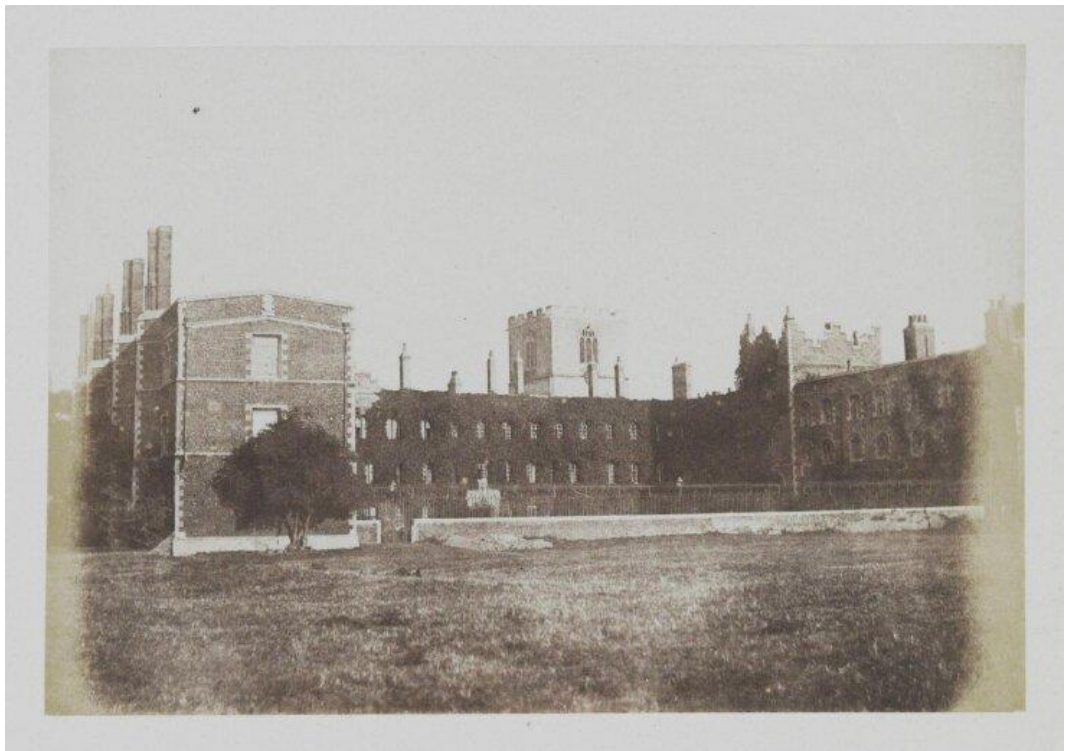
For readers alert to the game that Collins is playing, there are clues to Bale and the Reformation apparent in *No Name's* text. The deliberate mistake of 'Ossory, Essex' points not only to Bale, Bishop of Ossory but also to his patron Cromwell, Earl of Essex. The combination of their respective titles might suggest their joint contribution to the nation, their collaboration in producing *Kynge Johan*, and in the process advancing drama and the Reformation. Bale's birthplace of Dunwich on the Suffolk coast is also the location of a day trip in the fourth scene, set in nearby Aldborough. Collins had an 1861 travel guide in his library, that he may well have used for his research, *The East Coast of England* by Mackensie Walcott.⁵⁷¹ The guide mentions 'the foul-mouthed John Bale, Bishop of Ossory' as one of the famous people born in and around Dunwich.⁵⁷² Another notable deliberate mistake is Mrs Lecount's origin in Zurich. She explicitly describes herself as a Catholic ('on the faith of a good Catholic', p468), but Zurich was a centre of the Swiss Protestant Reformation. As we have seen, some of its representatives visited England in 1538, the same year Bale produced *Kynge Johan* in Cranmer's house.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷¹ Baker, Wilkie Collins's Library, p159.

⁵⁷² Mackensie Walcott, *The East Coast of England* (London, Edward Stanford, 1861), p42.

⁵⁷³ Mrs Lecount could be read as a religious exile, but at the end of the novel she returns to Zurich as a welcomed benefactor.

Collins's research for *No Name* took him to Cambridge. He wrote to his mother from London on 6 September 1861 that: 'After leaving Whitby I went to York, Huntingdon, Cambridge, Ipswich & Aldborough before coming back (studying localities for my new story)'.⁵⁷⁴ Cambridge does not appear in the novel, but it is associated with the Reformation, educating many of its key figures, including Bale himself at Jesus College. The appearance of Jesus College is quite similar to the way St Crux is described.⁵⁷⁵



St Crux comprises 'the gloomy ruins of an Abbey' (p476). It has north and east wings sitting at right angles, with a south wing blocked off by a 'brick

⁵⁷⁴ Collins, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, vol 1 p247.

⁵⁷⁵ Image: William Henry Fox Talbot, *Jesus College in Cambridge*, photograph ca 1839, Victoria and Albert Museum Collections, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1389109/jesus-college-in-cambridge-photograph-fox-talbot-william/?carousel-image=2> (accessed July 2021), © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

bulkhead': 'the monks lived due south of us, my dear' says Mazey (p631). On Magdalen's first day, she sees 'two long stone corridors, with rows of doors opening on them' (p621). The east wing contains a banqueting hall. Similarly, Jesus College's First Court has long rectangular buildings with three floors sitting on the north, east and south sides of a square, with cloisters including the chapel attached to it.⁵⁷⁶ Until the late nineteenth century it was one of the smallest and poorest of Cambridge colleges. The site was formerly a nunnery, St Radegund's priory, derelict by the 1490s and redeveloped in the early sixteenth century as a school with classrooms, dormitories, a chapel, rooms for 'Fellows' and 'a fine new hall'. 'A dozen sets of rooms opening off two staircases' were added in 1641. The chapel was restored to its medieval appearance by Pugin from 1845-76 'in accordance with the ideals of the Oxford Tractarians and the ecclesiological principles of the Cambridge Camden Society.'⁵⁷⁷ The restoration would have been in progress when Collins visited Cambridge. All these similarities suggest that Jesus College could have been a model for St Crux and that this was another way Collins could link his story to Bale and the Reformation.

The world of St Crux has strong Catholic connotations. 'St' or saint evokes Catholic saints, while 'crux' literally means 'cross' or crucifix, which

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<https://www.jesus.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/inline/files/Jesus%20College%20Map.pdf> (accessed May 2021). Also see <https://www.jesus.cam.ac.uk/college/life-jesus/location-and-virtual-tour>, (accessed May 2021). See also the Ordnance Survey map from 1884-92, which shows that these are the core buildings of the college (top right of the map): <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/os-1-to-10560/cambridgeshire/047/nw>, (accessed May 2021).

⁵⁷⁷ <https://www.jesus.cam.ac.uk/college/about-us/history/>, (accessed May 2021).

was seen as a 'papist' symbol in Victorian times.⁵⁷⁸ Ossory in Ireland was a known place in 1862, because its bishopric still existed.⁵⁷⁹ These connotations may have served to invoke contemporary anti-Irish feelings as well as anti-Catholic, creating an undercurrent of distaste for the Admiral that helped to keep the reader on Magdalen's side.⁵⁸⁰ The parallels with *Kynge Johan* further show that St Crux is being aligned with Bale's corrupt usurping Catholic power.

Dispossession

The textual parallels with *Kynge Johan* appear in the final episodes in *No Name*, in which Magdalen's attempts to recover her fortune finally fail. Admiral Bartram has inherited the money, and she infiltrates his home to find the Secret Trust, her only hope for overturning her husband's will. Caught in the act of reading the Trust, she is expelled as a burglar. After illness, she confesses her crimes to Captain Kirke, who forgives and marries her. This shows similarities with *Kynge Johan*: like King John, Magdalen is deprived of her rightful inheritance and overcome by the power of the usurpers. But like *Sedition*, she employs infiltration,

⁵⁷⁸ Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism in mid-Victorian England*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1992), p132.

⁵⁷⁹ The incumbent in 1862 was James Thomas O'Brien, Bishop of Ossory from 1842 to 1874. He 'maintained strongly evangelical views throughout his life.' His *An Attempt to Explain the Doctrine of Justification by Faith Only, in Ten Sermons* (1833) 'ran to five editions', and 'became a standard work.' He also wrote *Tractarianism: its Present State, and the Only Safeguard Against it* in 1850. G C Boase revised by Kenneth Milne, 'O'Brien, James Thomas', Oxford DNB online <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/20458> (accessed May 2021).

