A Heroine Confined in the Past:

A Reading of Wilkie Collins' *Armadale*

Kazumi Watanabe (渡辺一美)

In 1866 the reviewer of the *Athenaeum*, H. F. Chorley, claimed that "*Armadale* is a 'sensation novel' with a vengeance."[1] This vehement tone was characteristic of the contemporary reviewers, whom Wilkie Collins called in the preface of the novel as "Readers in particular."[2] What offended the reviewers seems the discrepancy between the surface and the reality in its heroine, Lydia Gwilt, "who has lived to the ripe age of thirty-five, and through the horrors of forgery, murder, theft, bigamy, gaol, and attempted suicide, without any trace being left on her beauty."[3] It is no wonder that Lydia Gwilt exasperated the critics as the blond bigamist of *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon did, because both heroines subvert the stereotype dichotomy of dark and fair as well as the consistency of their physical surface on which they show their beauty and the reality that they are villainesses.[4] However, these reviewers seem to have missed the point that when finally she feels her lost conscience before Midwinter, she suddenly becomes "haggard and old" (612).[5]

More typical attack in the contemporary criticism of *Armadale* was on Lydia's characterization: that she is a villainess with intelligence:

> Do the hags and intriguers exchange cynical letters sparkling with the epigram of a practised writer, and do the murderesses keep journals of equal literally merit and equal power of mental anatomy?[6]

As Alison Milbank points out, it is Lydia and Mrs. Oldershaw that "bear the intellectual weight" in the novel.[7] Their letters contain references to Shakespeare and others and Beethoven is Lydia's favorite artist. But what offended the reviewers was not the intelligence but Lydia's means of her "mental anatomy," her diary itself. When Chorley in his review said "The sorceress of *Armadale* (to display whom the novel was evidently constructed) writes, diarizes, confides, as familiarly as did Harriet Byron," he thought her diary is incongruous with her character[8]. Because of its function as "mental anatomy," though repulsive to these reviewers, her diary is important for revealing her contradicting self. And as the diary constitutes one third of the novel, it drives forward the most vital part of the novel. By giving its heroine the means of self-analysis by which she looks into her "depth" *Armadale* tackles the problem of her conflicts directly.

The plot of *Armadale* resolves around the fatalism that haunts its characters. The most obsessed by it is the dark Allan Armadale, alias Ozias Midwinter. For him the fatalism consists of two narratives, the death-bed confession of Midwinter's father and "the Narrative of the Dream" of the fair Allan Armadale, which confirms the former. The former is the confession of the murder of the father's namesake, who is the fair Armadale's father, and the warning to his son not to meet the murdered father's son, who is also named after his father. The latter narrative seems to Midwinter to foreshadow events in which he, Armadale, and a woman, who turns out to be Lydia, would be involved. To the dream is given a rational interpretation of a doctor but Midwinter is not persuaded. The fatalism is later supplemented by the letter of Brock who interprets the fatalism from the Christian point of view but the letter only drives it to consummation. This fatalism constitutes the center of the earlier part of the plot and

generates tension and interpretations. The fatalism is the inheritance of the two sons from their dead fathers and influences over the difference of generations between father and son.

On the other hand Mrs. Armadale, the fair Armadale's mother, holds her own fatalism. Though her fatalism is similar with the one which Midwinter inherits from his father in that both inhibit the encounter of the namesakes, her fatalism is distinct from the Midwinter's. Because she herself was actively involved in the event that has produced Midwinter's fatalism as well as hers. Her fatalism consists of her own base conduct at Madeira: her betrayal of Midwinter's father and the elopement with Armadale's father. She keeps it to herself and secludes herself with her son in a country. In appearance, as she expresses to Brock, the seclusion is to bring up her son "privately at home, and to keep him... from all contact with the temptations and the dangers of the world" (45). In reality it has two meanings. It is clear she is afraid that her son might meet the son of the man she betrayed but she is also afraid that her past conduct might be known to his son. She is estranged from her family because of her base conduct. So her seclusion in her house is not only a means of the management of her son from the encounter of his namesake, which she disguises as a pollution of "the world," but also a form of self-management of her past evil which might contaminate her son. She succeeds in her self-management in a secluded house and dies with her secret. She dies with her own fatalism.

So before the main events of the novel starts, two kinds of fatalism from the past that influence characters are posed: the one which comes from the past generation to haunt the next generation and the other which derives its ominous influence from the obsessed one's own past. The former derives its foreboding power from the evil of the past and the latter from its own evil. While the two kinds of fatalism are different in the manner in which they are described — the latter is more implicitly than the former — another difference becomes clear when the two are juxtaposed. There are three people involved in the incident which generates the fatalism and the three are equally evil: Armadale's father for disguising as Midwinter's father and stealing his fiancee, Midwinter's father for the murder, and Mrs. Armadale for betraying Midwinter's father. However, the fathers are dead before the children grow up and the criminality of the fathers only operates as a warning to their sons. That is, Midwinter's father, who is the origin of Midwinter's fatalism, dies before the fatalism haunts his son and is relieved of the burden which is shouldered by Armadale's mother. As a living evidence of the evil incident of the past Mrs. Armadale must perform self-management not to make the past contaminate her son. As the difference is clear, the two kinds of fatalism may be called, respectively, the "male" fatalism and the "female" fatalism. The male fatalism is only the shadow from the past without an entity while the female fatalism personifies as a woman. The female fatalism is also effectual only in one generation. In the novel as a whole women must bear the burden of personifying the past evil which men are exempted from and they must manage to keep their evil secret till they die. When the female fatalism is truly controlled to be ineffectual with the women's death, the ominous warning from the male fatalism loses its effect.[9]

