

Financial Promiscuity: Gambling on the Fallen Man in Collins' *Man and Wife*

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<1> Financially promiscuous men threaten Victorian structural norms when they undercut two popular assumptions about Victorian novels—the gendered specificity of the “fallen woman” and the structural tidiness of narrative closure. In nineteenth-century novels, authors often punish deviant characters in order to establish and reinforce contemporary codes of morality. In *Man and Wife*, Wilkie Collins supposes that women “cast themselves away impulsively on unworthy men, and that men ruin themselves headlong for unworthy women” (Collins 384). However, unlike many of his contemporaries, Collins does not take an absolute stance on sexual conduct. When he tells his readers, “look into your own experience and say frankly, could you justify your own excellent choice, at the time you irrevocably made it” (385), he asks them to see themselves in his fallen characters. In so doing, he illuminates the flawed reasoning of a social world that claims to insist on neat moral character designations. Collins puts his readers’ sexual conduct, and consequently, their morality into question by asking whether they have fallen in love with unworthy men or women. This type of boldness, rampant throughout *Man and Wife*, allows for a reversal of fates between the fallen man and woman within this narrative. While nineteenth-century writers commonly included fallen characters in their novels, they often focused solely on the fallen woman’s sexual misconduct and its harsh ramifications, as in “Porphyria’s Lover” or *Adam Bede*. The fallen man is nonetheless a recurring figure in the literature of this time.

<2> In my definition, a fallen man, typically bourgeois, gambles with his money. He imperils his social status when a sexual misadventure accompanies his financial reversals. While the fallen woman is often a clear monitory figure whose actual or perceived pre-marital sexual relations are punished with “attenuated autonomy and fractured identity” (Anderson 2), she is also usually empowered by the narrative presence of a fallen man. Yet Victorian gender criticism has neglected to document the importance of this re-gendered persona. Jane Flanders is accurate in her assertion that, in the Victorian novel, “when pursued by women, the goals of individual self-assertion, rebellion, and exploration of the unknown, became crimes punishable by universal censure, lifelong shame or death” (Flanders 109). Like Anderson, however, Flanders does not account for the impact of the fallen man’s narrative treatment that—at least in *Man and Wife*—allows the fallen woman to rise from her pre-ordained fate.

<3> Although their fates diverge, both fallen women and fallen men inherit bad luck. In *Man and Wife*, Collins’ fallen woman, Anne Silvester, is the illegitimate daughter of an erstwhile socialite.

Anne's mother, also named Anne, dies a mysterious death in her beloved Blanche's arms. The betrayal of women repeats at intervals across time and generations. The younger Anne has an affair with Geoffrey Delamayn, a gambler, an athlete, and a fallen man. Despite her potential to be cast as doomed, Anne ultimately marries the honourable Sir Patrick. Still, Anne does inherit a weakness for devious, dashing men through her matriarchal line. Fallen women are often betrayed and controlled by men, while fallen men betray their ancestors by succumbing to their desires and breaking their genteel family standing. Gambling reflects popular vice and breeds indeterminacy. When fallen men gamble, they undercut the continuance that their lineage is "supposed" to represent.

<4> By redeeming Anne and treating Geoffrey as fallen, Wilkie Collins shows sympathy, rather than either disdain or pity, towards fallen women. Patricia Frick attributes Collins' progressive outlook on these oft-shunned females to "his unconventional relationships with two women" (Frick 344). She goes on to say that "he faced the difficult task of reconciling his own more liberal notions of female sexual behavior with the conservative expectations of much of his audience" (Frick 345). In *Man and Wife*, Collins weaves an intricate tale that allows for female sexual mishap and a punished male seducer. Wilkie Collins put fiction into his life, and life into his fiction, with regards to romantic relations. His first long-term mistress, Caroline, lived with him in Harley Street, where Collins filled out a Census return as "a married lodger, a barrister and as an author" (Clarke 94). Caroline was registered as his wife, and her daughter, Harriet, was marked down as his house servant. Later, Collins took on another, younger mistress, from an even poorer background than Caroline. Martha, Caroline, and Wilkie defied convention when they came to live as a threesome in Collins' later years. In these later years, when Collins was writing *Man and Wife*, he makes a bold move for a Victorian author by shifting the burden of fallenness onto the well-born scoundrel.

