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OVER-DOING THINGS WITH WORDS IN 1862: PRETENSE AND PLAIN TRUTH IN WILKIE COLLINS'S *NO NAME*

By Sundeep Bisla

"It's like a scene in a novel – it's like nothing in real life"
—Noel Vanstone in Wilkie Collins, *No Name*

Ordinary Language

IN WALTER C. PHILLIPS'S CLASSIC STUDY of 1919, *Dickens, Reade, and Collins, Sensation Novelists: A Study in the Conditions and Theories of Novel Writing in Victorian England*, there comes an instant when the critic believes himself to have caught the last of his novelists in a moment of artlessness. Remarking on the comforting and seemingly-conformist opening of Wilkie Collins's *No Name*, Phillips comments that "in the early sixties . . . the popular drift toward realism – stories of domestic life – had compelled some modification of Collins's . . . original melodramatic scheme" (133). Collins's predilection for artfulness is well-established. Rejecting his suggestions for an earlier foreshadowing of the Dr. Manette subplot in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens comments in October 1859, "I do not positively say that the point you put, might not have been done in your manner; but I have a very strong conviction that it would have been overdone in that manner." He goes on to characterize Collins's suggested revision as potentially off-putting for the readership because it would inevitably be discovered and the situation consequently judged "too elaborately trapped, baited, and prepared" (*Letters* 9: 127). This essay is in a sense an exploration of the special utility inherent in Collins's elaborately prepared traps for the reader. The elaborate plan can sometimes go places, make certain philosophical critiques, that the accommodative plot cannot. Collins was not known to be a writer who changed course easily in the face of criticism. Thus, it is surprising to find Phillips, as well as other literary critics,[1] taking his opening in *No Name* seriously and as a sort of conservative retreat on Collins's part. But traps being what they are, that is, made to be fallen into, Phillips's misunderstanding is understandable. The opening of *No Name* does most assuredly invite such an interpretation. I will be arguing here, however, that, far from attempting to accommodate a newly emergent popular Victorian domestic taste, and pulling back from a previous subversive stance, Collins especially in his opening but also throughout his non-canonical[2] masterpiece is actually covertly attacking that taste at its very foundations.

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In a manner similar to Collins's previous fiction *The Woman in White*, which had concluded with an allegorical parody of the conventional, happy domesticity,[3] *No Name* begins with an illegitimate "happy home." In the "First Scene," that idyllic opening in which the reader is presented with a portrait of aristocratic family life in what would seem the ideal Victorian country home, that is, in that introductory parody of the domestic novel that appears – to resurrect that thankfully now discarded critical solecism – to "carry conviction" for critics like Phillips, the issue of impersonation, which we will see to be so important to the thematic level's recounting of the adventures of the story's heroine Magdalen Vanstone, that "born actress,"[4] redounds to the authorial level also. Collins is not only parodying the domestic novel in general but may be – like Captain Wragge in his "imitation of the great Imitator himself" (191), that is, in his imitation of Charles Mathews's "At Homes" – setting his sights on a particularly famous representative of his chosen genre, Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, a more "serious" treatment of the theme of disinherited girls of contrasting natures. In *No Name*, Collins is directly parodying (or impersonating) in the First Scene the "homely" style of the domestic novel,[5] citing it, all the more perhaps to disclose both the artifice at its basis and, by extension, the artifice inherent in its models, the upstanding Victorian and pre-Victorian citizenry and society.[6]

But, as is implied by Phillips's slip, this would at first glance not seem to be the case. Indeed, *No Name*'s opening lines could hardly be more ordinary in their prototypical domesticity:

> The hands on the hall-clock pointed to half-past six in the morning. The house was a country residence in West Somersetshire, called Combe-Raven. The day was the fourth of March, and the year was eighteen hundred and forty-six.
>
> No sounds but the steady ticking of the clock, and the lumpish snoring of a large dog stretched on a mat outside the dining-room door, disturbed the mysterious morning stillness of hall and staircase. (3)

The text continues on in this vein with the privileged daughter commencing for the next hundred or so pages to fall in love with and become engaged to the penniless neighbor lad. We will soon enough, however, be asked by the narrative to contrast the equanimity of this opening with Magdalen's anguish at several unforeseen turns of events, as the narrative reveals itself at the end of the First Scene in all its sensationalistic glory: "'Yes,' she replied. 'Strange things happen sometimes. If strange things happen to *me*, will you let Frank come back before the five years are out?'" (134). The coldly rational neighbor Mr. Clare, ominously foreshadowing *No Name*'s sensational continuation, foresees that Magdalen's future "will be no common one" (134). This latter sensational context calls on us to look again at the narrative's beginning and revise our understanding. We see that Collins had artfully constructed the opening scene of the novel so that it might turn out a mere imitation of the realist, specifically domestic, novel. Collins's parodic beginning had been meant at first to be taken "seriously" (and seriousness in its stoic opposition to artifice will be an important facet of our inquiry to come). Jeanne Bedell remarks that in *No Name* "[t]he placid opening scenes of the novel disarm readers and lull them into a false sense of security, one they share with its characters" (21). Here at the beginning of his narrative Collins has done a very good job – showing himself a kindred spirit to his chameleon-like heroine – of impersonating, or mimicking, a writer of domestic fictions.

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However, the argument pursued here will attempt to demonstrate that the narrative's complacent domesticity is always haunted by the specter of repetition's undelimitability. In his introduction to the novel Mark Ford writes that "Combe-Raven, where the story begins, is a placid, utterly commonplace country residence which Collins takes pains to evoke in the opening pages in the most realistic of ways. . . [But] [s]ubliminally – and because this is a Wilkie Collins novel – one intuits everything is about to go horribly wrong" (viii). I will here be attempting both to formulate a rationale for Collins's having placed his readers and characters on a precipice of immanent realist referential collapse and to describe the precise contours of that collapse's manifestation.

Mad to Act

THE CHARACTERS IN COLLINS'S TEXT are intent on "doing" things with words – indeed perhaps on *over*-doing them. The marriage vow, that arch performative, will prove an especially significant access point for this "doing." As is well known, the "performative utterance" was named such for the first time by the analytic philosopher J. L. Austin in his 1955 series of lectures on *How to Do Things with Words*. This term describes words that actually do what they say: "The name is derived . . . from 'perform,' the usual verb with the noun 'action': it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action – it is not normally thought of as just saying something" (*How to Do Things* 6–7). Austin finds a most useful, and pithy, example of these "doing" words in the common conception of the wedding ceremony: "for instance, the utterance 'I do' (take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife), as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony . . . [I]n saying these words we are *doing* something – namely, marrying, rather than *reporting* something, namely *that* we are marrying" (*How to Do Things* 12–13). Here I will not be arguing that Collins is an analytic philosopher before his time. Quite the contrary. I will instead be attempting to show that Collins's novel, in its relentless attack on the institution of marriage, sets out through various instances of parody to undo the idea of the sacredness of the marriage vow and, in so doing, also undoes the inherent proprieties founding both J. L. Austin's approach to performatives and Jane Austen's approach to realist narration.