⁵⁸⁰ Anti-Catholic feeling had been aroused by the recovery of the Catholic church in England mid-century, and there are other instances of Collins either expressing or exploiting these feelings in his fiction. See Susan M Griffin, 'The Yellow Mask, The Black Robe and The Woman in White: Wilkie Collins, anti-Catholic discourse and the Sensation Novel' in *Narrative* 12, 1 (2004), pp55-73.

manipulation and disguise, and is forced to confess at the end. Here, Magdalen appears to occupy both good and bad roles, whereas in *Kynge Johan* they are polarised, the good King and people versus the corrupt Church characters. Rather than creating balance, however, it seems to suggest the desperation and unfairness of her situation. Without her rightful assets, and faced with systematic self-interest and corruption, it becomes clear that she has little option but to adopt dubious practices herself, which supply the usurpers' excuse for her final defeat.

Magdalen is dispossessed like characters from *Kynge Johan*. The play opens with an appeal to the king by Widow England, whose assets have been unjustly stripped by the Church, just as Magdalen's have been taken by the Admiral, leaving her poor and desolate: 'For they take from me my cattell, howse and land / My wodes and pasturs with other commodityes' (KJ 62-3)⁵⁸¹. Later Magdalen is described in a similar way to *Commynnalte* (the common people), who appears, blind and helpless, when King John has failed to subdue the Church:

K. Johan

How sayst thou, *Commynnalte*? Wylt not thou take my parte?

Commynnalte

Alas, in me are two great impediments...

The first is blyndnes, whereby I might take with the Pope

Soner than with yow; for, alas, I can but grope...

⁵⁸¹ Line numbers from Bale, *Kynge Johan*, ed Happé; all quotations cross-checked with Collier's edition.

The nexte is povertē, which cleve so hard to my sydes

And ponych me so sore that my power ys lytyll or non. (KJ 1556-64)

Magdalen's masquerade as a servant means she has little power to search St Crux, which is large, for the trust, alone and in secret. After a few weeks she is in despair: 'condemned, as it were, to wander **blindfold** on the very brink of success – she waited for the chance that never came....' (p641, my emphasis).

Magdalen is also identified with King John, who is unable to withstand the power of the church and protect England and Commynnalte. She is trying to recover control of her fortune, or her own kingdom, but the forces opposing her are too great. Both Magdalen and the king have also lost natural sources of support. Magdalen is separated from family and friends and any right to legal assistance, just as the Church has manoeuvred the other powerful sections of society, represented by the characters Nobility, Clergy and Civil Order (law), away from King John. Clergy is part of the over-mighty Church ('I am proffessyd to the ryghtes ecclesyastycall'), while Civil Order is in its pay ('I am hyr feed man'), so refuses to help the King on the excuse that 'ye are excomynycate' (KJ 1476-78 and 1425). Both have influenced the loyal, well-meaning but rather brainless Nobility to 'not with hym talke /Tell he be assoyllyd [absolved]' (KJ 1450-51). Magdalen's Clergy and Civil Order seem to be Miss Garth and the lawyer Mr Pendril, while the Nobility they influence is Norah. Magdalen is 'excommunicate' in that she has separated herself from them to pursue her aims, but she also detects their betrayal: they 'have been searching for me again, and

...Norah is in the conspiracy this time, to reclaim me in spite of myself... I have no angry feeling towards my sister. She means well, poor soul...’ (p589). Mr Pendril is no longer on her side and tells Miss Garth that ‘any circumstances that estrange her from her sister, are circumstances which I welcome, for her sister’s sake’ (p590). But Magdalen feels that the estrangement has ‘driven me to the last extremity’ (p590-91), echoing King John’s lament to Nobility that ‘this is no tokyn of trew nobelyte / To flee from yowre king in his extremyte’ (KJ 1452-53). King John feels the defection of Nobility, his natural companion, more than the others, just as Magdalen is most hurt by the loss of her sister’s support. The Church deliberately targets King John’s supporters, just as Mrs Lecount contacts Miss Garth and Norah through Mr Pendril, and scares Norah into giving away vital information about Magdalen’s whereabouts (p526-30).

The Corrupt Authority

Admiral Bartram has taken over Magdalen’s fortune and an analogy is thus suggested between the Admiral’s regime at St Crux and the corrupt, foreign and usurping Catholic Church in *Kynge Johan*. The Admiral is a foreign usurper in that he is a distant relation to the Vanstones by marriage only and has inherited on technical legal grounds as a result of Mrs Lecount’s machinations. The details of his regime at St Crux closely follow Bale’s study of the workings and strategies of a corrupt power.

The Monastery

The analogy between St Crux and the Catholic Church is supported by its characterisation as a monastery. Mazey describes how the monks of St Crux used to live: 'they fattened on the neighbourhood all the year round. Lucky beggars!' (p632). This is similar to Widow England's complaint to King John that 'Such lubbers... do lyve by other menns goodes: Monkes, chanons and nones' (KJ 36-8). Mazey's play on 'beggars' here is a reference to the 'mendicant' orders, who were dependent on alms.⁵⁸² The monks may be long gone but St Crux still functions rather like a religious order. One of Admiral Bartram's 'fancies' is that 'he will be waited on by women-servants alone' (p609), evoking a female-only working community like a nunnery. Later, Admiral Bartram appears in a monk-like costume 'a long grey dressing gown... His head was uncovered; his feet were bare' (p667). He shelters the shocked and ill Mrs Lecount after Noel Vanstone's marriage, with 'charity [which] has given me an asylum, during the heavy affliction of my sickness, under his own roof' (p524). Medical care was one of the traditional benefits monasteries provided to their local community. *Kynge Johan* repeats the Protestant complaint that the monasteries were feeding on the local population and only benefitting their own kind, that the moral or religious basis for their occupation of assets had been corrupted. At St Crux, Mrs Lecount is not a local pauper but a

⁵⁸² These included the Franciscans and their female equivalent, known as the 'Poor Clares', which may suggest the source of the name Francis Clare, Magdalen's ex-fiancé.

personal contact, one moreover who had directed Magdalen's fortune to the Admiral.

Accumulating Assets

In *Kynge Johan*, the Catholic Church seeks to drain the king's resources, weakening his authority as king, just as Magdalen cannot control her own life without her money. The Church grasps these resources by dubious means, for example the Pope's envoy Pandalphus tries to divert wealth to the Church through inheritance, a practice for which priests were notorious. He demands that King John gives a third of his land to his sister-in-law (Richard I's widow) Julianne, because she will then leave it to the Church on her death. She dies before this can be done. Similar details appear in *Wills in No Name*. The Secret Trust provides for George Bartram's inheritance to revert to his sister Mrs Girdlestone if he fails to marry within six months, but she dies before the time is up. George and Mrs Girdlestone are the children of Andrew Vanstone's sister Selina (pp138, 244, 563-4, 572), who inherited a third of her father's fortune (Andrew had the other two thirds, p126). Neither Julianne nor Mrs Girdlestone appears in the action and these parallels are not necessary for the plot. Mrs Lecount seeks to control Noel Vanstone's estate in a similar way to Pandalphus, as the agent of control, rather than the personal beneficiary. This allows both characters to take a moral line while still protecting their own interests. The new Will Mrs Lecount dictates gives her the retirement fortune she is owed, just as Pandalphus's interests lie in enriching the Church that employs and keeps him.

Mrs Lecount's dictated Will is legal despite its dubious origins. Magdalen cannot challenge it without a lawyer, but for this she needs money. Her lawyer Mr Loscombe abandons her once there is no hope of her being able to pay his fees (p694), echoing Civil Order's abandonment of the king in favour of the Church on the grounds that lawyers depend on the Church's wealth for their livelihood (KJ 1258-70). The analogy suggests that the law's dependence on money is a deliberate and corrupt strategy of control by the powerful, keeping it out of the reach of challengers.