While Midwinter is haunted and made irresolute by the fatalism, a woman who was involved in the incident at Madeira appears and makes herself a part of the fatalism that drives the plot. She is Lydia Gwilt who is the only survivor of the generation of the two Armadales' parents. Though Midwinter doesn't know her true connection with the past, she strengthens Midwinter's fatalism because she agrees with the Armadale's dream. In addition as she begins to narrate the story through her diary, her own fatalism is revealed. Her fatalism results from her own past which includes more than her complicity of the incident at Madeira, the incident that produced the male fatalism. The most hideous past conducts for her happened when she wandered all over Europe, which culminated in the murder of her husband by poison. Her haunting fatalism is discrete of the male fatalism which haunts Midwinter, though the two intensify each other. Like Mrs. Armadale's fatalism Lydia's fatalism consists of her own evil past and we may call it her "female" fatalism. Her fatalism is felt by her as the sense of indelible sin of

the past, which is expressed in her diary as follows:

> Is there an unutterable Something left by the horror of my past life, which clings invisibly to me still? ... Oh me! is there no purifying power in such love as mine? Are there plague-spots of past wickedness on my heart which no after-repentance can wash out? (533)

The dynamism of the novel, at first, is produced by the struggle between Midwinter's anxiety of the male fatalism, that is, his anxiety, and at the same time the reader's expectation, of the accomplishment of the Armadale's prophetic dream and the characters' resistance against it. However, after Lydia's diary occupies the major part of the narrative, the dynamism is mixed with, or even replaced by, her inner conflict between the male fatalism and her female fatalism. The conflict is made clear by her pathological process in her diary: the male fatalism means for her that she will preserve her evil self and the female fatalism means that she must find a means of redemption of her evil self. Before examine her inner conflict closely, let us see what is revealed through her diary.

The writers of *Corrupt Relations* are right in pointing out that through Lydia's eyes we can acknowledge the true nature of the other characters.[10] It is in her diary that she reveals the hypocrisy of the persons who are respectable on surface. She is always a kind of voyeur. Hiding herself among trees she peeps a clandestine meeting of Armadale and her rival, Miss Milroy. We can see from the picnic scene of the Norfolk Broads that what Miss Milroy says to Armadale is not what she really means but it shows her cunning to draw his attention. Lydia reveals in her diary that Miss Milroy's surface regard for propriety when Armadale proposes her an elopement is in reality hypocritical. As Lydia foresees, though Miss Milroy first hesitates about Armadale's proposal, it is Miss Milroy who suggests the plan for marriage a few days later. As for Armadale, who sees only the surface, he always acts without thinking and lacks the inner contemplation. He is in a way complemented by Midwinter, who is certainly his double as their names imply. When Armadale is annoyed by Miss Milroy's sudden coolness, which really means her jealousy toward his close friendship with Midwinter, he only wonders. Though he is finally united with the clearly insignificant Miss Milroy, the process only shows follies of their respectability and doesn't direct our sympathy.

By undervaluing respectability that exists only on surface, the novel, through Lydia's diary, may criticize what Collins calls "the Clap-trap morality of the present day" which is the foundation of their respectability (xxxix). On the contrary the novel tries to direct our sympathy to the social outcasts — Midwinter, Lydia, and probably Bashwood. They are drawn to each other with an affinity that they cannot explain. When Midwinter meets Bashwood in Thorpe-Ambrose, though they are:

> parted widely, as it seemed on the surface, from any possible interchange of sympathy; drawn invisibly one to the other, nevertheless, by those magnetic similarities of temperament which overleap all difference of age or station, and defy all apparent incongruities of mind and character (224).

Possibly "the hidden Influence," which draws them together comes not only from the fact that they both have secret past but also from that they are definitely close in their feeling of uneasiness about their introduction into the respectability, even though they should lead a marginalized life. Armadale seeing only his timid behaviour dislikes Bashwood, saying he is a "miserably respectable man" (189). In this way the novel sets up two lines of characters: the characters of surface — Armadale and Miss Milroy, and the characters of depth — Midwinter and Lydia, who are doubles of the characters of the former category. The characters of depth here mean not only they have their inner self but also they are primarily marginalized people who have the knowledge of the underworld and are described as transgressors into the respectable life. This is underlined in the beginning of the novel by Brock's as well as Mrs. Armadale's distrustfulness about Midwinter, who seems to them a social vagabond.

The process in which Lydia is drawn to her

likeness, Midwinter, is disclosed first in her letter to Mrs. Oldershaw and next in her diary. She has meant first to reconciliate him to Armadale and get access to Armadale. When she has a glimpse of Midwinter's secret, however, she begins to be drawn to him. Reading his letter not to see her again, in which his fatalism is implied, she begins to be caught in his superstition even though she has not yet been informed of his past: "I got quite superstitious about it" (402). When his past is revealed, it is because his past is entwined with hers that she is made to believe in the Armadale's dream. Though her diary has functioned as the ground for her cool scrutiny for Armadale and Miss Milroy, it ceases to do so when she begins to observe Midwinter and herself. She says:

> Would it help me to shake off these impression, I wonder, if I made the effort of writing them down? There would be no danger, in that case, of my forgetting anything important. And perhaps, after all, it may be the fear of forgetting something which I ought to remember that keeps this story of Midwinter's weighing as it downs on my mind (412).

