

No Name: An Opaque Body of a Heroine

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In his most popular novel, *The Woman in White*, Wilkie Collins develops the plot around the lost identity of its heroine Laura, which Walter Hartright tries to retrieve. During the pursuit of it, it becomes necessary to discover hidden secrets of the villains — the illegitimacy of Percival Glyde and Count Fosco's treason to a Brotherhood. Though the recovery of Laura's identity cannot be done without obtaining the secrets, it is true that we sometimes get the impression that Hartright as well as the reader is pursuing the secrets of the characters' past for the secrets sake. It is so especially in the pursuit of the true identity of "the woman in white," Anne Catherick.

However, in his next novel, *No Name*, Collins asserts the different attitude to the use of secrets:

The only secret contained in this book, is revealed midway in the first volume. From that point, all the main events of the story are purposely foreshadowed, before they take place— my present design being to rouse the reader's interest following the train of circumstances by which these foreseen events are brought about.⁴¹

Clearly, the only secret of the novel here he implies is that the death of Andrew Vanstone without correcting his will left his two daughters, Norah and Magdalen, legally illegitimate, "Nobody's Children" (98). After the revelation of the secret the plot develops not around the seeking of the hidden secret, as in the case of *The Woman in White* but around the duel of wits between Captain Wragge, Magdalen's distant cousin, and Mrs. Lecount, the housekeeper of Noel Vanstone who inherits Andrew Vanstone's fortune.

As there is no secret in *No Name*, so there is no longer opposition of good and evil set in the respective

characters. About the melodramatic element in the sensation novel Winifred Hughes suggests, "The particular appeal of melodrama is in the clear-cut dichotomy between good and evil."⁴² *The Woman in White* is set within this melodramatic opposition between the good characters, Hartright, Laura, and Marian Halcombe, and the evil characters, Percival, Count Fosco, and Mrs. Fosco. While in *No Name*, even though Norah is clearly the personification of good, in contrast to the fallen Magdalen, the opposition of good and evil is not given the focus of the story especially after Norah falls back to the background. The world of the novel becomes whirlpool of evil and every character tries to outwit others with his or her cunning.

If there is not hidden secrets or a battle between the good and the evil characters, as in *The Woman in White*, what develops the plot of *No Name*? It is the best choice the characters with various degrees of evil select in the course of the story. The stance is first reflected in the contemplation of Captain Wragge, when he finds fifty pounds is going to be rewarded for the discovery of missing Magdalen. His orthodox principle of thinking is disclosed: "It was his habit always to see his way before him through a neat succession of alternatives — and so he saw it now." It continues as follows:

Three courses were open to him in connection with the remarkable discovery which he had just made. The first course was to do nothing at all. Inadmissible . . . The second course was to deserve the gratitude of the young lady's friends, rated at fifty pounds. The third course was by a timely warning, to deserve the gratitude of the young lady herself, rated — at an unknown figure. Between these two last alternatives, the wary Wragge

hesitated (137).

Or again, later with Magdalen's visible figure before him, he tries to appreciate her value: "One of two things . . . She's worth more than fifty pounds to me in her present situation, or she isn't." He not only chooses but also makes Magdalen to choose "between the two inevitable alternatives of trusting herself to him, on the one hand, or of returning to her friends, on the other" (143).⁴⁹

Similarly, Captain Wragge's rival, Mrs. Lecount, determines her action, in terms of alternatives. She suspects that Miss Bygrave, with whom Noel is infatuated, is Magdalen disguised. Not being able to confide this presentiment without evidence to Noel she contemplates:

Reflection showed her three different chances in her favour — three different ways of arriving at the necessary discovery. The first chance was to cultivate friendly terms with Magdalen . . . The second chance was to write to the elder Miss Vanstone . . . The third chance was to penetrate the mystery of Mrs. Bygrave's seclusion. . . (278).

And she resolves "to try all three chances, in the order in which they are here enumerated, and to set her snares for Magdalen."

Though the Captain and Mrs. Lecount are opponents, they are similar in that they make their option, taking into consideration the relative advantage they can make by that choice. But it also implies they don't have absolute standard of action. As they are not unequivocal villains like Percival or Count Fosco, they can make only minor schemes but cannot do the unambiguous evil like them. Of course Captain Wragge and Mrs. Lecount have to choose because of their avarice: they have to attain some reward by any means.