<5> Geoffrey Delamayn impregnates and humiliates Anne Silvester, and then uses his muscular physique to attract the widowed Mrs. Glenarm. Delamayn, like other fallen men, is characterized by his inexplicable sex appeal and his conscienceless actions. Male fallenness is contingent on perceived social standing and genteel expectations. Delamayn is guilty of sexual misconduct, and, like a fallen woman, he is robbed of agency when his fallenness is fully exposed. The fallen man, an agent of discord, troubles Victorian gender roles and threatens paradigms of masculinity. *Man and Wife* is centered on the authority of Sir Patrick Lundie, a figure whose approval or disdain marks the divide between morally upright and deviant characters. The interaction between an upright and a fallen character may seem to mimic the oppositional definitions of manliness of the period—Angel Clare and Alec D'Urberville in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, or Walter Hartright and Count Fosco in *The Woman in White*—yet the hierarchy implicit in their interaction is undermined by the fallen man's kinetic positioning within Victorian masculine roles. Gender criticism of nineteenth-century novels suggests a distinct overlap between categories of good and bad, male and female. At the same time, the most representative Victorian novelists often revert to simplistic conclusiveness, whereby the "good" and "bad" characters get their respective dues. The kinesis of fallen men disturbs clear-cut destinies. They rarely redeem themselves, but they do redeem others.

<6> Fallen men cause ambiguous narrative conclusions in *Man and Wife* and other novels. D. A. Miller's narratological theories explain the open-endedness implicit in the fallen man's narrative

presence amidst seemingly pat and moral endings. When, for example, George Eliot's "elaborately set-up plots fall flat, get bungled, or even abandoned in a constantly re-enacted moment of release from the tyranny of narrative control" (Miller, *Narrative* xv), they show that inconclusive narrative structure is a surprisingly common Victorian phenomenon. When Miller suggests that "erotic celebration" is a possible outcome of broken-down narrative (*Police* xi), he allocates narratological value to a character's sexuality. Unlike the fallen woman, the fallen man does not function solely as a straightforward warning to potentially promiscuous readers. Rather, the fallen man forces Victorian readers to question their notions of moral and narrative structures when his unpredictable behavior and treatment disrupt expected plotlines.

Gambling: Money, Bodies, and Plots

<7> With the decay of the British aristocracy and the rise of the middle class, came a belief in social mobility and a national absorption in gambling. By the 1870s, Victorians with inherited titles and dwindling finances scrambled to maintain their prestige and eligibility when they turned to speculation. Furthermore, "gambling infiltrated two central Victorian registers of value — work and marriage—functioning as the problematizing link between these two areas and money" (Franklin 35). Geoffrey Delamayn—a gambler, a sexual magnet, and a fallen man—risks his inheritance and limits his marriage prospects when he seduces and discards women. *Man and Wife* employs the trope of gambling as both a motif and as a metaphor for courtship and marriage. For Victorian men, financial speculation, irresponsibility, or inadvertent loss is commensurate with a fallen woman's actual or perceived promiscuity. Men who are loose with their finances face ridicule and limit their marriage prospects. In his two-volume study of gaming published in 1870, Andrew Steinmetz recognizes the frightening overlap in genders and classes that the gaming table affords.(1) Steinmetz quotes (and agrees with) an anonymous contemporary writer who laments the gender blurring that gambling gives way to:

The pernicious consequences to the nation at large [. . .] would have been intolerable enough had they been confined to the stronger sex; but unfortunately, the women of the day were equally carried away by this criminal infatuation. The disgusting influence of this sordid vice was so disastrous to female minds, that they lost their fairest distinction, together with the blushing honours of modesty. (Steinmetz 1: 263)

Steinmetz notes that while a male gambler who has gone too far can pawn his estate to pay his debts, a woman who gambles beyond her means must "find something else to mortgage when her pin-money is gone. The husband has his lands to dispose of; the wife her person" (1: 264). Steinmetz conjures up images of debased women prostituting themselves to pay off debts. He links the motif of gambling with deviant sexuality and gender bending.