Collins's story parodies the marriage vow in both obvious and subtle ways. The first example encountered in the narrative is a parody by omission. By having a loving couple turn out to have bypassed the necessity for the exchange of vows, Collins implicitly critiques society's imposition of that necessity. While the estate at Combe-Raven headed by Andrew Vanstone seems at first to be the ideal, indeed even extra-ideal, Victorian country home, it will soon enough turn out that the master and mistress are, shockingly, not married and that their daughters Norah and Magdalen are illegitimate. The daughters have, in effect, "no name." The parents are disclosed to have been only pretending to be married – falsifying the exemplary Austinian performative of "I do" at the same time that their story, quite appropriately, had been falsifying the standard mid-nineteenth-century Victorian domestic novel. They have, due to Andrew's already having been married,[7] been merely play-acting at marriage without having gone through the proper formalities. This rift, like those innumerable "infelicities" catalogued by Austin, only leads to "unhappinesses" – Magdalen being described more than once as the unhappy girl (94 and 142).[8]

Over the course of the narrative, we follow our heroine's adventures as she endeavors, through recourse to the aid offered by her scoundrelish quasi-relation Captain Horatio

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Wragge[9] and via a masterfully-handled series of deceptions and counter-deceptions, to recover from her miserly cousin Noel Vanstone the legacy of eighty thousand pounds left by her father.[10] Noel's having ended up with that legacy is solely the result of the father's ignorance of a technical quirk of the law, that is, a result of Andrew's having failed to draft a new will after his belated official marriage to his girls' mother had taken place, rather than the result of any active desire on his part to see his daughters left destitute. Her father's intentions having been thwarted, Magdalen feels justified in repeatedly assuming one disguise or another in her quite artful efforts at recovery – the model for this practice having been perhaps furnished not only by her early experience in the Marrables' private theatricals but also by an impersonation carried out at the extradiegetic level, our author's opening impersonation of the style of a serious-minded author of mid-nineteenth-century domestic fiction. Thus, the central theme of the story at both the narrative and authorial levels is repeatability – of manner, of tone, and of literary style.

It comes as little surprise then that *No Name* should be written on the plan of a stage-drama. This theatrical frame establishes, as many critics have remarked, the appropriate backdrop for Magdalen's many acts of taking on disguises throughout the story.[11] The narrative is broken up into eight "Scenes," with several series of documents being presented "Between the Scenes." The eight Scenes in the narrative are of varying lengths and for the most part each takes place at an individual location. In the First Scene the story opens with a domestic establishment that has always already been fissured, a domestic establishment rifted before the narrative has properly begun. We find, in essence, as will be suggested by the title of one of Miss Clack's pamphlets in *The Moonstone*, that the serpent is in the home. The fact that all the action in this narrative filled with impersonations is taking place so to speak "on stage" puts into effect from the beginning a mechanics of "doubled imitation." A single imitation would at first glance at least *seem* to be controllable. A doubled imitation, however, being patently uncontrollable, might as well be infinite.[12] Infinite contexts necessarily result in infinite intentions. Extrapolating from the radical resituatability of one's language (including one's thought-language), Jacques Derrida will continually over the course of his career point out that all intentions are fundamentally doubled, or to use his term "impure," and therefore potentially infinite.[13] This situation leads to an illimitability of imitations and split intentions from the beginning and the possibility (but not necessity) of referential madness.

There is an always uncomfortably controlled madness surfacing in this Collins story so taken up with the issue of rampant imitability. The entry of the Marrables' play, appropriately, is what instigates the madness of Magdalen (that name probably properly being pronounced Mad-lin).[14] When she promises to be a "good girl" for the rest of her days if allowed to participate, her father replies, "A good girl? . . . A mad girl, I think you must mean. Hang these people, and their theatricals!" (33). Later, her father will describe her as "mad to act" (38). Magdalen's theater-madness is an analog for the referential madness with which Collins's story had begun. Indeed, if we take the initially complacent domesticity at Combe-Raven to be symbolic of a general referential complacency, we can see both these aspects – referential-complacency and controlled stage drama – being threatened jointly when the narrative describes Magdalen as "the one ever-disturbing element in the family serenity" (39). Collins's heroine's fierce need to act (in either sense of that word) poses a threat, it would seem, to the domesticity and the fundamental referential grounding of the domestic/realist novel.

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Irrepressible Iterability

AUSTIN'S FUNDAMENTAL PROJECT THROUGHOUT *How to Do Things with Words* is one of active repression. The demonstration he is trying to effect in his lecture series is predicated on the possibility of discovering a means of conclusively distinguishing between performative and constative utterances. More than once he finds himself unable to establish a firm basis for his distinction.[15] Austin endeavors to keep rigorously excluded all the possible "infelicities" – "the things that can be and go wrong" (*How to Do Things* 14) – acting on the occasion of the utterance of performatives, to effectively show them the door, in a sense, so as to safely establish the happy, secure domesticity as one in which the constatives (words that merely report things) can always be distinguished from the performatives. As his study is for the most part simply an unsuccessful definition by negation of the elusive "pure performative," he understandably spends a good deal of time classifying various categories of failed performatives. Austin uses terms such as "Non-plays," "Misplays," "Miscarriages," "Misexecutions," "Non-executions," "Disrespects," "Dissimulations," "Non-fulfilments," "Disloyalties," "Infractions," "Indisciplines," and "Breaches" to describe the various different types of failed performatives (*How to Do Things* 18 n1). This impressive proliferation of categories of infelicitous would-be performative utterance should have been a sign to Austin that perhaps his task was futile.