Control of Space and Knowledge

At St Crux Admiral Bartram is described as 'a rigidly careful man with his keys'. Keys are a symbol of papal authority, drawn as two keys crossed, and appear in *Kynge Johan* as, 'Owre Holy Fathers power and his high autoryte' (KJ 622). This parallel suggestively identifies the Admiral with the Pope and his dual religious and temporal authority.⁵⁸³ Keys symbolise power because in practical terms they control access to space and assets and signify the right to do so. As the owner and keyholder, the Admiral can go anywhere in St Crux. As a servant, Magdalen can only go where her business takes her, and at the direction of her superiors, restricting her ability to search the rooms for the Secret Trust. This concept is also found in *Kynge Johan*, where the Church tries to control access to salvation only through itself, partly through physical access to churches and then by withholding knowledge of the Bible which, according to Bale's Protestant

⁵⁸³ The Admiral also tells his nephew George 'I don't pretend to be infallible', an attribute associated with the Pope (p652).

ideas, is the key to salvation. Dissimulation describes his role: 'Of all relygyons I keep the chyrch dore keye' (KJ 683-4). He can control who enters the church and on what terms. Usurped Power (the Pope) checks that Dissimulation 'dost... not preche the Gospell.... Yf I knewe thow dedyst thow shuldest have non absolucyon' (KJ 855-58). Similarly, Mazey shows Magdalen around St Crux but selects where they do and do not go, while the tour gives no clues as to the whereabouts of the Trust. The Secret Trust is the knowledge of how to recover her fortune, but it is being kept locked and hidden, physically beyond her reach. These parallels create an analogy between the recovery of Magdalen's fortune and salvation. The Admiral specifically tells Magdalen not to seek knowledge when she asks why Mazey sleeps outside his room. He points her to the Bible 'Look in your Old Testament when you go down-stairs, and see what happened in the Garden of Eden through curiosity' (p635). It is ironic that he is telling her to consult the Bible to learn not to learn. Bale's critique and Collins's parody of it reveal that the control of space and withholding of knowledge is in fact a self-interested deliberate strategy of power. As Mrs Lecount puts it, 'keep this desperate woman ignorant, and therefore harmless, as long as you can' (p569). Ignorant people are powerless and less able to challenge a corrupt authority. Just like the poor, blind, Comynnalte, they have little option but to accept the self-serving decisions and pronouncements of those in authority.

Magdalen finds some keys abandoned in some sheds, converted from old monastic cells, and attempts to bypass the Admiral's control with them. They open the 'magnificent Italian cabinet with doors that locked' (p638) in

the library, but no other piece of furniture (p659-60). This might suggest that keys found in monks' cells will only give access to the Italian (Catholic) religion; it is empty of knowledge and Magdalen does not find her 'salvation' there. Finally, she observes the sleepwalking Admiral switching the Trust from a cabinet to a bureau. When she steals his keys and finally finds the Trust, she has little time to decipher the 'cramped and close' writing before being caught (p671). The bureau and cramped writing are suggestive of bureaucratic obstacles or arcane language which can deflect the scrutiny of ordinary people. Maintaining power requires alternative strategies; if the cabinet of religion will not keep knowledge hidden, bureaucracy might.

The Corrupt Officials

A regime depends on the work of its officials and they reflect its character. Without exception, all the Church characters in *Kynge Johan* are corrupt, self-interested and hypocritical. They are zealous in their efforts to maintain the Church's power, displaying a perverted form of duty. At St Crux, these roles are played by the Admiral and Mazey.

Duty

Maintenance of the social order depends on people doing their duty, and in *No Name* Mazey is heard singing a popular song about it, the eighteenth-century sailor's ballad by Charles Dibdin 'Tom Bowling', which laments Tom who has died in action:

His form was of the manliest beau-u-u-uty,
His heart was ki-i-ind and soft;
Faithful below Tom did his duty,
But now he's gone alo-o-o-o-oft... (p627)

'Aloft' is clearly a play on being dead or being up higher on the ship (eg the rigging). Tom did his duty 'below', meaning lower down in the ship, but it also implies lower down in the social order; war requires ordinary people to give their lives to carry out their leaders' purposes. Mazey sings this song just before agreeing to show Magdalen around St Crux and this scene has many parallels with the scene in *Kynge Johan* where Sedition draws his companions Dissimulation, Usurped Power and Private Wealth into his plot against King John. This scene is a comic one with buffoonery, rude jokes and singing. Sedition is carried in on the backs of the other three in a parody of the carrying-in of a bishop. His next lines then rhyme 'soft' and 'aloft', just like Tom Bowling: 'Mary, now [I am] alofte, I wyll beshyte yow all yf ye sett me not downe softe' (KJ 803-4). Like Dissimulation, Mazey is unknowingly helping Magdalen to infiltrate St Crux; his lack of vigilance makes his rendition of a song about duty ironic. Dissimulation is heard singing offstage before he appears, like 'sum hoggherd calling for his pigges: such a noyse I never herd!' (KJ 637-8), while Usurped Power and Private Wealth enter singing a parody of 'placebo', or the Office for the Dead.⁵⁸⁴ Mazey's song combines these in

⁵⁸⁴ Jesus College, Cambridge was founded as a 'chantry' college, ie its first purpose was to sing masses for the dead. Under the Elizabethan settlement, chantry endowments were diverted to the support of students, with masses replaced by 'a termly sermon commending a college's benefactors.' <http://www.jesus.cam.ac.uk/about-jesus-college/history/> (accessed May 2021).

'the tuneless old voice in the distance, singing these lines' about a dead person (p627). The tune for Dissimulation's song is not specified, unlike Seditio's final song, which is given in musical notation. Collins's readers might have known the tune for Tom Bowling, as Tudor audiences would have recognised the sound of the Litany.⁵⁸⁵ When Usurped Power and Private Wealth enter singing, Dissimulation puts on his 'spectacles' to go and have a look, '*vadam et videbo*. Cokes sowll, yt is they: at the last I have smellyd them owt', to which Seditio replies 'Thow mayst be a sowe yf thow hast so good a snowt' (KJ 767-9). When Mazey hears that the housemaids won't show Magdalen over the house, he comments "'That head housemaid's a sour one, my dear – if ever there was a sour one yet" ...He rose, took off his spectacles...'(p627). The play on sow / sour could be a coincidence, but the repetition suggests not. The housemaids instinctively distrust the new parlourmaid: unlike Mazey they have smelled her out.

Mazey's drinking makes him prone to neglect of duty and he and the dogs repeatedly leave the house to misbehave. On returning they make formulaic gestures of repentance. Mazey wins forgiveness by the simple phrase 'Please your honour, I'm ashamed of myself', to which the Admiral responds, 'this mustn't happen again', but of course it does (p643).

Dissimulation repeatedly seeks absolution from more senior Church

⁵⁸⁵ Tom Bowling has quite a hymn-like tune. It was still a well-known song in the mid-nineteenth century and remains Charles Dibdin's most famous composition. See 'Charles Dibdin and his Songs', *The Cornhill Magazine*, May 1868, p578, BP (accessed May 2021). Popular songs were widespread in Victorian culture, see for example on street ballads David Atkinson and Steve Roud, eds, *Street Literature of the Long Nineteenth Century: Producers, Sellers, Consumers* (Newcastle Upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), pp49-51 and 99-153.

characters and is specifically absolved by Usurped Power (the Pope) during Seditio's infiltration scene: 'I assoyle the here, behynde and also before / Now art thou as clere as that daye thou wert borne' (KJ 861-62). The Admiral knows perfectly well that neither Mazey nor the dogs will change their ways, and the words 'this mustn't happen again' merely keep up appearances of his authority. Bale's play contains a sustained attack on the confessional, showing that immoral behaviour can in fact be facilitated by confession rituals. Mazey, with his long history of service to the admiral, has no real fear of sanction and thus has no motive to reform, but his neglect of duty has serious consequences: the Admiral sleepwalks barefoot and gets a chill that leads to his death. Mazey's partial responsibility for the Admiral's death is hinted at in the apology scene, for the Admiral goes on to say 'Come here and drink your wine. God bless the Queen, Mazey.' In *Kynge Johan* the king is poisoned by Dissimulation, who has to drink half the poisoned wine with him and dies too. Corrupt leadership breeds neglect of duty, if not corruption, in those below and can cause disaster.

Defeat is a 'Special Favour'.