Into the world ruled by the money-grubbing conspirators Magdalen is thrown and in the process she predictably adapts herself to the strategic alternative of her senior conspirators. For her the alternative is that of marrying Noel to reclaim her lost fortune or not. Before the marriage Captain Wragge urges Magdalen to

choose, holding up envelopes to forward to himself Mrs. Lecount's letter to Noel: "Look at these . . . Shall I tear the envelopes up, or shall I put them back in my pocket?" (349) But she wavers in her decision because giving up her plan means her death. To free herself from the tension she tries to settle the ultimate alternatives of life and death with a bottle of laudanum before her:

For one half-hour to come, she determined to wait there, and count the vessels as they went by. If, in that time, an even number passed her — the sign given, should be a sign to live. If the uneven number prevailed — the end should be Death (368).

As we have seen in the above examples, it is apparent that Collins sets up several alternatives before the characters as a strategy of developing plot so that by presenting possible courses of action of the characters he can foreshadow the following events as he says in the preface. Apparently the plot of *No Name* is established on dual, or sometimes plural, choices as contradicting forces struggling to predominate over the other. But the contradicting forces are by no means evil and good as in *The Woman in White*. Then, what kind of contradiction? Or what role does the contradiction in *No Name* play? To evaluate the function of alternatives as contradicting forces let us examine other contradictions in the novel, which are within the characters.

As many critics point out, at the beginning of the novel the characters are presented with their own contradictions.⁴⁹ In Andrew Vanstone there is contradiction between his actual age and his temperamental age: though he has turned fifty, judged by "lightness of heart, strength of constitution, and capacity for enjoyment" (2) he appears no older than thirty. Although Miss Garth is little more than forty, her dress is one of "an old woman" (3). More striking contradiction in the family is Magdalen. Though she presents herself "to make the family circle complete," (5) she is described as if to break the tranquil family

circle with her vivacity. Unlike her sister Norah, who is alike Mrs. Vanstone, Magdalen presents “no recognizable resemblance to either of her parents” (5) and in that she contradicts her parents’ expectation.

However, what is depicted as extraordinary in Magdalen is not so much the contradiction to the imaginable hereditary resemblance as her contradiction to herself. Her hair, which is purely light-brown, her eyebrows and eyelashes, which are a little darker than her hair, seem, as the narrator says, complete with violet-blue eyes but in fact “The eyes, which should have been dark, were incomprehensibly and discordantly light” (6). This “self-contradictory” in the upper part of her face is matched with the discordance in her femininely delicate lips and round and smooth cheeks on the one hand, and too large and firm mouth and too square and massive chin on the other. The whole countenance, which is “remarkable in its strongly-opposed characteristics,” is rendered additionally striking by its mobility. By using such phrases as “associated with a fair complexion,” “the promise of her face failed of performance,” and “at variance with established ideas of harmony,” these “self-contradictions” are delineated with probable discouragement of expectations on the part of the narrator. At the same time the discrepancy in her contradicts to expectations of the spectator, which are the same with those of the reader.⁶⁵ So it may be more accurate to say that her contradictions are not so much intrinsic in herself as the reflection of the reader’s expectations of what is going to happen as a result of the surface contradictions. We can estimate the appropriateness of the expectations by exploring Magdalen’s action in relation to the contradictions. Before that, it seems relevant to the consideration of these contradictions working in *No Name* to see another character whose portrayal is characterized by apparently contradicting factors.