This shows her ambivalent situation. On the one hand she wants to be freed from the dream. On the other hand she has to write her thought down and strengthen the fatalism. Her diary had functioned as the means for her self-analysis by which she conspires her plan and establishes her free will. Yet the revelation of the dream places her in a peculiar situation. Her past action is put in totally different context. When she first comes to Thorpe-Ambrose to be a governess of Miss Milroy, she contrives voluntarily with the help of Mrs. Oldershaw. But if her actions are placed beside the dream, she only reproduces the scene in it. The dream simultaneously undermines the freedom of her actions and makes her believe in it because she thinks she is voluntarily involved in it. She thinks she is:

> the woman who has come to Thorpe-Ambrose to marry him for his fortune now he has got it; and more extraordinary still, the woman who stood in the Shadow's place at the pool! These may be coincidences, but they are strange coincidences. I declare I begin to fancy that *I* believe in the Dream too! (414)

Ironically her diary which should give her the means of self-analysis only confuses her.

As Lydia's diary juxtaposed with the narrative of Armadale's dream undermines her freedom, another narrative from the past intensifies her impasse. She happens to find the letters of her former husband Manuel. As it is later known, the last of them was written to encourage her to poison her first husband. The letter contains a summary of a trial: a destitute woman assumed a missing widow of a drowned man, whose name happened to be identical with her husband's. Reading the letter Lydia is surprised to find the way out of her difficulty. If she is married to Midwinter and Armadale will be dead, she can personate Armadale's widow. What startles her is not only the coincidence of the case with her situation but also she has been unconsciously tending to reenact the case:

> The whole thing has been in my Diary, for days past, without my knowing it!... And I never saw, never suspected it... till I saw the shadow of my own circumstances suddenly reflected in one special circumstances of that other woman's case! (434)

The situation becomes complicated because the letter doesn't give her an escape out of it. The reenacting of the case doesn't mean simply that she imitates the prisoner of the trial. She must replicate her most hideous past, the murder of her husband. After she had murdered her husband, she married her accomplice Manuel who really was a bigamist. Deprived of her money by him, she was deserted and put on a trial. She is now haunted by the past doubly by the case of the prisoner's and her own past, as Midwinter is haunted by his father's death-bed confession and Armadale' dream. Moreover, only she survives the generation of the two Armadales' parents and realizes acutely the influence of

the past. Lydia, who is "the fatal force of the past" to the two Armadales as Jenny Bourne Taylor says, never gains her freedom from the past.[11] Here in her diary the struggle between Midwinter's male fatalism and Lydia's female fatalism becomes clear. If she is to follow her plot, making the male fatalism complete, she may only reproduce her own past hideous conducts — the murder and the subsequent misery — which has developed her female fatalism. So it would deprive her of an escape from the past evil self.

It is interesting that her impasse of her inner contemplation is reflected in her sense of stifling in the exterior world. Absorbed in thinking, she says in her diary "I must get out into the fresh air, and think about it" (430); "I shall sink, if I write or think of it any more! I'll shut up these leaves and go out again" (436). She even remarks, "I must go to the window and get some air. Shall I jump out?" (422) When she says, "A minute since, I shut up these leaves as I said I would; and now I have open them again, I don't know why" (436), it is clear that she is deprived of her free-will even when she writes her diary. As Alison Milbank notes, Lydia's assertion of her independence itself is "under threat," even when she says, "I won't, I won't, I won't think of it! Haven't I a will of my own? And can't I think, if I like, of something else?" (441)[12] Though she is given small distractions, she is obsessed with writing her diary. She is literally confined in her diary which gets nowhere. Unable to escape from the impasse, she gives up her free will to Mrs. Oldershaw, who is her accomplice:

> I have determined to put it beyond my power to have my own way and follow my own will. Mother Oldershaw shall be the salvation of me ... If I can't pay my note-of-hand, she threatens me with an arrest...In the state of my mind is in now, the best thing that can happen to me is to be taken away from Thorpe-Ambrose, whether I like it or not... I can't consider myself a free woman till I know what Mrs. Oldershaw means to do (437, 440).

The curious point about this is that she wants to be locked up in a prison. As she has no money to leave Thorpe-Ambrose, the only escape from the predicament of being locked up there without her free will is a form of self-incarceration, ironically the most intense mode of will to abandon her free will. But Mrs. Oldershaw writes to her to renew her bill and Lydia gives in to the temptation of her plot. Though she posts her letter of her consent of marriage to Midwinter by herself, it is merged with overt self-justification: "I say once more, no mortal creature could resist it! Time after time I have tried to escape the temptation; and time after time the circumstances drive me back again" (440).

The second crisis for her free will comes when she is in London, waiting for the marriage. Conclusively the letter from Brock's deathbed makes her decide to resist the temptation to assume the widow of Armadale. However, it is two days before she reads the letter that she has decided. Hearing the death of Brock, her resolution to perform her plot fluctuates. When Midwinter says he cannot live apart from her:

> the thought seemed to rise in my mind like an echo, "Why not live out all the days that are left to me, happy and harmless in a love like this!" I can't explain it — I can't realize it. That was the thought in me at the time; and that is the thought in me still. I see my own hand while I write the words — and I ask myself whether it is really the hand of Lydia Gwilt! (497)

The scene obviously marks her dissociation. She feels something in herself. She dissolves into "an echo," "the thought," which she cannot restrain and it automatically shows itself in her diary and into the subjectivity, which is startled to observe the apparition.