Derrida, in a brilliant critique (or more appropriately continuation) of Austin's project entitled "Signature Event Context," describes why he fails. That failure is the result of Austin's having ignored a fundamental principle of language (one known to the narrative of *No Name* in 1862): that "infelicity" begins "at home," that is, in the act of citation itself. Derrida, in solving Austin's problem, or rather in showing why it cannot be solved, will mine his way below the level at which one is able to distinguish between these two "entities" of performative and constative utterance. He will take Austin's inquiry into a region where the "iterability" of language must be encountered and acknowledged. Derrida makes clear that writing must have an effectivity beyond a given addressee and given addressor in order to be "readable." Once one grants these propositions – and I myself am inclined to do so because a form of communication that had been so structured as to be effective solely for one particular pair of communicators and for one particular context is not my experience of communication – one has effectively granted everything to follow in Derrida's critique. Derrida holds that "a written sign carries with it a force that breaks with its context, that is, with the collectivity of presences organizing the moment of its inscription. This breaking force [*force de rupture*] is not an accidental predicate but the very structure of the written text" ("Signature" 9). Admitting the necessary existence of the possibility for the repetition of the trace – that is, of the "structural unconsciousness" of language ("Signature" 18) – means necessarily admitting the possibility for the alteration of a given statement's tone, its speaker's intentions, indeed also its constative or performative nature. This breaking force has radical implications for the self that would be attempting – vainly it turns out – to appear unified in language, as Derrida makes clear when he comments, "the entire graphematic structure is connected to citationality, to the possibility of being repeated. And since a mark is repeatable, this means that it no longer needs me to continue to have its effects. *Insofar as I make use of an instrument that bears within itself its repeatability, I am absented from what I use*. And it's necessary to take account of this absence" (Derrida and Ricoeur 154; italics added). In short, language's inherently mobile qualities cause it always to fit uncomfortably

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within the typical regimes of determinate reference, analytic grammatical categorization, and thoroughly consistent self-representation, not to mention the typical regimes of property ownership.

Derrida's critique discloses that Austin's implicit reliance on propriety, in various guises, in his formulation of the "speech-act situation" is always already rifted by language's necessary iterability, its ability to be repeated. The honest intentions of Austin's unified subject are never going to be as pure as Austin wants them to be.[16] When discussing the logic of supplementarity, Derrida writes, "the indefinite process of supplementarity has always already *infiltrated* presence, always already inscribed there the space of repetition and the splitting of the self. . . The supplement itself is quite exorbitant, in every sense of the word" (*Of Grammatology* 163). Derrida's point is that the bottom line is complexity: that the end result is iteration and its various manifestations – polysemia, muddled intentions, improper or uncertain self-understanding, noise, etc. Derrida thus effectively maps out a world manifestly working not according to the proper/improper dichotomy founding Austin's inquiry (as well as, as we will see, Jane Austen's realism) but rather according to a different set of rules. He maps out a world in which artifice is rendered not a controllable supplement to the otherwise art-less world but rather a necessary precept. Austin's mistake was to have assumed (or to have attempted to create through a process of selective viewing) artlessness in the face of the inherently so very artful practice of citation.

Collins's text is similarly intent on disclosing hidden precepts, particularly those associated with realist novel writing. It is always useful to look at a society's repressions – especially fertile ground with regard to Victorian culture. The excluded entity par excellence for Victorian realist fiction, as is signaled by its name, is the evidence of its own fictionality, of its constructedness or non-"realness." While realist fiction, like any fiction, relies on the possibility of mimesis, the possibility of the world being re-rendered through a system of signs, what it most desperately needs to exclude is the coming to consciousness of that practice. Parody, or the mimesis of mimesis, brings realist fiction's repressed basis in artifice out into the open, brings it back into consciousness and out from behind the somnolescence that had been the reader's suspension of disbelief. As he has his story transform from domestic to sensational novel in the latter half of its First Scene, Collins brings home – much like Derrida in his critique of Austin – the fact of the undelimitability of parodic (or, indeed as a necessary corollary, so-called "serious") reference. He brings back to consciousness the fact of iterability's irrepressibility.

While Collins's previous novel *The Woman in White*, in its recounting of the Madame de Douhault Affair, had been the retelling of the story of an impersonation,[17] the citation of impersonation so to speak, *No Name* in its appearing to veer towards the arena of domestic fiction, in contrast, is the *impersonation of citation*. The narrative begins by impersonating the realist novel, a type of novel whose authors tend to understand their role as one of effecting something that we might call a "simple citation" of the world. The Victorian realists, following in the tradition established by Jane Austen, attempt to record reflections in a desire to "faithfully" represent (and re-present) the world. In a realist touchstone even more seminal than Chapter 17 of *Adam Bede*, the Reverend Richard Whately writes in his *Quarterly* review of 1821 that Austen's is

> that unpretending kind of instruction which is furnished by real life; and certainly no author has ever conformed more closely to real life, as well in the incidents, as in the characters and descriptions.

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> Her fables . . . have all that compactness of plan and unity of action which is generally produced by a sacrifice of probability: yet they have little or nothing that is not probable; the story proceeds without the aid of extraordinary accidents; the events which take place are the necessary or natural consequences of what has preceded. (360)

Collins mimics that simple "unpretending" citation practiced by Austen. Indeed, he could be said quite simply to be *citing* that citation. But in citing it he introduces – necessarily through the simple act of citation if nothing else – a foreignness into the home. (It is no accident that the plotting in this novel should be instigated by an oxymoronically-titled production of "private theatricals").

Once he doubles it, the situation is no longer as "simple" as it once had been. However, one is prompted at this point to wonder whether things had been all that simple in the first place. Is it possible to distinguish between simple citation and the impersonation of citation, between simple and doubled citation? The fact that, like Phillips, we could have been, and indeed at any time could be, "taken in" by Collins's opening suggests these two types of citation can easily pass for one another, thus posing serious ramifications for the suspension of disbelief. Always already facing the potential of being disclosed to have been merely overly-credulous, we would-be "suspenders" will tend to resent this type of revelation. It halts the uncomplicated enjoyment of the suspension of disbelief so desired by a narrative like *Sense and Sensibility*, makes it something that from then on has to be willed rather than "simply" being enjoyed. Collins is suggesting that, radically disenchanting as it may be, this is in fact the more honest standpoint. Thus, he disabuses the reader who wants nothing more, it seems, than to stay under the sway of the author's illusion. In *No Name*, Collins is "pretending" to be unpretending, and this "pretense" turns out to be radically subversive as he discloses all realist novelists to be potential parodists.

"I do *pretend . . ."*

WE TURN NOW TO A PARTICULAR EXAMPLE of Collins's parodying of the marriage vow, one with surprisingly profound implications. At the end of the First Scene of this theatrical narrative, the character Mr. Clare makes the following pronouncement to our heroine Magdalen: "I don't pretend to enter into your feelings for Frank, or Frank's for you. . . . The subject doesn't interest me. But I *do* pretend to state two plain truths" (132). This statement, given its particular emphasis and general context, is, at a certain level, clearly parodying the marriage vow. It is significant that immediately after Magdalen's parents' marriage has been disclosed to have been a sham a character should be making the statement "I *do* pretend. . .."