The arch-conspirator in the novel, Captain Wragge is again a figure of contradiction. Like Andrew Vanstone and Miss Garth he is characterized by the discrepancy of his age. When looked from the front, he would be estimated at fifty or more, but looked from behind, he is “almost young enough to pass for

five-and-thirty” (14). As a swindler his appearance and reality contradict. These contradictions are symbolically represented by his “eyes of two different colours— one bilious green, one bilious brown, both sharply intelligent.” This feature of eyes is so outstanding that the reader may well ask, “into what does this conspicuous idiosyncrasy of his eyes resolve later?” The answer is into nothing, as Geoffrey Tillotson says who is also annoyed by this kind of red herring.⁶⁶ Anthony Trollope complained that in Wilkie Collins’ novel “there is no piece of necessary dovetailing which does not dove tail with absolute accuracy,” therefore the reader can never “lose the taste of the construction.”⁶⁷ Responding to his protest Tillotson points out that there are occasionally what might be called futile retentiveness of details by the reader in Collins’ novel. Captain Wragge’s eyes are one of these examples. In fact, his eyes can function as no more than specifying to the reader that he reappears. In York where Magdalen is supposed to go, a man who seems poverty-stricken is introduced. He looks around him:

with eyes of two different colours — a bilious brown eye on the look for employment, and a bilious green eye in a similar predicament. In plainer terms, the stranger from Rosemary Lane was no other than — Captain Wragge (134).

There, as in other places, apparently contradicting eyes function as having the same quality, exemplified in the phrases, “both sharply intelligent” or “in a similar predicament,” rather than they are described as though they had respective roles and were employed as referring to contradicting forces working in his mind. The eyes make the reader to expect themselves to be working as contradiction but they have nothing contradicting in themselves.

In this context we can evaluate properly the contradictions in Magdalen’s feature. Though the narrator calls the reader’s attention to the “self-contradictory” quality in it, seen from another point of view these “light-brown” hair, “a shade darker” eyebrows and eyelashes, and “nearly colourless grey” eyes, with their insistence on fairness and lightness, are

harmonious in their gradation. As I suggested above, her contradiction consists in the reader's expectations, that is his or her idea of what is contradicting about her and what will be the result of the contradiction. However, these expectations are incited by the narrator's persistent depiction of other contradictions such as those of other characters' appearance and real age.

The reader's predicament that he or she is deceived by Magdale's surface contradiction applies to the characters in the novel. The moral ambiguity of Magdalen and the appropriateness of its representation on surface are underscored by Miss Garth's contemplation. After the death of Mr. and Mrs. Vanstone and the following disinheritance of their daughters, she thinks to herself their dispositions so far hidden from her:

Does there exist in every human being, beneath that outward and visible character which is shaped into form by the social influences surrounding us, an inward, invisible disposition, which is part of ourselves; which education may indirectly modify, but can never hope to change? . . . Are there, infinitely, varying with each individual, inbred forces of Good and Evil in all of us, deep down below the reach of mortal encouragement and mortal repression — hidden Good and hidden Evil, both alike at the mercy of the liberating opportunity and the sufficient temptation? (103 - 104)

What is problematic about her contemplation is that Miss Garth, reading the "surface" of the sisters — "the unalluring secrecy and reserve" of Norah and "the all-attractive openness and high spirits" of Magdalen — simultaneously sets up the melodramatic convention by placing good and evil respectively on Norah and Magdalen and disrupts this conventional opposition by interrogating whether there will be, and must be, inner conflict of good and evil in Magdalen. Hence she is convinced of the existence of Magdalen's conflict:

If the life of the elder sister was destined

henceforth to be the ripening ground of the undeveloped Good that was in her — was the life of the younger doomed to be the battle-field of mortal conflict with the roused forces of Evil in herself? (104)

This tenacious sticking to the description of the "surface" which may reflect "forces of inborn and inbred disposition" makes the reader believe in the hidden conflict in Magdalen. However, the interrogation is from Miss Garth's subjectivity not from objective view. What is confusing in the scene of Combe-Raven seems to be that sometimes the subjectivity of Miss Garth, who may prerogatively survey the commotion in the house, is merged with the narrator's view.