<8> Fallen and upright men rely on their bodies when they participate in sports, which are, in effect, a form of gambling. In *Man and Wife*, Arnold Brinkworth, a wholesome and earnest character, spends years in the merchant-service, and his face is "burnt gipsy-brown by the sun; with something in his look and manner suggestive of a roving life" (Collins 62). Arnold supports himself by means of his physical strength rather than taking on a more gentlemanly lifestyle because his "father's losses ruined him" (66). The elder Brinkworth's gambling compels his son

to resort to his physicality for income. Arnold plays croquet in the novel, but his physical exertions occur mostly outside of the representational parameters of the novel. Geoffrey, on the other hand, attends only to his body, and he races, lifts weights, rows, and boxes to unleash his surplus of adrenaline and ignore his dearth of scruples. Collins describes Geoffrey in all his brute, muscular allure, only to remind us of what the athlete has risked by exerting his physical strength:

The essential principle of his rowing and racing (a harmless principle enough, if you can be sure of applying it to rowing and racing, only) has taught him to take every advantage of another man that his superior strength and superior cunning can suggest. There has been nothing in his training to soften the barbarous hardness in his heart, and to enlighten the barbarous darkness in his mind. (213-4)

Arnold redeems himself from his father's negligent gambling by joining the merchant-marine. The fallen man does not put his body to such uplifting use. Geoffrey intimidates Crouch, a retired prize fighter to join him in a boxing match, wherein "the two gave, and took, blows which would have stunned—possibly have killed—any civilized member of the community" (174). Delamayn first falls when he has unsanctioned sex, and so gambles with codes of bodily conduct. The fallen man's body, when later put to non-sexual use, exposes his evil streak; Geoffrey becomes unredeemable when he uses his body to further his conscienceless goals. When the fallen man gambles with both his finances and his body, he perpetuates the open-endedness that the literal motif of gambling sets up.

<9> In *Man and Wife*, Collins gambles with his popularity when he reconsiders the gender and structural norms that he adheres to in his earlier novels. In *The Woman in White*, Marian Halcombe, an androgynous figure, drives the plot with her extraordinary insight. This strong and intelligent character remains unloved while her lovely and fragile sister gets married, which suggests that Collins upholds Victorian norms: delicate women marry; shrewd women fall ill and wither away. While the very notion of androgyny does problematize strict gender distinctions, it does not eradicate them. In *Man and Wife*, Collins destabilizes narrative and gender roles through his full development of a dual plotline. Geoffrey Delamayn perfects his physique to compete in a footrace that everyone else is betting on. When characters put their money either on the fallen man's victory or his loss, they gamble, analogically, on the outcome of the novel. Popular opinion leans towards the fallen man emerging victorious while the fallen woman dwindles away. Collins himself takes a risk by redeeming the fallen woman and punishing her seducer. Since Geoffrey swoons and falls in the footrace, thereby foreshadowing his eventual enfeeblement and death, he dispels any preconceptions that misogyny will dictate the gender politics of this novel. Collins leads the reader to believe that Anne Silvester, the fallen woman of the piece, will face a life of shame and strife, while the fallen man, Geoffrey Delamayn, will get away with sexual misconduct, inherit a large fortune, and marry the lovely though not-too-intelligent Mrs. Glenarm. He builds on the trope of familial doubling from his previous novels, most notably *Armadale*, where the parents' scandals and fates are re-enacted through their sons.

<10> In the opening chapters of *Man and Wife*, Collins sets up an elaborate plot whereby two best friends Anne and Blanche (who are the mothers of the central characters, also named Anne

and Blanche) are lifelong friends. Anne, who was once an actress, believes herself to be married to Vanborough. Her scheming husband tires of his lust for the strangely beautiful, former actress, and with the help of his barrister, Mr. Delamayn (father of Geoffrey Delamayn), he discovers a flaw in their marriage, and leaves her to marry a socialite. This first Anne “had got her death-blow on the day when her husband deserted her [...]. In spite of science (which meant little), in spite of her own courage (which meant much), the woman dropped at her post, and died” (Collins 41). Not only does Anne die a mysterious death in her beloved Blanche’s arms, but she also repeatedly asks the dramatic question that will haunt the narrative: “She is Anne Silvester as I was. *Will she end like Me?*” (42). The betrayal of women repeats at intervals across time and generations. When the next generation of Anne, Delamayn, and Blanche become the focal point of Collins’ narrative, Anne treads along her late mother’s path. She is rejected and abandoned by the muscular scoundrel, Geoffrey Delamayn. The text of *Man and Wife* not only supports the idea that the second generation will relive their parents’ scandals, but insists on it. When Anne finds out that Geoffrey has tricked Arnold Brinkworth (her best friend Blanche’s fiancé) into marrying her,(2) “without a cry to warn him, without an effort to save herself, she dropped senseless at his feet: as her mother had dropped at her father’s feet in the bygone time” (Collins 252). In case readers had not made the connection between Anne’s state and her mother’s, the narrator draws attention to it. When Anne leaves a note to Blanche that begins, “I have left you forever, Blanche” (295), and then disappears, it seems as if she is living out the tragic fate of a fallen woman, for whom there is no place, save as an outcast, in the bourgeois social world. Until the final chapters, Anne seems to be re-enacting her mother’s destiny, when she has been established as Geoffrey’s wife, and is held captive by him while he plots her murder:

The parallel between her mother’s position and her own position was now complete. Both married to husbands who hated them; husbands whose interests pointed to mercenary alliances with other women; to husbands whose one want and purpose was to be free from their wives. Strange, what different ways had led mother and daughter to the same fate! Would the parallel hold to the end? ‘Shall I die,’ she wondered, thinking of her mother’s last moments, ‘in Blanche’s arms?’ (Collins 551)

When Anne wonders whether “the parallel [will] hold to the end,” she acts as a mouthpiece for Collins’ concerns; should he keep with his tradition of familial doubling, and end his novel as such, or diverge from tradition by disrupting Anne’s destiny and punishing the fallen man in her stead?

<11> When Wilkie Collins keeps his readers guessing with a double plotline, he plays with our belief in narrative fate as he privileges indeterminacy. D. A. Miller claims that

the story of the Novel is essentially the story of an active regulation. Such a story requires a double plot: regulation is secured in a minor way along the lines of an official police force, and in a major way by the working through of an amateur supplement [. . .] [T]he Novel will illustrate both the generality and the continuity of the double regulatory enterprise. (Miller, *Police* 10-11)

In his study of the role of police in the Victorian novel, Miller recognizes that “the discretion of social discipline in the novel seems to rely on a strategy of *disavowing the police*: acknowledging its affinity with police practices by way of insisting on the fantasy of its moral otherness. [. . .] [T]he mechanisms of discipline seem to entail a relative *relaxation* of policing power” (16). While *Man and Wife* is an anomalous Collins novel in the conspicuous absence of the police, this text can nonetheless be used as a case study for Miller’s theory. The “mechanisms of discipline” in this novel are directly linked to its double plot. On the one hand, Anne’s seemingly dismal fate would regulate social norms, by treating the fallen woman as such. Yet the novel ends with Geoffrey enfeebled, self-quarantined, feminized, and then killed, whereas Anne marries Sir Patrick, a lawyer of unquestionable gravity. If we can look at Sir Patrick’s role as legal advisor and moral guide as a substitute for a police force, then we can see that he at once polices the values and chastity of Collins’ characters and overturns the values that do not coincide with his own. Sir Patrick Lundie is driven by a sense of justice, with his unflinching sense of right and wrong; he both develops and scrambles Collins’ double plotline in *Man and Wife*. Miller sees the police and their position in Victorian texts as a means of helping to uphold and defy morality. He sees omniscient narration as a “normalizing function which automatically divides characters into good and bad, normal and deviant” (*Police* 25). He builds on Bakhtin’s concept of “monologism”(3) which insists that “every struggle of two voices for possession and dominance in the world in which they appear is decided in advance—it is a sham struggle” (Bakhtin 168). This sham, according to Miller, is enacted by the master-voice of monologism, which never “simply soliloquizes.” Rather, “it continually needs to confirm its authority by qualifying, cancelling, endorsing, subsuming all the other voices it lets speak” (*Police* 25). In *Man and Wife*, where gambling and indeterminacy are constantly invoked, the other voices (besides Sir Patrick’s), are never fully cancelled as we readers are steered away from believing in narratological absolutes. At the same time, Sir Patrick is mostly aligned with the narrator of *Man and Wife*, and their shared values overtake other elements of narrative construction. Still, I would argue that their collaged voice creates a bolder, more open-ended version of right and wrong. Sir Patrick determines that Anne is legally married to Geoffrey, not Arnold.(4) He helps Anne to be married to a man who despises and wishes to kill her—hastening the fallen woman’s dismal destiny. Yet when Geoffrey’s plot to kill Anne gets bungled by the mute servant Hetty, Sir Patrick redeems Anne by marrying her and transforms her from a jilted woman to Lady Lundie.