Clare's statement comes as the first explicit "I do" in a series of what Austin would have called performative "misfirings." There are other instances in the narrative of a type of misuse or "mis-reference" in relation to the marriage vow. For example, there are the elliptical "I do"s interchanged by Magdalen and her cousin Noel late in the novel. At the particular moment when Noel and Magdalen are meant to exchange their vows, the narrative takes on a surprising reticence:

> The clergyman opened the Book.
>
> It was done. The awful words which speak from earth to Heaven were pronounced. The children of the two dead brothers . . . were Man and Wife. (418)

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Few performative failures could be more patent than the complete absence or elision evident in this bodiless soul, that is, in this instance of Collins's strategic use of what he liked to term "white lines." Collins's somber phrasing, "[t]he awful words which speak from earth to Heaven," suggests that he recognizes there to be a power particular to certain words and phrases. It is phrases such as this that tempt one to style him a speech-act theorist, only of a more worldly type, that is, than most twentieth-century practitioners. Collins tends to revel in the failures of speech acts rather than to prop them up through the deliberate and desperate imposition onto the system of language of unworkable proprieties (or falsifying normalizing conventions). For Collins, domesticity, whether residential or literal, cannot be rendered fundamentally unassailable, fundamentally secured from the always-possible return of the repressed, the return of the "unserious" performative specifically and the return of unseriousness in general.

If one were to attempt to sum up his work in a single statement, it would be that in Collins's novels no one is safe at home. *No Name* is no different from the rest of Collins's stories in this respect. The most forceful assault made in the narrative on complacent domesticity is that one we have begun to trace, the assault made on the marriage vow, that basic grounding for the propriety, if not perhaps also the happiness, of the average Victorian home. One of the titles Collins was considering up to the last minute before serialization of *No Name* had begun particularly emphasized the domestic and matrimonial aspects of his narrative. Collins's biographer Catherine Peters tells us, "Wilkie asked his mother for her opinion on a short-list of eight [titles], which includes *Man and Wife*, a title he used nine years later, but not *No Name*" (241).[18] The marriage vow is explicitly parodied in the tensely dramatic scene in which Magdalen agrees to take the fatal step of giving herself over to the mentorship of Captain Wragge:

> "Place your departure from York, your dramatic career, and your private inquiries under my care. Here I am, unreservedly at your disposal. Say the word – do you take me?"
>
> Her heart beat fast; her lips turned dry – but she said the word.
>
> "I do." (181)

This particular "I do" is most probably intended to remind us of that other one, the one that Magdalen did not have the chance of saying in the First Scene to Frank Clare, her young love interest and neighbor, because her happy domesticity had commenced – like a less-than-solidly-built stage set – literally crumbling around her. As *No Name*'s manifest emphasis on stage mimicry and on the phrases "I do" in the act of marrying and "I will" in the act of bequeathing make clear, a principal interest of the narrative rests in "performatives," those "awful words which speak from earth to Heaven," those words, that is, to put it in the discourse of the narrative, that make body and soul work together as one in a common goal.

Copies and Disarticulated Souls and Bodies

THERE ARE OTHER IMPLICATIONS to Mr. Clare's words. He shies away from the pretension of weighing Magdalen's and Frank's feelings for one another but does not shy away from the pretension of stating plain truths. The term "to pretend" can also mean to falsify, and it is in this sense that his statement implies a reference to Collins's opening domestic gambit

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in *No Name*. "I *do* pretend to state . . . plain truths": this might well be Collins speaking in his own person here – or indeed any realist novelist. This is what Collins the writer had been doing throughout the First Scene of his novel, that is, in the pages immediately preceding Mr. Clare's admonition.

What does it mean to "pretend" to state plain truth? Is this something different from lying? Is it something different from *merely* stating plain truth, i.e., representing straightforwardly in language? It is impossible to distinguish these three situations and it is *this truth* that this fiction is ultimately attempting to convey. In *No Name*, Collins shows the representation of "truth" – insofar as it would want to manifest itself through something called domestic *fiction* – to always already have been based on pretense. However, Collins is not content with this degree of subversive overturning of the true/false, real/sensational, and real/unreal binaries. He will go on to attempt to disclose intentions to be always already potentially false or inherently falsifiable at their basis.

Several critics have noted the unifying role played by nineteenth-century domestic fiction in upholding the general domestic proprieties.[19] The narrative of *No Name* represents, then, a very serious threat, as it shows those proprieties to be fundamentally violable, bringing it all home, down to the level of the propriety of the "proper" citizenry from which the realist author draws for his or her models. As we have seen, imitability, at various levels, is the main issue with which this narrative occupies itself throughout its course, as it transitions from staid, average Victorian domestic novel to sensational story of our heroine Magdalen's disinheritance upon the untimely deaths of her father and mother and her subsequent sensational efforts to see that justice is done to her and her sister Norah.

The assault on the safe domesticity in *No Name* takes on its most radical formulation in the narrative's assault on the safe home of the integral self, the unique body. We should recall in this context not only Magdalen's impersonations of Norah, of the girls' governess Miss Garth, and of Magdalen's own maid Louisa, but also her impersonation of the spirit of her father, that impersonation that calls forth the plotting in the story. After her father dies, Magdalen takes upon herself the task of seeing his last wish realized, of embodying his last intentions. By comparison, after Noel Vanstone makes a new will in order to thwart Magdalen from in effect inheriting back her father's money, that will is described as a speech-act empty of Noel's actual intention, empty, that is, until one considers a further document. To discover that intention one also needs to know the contents of the Secret Trust. That Trust being the necessary link putting into effect Noel's wishes, it becomes the document that renders the will a viable performative, as Mrs. Lecount makes clear: "Your will there, is a body without a soul . . . until the letter is completed and laid by its side" (467). And was not the sad story of Andrew Vanstone's so-very-ineffective intention to leave a will with which we had begun the narrative, on the contrary, the story of the spirit being cruelly deprived of the official means, that is, an instance of a soul without a body?