At the beginning of the novel Mr. and Mrs. Vanstone go to London on an errand, which is mysterious to Miss Garth. She cannot be satisfied by the explanation in Mrs. Vanstone's letter and wonders whether there is a hidden motive:

She locked up the letter in her desk . . . and went down stairs again to the breakfast-room. Amid many uncertainties, this at least was clear: Mr. and Mrs. Vanstone were coming back on the twenty-third of the month. Who could say what new revelations might not come back with them? (20)

With the turn of the chapter the same question is assigned to the narrator: "No new revelations came back with them: no anticipations associated with their return were realized" (21) and the narrative turns to the consideration of secrets in general. The effect of this simultaneous confusion and conversion of Miss Garth and the narrator is not to authorize Miss Garth's subjectivity by making her aligned with the narrator's objective view. But it undermines the narrator's authority, who can do nothing but foreshadow the course of the narrative by repeating several questions which are essentially unvarying with Miss Garth's.⁶⁸ In all these persistent descriptions of what is visible on bodily "surface," the conviction of hidden realities of conflict, contradiction, and dichotomy in psychological

“depth” is aroused but their appropriateness is grounded on what the character, the narrator, and the reader observe. So this subjectivity-based conviction may be illusory as the surface may not reflect correctly the depth. Moreover, what is problematic is that the illusion is interpolated by the surface, while the surface is depicted as being extrapolated by the deceptive depth.

The problem of subjectivity is sometimes articulated by the characters themselves. For example Captain Wragge is the character who most visibly personifies the discrepancy between surface and reality. Though he is definitely a swindler, he calls himself a “moral agriculturalist, that cultivating man” and in so doing he reveals the problem of designation:

Narrow-minded mediocrity, envious of my success in my profession, calls me a Swindler. What of that? The same low tone of mind assails men in other professions in a similar manner — calls great writers, scribblers — great generals, butchers — and so on. It entirely depends on the point of view (153).

Likewise, his “Constitutionally torpid” wife, Matilda Wragge of an “interminable height,” (146) unconsciously illustrates the same problem. Ordered by the Captain an omelette for the breakfast, she recites the recipe:

“Omelette with Herbs. Beat up two eggs with a little water or milk, salt, pepper, chives, and parsley. Mince small.” — There! mince small! How am I to mince small, when it’s all mixed up and running? “Put a piece of butter the size of your thumb into the frying pan.” — Look at my thumb, and look at yours! whose size does she mean? “Boil, but not brown.” If it mustn’t be brown, what colour must it be? She won’t tell me; she expects me to know, and I don’t. “Pour in the omelette.” — There! I can do that. “Allow it to set, raise it round the edge; when done, turn it over to double it.” — Oh, the numbers of times I turned it over and doubled it in my head, before you came in to-night! “Keep it soft; put the dish on the frying-

pan, and turn it over.” Which am I to turn over — oh mercy, try the cold towel again, and tell me which — the dish or the frying pan? (149- 150)⁹⁹

Here what Matilda says seems to criticize covertly the working structure of the whole novel. On the one hand she elucidates the problem of the subjectivity by pointing out arbitrariness of “a piece of butter the size of your thumb” because it does not present an absolute standard. On the other hand she discloses the deceptive nature of what the book “expects” the reader to know, hence the illusory expectations for and of the reader. Moreover, these ambiguities of the cookery book at the same time imply that there is no clear-cut distinction between one and the others and point to the novel’s ambiguity about the dichotomy between good and evil.

The pattern of the interpolation of the mock-reality by its illusory reflection on surface is conversely employed by Magdalen, who is the most prominent object of various male and female observers. In spite of the recurrent representation of her inner conflict such as “the roused forces of Good and Evil fought their terrible fight for her soul” (170), the predicament of Magdalen is that she cannot solve the struggle by herself. When Captain Wragge urges her to choose the marriage with Noel or not, he says she, not he, is responsible for it, because Magdalen has “planned this marriage of your own free will” (349). She is determined to make him proceed with the plan, only to fluctuate in her decision later. Predictably the marriage is described in terms of alternative: “She knew the true alternative, and faced it. On one side, was the revolting ordeal of the marriage — on the other, the abandonment of her purpose” (357). And the latter choice means death for her: writing to Norah, she says, “There are now two journeys before me to choose between. If I can marry him — the journey to the church. If the profanation of myself is more than I can bear — the journey to the grave!” (366) As her assumed name, Miss Bygrave, shows her plan is persistently close to death. She decides on committing suicide by taking over-dosed laudanum and only up to that determination she exerts her own will. She is going to take laudanum from the bottle:

At the first cold touch of the glass on her lips, her strong young life leapt up in her leaping blood, and fought with the whole frenzy of its loathing against the close terror of Death. Every active power in the exuberant vital force that was in her, rose in revolt against the destruction which her own will would fain have wreaked on her own life. She paused: for the second time, she paused in spite of herself. There, in the glorious perfection of her youth and health — there, trembling on the verge of human existence, she stood; with the kiss of the Destroyer close at her lips, and Nature, faithful to its sacred trust, fighting for the salvation of her to the last (367).