Placing the Fallen Man

<12> The fallen man propels the plotline of *Man and Wife* and his presence frees the fallen woman from her bleak prospects. Elaine Showalter outlines the distinction between male-authored and female-authored upright and deviant characters in *A Literature of Their Own*. She claims that “by the 1850’s, the ‘woman’s man’, impossibly pious and desexed or impossibly idle and oversexed, had become as familiar a figure in the feminine novel as the governess” (136). Since women writers were not supposed to know too much about the inner workings of the male psyche, they would create a “model hero” who was largely “the projection of women’s fantasies of how they would act and feel if they were men, and, more didactically, of their views on how men *should* act and feel” (Showalter 136). Showalter finds the similarities between the categories of gentleman and rake to be a female-authored phenomenon. Model heroes, claims Showalter, “are more devious than male versions of the manly ideal” (138). She goes on to explain the need

for these (female-authored) model heroes: “since conventions of the novel and of womanhood made it all but impossible for heroines to exhibit sexuality and power, feminine novelists projected these aspects of themselves onto their heroes” (Showalter 143). Charlotte Brontë’s Rochester in *Jane Eyre* exemplifies the idle, oversexed, yet irresistible hero who pops up in female fiction in the mid-nineteenth century. These heroes “are not conventionally handsome, and are often downright ugly; they are brusque and cynical in speech, impetuous in action. Thrilling the heroine with their rebellion and power, they simultaneously appeal to her reforming energies” (Showalter 140). While the fallen man represents some of the same cultural anxieties and inconsistencies as the two versions of the model hero (pious and undersexed, or idle and oversexed), he does not actually qualify as a hero, since he is usually beyond reform and does not have a happy narrative dénouement. Furthermore, unlike Showalter’s “model hero,” the fallen man is a character who is produced by both male and female authors. While cultural anxieties would certainly differ across the gender divide, these anxieties were enacted by both men and women through their fallen characters.

<13> In the introduction to *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Manhood*, James Eli Adams points to the gender-driven malaise that affected male Victorian authors distinctively. Adams sets out to “explore a contradiction within Victorian patriarchy, by which the same gender system that underwrote male dominance also called into question the ‘manliness’ of intellectual labor” (Adams 1). Adams illuminates the Victorians’ flawed gender system and the masculine definitions that uphold it. He claims that “masculine identities are multiple, complex, and unstable constructions within the framework of a particular culture” (Adams 3). Literary and cultural studies have resisted paying too much heed to the complexities of Victorian masculinity, lest they “might serve to obscure, and thereby to reinforce, the domination against which feminist analyses were and are in the first place directed” (3). Adams speaks to “the interrelations among gentleman, dandy, priest, prophet and soldier, and professional as models of identity central to the rhetorical self-fashioning of Victorian intellectual men” (Adams 15). These “interrelations” between gendered categories open a space for the fictional fallen man. When the fallen man both visits and transcends Victorian categories of masculinity, he illuminates the insufficiency of these categories. Furthermore, whereas Wilkie Collins can be seen as a Victorian intellectual, he positions Geoffrey Delamayn as a fallen man to show his own crisis of self-fashioning within the confines of gender.

<14> This task of finding a place for the fallen man amidst the vast spectrum of Victorian masculinities is at once complicated and encouraged by Richard Dellamora in *Masculine Desire*. He traces definitions of the gentleman towards the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, and he finds a convergence between the categories of “dandy” and “gentleman.” Dellamora outlines the nineteenth-century conflict between the middle-class husband’s need to work, and the idleness required of gentlemen. Indeed, this category of gentleman was becoming so non-exclusive, that “by the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, it was almost universally accepted that a traditional liberal education at a reputable public school should qualify a man as a gentleman.” (198) Dellamora speaks to the same problem of masculine “self-fashioning” that Adams encounters with regards to Victorian intellectual men: the insufficiency of existing categories leaves men in the conundrum of conforming where they do not exactly fit, or deviating and facing scandal or ridicule. While the Byronic hero that Dellamora alludes to is often given feminine traits and so threatens traditional notions of masculinity, the fallen man is usually quite manly. The fallen man

takes on the fallen woman's narrative function, while maintaining his own pronounced masculine characteristics. He is too sleazy to be a gentleman, too manly to be a dandy, too socially accepted to be a rake, and too devious to be a muscular Christian. He demonstrates the insufficiency of pre-scripted gender roles when he dabbles in, but does not fit absolutely into, any single role.