A corrupt official might cause failures but can recover situations in unscrupulous ways too. Mazey's abandonment of his post to go drinking, enables him to spot Magdalen reading the Secret Trust on his way home. He offers to let her escape because he says he has taken a fancy to her. Magdalen asks for time to think and then accepts the deal to avoid being publicly expelled in disgrace. Mazey makes her leave her luggage, all her

remaining wealth, behind. Her last chance to read the Secret Trust slips away and with it all power to challenge her fortune's usurpation. These details mirror King John's capitulation to the Church. Cardinal Pandalphus manipulates the isolated King John to submit to the Church, promising 'specyall faver' (1664). King John asks for time to think and then capitulates to avoid war and disaster for his country. Pandalphus then demands vast compensation from the king: he must give up the crown, pay large sums to the Church, take no more tribute from the clergy, restore the abbeys, make Steven Langton Archbishop of Canterbury, and release Treason (1650-1983). All this adds up to a total surrender of John's wealth and power as king. This parallel darkens the view of Mazey's treatment of Magdalen. His apparent kindness for her is created from the cardinal's⁵⁸⁶ blatant and hypocritical manipulation of King John, and he expels the threat she represents efficiently with the least fuss.

Excommunication Ritual.

Magdalen's expulsion from St Crux appears to be closely modelled on Bale's depiction of the Church's excommunication of King John. This is the Catholic Church's ultimate sanction, a ritual formally denying an offender the sacraments of the church, which was believed to condemn the person to damnation. The ritual takes the form of 'Cross, Book, Bell and Candle' (KJ 1035-51, 1358). As White explains, the ritual is 'highly theatrical and emblematic... gesturing with the crucifix to signify the

⁵⁸⁶ In his truckle bed outside the Admiral's door Mazey wears a 'thick red fisherman's cap' (p633), red being the colour of a cardinal's cap.

withdrawal of divine grace, closing the Bible to symbolize the deprivation of spiritual benefits, extinguishing the candle to close off God's guiding light, and ringing the bell, to announce impending eternal death and damnation.⁵⁸⁷ There is a foreshadowing of this ritual when Magdalen arrives. Crux means crucifix, Magdalen is summoned to serve Admiral Bartram by the bell and he tells her to 'mind your book and your needle' (p623). The substitution of 'needle' for candle looks like a deliberate misquotation. Magdalen's actual expulsion begins with Admiral Bartram ringing for coals, a sly suggestion of hell-fire, while the bell itself is described as 'the herald of the end' (p662). When Mazey catches her reading the Secret Trust, her key to salvation like the Bible, he removes both it and the candle she is reading it by (p672-3). Just like a priest withdrawing his mediation between the sinner and God, this is the moment that Mazey ceases to favour Magdalen and expels her.

Magdalen's expulsion by parody of an excommunication ritual also refers to the way the powerful use ritual to add a moral veneer to their exercise of power. Rituals appear in religious or official ceremonies which, when conducted by the select few, imply divinely appointed superiority or powers. Bale debunked this practice in *Kynge Johan* by parodying it on stage. Removed from its context and played in comic style, the excommunication ritual is exposed as a series of empty gestures performed by actors, ridiculing the idea that they could actually condemn someone to eternal damnation. As White comments, this 'shows it for

⁵⁸⁷ White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p37.

what Bale thought it was: a piece of good theatre.’ Bale was trying to re-educate the trained responses of his audience ‘to perceive such ceremonies as hollow spectacle.’⁵⁸⁸ The ritual is clearly misused as part of a power struggle, to subdue the king and bring him back under control. The analogy created with Magdalen’s expulsion undermines the credibility of the moral line that Mazey adopts, revealing the ruthless exercise of power underneath.

Crimes Against the State

Mazey can expel Magdalen easily because her behaviour, sneaking into St Crux in disguise, stealing the Admiral’s keys and reading his private papers, is obviously dubious. It is easy for Mazey to define this in terms of crime; as he puts it, ‘you’ve committed burglary’ (p673). But identifying her with King John at the moment of her expulsion undermines his assertion. Deprived of resources, family and rights that she ought to be able to rely on, she is being forced into the position of thief in order to seek what is rightfully hers. Her position is so weak that, when caught, she has to agree that she has done wrong and escape on Mazey’s terms or face worse. This illustrates the final strategy of the corrupt power: if the dispossessed have no legitimate means to access their rights or challenge power, committing crime is their only option. The authority can then punish them from a moral standpoint, with society’s approval. This raises the problem of how to oppose a corrupt authority, which has co-opted and corrupted normal social institutions to protect its power and right to rule. If

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid, p37-9.

legitimate methods of opposition are closed, is crime justified? In order to fight a corrupt authority, do you have to become as bad as they are?

Sedition

Sedition means acting or inciting action against the state, and in *Kynge Johan* Sedition infiltrates the Church and manipulates it into undermining the king. Magdalen, too, has infiltrated St Crux, and she is in disguise, a trick explicitly associated with Sedition, who appears in various guises during the play: 'In every estate of the clargye I playe a part' (KJ 194). By adopting this role as chief Vice, Magdalen is resorting to crime in her attempt to undermine the regime in power.

Sedition misuses the confessional to manipulate Nobility, disguising himself as the confessor 'Good Perfeccon'. The scene pays attention to the correct costume and action: Nobility asks Sedition to 'Put on yowre stole, then, and I pray yow in Godes name sytt' (KJ 1148-9).⁵⁸⁹ Under the pressure of confessing his sins for absolution and unsure what is the right thing to do, Nobility is persuaded by Sedition to support the Church against the king. This confession is closely paralleled in *No Name* when Magdalen hears the confession of her maid Louisa, whom she invites to sit beside her. Magdalen puts on her shawl to go out in the middle of the scene, suggesting the stole (p607).⁵⁹⁰ Louisa confesses to having a child

⁵⁸⁹ 'The stole required by the Church for the confessor', White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p36.

⁵⁹⁰ The link between the shawl, sitting and confession is reiterated when Magdalen sits in the ruined church entrance at St Crux in her shawl, where 'in centuries long gone by, the stream of human sin and human suffering had flowed, day after day, to the confessional, over the place where she now sat' (p654).

out of wedlock and obtaining her present job by a 'false character'.
Magdalen offers her a solution: she will pay for a passage to Australia if
Louisa helps her disguise herself as a parlour maid to gain access to St
Crux. Magdalen says 'I won't take advantage of the confession you have
made to me; I won't influence you against your will', but the deal is clear:
'what would you do for me in return?' (p607). For both Nobility and
Louisa, the conversation reminds the victim that the alternative to the
proposal is heavy – damnation or years of waiting to marry her child's
father. Both are sworn to secrecy as part of the deal. In manipulating her
maid in this way, Magdalen is acting as a corrupt authority too. But rather
than condemning her, the role-play is ambivalent. *Kynge Johan's* Seditio
is trying to undermine the rightful ruler, while by contrast Magdalen is
trying to undermine a power that has been aligned with the corrupt and
usurping Catholic Church. Seditio and Magdalen are also different in the
social status of their victims. Magdalen chooses to co-opt a lowly maid in
her cause, partly demonstrating her relative powerlessness, but also
revealing her social open-mindedness. Both Nobility and Louisa initially
recoil from the idea of breaking the established social order. Nobility says
that King John's 'princely astate and powre ys of God' (KJ 1178), while
Louisa says 'I am not a lady' (p612), which Magdalen asks her to pretend
to be. Magdalen's response, 'a lady is a woman who wears a silk gown
and has a sense of her own importance', echoes King John's later
sentiments when trying to persuade Nobility not to abandon him too:

Sum thynkyth nobelyte in natur to consist,
Or in parentage; ther thowght is but a myst.

Wher habundance is of vertu, faith and grace,

With knowledge of the Lord nobelyte is ther in place. (KJ 1522-25).

Both Magdalen and King John define nobility as learned behaviour rather than the possession of inheritance. Both have come to understand that inheritance is untenable without education, social support and trappings. King John chooses to maintain his virtue and without his support and trappings he is overwhelmed. Magdalen instead backs up her natural role of King John with Sediton's tactics.