This scene clearly shows the moment when her free will ceases to function and also makes problematic the function of the very free will of the whole novel. As we have seen, the scheme of Magdalen is nothing but the copy of her model, Captain Wragge's utilization of alternative, which is not unlike Mrs. Lecount's. However, the Captain's and Mrs. Lecount's strategic alternative means the choice made between possible options that are all more or less profitable to the choosing persons. The difference between the options is the degree of possibilities. The alternative of the Captain and Mrs. Lecount has never been employed to such an antithetical choice between good and evil, or life and death. It cannot be applicable for the present Magdalen.

Significantly, in this scene of her uncompleted suicide her voluntary decision suspends and is displaced by the conflict between the Destroyer and Nature. At this point the narrative turns suddenly into more mystified tone with its depiction of her inner conflict incarnated in the two and it seems incongruent with the matter-of-fact description of the contest between characters so far. Literally it might be said that the inner conflict which Miss Garth has tried to comprehend from Magdalen's physical surface is embodied as the pair, the Destroyer and Nature, appearing on the narrative surface by being related explicitly. However there are interesting points about it. First the seeming antitheses are not the choices given for Magdalen's free will to

choose. The Destroyer is aligned with her free will because it "would fain have wreaked on her own life" death. If the Destroyer is the overt manifestation of her free will, Nature is the instinctive, not to say unconscious, action of her uncontaminated will to live. Here the two collide and she falls into an impasse. Though the alternatives are incarnations of the two wills, the two are not different in that both originate from her. So the conflict, on the one hand, sets up the expected opposition of good and evil, as allied respectively with life and death, between which Magdalen may select and on the other hand it subverts the opposition and implies there is no choice. If she is to choose, she has to achieve the way other than by her free will. Conclusively, she has to externalize the illusory conflict into too prosaically realistic phenomenon in order to escape the impasse. After the example of a murderer who hurled a spud of a plough into the air and set "the life or death of the woman who had deserted him, on the hazard of the falling point," she decides between life and death by counting the number of ships passing in one half-hour: "If, in that time, an even number passed her — the sign given, should be a sign to live (368). Then the "sign" coming from the outside of the window by which Magdalen sits is too significant since it metaphorically means the externalization of her never solved inner conflict. The scene is also important because of the fact that the strategic alternative can work no more as she wonders whether it is "Providence" or "chance" (369). As providence or chance, it is nothing for her to choose.

The second interesting point is that in the description of her inner conflict the same insistence on the external reflection of the depth works here as in the case when Miss Garth observes Magdalen and conjectures her inner conflict. Here the conflict is incarnated in the Destroyer and Nature. The Destroyer whose kiss is "close at her lips" is nothing but the bottle of laudanum which is labelled "in large letters — POISON" (362). So the Destroyer, laudanum, and poison are associated with the fallen and contaminated Magdalen. While Nature doesn't have such a similar embodiment as shown in the Destroyer-laudanum relation, clearly it is bound up with "the glorious

perfection of her youth and health," hence the pure and uncontaminated elements in Magdalen that are visible to observers. The effect of this underscores the recurrent insistence on surface and makes the existence of her inner conflict more problematic.