As we have seen she is basically the character who observes others, hiding herself behind. It is now herself she observes. Moreover, she not only observes something in herself but, in Thorpe-Ambrose, feels someone observe herself:

> My nerves must be a little shaken, I think. I was startled just now by a shadow on the wall. It was only after a moment or two that I mustered sense enough to notice where the candle was, and to see

> that the shadow was my own (428).

She is haunted by herself. This scene should be examined with the record that follows immediately. When she thinks of the resemblance of the names of two Armadales, she is surprised by the same result of the unconscious writing: "My nerves *must* be shaken. Here is my own handwriting startling me now!" (429) There are two processes going on in her dissociation: her observing something in herself but which is hers; her observing something out of herself but which is herself. Yet the two processes are alike in that they are mediated through her body. In the former case, despite of the insistence on "the echo," "the thought," in her "mind," her thinking is palpable only by her body that is violated by something she cannot discern. Thus her subjectivity that transcends her body thinks the body is haunted. In the latter case the shadow is the reflection of her body. Then her body transcends its physical body and haunts her subjectivity. In both cases the sense is that her body is dissolving when the inner struggle is going on. *Armadale* is written as realism, despite its extraordinary plot. However, in this moment the novel seems to approach fantasy. As quoted above, Lydia "saw the shadow of [her] own circumstances suddenly reflected in one special circumstances of that other woman's case" (434). Here in the murder case, and of course in the narrative of Armadale's dream, Lydia is reflected as "the shadow." Similarly, when she self-analyzes through her diary, her diary operates as a mirror and reflects her. The mirror truly reflects her-self that is dissociated by the struggle between the male and the female fatalism and through the mirror the dissociated self shows itself as "a shadow." But when the mirror makes the image (the reflection) of the object in the "paraxial" area, the mirror blurs itself. What is significant about it is not that it duplicates the object but it undermines the boundary, the mirror itself, which differentiates inside, the area of the object side, and outside, the paraxial area.(13) In the case of Lydia the struggle culminates in the dissociation of her-self, dissolving the boundary of her body. But this does not mean that she has escaped from the confinement of her diary. Because the dissolution of the boundary is only the process of writing her diary. As long as she writes her diary, she is confined in the space that is produced by the reflection.

Significantly enough, during writing her diary Lydia loses her prerogative of observing others. She feels someone, other than her shadow, observe herself. In fact she is observed. In London she makes a summer dress at a milliner:

> I was not mistaken in believing that my nerves were all unstrung ...It was only in the trying-on room that my suspicions were roused ... I thought ... that one of the assistants persisted rather oddly in keeping me turned in a particular direction, with my face towards the glazed and curtained door that led into the work-room (495-496).

She thinks Mrs. Oldershaw is following her but she is mistaken. She is pursued by spies hired by Bashwood. If Lydia is an adept in voyeurism, Bashwood is a kind of her deputy who has peeped Armadale and Miss Milroy for her. Now the table is turned. Even her lodging is violated by a woman (499) and her suspicion thickens. When a messenger from the milliner comes to her lodging with her ordered dress, she thinks him for another spy. After that she dreams all through the night "of the wretched conspiracy to discover me, by which I have been driven from one place to another, like a hunted animal" (499). Here she thinks that she is always watched and she has no place to hide herself.(14)

Then put the problems above together. On the one hand in writing her diary she is dissociated from herself and even the dissociated self watches herself. At the same time the diary definitely gives her a means of self-analysis. To self-analyze herself she must achieve a kind of transparency through which she can see herself. But in the process what if her inner-self permeates out of her? As argued above, her anxiety of bodily dissolution is the result of her self-analysis in the diary, which functions as a mirror. The diary no more functions as self-control. Her uneasiness about being watched by someone, on the other hand, is originated from her nomadic life, going "from one place to another." We are later informed of her wandering life —

from Thorpe-Ambrose, Madeira, France, Brussels, all over the Continent with a Baroness, Naples, and again to England. She has lived only in temporary residence and never had a rigid house which separates her from the outside. The uneasiness comes also from her voyeurism. As a voyeur she has to be situated in more vulnerable position than the persons who are watched. It is not her but Armadale and Miss Milroy who are in a "secluded situation among the trees" (425). A voyeur, when she or he peeps inside, is not inside but outside. The uneasiness of being watched results from the feeling of loss of a solid shelter behind and before one. In the two cases above the similarity between them is the sense of dissolution of a boundary that should firmly differentiate the one from the other and may protect the former from the latter.

When in Thorpe-Ambrose Lydia expresses her desire to be imprisoned, the desire for self-incarceration, it is from her need for the space which contains her whole self. That is the desire for an indissoluble boundary that would demarcate herself. Her marriage with Midwinter means the possibility for her to establish the space of containing her self and to become its satisfied content. It is needless to say the space is their house in Naples. The house for her should be the site of self-control after the dissociation of her self by her diary. Before the wedding she gives up her diary:

> I close and lock this book, never to write in it, never to open it again... I have trampled my own wickedness under foot. I am innocent; I am happy again. My love! my angel! when to-morrow gives me to you, I will not have a thought in my heart which is not *your* thought, as well as mine! (504)

As it only prompts her dissociation, she must stop writing her diary. The last line is significant. Because it can be read, "I will not have my thought," as well as "I will not have a thought not yours and mine." So it implies the self-control in her home means simultaneously a happy union of her-self and Midwinter's self and the absorption and loss of her-self, hence becoming a passive angelic wife. The control of her-self in the house has another meaning to Midwinter. Concerning his fatalism, what he most abhors is that he may become the cause of Armadale's calamity as his father is to Armadale's father. Then Lydia appears as the personification of Midwinter's repressed self, which may be called id in Freudian term, who tries to fulfill his hidden wish. As she must control her wish, he must control his/her wish. So the marriage is reciprocal.