Retribution

After King John's death, Sediton is captured and subjected to Imperial Majesty's judgement. The panicked Sediton cries for 'A sayntwary!' and is rendered breathless with fear: 'I am wyndelesse, good man; I have muche payne to blowe' (KJ 2474-77). Sediton kneels to Imperial Majesty and begs for his life in exchange for confession, which is granted: 'Aryse. I perdon the so that thou tell the trewth' (KJ 2497). When he does so, however, Imperial Majesty has him hanged. These details reappear in the final scene of *No Name* when the repentant Magdalen confesses all to Kirke. Magdalen kneels to Kirke to beg him not to leave her and realises she must tell him everything (p727). Kirke suggests that Magdalen's friends will 'take you away, I suppose, to some better place than this?', a play on a better lodging or one's destination after death. When he returns to give his reaction to her confession, she takes his arm with 'breathless anxiety' that he will leave her. Kirke forgives her instead of condemning her. Unlike Sediton, she genuinely repents her actions. At first glance it

looks as though Collins's story is deviating from Bale's ending to create a happy ending for his heroine.

Bale's apparent solution to corrupt power is to substitute it with royal power. It is easy to read *Kynge Johan* as one-sided propaganda because this is what it was created for. Dermot Cavanagh in 'John Bale and Tragic Drama', however, argues for a more ambivalent reading of the play, when it is considered as a 'mourning play', a form of tragedy defined by Walter Benjamin. Building on Franco Moretti's 'key proposition... that [late-Elizabethan and Jacobean] tragedy arose as a critical response to absolutist forms of governance', Cavanagh argues that the much earlier *Kynge Johan* used its tragic medium to explore the 'limits and contradictions' of sovereignty.⁵⁹¹ The mourning play has two key features: 'the forceful use of lament and the dramatic spectacle of a "martyr-king" confronted and overwhelmed by an intriguer', while its 'political dimension...derives from its slow dissolution of faith in the capacity of sovereignty to find a definitive or just solution to historical crisis.' The mourning play reveals two modes of kingship, the martyr 'with a commitment to truth that results in his tragic destruction', or 'the potential to act as a tyrant', both of which are played out in the figures of King John and Imperial Majesty. King John falls short of his own conception of his 'divinely ordained authority', descending into impotent sorrow and death.⁵⁹² On the one hand 'John dies nobly at the hands of persecutory

⁵⁹¹ Dermot Cavanagh, 'Reforming Sovereignty: John Bale and Tragic Drama', in Peter Happé and Wim Husken, eds, *Interludes and Early Modern Society, Studies in Gender, Power and Theatricality*, (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2007), pp191-209, pp191-3.

⁵⁹² *Ibid*, pp196, 199.

violence', on the other his surrender and death amount to an abdication of responsibility. Imperial Majesty, who takes over, defeats Sedition with his own weapons, fear, manipulation and lies, the kind of behaviour 'associated elsewhere in the play with tyranny.' 'In Imperial Majesty's resemblance to what he opposes, we can see how easily apparently polarised definitions of sovereignty can be reversed or doubled.'⁵⁹³

No Name's ending seems to avoid these issues when Magdalen's fortune is not restored through Sedition's tricks and Kirke chooses not to act the tyrant. This reading is not borne out by a closer look at who's playing who in this drama.

Divine Authority

Magdalen adopts the role of King John to claim sovereignty over her own fortune, but is defeated. By the last scene, she can no longer play him: he has died by this point in the parallel parody of the play.⁵⁹⁴ It is only left to her to play Sedition and beg forgiveness. Her role as Sedition implies that she has no right to take over the fortune. Kirke plays Imperial Majesty, who condemns Sedition, but he does forgive Nobility, Clergy and Civil Order, who all swear allegiance to him: 'I forgyve yow all and perdon your frowarde wytt', and 'Than must ye be sworne to take me for your heade... As ye wyll have me your socour and refuge' (KJ 2344, 2435 and 2440). Although Magdalen presents herself to Kirke as Sedition, he magnanimously redefines her as his supporting groups and forgives her.

⁵⁹³ Ibid, pp203-6.

⁵⁹⁴ Perhaps echoed in her illness which brings her close to death.

She can take refuge as his wife, which involves swearing to obey him. Magdalen must give up any hope of exercising sovereignty over her own assets; she must instead become a supporting element of Kirke's kingdom. Magdalen's choice is not between being a beleaguered failing king or a tyrant; she is not allowed to be a king at all.

Even as king, the derivation of this role from *Kynge Johan* shows that her power was limited. At the height of his defiance against the church, King John claims the supremacy that Henry VIII wanted over the church in England, namely that he was answerable only to God. The church is not supposed to exercise power, he claims, but should obey their prince and restrict itself to giving counsel:

'The power of princys ys gebyn from God above,
And, as sayth Salomon, ther hartes the Lord doth move.
God spekyth in ther lypes whan they geve jugement
The lawys that they make are by the Lordes appoyntment.
Christ wyllid not his the princes to correcte
But to ther preceptes rether to be subjecte.
The office of yow ys not to bere the sword,
But to geve counsell acordyng to Godes word.' (KJ 1342-49)

After her marriage to Noel, Magdalen's defiance of her own moral counsellor, Miss Garth, includes telling her that she has no right to control her even if she finds her: 'Do you know who I am? I am a respectable married woman, accountable for my actions to nobody under heaven but my husband' (p590). This parallel equates a husband to God.

Being subject only to a husband is a very different proposition from being subject only to God. In the latter case, the ruler can decide for himself what God wants, and he is above mere human intervention. A Victorian husband, however, could intervene in his wife's affairs in a very real human way on a continuous basis. She may have been beyond the power of the rest of society, but she was very much subject to his power at home. This parallel between a wife's position and King John's creates a bitterly ironic comment on the position of a married woman. Magdalen's 'kingship' over her fortune as Noel Vanstone's wife was extremely limited. The moment her 'God', Noel Vanstone, feels she is no longer serving him, his sense of grievance makes him susceptible to Mrs Lecount's schemes and she is cast out and disinherited again.

If only a man can exercise kingship, by the terms of Cavanagh's interpretation of *Kynge Johan*, he might be ineffectual and abdicate his responsibilities like King John or a tyrant like Imperial Majesty. Magdalen has experienced both types in her fiancé Frank Clare, who abandons her, and her husband Noel Vanstone, who repudiates her without 'a farthing', effectively taking her life like Sediton's for undermining his rule. Only Kirke exercises kingship properly. He fulfils the responsibilities to defend and protect that King John acknowledges at the beginning of the play:

'Englande

And let me have right, as ye are a ryghtfull king

Apoyntyd of God to have such mater in doing.

For God wylyth yow to helpe the pore wydowes cause....

Seke right to poore, to the weake and faterlesse,
Defende the wydowe whan she is in dystresse.

K. Johan

For God hath sett me, by his apoyntment just,
To further thy cause and to mayntayne thi right,
And therefore I wyll supporte the daye and nyght.

So long as my simple lyffe shall here indewer...’ (KJ 127-40)

Kirke takes charge of the desperately ill Magdalen, takes all the rooms in her lodgings and stays to care for her. “I have taken this trust on myself,” he said: “and, as God shall judge me, I will not be unworthy of it.” (p703). This late reference to an early vow of King John’s suggests that it has been the case all along that only a man can be a king. Magdalen’s apparently happy ending in fact reveals that women have no power in their own right. They can only exist as subjects of their husbands, and are dependent on the husbands’ character. Men have the freedom to act like tyrants or abdicators; Magdalen is simply lucky to have ended up with a man who exercises his power with a sense of responsibility to others instead.

Political Allegory

The textual parallels between *Kynge Johan* and *No Name* suggest alternative, darker, readings of the novel’s final scenes. They use *Kynge Johan*’s exploration of corrupt power to add weight to Magdalen’s case, by showing that she suffers from the systematic manipulation of power. All

four cases I have discussed in this thesis have political implications, suggesting comment on the real nineteenth-century world beyond the novel. *Kynge Johan's* political intent and allegorical form raises the question whether its use by Collins indicates that *No Name* is intended to be read as a political allegory.

Allegory

The Cambridge Companion to Allegory offers this definition of allegory:

In its most common usage it refers to two related procedures, a manner of composing and a method of interpreting. To compose allegorically is usually understood as writing with a double meaning: what appears on the surface and another meaning to which the apparent sense points. Allegorical interpretation (allegoresis) is understood as explaining a work, or a figure in myth, or any created entity, as if there were another sense to which it referred, that is, presuming the work or figure to be encoded with meaning intended by the author or a higher spiritual authority.⁵⁹⁵

Jeremy Tambling in *Allegory* defines further characteristics of allegory: that it works with hidden meanings, even deception, 'invites a variety of interpretations', which may only be in the 'eye' of the reader, and while

⁵⁹⁵ Rita Copeland and Peter D Struck, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011), p2.

writing allegorically is 'a form of self-conscious play', it is nonetheless 'associated with great seriousness.'⁵⁹⁶

The systematic nature of *No Name's* theatrical references and their political implications could mean that Collins was consciously using parodies of drama to create an allegory or allegories that he intended at least some of his readers to be able to detect.