It is suggested above that the scene of interrupted suicide is incongruent with the story up to that point. In fact, it is the turning point of the narrative and foreshadows the part of St. Crux and after. *No Name* is divided into seven scenes that are respectively set in different places and between each scene are inserted letters and Captain Wragge's memorandum. Structurally the novel is divided into three sections, each of which has distinct quality. The first section is set in the idyllic world of Combe-Raven where the family has lived contentedly and Magdalen does not need to conspire. Disinherited Magdalen develops her ability to act with the help of Captain Wragge and then comes to Aldborough with Captain and Mrs. Wragge, fabricating the Bygrave family. In this second section she employs the strategy of alternative that is also the strategy of Captain Wragge and Mrs. Lecount. We have already seen in this world they try to outwit each other by picking the most profitable choice from possible alternatives but it finally fails Magdalen. The third section is set in St. Crux. Between the second and third section valetudinarian Noel Vanstone is informed of the true character of Miss Bygrave, who is now Mrs. Noel Vanstone, by Mrs. Lecount. Rewriting his will he dies without leaving Magdalen his fortune. It is left to Admiral Bartram but to his will is attached "a Secret Trust" which orders the Admiral to give Noel's legacy to his cousin, George Bartram, on condition that he is married or will be within six months from Noel's death. Magdalen, in the mean while, informed of her disinheritance by her husband, disguises herself as a maid and tries to ascertain the contents of the Secret Trust in the Admiral's residence, St. Crux.

Though Wilkie Collins expresses that there is no secret except the one that marriage of Magdalen's parents is without sanction of the Church and the law, St. Crux is obviously the site of secrets and mysteries. Except the contents of the Secret Trust that are by no

means a secret to the reader, other secrets and mysteries for the characters and the reader center on St. Crux. These are the mysterious behavior of the Admiral, the ambiguous character of his lodger, old Mazey, who sleeps in a cot before the door of the Admiral's bedroom, and most significantly, a disused room, worthy of Gothic setting, which is called by Mazey "Freeze-your-Bones" (466). When she fails to attract George Bertram and to find the Trust in the Admiral's library, she tries to steal into the disused room with discarded keys she collects in the garden. Again her action is insistently described in terms of alternative:

Bedtime came again; and found her placed between the two alternatives of trusting to the doubtful chances of the next morning — or of trying the keys boldly in the dead of night. In former times, she would have made her choice without hesitation. She hesitated now (487).

Or again when, discovered by Mazey, her plan is discouraged: "If she remained in the house, there were only two courses before her — to charge old Mazey with speaking under the influence of a drunken delusion, or to submit to circumstances" (501). As the above quotation shows even though she expresses her anxiety about her strategy, she has to employ it. However, the strategy of alternative does not succeed because it is no more applicable after it fails to work in the scene of her suicide. After the Captain Wragge and Mrs. Lecount retires behind the stage, her companion and rival have already changed from the alternative-based conspirators to the mysterious Admiral Bartram. Compare the next two quotations that describe the "system" of the Captain and the Admiral:

Although Captain Wragge's inborn sense of order was, in him — as it is in others — a sense too inveterately mechanical to exercise any elevating moral influence over his actions, it had produced its legitimate effect on his habits, and had reduced his rogueries as strictly to method and system as if they had been the commercial transaction of an honest man (155).

At St. Crux Magdalen's difficulty is that she cannot steal the keys of the house from the Admiral because:

he had no discoverable reason for now securing them in the library-table drawer, and now again locking them up in some other place. The inveterate wilfulness and caprice of his proceedings, in these particulars, defied every effort to reduce them to a system, and baffled all attempts at calculating on them beforehand (473).

The contrast between them is too clear. In the novel this "system" is closely connected with predictability of conduct. The predictability, of course, results from the ability to imagine the possible alternative of the other.

However, what definitely shows the annihilation of the strategy of the alternative in St. Crux is the mystery of the Admiral Bartram. The mystery is his "constitutional tendency to somnambulism" (499) and for this reason Mazey has to watch him at night before his room. When Magdalen steals into "Freeze-your-Bones," she finds the Admiral approach:

A long grey dressing-gown was wrapped round him. His head was uncovered; his feet were bare. In his left hand he carried his little basket of keys. He passed Magdalen slowly; his lips whispering without intermission; his open eyes staring before him, with the glassy stare of death. His eyes revealed to her the terrifying truth. He was walking in his sleep (493).

The most significant point about this somnambulism is that it means the state between life and death as well as the state between sleep and awakening, disrupting the opposition of life and death. The Admiral with "The awful death-in-life of his face" (494) speaks with the already dead Noel Vanstone. He moves the Secret Trust from its former hidden place:

"Yes," he said. "Safer there, as you say, Noel—safer, there." So he spoke. So, time after time, the words that betrayed him, revealed the dead man

living and speaking again in the dream (494).