The plotting in *No Name* only truly begins after Andrew Vanstone's death has resulted in the thwarting of his manifest intention to have provided for his two daughters. Because Andrew has not made a new will after having taken the step, apocalyptic in testamentary terms, of finally having married the girls' mother – his common-law wife of many years – the whole of his estate passes to his heartless and already wealthy brother Michael, Noel's father. This circumstance renders Andrew a character a bit like Hamlet's father, doomed to walk the earth decrying the usurpation of his (e)state by his brother and demanding the actualization

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of his intentions. (Captain Wragge at more than one point will quote Osric's judgment from *Hamlet*, "a hit, a palpable hit" [159 and 171].) It is this thwarted "will"-ingness that causes Magdalen so to resent her uncle Michael's refusal to give the sisters their father's money. In his last letter, directing his lawyer Pendril to begin the process of drafting a new will, Andrew presciently writes, "If anything happened to me, and if my desire to do their mother justice, ended (through my miserable ignorance of the law) in leaving Norah and Magdalen disinherited, I should not rest in my grave!" (108). Once Andrew is dead, however, there would seem to be no way for his intention to be put into effect. As Andrew's last words make clear, in this case it is absolutely a matter of the spirit being willing but of the flesh needing to be . . . well, somebody else's. The rest of the narrative of *No Name* is largely a recounting of Magdalen's dedication of her body, in various ways, to the goal of effecting her father's last wish. Magdalen not only sacrifices her self-regard by taking on a series of disguises and commencing a career as a stage actress in the pursuit of the eighty thousand pounds, but she also sacrifices her purity – scandalizing most every novel reviewer of the day. Her marriage to Noel may be an improper use of her body that only goes the more to show how "vulgar" and "polluted" – to repeat Margaret Oliphant's descriptions of Magdalen's actions and of Magdalen herself (Oliphant 170) – the genre of sensation fiction had become by 1863, but it nevertheless also makes a sort of theoretical sense in the context of her quest to actualize her father's disembodied and as yet ineffectual wish.

Another turn-about of the soul/body duality is effected by the two marriages in the narrative. Magdalen's sacrifice in marrying Noel is one that we are called on to compare with her parents' "marriage." While Magdalen's marriage (disregarding the fact that she has married under an alias) has undergone the requisite formalities, her parents' common-law union had actually possessed the spirit so very lacking in this "official" one; that is, while the parents' marriage may have been a soul without an official body, their daughter's marriage is most decidedly a body without a soul. Magdalen's many hesitations along her path towards her wedding day with Noel serve not only to highlight Wragge's role as Svengali, and perhaps to mitigate the immorality of her marriage, but, in a speech-act context, they also go towards proving that the soul in this shape-changing body is not as willing as it should be, that Magdalen is most decidedly not that most desired of speech-act entities, a unified subject. Her hesitations provide a good indication that the narrative of *No Name* is much more interested in the "space between," so to speak – that is, in the distance between thought and action, between word and deed, between motivator and actor – than in "pure" performatives. It is fundamentally interested in – as Collins puts it in the preface to *Basil* (1852), that earlier novel that was being carefully revised during the early stages of the writing of *No Name* – "the broad line of separation which distinguishes between the will and the deed" (*Basil* xxxvii).[20]

At one point during the intrigues at Aldborough, Magdalen orders Captain Wragge (masquerading as her uncle "Thomas Bygrave" for the purposes of their con-game) to take her away from the scene of action for a few days: "I can't get over the horror of marrying him, while I am in this hateful place – take me somewhere where I can forget it, or I shall go mad!" (358). Consequently, she, the Captain, and his wife spend four days at the town of Woodbridge. On returning, Magdalen has recovered her composure, having reconciled herself to her original plan: "Vibrating perpetually from one violent extreme to another, she had now passed from the passionate despair of five days since, to a feverish exaltation of spirits, which defied all remorse and confronted all consequences" (364). One is again

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tempted to compare her with Hamlet as we find her, after a bout of near-madness, once more resolute of heart in her purpose of seeing her father's wishes honored. However, this resolve does not last, and soon she is on the point of another, this time much more serious, hesitation. When she is on the brink of having achieved the union towards which she so dedicatedly had been maneuvering, Magdalen nearly commits suicide, stopped only by the appearance of an eighth ship at her window: an odd number of ships during the fateful half hour, she had arbitrarily decided, would have meant she must drink the bottle of laudanum she held ready in her hand.

Just before the scene of the ships, she asks herself where her amazing endurance under her many trials comes from: "[W]hat is my heart made of! How it lives and lives, when other girls' hearts would have died in them long ago!" (400). Her "heart" it will turn out, not surprisingly, is made up of textual citations. Throughout the plotting, Magdalen keeps with her, in a white bag tied round her neck resting over her physical heart, two extracts, one copied from her father's defunct will, the other from his last letter to his solicitor Pendril. While it is certainly Magdalen's heart, in the physical sense, that allows her to commit her acts throughout the narrative, it would seem that her father's spirit, "heart" in the figurative sense, all the while motivates them. Magdalen's impersonations take not only their impetus but also perhaps their analogical model from these textual extracts that she carries about with her in her little white bag. The narrative makes it clear that these words are citations. Norah comments on Magdalen's refusal of the original documents, "I was the eldest[sic] (she said), and those last precious relics ought to be in my keeping. I tried to propose to her that we should divide them; but she shook her head" (138). Showing the bag containing the extracts to her sister, Magdalen replies, "I have copied for myself . . . all that he says of us in the will, and all that he says in the letter. . . This tells me in his own words what his last wishes were for both of us . . . and this is all I want for the future" (138). Here we have the two girls treating these texts as a type of legacy. This is an important conflation, since an issue of some interest to the narrative is the question of the control of Andrew Vanstone's other (monetary) legacy. What would have made the money and the texts work together would have been Andrew's successfully wrought last performative.

This situation of Andrew Vanstone's failed performative brings to prominence the linguistic iterability at the basis of the will/deed distinction. More properly, this should be termed a will/will distinction (since Magdalen and her father represent two aspects of the same will). In this non-unified will, we find there to be a foreignness disclosed to exist at the basis of the self. This situation is another manifestation of the other being lodged securely in the self, that situation of course having come into being as a result of "one" being, via linguistic iterability, "absented from what one used," as Derrida puts it, absented from the language one had been using to express the self. The constantly failing performatives in *No Name* are meant to invoke and disclose this otherness in the self.[21]

Sensationalism in a New Sense

As we have seen, the opening episodes of this novel so dedicated to theatricality cleave to the line between simulation and origination and disclose the former to be subverting the latter. But theatricality had already been extant in the name given to the genre that *No Name* helped found, the "sensation novel." The term "sensation fiction" was continually to haunt the composition and reception of *No Name* and Collins's next novel *Armadale*. The former

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was labeled a "sensation novel," to offer but one example, by an anonymous reviewer in the London *Daily Telegraph* on 2 January 1863. The term "sensation writing" had been coined as early as September 1861, when a reviewer in the *Sixpenny Magazine* had used the label in the course of commenting on the startling effect *The Woman in White*, among other novels, had had on contemporary fiction (see Page 9). *No Name*'s initial serialization, in *All the Year Round*, had begun on 15 March 1862, and ended on 17 January 1863. Collins's next novel *Armadale* would be labeled by the reviewer H. F. Chorley, "a 'sensation novel' with a vengeance" (Chorley in Page 146). However, I contend that from the beginning, specifically from *No Name*'s parodically domestic initial opening First Scene, Collins was attempting to write something other than what came to be known as the typical sensation novel, a genre of which he is nevertheless considered the father.