<15> The fallen man is not an accidental coincidence, but rather a response to the limitations of gendered categories. When looking at Gilbert and Gubar's important analysis of the female literary imagination, we see why recurring figures in Victorian novels are always imbedded with meaning, regardless of conscious authorial intention. In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, they claim that

Even the most apparently conservative [. . .] women writers obsessively create fiercely independent characters who seek to destroy all the patriarchal structures which both they and their authors' submissive heroines seem to accept as inevitable. Of course, by projecting their rebellious impulses not into their heroines but into mad or monstrous women (who are suitably punished [. . .]), female authors dramatize their own self-division, their desire both to accept the strictures of patriarchal society and to reject them. (Gilbert and Gubar 78)

Fallen men, too, destroy and uphold patriarchal structures, as they (not the fallen women) must leave the narrative worlds in order to restore order. Yet the "order" that they restore is not the same order with which these novels begin, but rather a daring, futuristic order where gender roles are indeterminate. The fallen man challenges the patriarchal order more effectively than the madwoman does, since he is born into that order, expected to be a valiant upholder of that order, only to be excluded from it permanently—as is the case for Delamayn—at the hands of a weakened woman. Fallen men risk their agency and their lives when they indulge in financial and amorous speculation, gambling and illicit affairs. The patriarchal order depends on adherence to precedents; those who stray threaten that order. When Delamayn gambles with his finances and his body, he also gambles with his mastery and power. Fallen men invert Victorian gender roles when their self-driven speculations lead them to be overpowered by the "weaker sex."

<16> Through the character of Geoffrey Delamayn in *Man and Wife*, Wilkie Collins avoids perpetuating the limiting gender ideology of his time, all the while presenting his audience with a character whom they can easily recognize and perhaps even categorize as a rake, or dissolute deviant. While it is possible to identify Geoffrey Delamayn as a rake, it is my assertion that in so doing, one overlooks the complexities of this character and the implications thereof. While unmarried, Geoffrey has sexual relations with Anne Silvester. Although their sexual encounter renders both characters equally fallen in the technical sense, Geoffrey possesses more traits of fallenness than does Anne. His untimely death seems to be modeled on that of fictional portrayals of the sexually deviant woman, while Anne's status is redeemed through her marriage to Sir Patrick. Furthermore, Geoffrey's financial ruin is directly linked to his sexual fall. He is already in dire financial straits when the novel begins. Being the profligate scoundrel son, and second born to boot, Geoffrey stands to inherit nothing. His only chance at financial redemption is to marry a woman of his parents' choosing. When Anne impels him to marry her, he explains

bluntly that “if I marry you now, I am a ruined man” (79). The narrator confirms the scoundrel’s exclamation:

Discovery [of their affair], which meant moral ruin to the woman, meant money-ruin to the man. Geoffrey had not exaggerated his position with his father. Lord Holchester had twice paid his debts—and had declined to see him. One more outrage on his father’s rigid sense of propriety—and he would be left out of the will as well as kept out of the house. (83)

By highlighting Geoffrey’s financial and sexual promiscuity, Collins sets him up in opposition to Sir Patrick. By gambling with his sexuality, Geoffrey impregnates Anne, and so worsens his already tenuous finances. The elder lawyer is passionate in his outrage at the national veneration of Geoffrey: “‘It’s the cant of the day,’ cried Sir Patrick, relapsing again, ‘to take these physically-wholesome men for granted, as being morally-wholesome men into the bargain. Time will show whether the cant of the day is right’” (69). Geoffrey’s strength does not indicate his moral wholesomeness. Even sweet, trusting Blanche, sees that his athletic prowess does not annul his flaws of comportment. She taunts him when he refuses to play the civilized sport of croquet: “‘Must you always be pulling in a boat-race, or flying over a high-jump? If you had a mind, you would want to relax it. You have got muscles instead. Why not relax *them*?’” (62). Just as Britain, according to Sir Patrick, places undeserved value on Geoffrey’s strength, so does Arnold repay Geoffrey’s physical feats with an endless sense of moral obligation. Arnold did not exactly choose to have Geoffrey for a lifelong friend. He is indebted to the muscular rogue for saving his life, years before. Because Geoffrey has lost most hope of inheriting his father’s money, his only source of income is his body, and this income includes an eternal sense of indebtedness from Arnold. Geoffrey saves Arnold with his brute strength, and then expects Arnold to put his own reputation and love life at risk by going to meet Anne at the inn. “One good turn deserves another,” (102) is all Geoffrey needs to say to get Arnold to agree to his absurd request. If Geoffrey cannot fool others into thinking he is strong in spirit as well as body, then he will manipulate them to further his social-climbing goals.