Etymologically somnambulism is the word made up with two Latin words, *somnus* which means "sleep," and *ambulare* which means "to walk." A part of the latter word is derived from Latin *ambi*, meaning "about" and *ambo*, "both."¹⁰ So the Admiral's somnambulism is an apt metaphor of the condition of St. Crux where the distinction between one and the other, such as sleep and awakening, or life and death, becomes ambiguous and the choice between them is no more possible. What Mazey says about women, though he is evidently a misogynist, seems to underscore the disappearance of distinction: "They're all alike . . . Tall and short, native and foreign, sweethearts and wives—they're all alike!" (501)

As the site of somnambulism, the condition of in-between of sleep and awakening, St. Crux seems to contaminate its inhabitants with the malady. Mazey who watches the Admiral is described by a maid that "He was neither asleep nor awake—he was between the two" (508). Even Magdalen is not free from the infection. In the scene when she sees the Admiral sleepwalking:

Some inscrutable fascination possessed her; some mysterious attraction drew her after him, in spite of herself. She took up the candle, and followed him mechanically, as if she too were walking in her sleep (494).

Following him, she crosses the door of "Freeze-your-Bones," the Banqueting Hall, and the drawing-room. In so doing she crosses the threshold of sleep and awakening with the Admiral. At the same time she passes over from the world of alternative to the world of in-between. Eventually leaving St. Crux, which significantly connotes both "puzzle" and "cross," she falls ill and hovers between life and death. Her landlady's remarks clearly show her state. When a doctor asks her whether Magdalen is "awake or asleep," she reports she was "betwixt the two" (520).

This borderline or crossing condition is the product of her intrusion in St. Crux where the Admiral Bartram

and Mazezy embody oppositions without contradiction by being between in sleep and awakening at once. However, the function of this resolution of oppositions is not to make the difference of them ambiguous. By making the surface replicate the hidden depth, it establishes a kind of transparency. In the case of the Admiral's somnambulism, as George Bartram interprets later, "he was doing, in his sleep, what he would have died rather than do in his waking moments" (544), so his hidden desire surfaces in his sleep-walking. As for Magdalen, at first she is characterized by her opaqueness. As Miss Garth's deceptive assumption of her inner contradiction by the reading of her surface shows, nobody, even Magdalen, can infer correctly her depth. At the same time everybody has recourse to the visible surface to resolve it, as when Magdalen tries to solve the struggle between her inner good and evil by the external phenomenon. However, when she falls ill, her maid remarks, "I believe there is some dreadful trouble on her mind — and I am afraid, from what I see of her, that she is on the eve of a serious illness" (514). Sure enough as the maid "sees" her trouble on her mind, she falls ill. She at last achieves the consistency between what is visible on surface and what is hidden in depth. Then for Magdalen the condition in-between at St. Crux is the bridge from the opaqueness to the transparency, hence she can acquire the control over her inner conflict between good and evil by herself. This is shown when she is informed after her illness that Norah has been married to George and achieved what Magdalen could not, the lost fortune and the name of their father:

As the light of that overwhelming discovery broke on her mind, the old strife was renewed; and Good and Evil struggled once more which should win her — but with added forces this time; with the new spirit that had been breathed into her new life; with the nobler sense that had grown with the growth of her gratitude to the man who had saved her, fighting on the better side. All the higher impulses of her nature . . . all the nobler elements in her character gathered their forces for the crowning struggle, and strengthened her to meet,

with no unworthy shrinking, the revelation that had opened on her view (537).

With the change of Magdalen to a kind of transparency, there resurface the characters continuously hidden behind the stage, except in their correspondence: Kirke, Norah, Captain Wragge, and Matilda Wragge. Kirke is the very character of transparency for her and she can see through him "the truth" that he loves her:

She looked at his changing colour, she listened to his hesitating words, with every sensitive perception of her sex and age, quickened to seize intuitively on the truth. . . . His face would have betrayed him, in that look; his voice would have betrayed him, in the next words he spoke — if she had not guessed the truth already (531, 537- 538).