Collins's agenda was much more ambitious than that of the typical sensation novelist of his time. A lack of subversive ambition on the other sensationalists' part is evident in the defenses they offer for the legitimacy of this genre. They invariably argue that, in actuality, there exist occasional eruptions of sensationality in the real world, as, for example, Dickens contends when he proclaims, "It is very easy to cry 'Sensational!' but the word proves nothing. Let it be granted that such things *are* sensational; but then life itself is similarly sensational in many of its aspects, and Nature is similarly sensational in many of her forms, and art is always sensational when it is tragic" ("Sensational" 14).[22] But Collins believed that it was more productive – rather than suggesting sensation was somehow an occasional eruption in and interruption to regular life – to ask what made the eruptions always already possible in the first place. In order to adequately address this problem of nineteenth-century fiction we have been required, surprisingly, to have recourse to a twentieth-century literary critical context, Derrida's critique of speech-act theory in the early 1970s. Applying Derrida's insights about Austin to Collins's context has allowed us to see that those eruptions of sensationality all turn out to be the result of sincerity being based on a fundamental insincerity, an insincerity so fecund that some of its manifestations can be sacrificed to the mundane task of mimicking the effects of what we like to call "sincerity."

To consider Collins a simple sensationalist – an assumption evident in a title such as *Dickens, Reade, and Collins, Sensation Novelists* – is a mistake on the same order – and grows out of the same critical naiveté – as the act of taking the opening of *No Name* for the opening of a domestic fiction. The one interpretation leads naturally into the other. For critics such as Phillips, the sensationalism in *No Name*'s latter half thus ends up seeming a "failure" on Collins's part, a poor secondary substitute for the artist's inability to have "properly" fulfilled his role as domestic novelist. Sensation becomes merely an aberration to be subsumed back into a more general realism.

Early in the narrative of *No Name*, Magdalen discusses a "question of Art" with her sister Norah. Magdalen has the night before impersonated Norah while playing the role of Julia in the Marrables' private production of *The Rivals*,[23] and she can tell that her sister is not at all pleased:

> "Dear me, how black you look this morning! I'm in disgrace, I suppose. Haven't you forgiven me yet for my acting last night? I couldn't help it, love; I should have made nothing of Julia, if I hadn't taken you for my model. It's quite a question of Art. In your place, I should have felt flattered by the selection."
>
> "In *your* place, Magdalen, I should have thought twice before I mimicked my sister to an audience of strangers." (52)

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Given the starkly contrasting natures of the two Vanstone girls, expressed here and throughout the story, it would seem *No Name* could just as appropriately have been titled *Sense and Sensationality*, the difference in the sisters' natures having served to highlight the distance being bridged by, and degree of violation inherent in, Magdalen's impersonation. Mark Ford, the editor of the Penguin edition, insightfully focuses on this particular scene: "Norah's distress is interesting because it so clearly illustrates society's aversion to having what it likes to believe is natural and unique revealed to be conditioned and imitable" (xii). Here identity encounters the danger of perhaps having to acknowledge its always potential disruptibility by iterability.

If we extend the implications of Ford's comment about Norah's distress also to the macro-mimicry in the First Scene, we see that Collins is implying with his parody of realism that the realist novelists of his day could all along have been writing parodies, an insight for which they, like Norah, would have been unlikely to thank him. The only things hampering this undecideable whirligig of uncontrollable interchangeability are certain contextual cues. There is nothing, in theory, distinguishing the elements at the basis of realism from those at the basis of the parody of realism. Both are disclosed by the opening of *No Name*, at different points and from the points of view of different contexts, to bear the possibility of being constituted by the same words, the possibility of looking the same – reminding us of the sensation-generating similarity in appearance of Anne and Laura in *The Woman in White*.

At the beginning of *No Name* Collins shows that the domestic novel, like any form or style of fiction, can itself be cited and impersonated – even at the level of its founding principles: in the case of domestic fiction, the happy home, the young lovers headed altar-wise. It is all the more appropriate, then, that Magdalen should take, after that home has broken up, the most conservative character at Combe-Raven, her governess Miss Garth, as her model when she begins performing "At Homes" under the direction of Captain Wragge – parodying the form of domestic fiction within the narrative itself.

A clue to the always already unstable propriety at the basis of the paradigmatic domestic picture afforded by Combe-Raven can be found in the novel when Wragge describes his plan for utilizing Magdalen's powers of mimicry. Wragge writes in his Chronicle of Events,

> I have discovered that [Magdalen] possesses extraordinary talent as a mimic. She has the flexible face, the manageable voice and the dramatic knack which fit a woman for character-parts and disguises on the stage... Train her in the art of dramatic disguise; provide her with appropriate dresses for different characters ... *advertise her as A Young Lady at Home* ... and what follows as a necessary consequence? Fame for my fair relative, and a fortune for myself.[24] (190–91; italics added)

For Collins, once again, home is where the mimic is. We have seen Derrida come to a very similar conclusion – for a very similar reason. The fact that this same discovery about the workings of language is made by these two apparently widely separated – in time, in discipline – cultural authorities should come as little surprise, as both had involved themselves in a similar project, that of analyzing the ramifications for "propriety" (whether philosophical or social) of the *fundamental illimitability of the act of citation*. Both having undertaken to disclose the profound reach of the disturbance caused by the possibility of citation, a disturbance extending all the way down to the level of the hearth and home and the very essence of the "self," it was inevitable that the cracks in the essentially vulnerable

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foundations of the proprieties holding up the school of J. L. Austin's speech-act theory and of Jane Austen's realism should have come to disclose themselves.

Mine is not an altogether original formulation. The spirit of our two Aust(e/i)ns has been brought together before. Margaret Anne Doody comments on J. L. Austin's implicit claim to philosophical kinship with Jane Austen, noting that the Oxford philosopher "paid tribute to Austen's philosophical title and concerns when he named his own book *Sense and Sensibilia*." Doody's further point suggests one reason for Austin's choice of title: "J. Aust*i*n was doubtless stimulated by the similarity of his name to that of J. Aust*e*n into seeing some resemblance in their concerns."[25] However, I have here been arguing that the similarities lie deeper, especially with respect to the issue of repressive capacity, than Doody would seem to envision. This similarity between Austin and Austen is not surprising as the philosophers of propriety as we might call them are always going to be involved in campaigns designed in one way or another to repress, control, and discipline the iterability of the mark, be that mark the improper arching of the brow, the speaking or writing of the wrong word, or, most disturbing of all, the mimicking or counterfeiting of the proper gesture. Collins, having shown that the world works according to a different set of rules than those provisional ones mapped out by Jane Austen and by the more proper Victorian domestic novelists of his own time, also poses a fundamental challenge to the world of Austen's heirs, the world of the twentieth-century speech-act theorists. Collins thus could be seen in *No Name* to be a deconstructionist *avant la lettre* in general and, in particular, to be prefiguring Derrida's deconstruction of J. L. Austin's speech-act theory.