<17> Geoffrey’s physical feats do not fool anyone for long, as he is blamed for both his and Anne’s falls. When Arnold exhibits frustration at his “marriage” to Anne and wishes that he “had never set eyes on her,” Sir Patrick redirects the blame to the fallen man; “‘Lay the saddle on the right horse’, returned Sir Patrick, ‘Wish you had never set eyes on Geoffrey Delamayn’” (469). Sir Patrick maintains “unfeigned respect” (384) for Anne even after he knows that she has deviated from the sexual norms of her day, and the fallen woman is consistently treated with understanding and compassion by both Sir Patrick and Collins. Sir Patrick despises Geoffrey and admires Anne from the start, and he alternates between confoundment at Anne’s attraction towards Geoffrey, and an understanding that Geoffrey’s body is a very powerful currency that victimizes all those who encounter it:

His features were as perfectly unintelligent as human features can be. His expression preserved an immovable composure wonderful to behold. The muscles of his brawny arms showed through the sleeves of his light summer coat. He was deep in the chest, thin in the flanks, firm on the legs—in two words, a magnificent human animal, wrought up to the highest pitch of human development, from head to foot. (60-1)

Sir Patrick encourages both characters and readers to join him in despising Delamayn and respecting Anne. The narrator asks us to understand Anne's fall as a reflection of the nation's misplaced veneration of bodily feats:

Was she without excuse? No: not utterly without excuse [. . .] She had seen him, the hero of the river-race [. . .] *His* were the arms whose muscle was celebrated in the newspapers [. . .] A woman, in an atmosphere of red-hot enthusiasm, witnesses the apotheosis of Physical Strength. Is it reasonable—is it just—to expect her to ask herself in cold blood, what (morally and intellectually) is all this worth?—and that, when the man who is the object of the apotheosis, notices her, is presented to her, finds her to his taste and singles her out from the rest? No. While humanity is humanity the woman is not utterly without excuse. (77)

The narrator generalizes and almost excuses Anne's sexual fling with Geoffrey. At other points in the narrative, Geoffrey's sex appeal is described, and we see that he has the same debilitating effect on Mrs. Glenarm as he does on Anne. When she laid her hand on "the athlete's mighty arm," Mrs. Glenarm exclaims, "What a man you are!" (336). The narrator tells us that "the whole secret of the power Geoffrey had acquired over her was in those words" (336). When Geoffrey's brute sexuality is emphasized in *Man and Wife*, Collins draws our attention to the human fallibility inherent in Anne's situation; she could not resist her natural pull towards Geoffrey. Geoffrey, on the other hand, is scheming and manipulative, and his sexual transgressions are a form of conscious gambling. Geoffrey backslides in his family when he refuses to follow the example of his brother, Julius, who "had just muscle enough to lift a Dictionary from the shelf" (184). The first-born Delamayn marries and stays in good familial standing by cultivating his mind and paying little heed to his body. While Julius attracts a wholesome wife with his sensitivity and inheritance, Geoffrey destroys women by tempting them with his body.

<18> Delamayn has the whole country hedging bets on him as he prepares for the footrace, but then he disappoints them by fainting. Soon after, he dies in a state of degradation and shame. When Collins includes a fallen man in his narrative, he undercuts some fundamental assumptions about Victorian morality, masculinity, and femininity, as he leaves contemporary gender and structural norms in a state of promising turmoil.

"Spectrums of Possibilities"(5)

<19> In 1856, George Eliot wrote to John Blackwood that, "Conclusions are the weak point of most authors, but some of the fault lies in the very nature of a conclusion, which is at best a negation" (qtd. in Allott 250). Strands of unruly desire drive plots in many Victorian narratives, only to be discounted by conclusions that reward upright characters and punish all deviants. In his last novel, Collins strives to invigorate rather than negate the strands of suggestive possibility that the rest of his narrative develops. Critics such as D.A. Miller, Marianna Torgovnick, Alexander Welsh, J. Hillis Miller, and Frank Kermode have noted or implied in their narratological examinations of Victorian endings that readers always come to Victorian (and other) novels with certain expectations about closure and resolution. The basic premise of Frank Kermode's oft-quoted *The Sense of an Ending* is that endings, in trying to pronounce final meaning on a text, often contradict the themes of uncertainty and possibilities that the rest of the

novel has been setting up. As the title of Kermode's work suggests, readers "hunger for ends and for crises" (55); we want the *sense* of an ending, even if it will undermine the more anarchic strands privileged elsewhere in the work. Wilkie Collins seems aware of readers' tendencies to "behave as young children do when they think of all the past as 'yesterday' [. . .] the past is brief, organized by our desire for satisfaction and simply related to our future" (Kermode 50). Alexander Welsh claims that Victorian authors succumb to the general phenomenon of intensifying "the sense of an ending in order to account for the disruption of the narrative and to satisfy contradictory desires" (Welsh 9). In *Man and Wife*, Collins weights contradictory desires and narrative disruptions above orchestrated closure.