Allegory in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

Allegory as a literary technique was out of fashion in the nineteenth century. Both *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory* and Jeremy Tambling in *Allegory* trace a historical process in which allegory was essential to some periods of literary history and disregarded in others. In the medieval world, allegory articulated a view of the universe that was 'perceived as widely and deeply meaningful', full of signs and symbols to be interpreted in religious terms. The 'veil of allegory' was defined by Boccaccio (1313-75), an early commentator on Dante, as a poetical means of protecting the truth, arguing that profound and precious things are rightly kept back and only reached by overcoming great difficulties.⁵⁹⁷ With the rise of enlightenment thinking, allegory became disconnected from its religious and spiritual potential. It became a literary and visual device, with personifications useful for satire.⁵⁹⁸ Romanticism rejected eighteenth-century rationalism, and with it allegory as a mechanical and

⁵⁹⁶ Tambling, *Allegory*, pp1-17.

⁵⁹⁷ Tambling, *Allegory*, p28 and p39.

⁵⁹⁸ Copeland and Struck, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, pp8-9.

self-consciously artificial device. Symbolism was favoured instead, an attempt to use signs that encapsulated eternal or universal truths, perhaps demonstrating a desire to recapture a sense of the divine or spiritual.⁵⁹⁹ By the mid-nineteenth century, this heritage on the one hand coupled with the rise and dominance of realist fiction on the other meant that allegory was not of significance in literary culture. Collins's use of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in *The Woman in White* argues not only a familiarity with allegorical literature but also an adventurous approach to his own work, unafraid to experiment with techniques that were unusual in his own time.

He was not unique in this, in that Tambling does identify some nineteenth-century examples of allegorical writing that seem to suggest its use for critique or dissent. He detects a questioning of the Romantic distinction between allegory and symbolism, such as in the work of American writers, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville and Emily Dickinson. For example, Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* repeatedly re-interprets the symbolic letter 'A' for adultery, turning it into an allegory of multiple meanings or maybe none. Melville's *Moby Dick* 'may be read both as an allegory and as a meditation on allegory' while at the same time suggesting that any 'significance has faded in the age of realism.'⁶⁰⁰ Allegory could also contest 'the fixing of identity that nineteenth-century modernity was so concerned to uphold', giving expression to things that could not be openly discussed. For example, allegory 'serves as a way to describe the indescribable or the monstrous.' In Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, Bertha Mason and

⁵⁹⁹ Tambling, *Allegory*, pp73-81.

⁶⁰⁰ Tambling, *Allegory*, pp87-91.

Jane sometimes mirror each other, suggesting an allegory of the monstrous 'other' side of Jane.⁶⁰¹ Allegory can also be found in responses to urban modernity. Various parts of Dickens's work seem allegorical, connecting the experience of urban capitalism with madness, mechanism and deadness, such as the lawyers in Bleak House operating in faceless unison 'like eighteen hammers in a pianoforte.' These sorts of allegories turn 'things into people and people into things', expressing 'alienation', 'the sense of not belonging, not fitting, not relating', the very opposite of a Symbolist desire to experience unity with the world.⁶⁰²

Allegory as a Tool for Political Critique

Allegory's advantages for expressing political dissent stem from its ability to undermine the fixed meanings and symbols that are often tools of ideology. As Tambling argues, symbolism desires to define 'timeless, beautiful, eternal truths', an approach which 'consecrates certain values as natural, permanent.' Symbols are therefore important 'within any form of ideology... which makes much of saying that certain things are "natural".' If allegory is a technique of creating or adding meaning, it can be read as an understanding that the meaning in symbols is not natural but has been added. Walter Benjamin's work on the mourning play proposes that allegory is discovered through a state of melancholy, which perceives the world as a collection of fragments that have no intrinsic meaning and are subject to decay and death.⁶⁰³ Politically, symbols can be read as

⁶⁰¹ Ibid, pp92-96.

⁶⁰² Ibid, pp101-104.

⁶⁰³ Tambling, *Allegory*, pp110-16, referring to Walter Benjamin's *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* or *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928, trans 1977).

allegories that have been invested with their significance to express or promote a certain set of values. These artificially constructed fragments, however, are also subject to decay and death, which means they can be changed, destroyed or superseded. This process can be seen in *Kynge Johan* when Bale debunks the excommunication ritual, something previously seen as sacred and 'real', as performance theatre. Allegory can also counter ideological symbolism in its ability to invite or suggest multiple interpretations rather than one 'essential' or universal one. As *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory* puts it:

the nature of allegorical writing is elusive, its surface by turns mimetic and anti-mimetic, its procedures intricate and at times seemingly inconsistent, and its meaning or "other" sense – how it is encoded, or what it refers to extrinsically – often indeterminate.⁶⁰⁴

This introduction of uncertainty helps to create doubt in symbols, and to show that nothing is fixed, essential or 'natural', but much is culturally produced and changeable.

Tambling also discusses the ideas of the American Marxist critic Fredric Jameson who sees the value of allegory in creating what he calls '*national allegories*'. Arguing that there is always 'politics buried under the surface of texts', he observes that they can 'bear unconscious witness to a political crisis which cannot be stated openly.' In his assessment of 'underdeveloped' 'Third World' texts, he argues that 'the story of the

⁶⁰⁴ Copeland and Struck, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, p2.

private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public Third World culture and society', which is 'defined by the experience of colonialism and imperialism.' Any such individual's 'present choices are always deeply compromised', reflecting those of their society.⁶⁰⁵ Jameson's ideas have been in turn criticised, but nonetheless reflect the idea that an individual's story can be understood as part of wider social and political systems and thus become political.

The Condition of England

If Magdalen's story is an allegory of wider conditions, it is already clear that she reflects the disadvantaged position of women in nineteenth-century England who are systematically deprived of their assets and power. Her persistent casting as gods, kings and princes who are overwhelmed by usurping forces, or her attempts to play powerful roles that are denied her, suggests that women are the rightful rulers of their assets and that the deprivation they endure is deliberate. The theatrical role-play exposes the unequal battles for power that create this situation; it is constructed, not natural.

The use of *Kynge Johan* itself invites a 'condition of England' interpretation, with an implication that the nineteenth-century elite operates like the sixteenth-century Church portrayed by Bale, self-serving and corrupt. Magdalen, cast as a combination of dispossessed England, the poor blind common people and the king who is overwhelmed by a corrupt

⁶⁰⁵ Tambling, *Allegory*, pp154-56, referring to Fredric Jameson, 'Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism' in *Social Text* 15 (1986).

usurping power, might stand for the ordinary people of nineteenth-century England, whose rights to the assets of their own country have been usurped by a powerful elite. Her casting as Sedition suggests that their only means of resistance is crime. Her reorganisation by Kirke into her submissive secondary role as dependent wife can be seen in this context as the systematic removal of women from power as a section of society. The allegory suggests that at every level the male elite have too much power to the detriment of everybody else. The comparison of the Vanstone fortune with salvation is particularly pointed, suggesting that wealth is the real object that drives society, perhaps the 'true religion'.

The Admiral can be read as a usurper on a national level, in his ownership of what was once a monastery. *Kynge Johan* was an integral part of the campaign for the Reformation, in which much confiscated monastic land ended up in the hands of the ruling classes. The Reformation also saw the monarchy and Church, political and religious powers, joining forces in the established Church of England. St Crux might be read as an allegory of the nineteenth-century Church of England, degenerated like Bale's monasteries from its original religious purpose of serving the community and only protecting its own.