The argument might be posed that what realists do is done seriously and according to rules that sensationalists do not believe in or follow. This is the position that would be espoused by what I am calling the "School of Austen/Austin." Counteracting just such a contention had been the motivation behind my earlier rehearsal of Derrida's critique of J. L. Austin's inherently vulnerable insistence upon the "seriousness" of his speakers' intentions in his philosophical analyses. However, when dealing with this topic, if we can be certain of nothing else, we can be certain that repetition never hurts. So I would, by way of concluding, offer a series of questions recapitulating Derrida's (and, by implication, Collins's) critique of the fundamental tenets of the philosophers of propriety: Is there not a degree of artifice *inherent in* any act of citation, no matter how "faithful"? Is not the act of simply moving something to a different context a radically transformative act, an act structurally constituted to fatally undermine the transparency of "honest" intentions? Can one's good-willed intentions – as Magdalen implies they do in the case of her impersonation of Norah – ever sufficiently mitigate the threat posed by the act of citation? In short, is the artless citation ever really possible? According to Derrida's critique of Austin, the answer to this last question would have to be – as is Norah's answer to Magdalen – a resounding No.

Constantly Saying "Relly!"

THE ISSUES RAISED IN THIS ARTICLE about a book entitled, paradoxically, *No Name* – a story very much taken up with the sensational legal fiction of the illegitimate child being considered Nobody's Child – are all encapsulated in a particular story that Wilkie Collins includes in his first book, his biography of his painter father. The story is told in a letter written by Collins's father and has special resonance with the issue of naming since the man being spoken of by William Collins is Wilkie Collins's godfather, the painter Sir David

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Wilkie, the bequeather of Collins's middle – later first – name. Both of these gentlemen – one as character and one as author but both conjoined in the name "Wilkie Collins" – participate in the following story regarding the impossibility of distinguishing a real "re(a)lly" from a faked "re(a)lly."

> Chantrey and Wilkie were dining alone with me, when the former, in his great kindness for Wilkie, ventured, as he said, to take him to task for his constant use of the word "*relly*," (really,) when listening to any conversation in which he was much interested. "Now, for instance," said Chantrey, "suppose I was giving you an account of any interesting matter, you would constantly say, '*Relly!*'" "*Relly!*" exclaimed Wilkie immediately, with a look of the most perfect astonishment. (Qtd. in Wilkie Collins, *Memoirs of the Life of William Collins* 194)

This scene has resonances with Magdalen's quest in *No Name* to become "Magdalen Vanstone," a name she had mistakenly thought was hers for her first 18 years. After she has married her cousin Noel and thereby become entitled to use that signature, near the end of one of her letters she writes the following to her former governess Miss Garth:

> I have made the general sense of propriety my accomplice this time. Do you know who I am? I am a respectable married woman, accountable for my actions to nobody under Heaven but my husband. I have got a place in the world, and a name in the world, at last. . .. You forget what wonders my wickedness has done for me. It has made Nobody's Child, Somebody's Wife. . . . If you ever speak about me to Norah, tell her that a day may come when she will see me again – the day when we two sisters have recovered our natural rights; the day when I put Norah's fortune into Norah's hand. . . .
>
> Magdalen Vanstone (484)[26]

In Magdalen's allusion to her "natural right" there is a suggestion of that "moral right" of the author over his literary creation that characterizes certain strains of English and French copyright law. Along these lines, it is appropriate that Captain Wragge, her helpmate, should be a self-professed "moral agriculturist" (169) and should describe himself as "the publisher, so to speak, of [Magdalen's] book" (200). Magdalen is all along passionately fighting, as she writes that "book," for the reestablishment of a natural right – related quite closely to paternity – that she feels has been unfairly slighted by the culture around her.

The narrator of the story at one point asks, "What did Magdalen care for satire?" (78). Quite a bit, it would seem. Here in this letter, her name "Magdalen Vanstone" could be seen to be a type of satire upon society's proprieties. She has been able to play by the rules and nevertheless to end up in a position that seems "real" but that has been reached by unrelenting "wickedness." Similarly, Lydia Gwilt in Collins's next novel *Armadale* cannot believe her luck when she learns that the real name of her husband Ozias Midwinter is "Allan Armadale." This fortuitous circumstance suggests to her a wicked plan for establishing a similar false legitimacy having to do with naming: she resolves "to pass [her]self off for the widow of one man, while [she is] all the while the wife of the other" (*Armadale* 447). Both of these women are able to establish, through a clever manipulation of the proprieties, that powerful oxymoron, a false reality. They have reached that region where one's "relly," or one's reality, is fundamentally ambiguous.

Language's always-operative iterability opens up vast realms of possibility for diversity of meaning and intention. For one thing, it summarily frees up those possibilities that

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Austin's act of having labeled them more or less "improper" (recall Austin's extensive list of misexecutions) would seem to have successfully pushed off into exile. No matter how much the philosophers of propriety desire their exclusion, the infelicities are never going to be conclusively excised. Here in this story of Sir David Wilkie's always-potentially-ambiguous reply, iterability allows for the second "Relly!" forever to oscillate between the performative and constative domains, between use and mention, between the realistic and the parodic. We can never be sure whether Wilkie was joking or being serious (just as you can never be sure whether I intend here a formal reference to the painter or an informal one to the writer), citing himself seriously or parodically, when he exclaimed, "*Relly!*" And this uncertainty was fine with Wilkie.

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NOTES

My thanks to Nicholas Birns, Sladja Blazan, Penelope Ingram, Anne McCarthy, Simon Petch, and Véronique Pouillard for reading and commenting on earlier drafts of this essay.