Norah, who has once declared "'her family misfortunes' left her no honourable alternative," (504) not only reappears in the front but also brings the lost Secret Trust literally "to the surface" (543). Captain Wragge now prospers, having invested in medical business which he calls "Medical Agriculture" (525). Significantly, though the Captain retains his inveterate dubious character, advertising that Mrs. Wragge is cured by his pill "of indescribable agonies from every complaint under the sun," (526) he uses the advantage of transparency from a commercial point of view. He recounts the advertisements of his pill which anticipate the modern commercialism and one feature is his pill shop: all work in it is "visible to the public through the lucid medium of plate-glass" (526).¹¹¹

This "plate-glass" obviously shows the final state *No Name* establishes for the characters as well as for the novel itself. At first by insistently making Magdalen opaque, the question whether she is truly evil or not has been made equivocal. And in so doing the novel reserves the chance of final redemption for Magdalen. Considering what R. D. Laing calls "plate-glass feelings" Victor Sage argues that the feeling that one's inner self is under the gaze or scrutiny of the other "is,

in fact, a motif in primitive Christianity which we can all recognize, if we let 'the other' equal God."⁽¹²⁾ If this "plate-glass feelings" is connected with the Christian conscience, *No Name*, conversely, by making the seeming parallel of Magdalen's surface and depth illusory, uses the heroine's bodily surface to contain her inner self and prevent the contamination of the self to the end. Her inner self remains pure by being protected by her opaque body. And when the parallel, or the transparency, is truly established, she is finally given redemption. At the same time the double structure of the novel — the world of the plotters in front and the good characters behind the scene — collapses and at last the new world is established. As Collins says there is no secret in the novel in the preface, for the characters it is this world that has no secret.

Note

- (1) Wilkie Collins, *No Name*, ed. Virginia Blain (1862; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986) xxxvi. Subsequent references to the novel will be to this edition, and will be included parenthetically in the text.
- (2) Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980) 12.
- (3) Later he returns "to my choice of alternatives" (185).
- (4) See for example Philip O'Neill, *Wilkie Collins: Women, Property and Propriety* (Totawa, NJ: Barnes, 1988) 154.
- (5) Or it may depends on the physiognomic reading of the heroine. As Jeanne Fahnestock argues Magdalen "has a 'chin too square and massive for her sex and age' but appropriate for the daring heroine who will marry a fool and pretend to be a housemaid for the sake of regaining her inheritance." See "The Heroine of Irregular Features: Physiognomy and Conventions of Heroine Description," *Victorian Studies* 24 (1981) 340-341.
- (6) Geoffrey Tillotson, "Wilkie Collins's 'No Name'," *Criticism and the Nineteenth Century* (London: Athlone, 1951) 234.
- (7) Anthony Trollope, *Autobiography* (1883), reprinted in Norman Page ed., *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1974) 223.
- (8) About the narrative authority of the novel, Deirdre David discusses the narrative authority, "omnipotence," and the disruptive force to it in *No Name*, exemplified in the relation between Captain and Mrs. Wragge. See her "Rewriting the Male Plot in Wilkie Collins *No Name*: Captain Wragge Orders an Omelette and Mrs. Wragge Goes into Custody." *Out of Bounds: Male Writers and Gender(ed) Criticism*, ed. Laura Claridge and Elizabeth Langland (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1990) 186-196.
- (9) For the interpretation of this scene, see also David.
- (10) I have consulted *The Universal Dictionary of the English Language*, ed. Henry Cecil Wyld, 4th Impression (London: Routledge, 1961) and *OED2*.
- (11) There is a curious commentary about Captain Wragge. A contemporary reviewer, H. F. Chorley, anonymously says about Captain Wragge: "Capt. Wragge, though spiritedly hit off, is at the outset too transparent in the confessions of scoundrelism, made by him to Magdalen." As the reviewer says, the Captain has been in a sense the character of "transparency" from the beginning. See H. F. Chorley [anon.], *Athenaeum*, 3 January 1863; Page, 137.
- (12) Victor Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition*, (London: Macmillan, 1988) 101. See also R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (1960; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965).