The imagery created in relation to space, buildings and objects especially suggests allegory, implying comment on the methods used by the elite to stay in power. If Magdalen is an allegory of ordinary people, she encounters the structural barriers keeping them from knowledge and their own wealth. The Secret Trust, the knowledge she needs access to, is

hidden in cabinets of religion and bureaux of bureaucracy. The Admiral's papal keys suggest a control of space that is revealed as a deliberate strategy of exclusion. Magdalen is excluded from spaces that might supply her with the knowledge that she needs. Spaces that supply knowledge might include universities, especially when St Crux might be modelled on Bale's place of education, Jesus College, Cambridge. Wealth and social position were needed for access to university in the nineteenth century, and the education received there reinforced it. Meanwhile the Admiral instructs her not to seek knowledge, citing the Bible, suggesting a strategy of using both education and religion to reinforce the social order. The lower orders are denied intellectual education and socialised to know their place. The Admiral presents this as a religious duty, a message to which nineteenth-century people were susceptible because so many of them were genuinely religious.⁶⁰⁶

The parody of the excommunication ritual might be read as an allegorical reference to the wider Victorian culture of ritualising power both politically and in the church. As Albert D Pionke notes, 'for... the upper and upper-middle classes and the professions... ritual fostered intra-class solidarity, demonstrated political and social authority, and attempted to make that authority sacred in the eyes of the general public.'⁶⁰⁷ Other authors, such as Trollope and Dickens, also parodied the rituals of officialdom; Pionke

⁶⁰⁶ Bible knowledge and religious observance were widespread, as shown by persistent religious controversy in this period and the 1851 Religious Census. See Kreuger 'Clerical' in Tucker, ed *A New Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*, pp141-55, pp143, 149.

⁶⁰⁷ Albert D Pionke, "I do swear": Oath-Taking among the Elite Public in Victorian England' in *Victorian Studies* 49,4 (2007) pp611-33, p612. quoting Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (1867) (Oxford University Press, 2001), p8.

argues that the existence of such parody demonstrated that ‘class difference in Victorian England was continuously constructed through public performance’.⁶⁰⁸ Rituals are a good example of symbolic acts that are asserted to have intrinsic meaning in which people must believe, but the meaning has been added, making them more like allegories.⁶⁰⁹ In Catherine Bell’s work on ritual theory she describes this as ‘the definition of reality thesis.’⁶¹⁰ She cites Steven Lukes, who argues that ritual “‘helps to define as authoritative certain ways of seeing society: it serves to specify what in society is of special significance, it draws people’s attention to certain forms of relationships and activity – and at the same time, therefore, it deflects their attention from other forms, since every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing.’”⁶¹¹ Bell describes this as ‘a form of control not experienced as such by the people involved.’⁶¹² She also cites Mary Douglas’s analysis of ritual as ‘contributing to the restraining effect of closed and highly structured societies’, such as religious or public institutions.⁶¹³ Therefore one way to undermine an entrenched power structure is to debunk its rituals, as Bale did. If St Crux is an allegory for the Church of England, Collins may be commenting on its use of ritual to maintain power. Richard Foulkes notes the increasing crossover between religion and theatre in the nineteenth century. Actors and clergymen

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid p626-9.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid p623, referring to Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, (1915), p174.

⁶¹⁰ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2009), p171, summarising from Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, (1915).

⁶¹¹ Ibid p175, quoting from Steven Lukes, ‘Political Ritual and Social Integration’ in *Sociology: Journal of the British Sociological Association* 9,2 (1975) pp289-308.

⁶¹² Ibid, summarising from Clifford Geertz, *Negara* (Princeton University Press 1980).

⁶¹³ Ibid, p177-8, summarising from Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols* (Random House 1973).

needed similar performance skills, the Oxford Movement involved more ritual and theatricality, while Evangelicals thought that personal devotion was assisted by art and literature.⁶¹⁴

The Admiral's identification with the Pope, who was an international power, suggests an international dimension to the allegory. St Crux might be read as an allegory of the British sea-faring trading Empire, with its north and east wings and an 'Arctic Passage', suggesting key trading routes, its surrounding tidal streams crossed by many bridges and its housekeeper called Mrs Drake (pp476, 629-30, 618).⁶¹⁵ Magdalen's tour of the house is a 'voyage of domestic discovery' (p626), while her working quarters are her 'domestic dominions' (p622). This allegory might suggest that the British Empire was another corrupt, foreign usurper. The buildings of St Crux are old and decaying, which might suggest that the empire is defunct or perhaps that it has ruined those ruled. Mrs Lecount's machinations mean that Magdalen's fortune is locked up where even the Admiral cannot use it. As his nephew George puts it: 'The house and lands are to be mine... But the money with which I might improve them both, is to be arbitrarily taken away from me' (p645). This comment might suggest that too many of the empire's profits or assets are being siphoned off into private hands, while the lands or the countries and their peoples, or even the ordinary people of Britain, are left to fall into decay.

⁶¹⁴ Richard Foulkes, *Church and Stage in Victorian England* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp35, 41, 48, 50-51, 82-5.

⁶¹⁵ The play on Francis Drake might also support the idea of St Crux as a Franciscan monastery.

Allegorical readings of *No Name* that critique the state of the nation contrast with the motives that brought *Kynge Johan* to its nineteenth-century publication by the Camden society. Both the antiquarian community and historicist theatre producers like Charles Kean sought to celebrate England through her past glories. The parallels with *Kynge Johan* in *No Name* instead map England's ruling classes onto the corrupt (and eventually ousted) Catholic Church. This was quite an insult when Protestantism and the Reformation were regarded as 'intimately associated with our strongest national feelings.' The parallels restore a voice from the time of the Reformation, even if it was then an establishment and propagandist one, to evoke the experience of the powerless living under a corrupt regime,⁶¹⁶ and to imply that England was anything but glorious. It is impossible to be sure what Collins intended or whether these ideas reflect his real opinions, when both parody and allegory create uncertainty, and *Kynge Johan* was a potentially unreliable text. But the drift of political opinion here does seem consistent.

The Condition of Theatre

The use of theatrical parody and reference to contemporary practices might also suggest a related 'Condition of Theatre' allegory: does Magdalen the 'born actress' in some sense represent the theatre? Her story begins with *Prometheus Bound* and proceeds through many of the

⁶¹⁶ Despite his power, Cromwell persistently strove after social reforms, as well as in religion. His poor relief legislation of 1536 made parishes responsible for their local poor, and although its success in practice was limited, it 'marks the first occasion on which an English government had recognized a responsibility to those on the fringes of society.' Leithead, 'Cromwell, Thomas', Oxford DNB online.

great works of Western theatre to Collins's day, implying that her story can be seen as the story of the theatre, too.

Censorship

As noted earlier, nineteenth-century theatre after 1843 was both censored and wholly commercial with no state support, conditions which prevented it from contributing to public debate. Magdalen might be an allegory for theatre because her story reveals that conditions for women were similar. Just like a woman, theatre was subject to moral control, actively prevented from taking part in politics and had to please those with money to get its living; it is therefore not surprising that it did so by harnessing its visual attractiveness and accommodating middle-class demands for social respectability.

Kynge Johan is intrinsically connected with the beginnings of state censorship of drama by law. In 1543 Henry VIII passed the Act for the Advancement of True Religion. This forbade moral plays to promote any interpretation of Scripture contradicting that set forth by the king.⁶¹⁷ It was in direct response to plays like Bale's which had been advocating Protestantism. Censorship is an obviously available tool for an authoritarian power wishing to curb drama's ability to criticise. Censorship arose at a time when drama was beginning to move out of the direct pay and control of the ruling classes. Once theatre was playing commercially

⁶¹⁷ White, *Theatre and Reformation*, p56. John Payne Collier also noted this Act in his *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, Vol 1, p128.

to the general public, it could only be controlled by less direct methods such as the law.

John Payne Collier, *Kynge Johan's* editor, spoke in favour of censorship, as an expert on drama, to the 1832 Select Committee, set up to examine the laws relating to theatre. He asserted that 'the authorities' retention of political control was crucial to the well-being of the theatre and society', and that the suppression of a play about Charles I in 1825 was justifiable at a time when "there was a disposition to think lightly of the authority of kings."⁶¹⁸ Collier was connected with aristocratic and government authorities: he worked as part-time librarian to the Duke of Devonshire and hoped through his patronage to be appointed Examiner of Plays, unsuccessfully.⁶¹⁹ Collier's views were arguably compromised by these circumstances. But even if his opinions were honest, this would mean he was in favour of the control of texts in the interests of the powerful. As a scholar who committed forgery, he was an example of a corrupt authority himself. He had been an authority on medieval drama, but his exposure showed that he had been abusing the trust of other scholars and the public for decades. Forgery is, arguably, just an extreme method of controlling texts, and as Examiner, he would have been able to cut and suggest replacement text with full legal authority.