For Lydia the house in Naples should become what Gaston Bachelard calls "felicitous space."[15] Though the space turns into the site of disillusion, the disillusion about the marriage and Midwinter, who she thinks doesn't love her. The hoped-for union is not fulfilled and she again finds her "second self" in her diary (532). But writing her diary can make her return to the state of dissociation before. For this reason she has to protect herself by setting up a boundary which demarcates herself by other means. She still has to try to be contained in the house. It is clear in the scene in Naples she is not willing to go out of the house. In fact she rarely does. Even when Midwinter is freed from his work, she is disillusioned about him and prefers "remaining at home" (538). She also wants to remain at home because Naples is the place where she met her first husband, Mr. Waldron, and it reminds her of her hideous past. She fears that someone who knew her past will recognize her.

In the meantime, however, the hideous past personifies as two people who are connected with the past which forms the male and the female fatalism respectively. The past in Thorpe-Ambrose is incarnated as Armadale. Lydia is anxious about her "dream of living happy and innocent in Midwinter's love, dispelled for ever, and with nothing left in its place to help me against myself" (537). When Armadale arrives at Naples, he turns for her to a transgressor to the house. That is clear as she says irritatedly: "He is perpetually in and out of this house ... A visit at luncheon - time, and another visit at dinner-time...Armadale came to breakfast this morning" (538, 540). Once she was the transgressor to Armadale's house. Now the sanctuary of her house is transgressed.

Then the past before Thorpe-Ambrose, the past connected with Lydia's murder, is personified as

Manuel. The scene when she is discovered by him shows explicitly what is her predicament: how much she is deprived of a sheltered place. She goes to see an opera with Midwinter and Armadale and their "box" is close to the stage. She in spite of herself goes out of the "box" to a vulnerable situation:

> I sat back in the box at first, well out of sight; for it was impossible to be sure that some of my old friends of former days at Naples might not be in the theatre. But the sweet music gradually tempted me out my seclusion. I was so charmed and interested that I leaned forward without knowing it, and looked at the stage ...[When she noticed Manuel on the stage,] I drew back again into the shadow (543-544).

Recognizing her, Manuel blackmails that he will call at "the house" to become another transgressor (553).

The hideous past not only comes from the outside of the house. She finds that in the very house it is enclosed. When Lydia is arranging her dressing case, she is surprised to find a ring and a bottle of drops, both of which remind her of past life. The former is the wedding present from Armadale and the latter is the drops of laudanum that she took from sleeplessness. Her diary underlines that her discovery is unconscious and innocent: "My dressing-case — I will put my dressing-case tidy, and polish up the few little things in it which my misfortunes have still left in my possession" (537). The scene only imitates her unconscious discovery of Manuel's letters in a box before: "I'll dawdle over my dresses, and put my things tidy... It was such a long summer day, and I was so tired of myself. I went to my boxes next" (432).

Lydia's discovery agrees with what Bachelard says about drawers, chest, and wardrobes which contains "the secret psychological life," but whose locks are only the sign of invitation and wait to be opened.[16] By opening these boxes, she finds her repressed memory and is forced to return to her plotting. Moreover the processes she finds what they enclose underscore the utter vulnerability of these enclosures. As there is no place to shelter her, there is no enclosing space that completely keeps secret. Even her diary is not suitable to keep her secrets. Her diary is the receptacle for her memory but when writing her diary it is clear that she consciously censors what she is writing as when she drops laudanum into Armadale's lemonade. The incident is vicariously narrated by Midwinter and recorded in her diary. What she represses from her diary, what reminds her of her hideous past, however, is precariously kept in these boxes, waiting for the moment to be opened.

Both inside and outside of the house are filled with the memory of the past, subverting the difference between inside and outside. Lydia cannot find an escape from the past either in or out of the house. In the scene of her discovery of the ring and the laudanum it is not for her self-imposed confinement but for the weather, which has nothing to do with her will, that she cannot go out. She repeats: "I wish it wasn't raining; I wish I could go out" (537). This highlights her impossibility to escape voluntarily from her confinement as well as her past. In this sense of no escape she is drawn to the past which she has repressed. In a way confined by the rain, she reads her own diary which recorded her past plotting in Thorpe-Ambrose: "I think I shall look back through these pages, and live my life over again when I was plotting and planning" (534).

Perhaps what exasperated the contemporary reviewers about her diary is her equivocation of complicity which she shows when she is drawn to the past and her plotting: now she is neither active in her plot nor resolute to reject it. Repeatedly she expresses her innocence. On the plot level it may be necessary that she should be innocent so that she is given a chance of redemption in the end. However, what is expressed in the equivocation is not her ambiguity about her innocence but she is closely entwined with the past, that is she is the past itself. The past for her is not only the past but produces her present and future. Reading her diary gives her fascination that the present life with Midwinter never gives. Though she disguises it, her-self in the present is not her true self. When she makes Manuel the instrument to kill Armadale, she expresses that she feels "like myself again" (557). Her true self is her past wicked self and she cannot escape from the

influence of the past. If she is "the fatal force of the past," she is so in two senses: she drives the life of Armadale and Midwinter, who is captivated by the fatalism and she herself is captivated by her past no matter where she goes.