1. Amidon writes that "The novel opens quietly, with an image of blissful domestic rectitude that was sure to warm the hearts of Collins' critics" (97).
2. The most prominent treatments of this book are those offered by Taylor (1988), Michie (1989), David (1990), Horne (1991), Peters (1991), Jones (1999), and Pykett (2006). See Stange commenting in a review of a recent edition of the novel in 1979 that "no one has recently claimed that [*No Name*] was a finer novel than *The Moonstone* or *The Woman in White*. And yet, reading *No Name* again, necessarily in the light of our present preoccupations with the theory of fiction, I have come to feel that it displays more clearly and more compendiously than the better-known novels what now appears to be the distinctive interest of Collins's work" (96).
3. See the discussion of the unconventional conventionality of this ending in Bisla 129.
4. *No Name*, ed. Mark Ford, 43. All further references, unless otherwise noted, will be to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.
5. I will throughout this essay be using the terms domestic fiction and realist fiction interchangeably, considering them offshoots from the same parent source: whether or not this collapse is justified with regard to object, it is so with regard to subject as both "sincerity" in congenial domesticity and "propriety" in referentiality are attacked by Collins in *No Name*'s First Scene.
6. Collins would himself undergo a similar parodying in the opposite direction when *The Moonstone* (1868) was domesticated by Trollope in *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873). See Ashley 94 and Milley.
7. This detail may have been autobiographical as Collins is rumored not to have married Caroline Graves because of an earlier, secretly contracted marriage. See Peters 198.
8. While these descriptions undoubtedly refer to Magdalen's new-found distance from the conventional "happy home," that label itself also connects her to Austin's "infelicities" as both she and Austin would seem to long for a happiness based on the illusion of a solid Victorian domestic propriety.
9. Magdalen's maternal grandmother had been Wragge's step-mother for a time, before she came to marry Mrs. Vanstone's father and to give birth to a daughter (21). The complex family dynamics connecting Wragge to Magdalen's mother suggest a foreignness in the home, that is, they imply the existence of other possibilities for defining a family than that one represented by the fantasized ideal of the unified nuclear family with which the novel begins.
10. Stange considers these intrigues to be the main interest in the story: "Collins is at his most exuberant in handling the continually inspissating pattern of intrigue that dominates the middle section of the novel. . .. [T]he reader's interest is not in the outcome of the main plot but in the succession of plots

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and counterplots the characters devise to ensnare each other. It would not be far wrong to say that the subject of *No Name* is *plotting*. It is a tale of trappers trapping trappers, devised by a novelist who, we are continually reminded, is himself an addictive contriver" (97).

11. See Horne 283–84 and Peters 239.
12. It is significant that in Collins's grandfather's book *Memoirs of a Picture*, a fiction about picture forgery and a formative influence on Wilkie, there are not one but *two* imitations of the original masterpiece in circulation.
13. See for two examples, among many, "Freud and the Scene of Writing": "We must be several in order to write" (226), and *Monolingualism of the Other*: "We never speak only one language – or rather there is no pure idiom" (8).
14. Virginia Blain, the editor of the Oxford edition of the novel, suggests the name should be "possibly pronounced as it was sometimes spelt, 'Madlin,' from the French form, Madeleine" (*No Name*, ed. Blain, 743 note to page 15).
15. See Bearn for a good exposition of these points of failure.
16. Mary Louise Pratt holds that the "lone pairs of speakers and hearers are generally taken in speech-act theory to be much more monolithic entities than people really are. In fact, the speakers and hearers of traditional speech-act theory are clear instances of the notorious unified subject . . . Speech-act theory . . . supposes the existence . . . of an authentic, self-consistent, essential subject, a 'true self' . . . It's all a matter, as Austin loved to say, of a man's (sic) word being his bond. The idea is of an authentic self, fully realized through speech, and speech fully adequate to the self – speech from the heart. Derrida's critique of speech-act theory addresses this aspect of the theory" (8).
17. See Collins, *The Woman in White*, Appendix E, 599–600, and Hyder.
18. The later novel was itself a sustained attack on – when it was not criticizing the amorality of narcissistic athletes – the Scottish and Irish marriage laws of Collins's day.
19. See for instance Nancy Armstrong's discussion of the establishment and upholding by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century domestic fictions of the proprieties concerning sexuality and gender in *Desire and Domestic Fiction*.
20. The title of *How to Do Things with Words* when it was being formulated as lectures at Oxford was "Words and Deeds" (vi).
21. As will also the alienations of the name and non-singularity of the event in Collins's next novel *Armadale* and the scenes of self-alienation in *The Moonstone*. The second most prominent failed performative in *No Name* is Mrs. Lecount's stamping with Noel's seal the envelope containing Noel's Secret Trust after he refuses to do so (474–75).
22. Anthony Trollope also did not consider sensationalism and realism to be opposed. Summarizing this debate in 1876, Trollope in his *Autobiography* writes, "Among English novels of the present day, and among English novelists, a great division is made. There are sensational novels and anti-sensational, sensational novelists and anti-sensational; sensational readers and anti-sensational. The novelists who are considered to be anti-sensational are generally called realistic. I am realistic. My friend Wilkie Collins is generally supposed to be sensational. The readers who prefer the one are supposed to take delight in the elucidation of character. They who hold by the other are charmed by the construction and gradual development of a plot. All this is, I think, a mistake, – which mistake arises from the inability of the imperfect artist to be at the same time realistic and sensational. A good novel should be both, and both in the highest degree. If a novel fail in either, there is a failure in Art. . . . Let an author so tell his tale as to touch his reader's heart and draw his tears, and he has, so far, done his work well. Truth let there be, – truth of description, truth of character, human truth as to men and women. If there be such truth, I do not know that a novel can be too sensational." (226–29)
23. Michie – in her discussion of the way in which "Fallen sisters . . . are frequently recoupable through their sisters' efforts" in both Rossetti's "Goblin Market" and *No Name* – suggests there to be in Collins's recourse to private theatricals a covert tie to domestic fiction, specifically to the fictions of

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Jane Austen: "Amateur theatricals are used, of course, from *Mansfield Park* onward, as vehicles for the expression of inappropriate erotic feelings" (404 and 412).

24. This role played by Magdalen is foreshadowed when the narrative has Miss Garth look in on the tableau of the future star of the Marrables' play preparing for her role: "There sat Magdalen, in an arm-chair before the long looking-glass, with all her hair let down over her shoulders; absorbed in the study of her part. . . . And there behind her sat the lady's-maid, slowly combing out the long heavy locks of her young mistress's hair, with the sleepy resignation of a woman who had been engaged in that employment for some hours past. . . . The luxurious tranquillity of the scene; the cool fragrance of flowers and perfumes in the atmosphere; the rapt attitude of Magdalen, absorbed over her reading; the monotonous regularity of movement in the maid's hand and arm, as she drew the comb smoothly through and through her mistress's hair – all conveyed the same soothing impression of drowsy delicious quiet" (39).
25. Doody xxxiii–xxxiv and xxxiv n21. In the Foreword to *Sense and Sensibilia*, Warnock writes, "Austin lectured many times on the problems with which this book is concerned. The first lectures . . . were those which he gave in Oxford in Trinity Term, 1947, under the general title 'Problems in Philosophy.' He first used the title 'Sense and Sensibilia' in Trinity Term of the following year, and this was the title that he subsequently retained" (*Sense and Sensibilia* v).
26. Magdalen refers here to the legal designation of the illegitimate Victorian child as *filius nullius*.

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