⁶¹⁸ Stephens, *Censorship of English Drama*, p38 and p48.

⁶¹⁹ Arthur Freeman, Janet Ing Freeman, 'Collier, John Payne', Oxford DNB online, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5920> (accessed May 2021).

Was Theatre Dead or Alive?

Magdalen might also be an allegory for the theatre in her disinheritance. Collins's scheme uses great dramatic works of the past, some of which had disappeared from the stage into written form only available to the elite, such as *Prometheus Bound* or *Kynge Johan*, or were more valued in written form, such as Shakespeare's plays, implying that theatre had been disinherited of some of its assets. These assets had in a sense been usurped by the elite, keeping them out of the reach of ordinary people. Just like Magdalen's financial disinheritance, theatre's loss of its own assets, in this case the content and relevance of political plays, reduced its ability to challenge the powerful.

Magdalen's story shows her progression from a living and vital young woman to a dead shell by the end, an empty vessel for the service of the status quo. This can be read as an allegory of what had happened to the theatre too. Collins is referring to the span of theatre history which critiques contemporary theatrical methods and fashions, but which also illuminates the process of change. Plays like *Prometheus Bound* and *Kynge Johan* were key works in the historical development of theatre, they were at the apex of change. Collins understood that art forms stay alive by engaging in risk, experiment and innovation and stay relevant by engaging in contemporary issues. He showed this by experimenting with theatrical parodies in his own art form, the novel. But the process of commercialisation and increased censorship that theatre had undergone through the nineteenth century discouraged all these things. In addition,

the nineteenth-century's cultural devaluation of performed art in favour of fixed written literature further handicapped drama, for which performance is fundamental. Important works from the past were only being valued as dead paper texts on elite shelves instead of being alive and in the theatre. Acting scripts, like musical scores, are merely skeletons of arts that can only really exist when brought to life in performance. Collins's theatrical parodies bring lost texts back into performance and remind the reader that this is their correct mode. Similarly, the contemporary fashion for splendid and realistic visual display in the theatre overrode the content of plays and reduced history to a concern with dead artefacts. Collins's use of parody adopts the methods of popular theatre to offer critique of these fashions and some of their effects. Collins satirises the reduction of York to a cardboard stage set, but the play on York / Yorick can also be read allegorically. Yorick appears in *Hamlet* only as a skull, a dead artefact. He was a jester who once had a voice, who used to be able to say critical things about the monarch to his face, under the guise of entertainment or joke, and get away with it. Similarly, the theatre used to be able to take part in political and cultural debate but by the mid-nineteenth century it could not. The Victorians had a view of history as a path to the glorious and inevitable greatness of now. They liked their history and their literature to come in preserved and fixed form because if the past is dead, you can control it, select it, reproduce it for a particular agenda, and like a skeleton or a skull it cannot protest. The past, too, is subject to iterability: it can be copied, taken out of context and its meaning changed. It can be a parody.

Conclusion

The theatrical parodies in *No Name* show that Collins was a more sophisticated writer than he has been previously considered, using creative methods that have been largely overlooked. With parody, theatre, intertextuality and allegory he made a controlled critique of realism and a cumulatively devastating attack on the society it supported. The results of this research invite a reappraisal of how Collins's work might be approached in the future.

This thesis vindicates and extends the previous arguments of Caracciolo and Bisla that Collins was more than a sensation writer. This research reveals that Collins's use of intertextuality was far more extensive than Caracciolo or others previously supposed. It invites further detailed intertextual investigation of *No Name* itself or Collins's other major novels, to reassess his literary technique, originality or social commentary.

Bisla's arguments that Collins used parody to attack realism and that his work is driven by an interest in iterability is supported by the theatrical parodies. However, Bisla's assertion that Collins's primary interest was 'the paradoxical workings of textuality' is somewhat countered by the need for so much historical, theatrical and personal context to decipher their significance. Clearly, Collins's subtext relates strongly to contemporary issues, and rather than seeing his technique as a departure from his reputation as a writer interested in social issues, it simply reveals his unusually creative method for critiquing them.

Collins's work also needs to be reassessed in the light of his deep interest in theatre. It was a preoccupation which I have demonstrated being expressed through his fiction, not just through his attempts to write plays, and this aspect of his life needs to be appreciated to really understand his work.

This research also invites a reassessment of Collins's potential or intended readership. His technique is sophisticated, requiring both knowledge of theatre, history and literature and the skill to use it in a complex and purposeful way. The readership of sensation fiction was dismissed by contemporary critics as being mainly silly emotional women and subsequently assumed to be 'popular', meaning 'not intellectual'. Collins's methods suggest that he may have hoped to engage an intellectual readership for his work, one that had the brains, knowledge, time and stamina to perceive and decipher the hidden code. Only educated males would have been able to recognise *Prometheus Bound*, while the parody of *Kynge Johan* may have been aimed directly at antiquarians. The sorts of people who could have read the subtext were exactly those who enjoyed wealth, education and privilege at the expense of everyone else, people who had the power to change things, and perhaps Collins hoped to influence them.

However, since contemporary reviewers failed to mention what Collins was doing in *No Name*, and it is uncertain whether anyone noticed, do we have to consider that the novel failed in its purpose? All that artistic innovation and political critique was wasted if it didn't reach an audience.

The answer depends on what we surmise Collins wanted or expected. As previously argued, Collins must have been aware that a large proportion of his readership wouldn't notice. He was used to his efforts not getting recognition, such as *The Red Vial* or his use of Dante in *The Woman in White*. As a sensation novel *No Name* was still a commercial success, widely read and reviewed, and it is possible that some readers did notice the subtext privately. Collins pursued his own artistic purposes on his own terms, and in this sense *No Name* was an innovative achievement, just waiting to be discovered.

Appendix

Dramatic Works Used in *No Name*

Date	Author	Title	Type	Extent
460s BC	Aeschylus	<i>Prometheus Bound</i>	Tragedy	Whole
438 BC	Euripides	<i>Alcestis</i>	Tragedy	Substantial part
1375	Anon / various	<i>Chester Mystery Cycle</i>	'Mystery' play	23 out of 24 plays
1538	John Bale	<i>Kynge Johan</i>	'Morality' / history hybrid	Whole
1594/5	Shakespeare	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Comedy	Famous quotation, speculative
1594/5	Shakespeare	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Tragedy	Key scenes
1597	Shakespeare	<i>Richard III</i>	Tragedy	Key scenes
1599	Shakespeare	<i>Julius Caesar</i>	Tragedy	Key characters
1600	Shakespeare	<i>As You Like It</i>	Comedy	Famous quotation, speculative
1600-04	Shakespeare	<i>Hamlet</i>	Tragedy	Whole
1606	Shakespeare	<i>Macbeth</i>	Tragedy	Key scene
1775	Sheridan	<i>The Rivals</i>	Comedy	Substantial part
1785	Beaumarchais	<i>The Marriage of Figaro</i>	Comedy	Substantial part
1803	James Kenney	<i>Raising the Wind</i>	Farce	Key character
1815	Thomas John Dibdin	<i>Past Ten O'Clock and a Rainy Night</i>	Farce	Part
1817/20	Rossini / Ferretti	<i>La Cenerentola</i>	Opera Buffa	Substantial part, with other versions
1814-21	Charles Mathews	<i>Mailcoach Adventures</i>	'At Home'	Part
1830	M Rophino Lacy	<i>Cinderella, or the Fairy Queen and</i>	Comic Opera	Substantial part, with other versions

		<i>the Glass Slipper</i>		
1841	J R Planche	<i>Beauty and the Beast</i>	Extravaganza	Small part, speculative
1845	Smith and Taylor	<i>Cinderella, A Burlesque Extravaganza</i>	Burlesque	Part, with other versions
1854	Slingsby Lawrence (G H Lewes)	<i>Sunshine Through the Clouds</i>	Drama	Small part, speculative
1855	Wilkie Collins	<i>The Lighthouse</i>	Drama	Part
1857	Wilkie Collins	<i>The Frozen Deep</i>	Drama	Part
1858	Wilkie Collins	<i>The Red Vial</i>	Drama	Substantial part
1860	H J Byron	<i>Cinderella and the Little Glass Slipper</i>	Burlesque	Substantial part, with other versions

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