Lydia has hoped her house in Naples to be the rigid boundary between inside and outside to shelter her. But the two only replicates each other, dissolving the boundary. If the house itself were the mirror, to be exact, if the boundary between the inside and the outside of the house were the mirror, it should reflect an object in the paraxial area in the form of a shadow. For her the object is the past and the past duplicates itself both sides of the mirror. However, not only the object but also the reflected image itself is not a shadow but a reality for her. In this way the difference of the object/the image vanishes and the boundary ceases to function properly. It only constitutes a kind of space made only of past. Pent up in the space, she cannot act but be tainted by the past which she abhors.

Only once in Naples Lydia actively conducts to be committed in her past: she tries to kill Armadale by mixing laudanum of fatal dose in Armadale's lemonade. The scene shows clearly the function of the space of the house. When she is near the window of the house she is irritated by Armadale's insensible word for her and she goes into the bedroom and takes the bottle of laudanum. The course she follows draws the line from the edge to the heart of the house. If she is going to regain her past wicked self, she has to go away from the boundary line. This route, of course, is the inverted one that she follows feeling her self again when she meets Manuel "by the margin of the sea," which is the farthest point from the house (554). In both cases the position against the house is concerned with her past self. The extreme points meet inside and outside of the house, simultaneously obscuring the boundary between them and forming the space of the past. In this way she is surrounded by the past. The only space, then, she can feel free from the past is on the farthest point from the edge of the space of the past. That point is the already vanished boundary, the margin of the house itself, where the dichotomy of inside and outside blurs. That place is specified as the window of the house. Indeed, in the scene of Naples the descriptions of her looking out of the window are meaningful. She is perpetually either writing her diary or looking out of the window:

> Supposing — I only say supposing — I felt now, as I felt when I travelled to London with Armadale; and when I saw my way to his life as plainly as I saw the man himself all through the journey... ? I'll go and look out of window. I'll go out and count the people as they pass by (535).

Looking out of the window means for her the alternative other than thinking her past plotting. Then looking out of the window, what does she want to see? Perhaps she is waiting for a vision disconnected with the past, an epiphany of redemption.

As it seems to clarify the function of the window in the novel, take a couple of examples and see the function of the window in the contemporary paintings which describe fallen women. First, *The Awakening Conscience* (1853) by William Holman Hunt.(17) Though the woman is situated in the center of the picture, the vanishing point coincides with the mirror behind her and our eyes are directed to it. By the reflection of the mirror we know that she is looking at the garden out of the window. Clearly in this picture the view out of the window is opened and shows the origin of the epiphany of redemption. As Nina Auerbach argues, the meaning of the picture becomes more specific by juxtaposing Hunt's *The Light of the World*, depicting Christ knocking a door.(18) Next examine the first picture of *Past and Present* trilogy (1858) by Augustus Egg.(19) In *Misfortune* the discovery of a wife's infidel is painted. By the position of the reflected lamp in the mirror in the middle, we can see that the eye of the painter is rather low and it may evoke the sympathy of the one who looks at the picture for the woman lying prone. However, the irredeemable destruction of the family is underlined by several things around her, such as children's cards-house in the point of demolition. In this picture the mirror reflects not a garden but an exit from the room and foreshadows the woman's dismissal from the house which is depicted in *Despair*, the last of the trilogy. In these pictures the view from the window or

the exit which is reflected in the mirror seems to show the possibility or the impossibility of redemption for these fallen women. [20]

We may recall here another contemporary picture of a woman closely connected with a window. For the 1863 edition of *No Name* Wilkie Collins persuaded his friend, John Millais, to produce a fine steel engraving. The picture depicts the climax scene, its heroine Magdalen looking out of the window at the sea, counting the ships passing by. Though her possibility of redemption doesn't come in this critical moment, the frame of the window nevertheless shows her the possibility of redemption as it commands the view of the sea and ships. For her the possibility comes with the arrival of Captain Kirke. Significantly he is the visitor from the sea, having boarded his ship, the *Deliverance.* Then before the window Magdalen waits too early for the vision of redemption which would come in the form of Captain Kirke and the *Deliverance.*

If Lydia is to see the vision, her eyes must see over the space of the past. If she could discover her unidentified parentage, which may be the origin of her past, she might reconstitute her past and change her present and future life. But Mrs. Oldershaw is her only mother, as she calls her "mother Jezebel." So the view of redemption should come from the window which looks over the space of the past. The view out of the window, however, only commands an ordinary phenomenon. What she sees is "A funeral has gone by, with the penitents in their black hoods ... A pleasant sight to meet me at the window! I shall go back to my Diary" (535). The image of death foreshadows the death of Armadale and her plotting of affecting his widow. In the last scene in Naples when Armadale is going to be out at sea, Lydia again looks out of the window. When she looks beyond "the margin" at the sea, the view gives her the vision of her future. It is not the presentation of her redemption which is completely disconnected with her past: "I saw him [Midwinter], from my window... I looked again...and Armadale's yacht had sailed on the trial cruise" (563). The possibility of redemption doesn't come with the arrival of a ship as in the case of Magdalen in *No Name.* It only prompts her plotting. Moreover, the scene of the departure of Armadale's yacht shows the contradicting attitude of Lydia toward the past. She on the one hand is going to create her own future as "Mrs. Allan Armadale," which is connected with her past plotting. On the other hand she tries to obliterate her past with Manuel, who threatens to expose her "whole past life to Midwinter before the vessel left the port" (561). Even she tries to free herself from the past, it only connects her future with the past.

Her next abode as a widow of Armadale is Fairweather Vale, Hampstead where her acquaintance and new accomplice, Doctor Downward, founds his sanatorium. Here she is introduced as the patient of "Shattered nerves — domestic anxiety" (622). Though the phrase is innocently used by Doctor Downward, ironically it is the apt words to designate her. Because her dissociated self is closely connected with her concern with her house. Both Lydia and Doctor Downward in moving there have established their new identities, but what is important about the place itself is that its newness is strangely mixed with past. It is described as follows:

> Fairweather Vale proved to be a new neighbourhood ... the place looked very dreary. We approached it by a new road running between trees, which might once have been the park-avenue of a country house. At the end we came upon a wilderness of open ground, with half-finished villas dotted about, and a hideous litter of boards, wheelbarrows and building materials of all sorts scattered in every direction. At one corner of this scene of desolation stood a great overgrown dismal house, plastered with drab-coloured stucco, and surrounded by a naked unfinished garden, without a shrub or a flower in it, — frightful to behold. On the open iron gate that led into this enclosure was a new brass plate, with "Sanatorium" inscribed on it in great black letters. The bell, when the cabman rang it, pealed through the empty house like a knell; and the pallid withered old manservant in black, who answered the door, looked as if he had stepped up out of his grave to perform that service. He let out on me a smell of damp plaster and new

varnish (575).

This is the description by Lydia herself of the strangely mixed newness and oldness. The house is no more "a country house" nor "sanatorium" yet. Its oldness is not completely dislodged by its newness. It seems simultaneously in its progress and in its deterioration. Underneath its newness lies the image of waste and death. It reflects her uncertain attitude toward the past. She cannot attain a new identity that is completely disconnected with her past. The underlying oldness behind the newness signifies her indelible fatalism, that she can never be freed from her past. The sanatorium, by showing its past and its present at the same time, produces a kind of a-historical setting. It prepares the place for "the fatal force of the past" to be buried harmlessly to the other characters.

Before the "Book the last" her diary ends as it reaches its last page. The end coincides with the loss of the means by which she re-affirms her "second self," her wicked self. It is reflected on her uneasiness in the last page: "Are my energies wearing out, I wonder, just at the time when I most want them?" (600) The loss of the self-possession as the second self anticipates the failure of her plotting. Conclusively she chooses the way to the possibility of redemption by entering the room which she herself fills with poisonous gas. By incarcerating herself in the room she protects herself and Midwinter from her wicked self. Before that she looks out of the window at the moon and hopes for the redemption:

> The waning moon shone in faintly at the window. With her hand on the door of the room, she turned and looked at the light that was slowly fading out of the murky sky. "Oh, God, forgive me!" she said. "Oh, Christ, bear witness that I have suffered!" (654)

Lastly she again hopes for the vision of salvation and the possibility of confining her wicked self in an enclosed space.[21] But is it too much to say that the description of her collapse with "the sound of a fall" is too meaningful? Because it may imply that she never attains the salvation to the end.

Before Lydia takes her life, she writes her death confession to Midwinter. It is significant that she writes it on the margin of the letter which Brock left when he died. In it he shows his interpretation of Armadale's dream from the Christian point of view: all events, evil or good, are by God's will and Midwinter should be the savior when Armadale is in danger. Unlike the postscript by Count Fosco which violates the diary of Marian Halcombe in *The Woman in White*, Lydia's writing on the margin is more passive. By her postscript she endorses Block's interpretation of the fatalism. Her suicide self-confinement signifies the end of her female fatalism, the disappearance of the dangerously wicked woman. At the same time it purges Midwinter and Armadale of their male fatalism. The sanatorium, with its a-historical effect, is the place where Lydia is exorcised of her past. Other characters are absolved of the influence of the past.

Besides, her death leads to the explicit obliteration of Lydia from history itself from the side of the male characters. In her grave she is buried as neither "Mrs. Allan Armadale" nor "Mrs. Ozias Midwinter" and without even her own name: "nothing has been inscribed on the tombstone, but the initial letter of her Christian name, and the date of her death" (656). In the last scene Midwinter never clarifies his relation with Lydia to Armadale and by so doing he keeps "the sacred memory" of Armadale's mother intact (661). In this way the female fatalism, Armadale's mother's and Lydia's, is doubly buried. Lastly Midwinter and Armadale try to establish the house of their close bond which has no element of threat in it by making "my [Armadale's] house" "your [Midwinter's] home" (660).

However, the ending of the novel hardly establishes the melodramatic ascendancy of good over evil. Mrs. Oldershaw and Dr. Downward are never punished. Even Midwinter's effort to be freed from the past seems hollow, as it is clear when he tries to forget the past under threat. Perhaps these ambiguous attitudes toward the past are the problem of *Armadale* itself. Because the novel initiates the contrast of vigorous women to irresolute men, when the most vigorous woman ceases to be present, the plot of the male

characters loses its dynamism. If a hero is to retrieve the authority of the narrative, he must actively construct his "story," or "history," as in the Collins' *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone* their heroes try to do. Moreover, as the whole novel reiterates the vulnerability of a confined space, the grave of Lydia too seems to involve the danger of letting loose the past. As Bachelard would say, the grave as a space is also the sign from which the past can be traceable, even though the survivors try to obliterate her history from its surface.[22]

Notes

(1) H.F. Chorley [anon.], review of *Armadale, Athenaeum* 2 June 1866; Norman Page ed., *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1974) 146.

(2) Wilkie Collins, *Armadale*, ed. Catherine Peters (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989) xxxix. Subsequent references to the novel will be to this edition, and will be included parenthetically in the text.

(3) Unsigned review, *Spectator*, 9 June 1866; Page, 150.

(4) Perhaps Collins was more subtle than Mary Elizabeth Braddon, as he never wrote a blonde villainess. For physiognomy and phrenology as a background for Collins' novel, see Jenny Bourne Taylor, *In the Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1988), especially 45-63. Though dealing in larger context, see also Jeanne Fahnestock, "The Heroine of Irregular Features: Physiognomy and Conventions of Heroine Description," *Victorian Studies* 24 (1981) 325-350. For Collins' use of stereotypes, hence the reader's expectations, see Sue Lonoff, *Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers: A Study in the Rhetoric of Authorship* (New York: AMS, 1982) 91-92.

(5) Similarly in the novel "She stood by the window, white and still, and haggard and old... [she] turned, and slowly came back to him with frowning brow and drooping head — with all the grace and beauty gone from her, but the inbred grace and beauty in the movement of her limbs" (637-638).

(6) *Spectator*; Page, 149.

(7) Alison Milbank, *Daughters of the House: Modes of the Gothic in Victorian Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1992) 44.

(8) *Athenaeum* (1866); Page, 147. When his review is compared with his review of *No Name*, it becomes clear how bolder *Armadale* seemed to the contemporaries. Chorley praised the characters in *No Name*, especially its heroine Magdalen, who have "a colour and a character" and "interest those who read the tale." See H. F. Chorley [anon.], *Athenaeum*, 3 January 1863; Page, 132-133.

(9) In this essay the word "fatalism" signifies Midwinter's fatalism from his father unless it is used with the adjective "female."

(10) See Richard Barickman, Susan MacDonald, and Myra Stark, *Corrupt Relations: Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Collins, and the Victorian Sexual System* (New York: Columbia UP, 1982) 135-137.

(11) Taylor, 163.

(12) Milbank, 40.

(13) The idea of "paraxial" is suggested by Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981; London: Routledge, 1988). She argues that "The paraxial area could be taken to represent the spectral region of the fantastic, whose imaginary world is neither entirely 'real' (object), nor entirely 'unreal' (image), but is located somewhere indeterminately between the two" (19). See also, 82-91.

(14) 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." See Victor Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1988) 101. Here Sage quotes R.D. Laing's

examination of a psychotic. Laing says about "plate-glass" feelings as follows: "The heightened sense of being always seen, or at any rate being always potentially seeable, may be principally referable to the body, but the preoccupation with being seeable may be condensed with the idea of the mental self being penetrable, and vulnerable, as when the individual feels that one can look right through him into his 'mind' or 'soul.'" R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (1960; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965) 106.

(15) Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Etienne Gilson (1958; Boston: Beacon, 1969) xxxi.

(16) Bachelard, 78. The idea about Lydia's secrets which are easily revealed is hinted by "Drawers, Chests and Wardrobes," Bachelard, 74 - 89. Though Bachelard's book endorses the relation between Lydia and those receptacles of the past, unlike her case what he calls "unforgettable past" (xxxii) is connected with felicity. In contrast the house as "felicitous past" is from the beginning denied to wandering Lydia and it only means possibility for her. Clearly there is a discrepancy that Gilbert and Guber points out: "What is significant from our point of view, however, is the extraordinary discrepancy between the almost consistently "felicitous space" [Bachelard] discusses and the negative space we have found." See Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Mad Woman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979) 87-88.

(17) William Holman Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience,* The Tate Gallery, London.

(18) See Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982) 77-82. There are three different versions of *The Light of the World*. The book by Auerbach reproduces the version in Keble College, Oxford (1851-1853).

(19) Augustus Leopold Egg, *Past and Present*, The Tate Gallery, London.

(20) It is not probable that Wilkie Collins didn't know these paintings. Both Holman Hunt and Augustus Egg were his close friends. About his friendship with the two: for Hunt, see Kenneth Robinson, *Wilkie Collins: A Biography* (London: Bodley Head, 1951) 123 - 126 and William M. Clarke, *The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins* (London: Allison and Busby, 1988) 54-57; and for Egg, Clarke, 58-60 and 68 - 74. As for the interpretation of *Misfortune*, Nina Auerbach contrastingly sees the lying position as empowering her. See Auerbach, 161. For the contemporary paintings of a fallen woman theme, see also Linda Nochlin, "Lost and *Found;* Once More the Fallen Woman," *Feminism and Art History*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harper, 1982) 221-246.

(21) Nina Auerbach will say her last look at the moon is more meaningful. Because "Traditionally, it [the moon] stands for changeableness, connoting not simply the wife's [in Egg's *Despair*] perfidy but the fallen woman's inherent power of metamorphosis which allows her to destroy and reconstruct her world" (162). Thanks to the computerized simulation we can easily identify the shape of the moon on the day of Lydia's death, 9 December 1851, as gibbous. Perhaps it is mere coincidence, but it is almost identical with the shape of the moon in Egg's *Prayer* and *Despair*.

(22) I am here recalling the most dangerous villainess in Victorian literature — a female vampire, Carmilla. In the Le Fanu's short story, Carmilla revives from the grave as a vampire.