<20> It is difficult to argue that *Man and Wife*, a Victorian novel that ends in both marriage and death, resists closure. While death and marriage are two of the age-old signifiers of an ending, the details and effects of these events at the end of Collins' novel allow for indeterminacy rather than didactic conclusiveness. *Man and Wife* ends with a marriage and death that collectively and respectively reject traditional notions of structure and morality and put rebellious suggestions of open-endedness in their stead. Marianna Torgovnick has claimed that "the doubts implicit in the weakness or parodic quality or stylization of many Victorian endings somehow got and get overlooked in the model of open and closed endings [...] the not-so-sunny thoughts that preceded were often veiled in the endings Victorian novelists typically wrote" (Torgovnick 5). These not-so-sunny thoughts are brought forth throughout *Man and Wife* as both the narrator and the sage advisor Sir Patrick Lundie sympathize with the fallen woman and blame her seducer. Even at the end of the novel, it seems as though the fallen woman will fall hopelessly to a miserable fate while the bourgeois conformists will get the marriage and fortune that they have coming to them. Instead, after enduring censure and shame, Geoffrey dies a fallen man literally (by falling to the ground) and figuratively (weakened by his moral decay).

<21> Collins alternates between prioritizing the respective themes of indeterminacy and fatality, both of which he develops throughout the narrative. The theme of gambling becomes progressively pronounced, as Geoffrey's footrace gets everyone betting. Mr. Speedwell, the knowledgeable surgeon, paints the mighty Geoffrey as a weakened androgynous figure, when the athlete faints while training. Speedwell proclaims, "He will probably live, but he will never recover... he is big enough and muscular enough to sit as a model for Sampson—and only last week, I saw him swoon away like a young girl, in his mother's arms" (219). The surgeon's words are met with outrage by Delamayn, who privileges his brute masculinity as a defining feature. Geoffrey is a gambling man, and he is described early on as being barbaric and unintelligent, though honourable, in part, because "nobody had ever known him to be backward in settling a bet" (61). The gambling athlete wants to restore his bodily vitality with his betting book, and so tells Speedwell,

'I lay you an even hundred, I'm in fit condition to row in the university match next spring.'

'I don't bet, Mr. Delamayn.'... Geoffrey turned defiantly, book in hand, to his college friends about him. The British blood was up; and the British resolution to bet, which successfully defies common decency and common law, from one end of the country to the other, was not to be trifled with.' (221)

Speedwell does, in fact, bet—he and Geoffrey’s trainer Perry both realize that Geoffrey might not live to complete the footrace. They are “the only two men who had ‘hedged’ their bets by privately backing his opponent” (498). Gambling is the common link for all Englishmen in *Man and Wife*, and the prominence of this pastime draws the reader’s attention to the national faith in indeterminacy and uncertainty. When Geoffrey’s body fails him in the race, he is left semi-conscious, yet still insists on paying his gambling debts to Arnold Brinkworth: “The awful moment when his life was trembling in the balance found him true to the last living faith left among the men of his tribe and time—the faith of the betting book” (499). Geoffrey is willing to give Arnold his due in betting, but will cheat him blind in his love life. For Geoffrey, an absolute faith in indeterminacy frees him from adhering to any other moral codes.

<22> The narrative does not share the scoundrel’s values. Collins sets up a chain of fatality throughout the novel that leads us to believe that all the characters’ fates have been predetermined. Since Sir Patrick is both a lawyer and a moral voice in the novel, he would seem to sanction the idea that the law works together with a moral code to determine characters’ outcomes. When Sir Patrick determines that Anne is Geoffrey’s legal wife, he comments on the incongruity of morality and justice:

The persons here present are now about to see the moral merit of the Scotch law of marriage (as approved by England) practically in operation before their own eyes. They will judge for themselves of the morality (Scotch or English) which first forces a deserted woman back on the villain who has betrayed her, and then virtuously leaves her to bear the consequences. (523)

While the law may be imperfect, it is nonetheless a code to be respected and adhered to. The predetermined legal code is outside of the characters’ control, and it thus plays into the chain of fatality. The narrator laments of Anne, “the law sanctioned the sacrifice of her, as unanswerably as it had sanctioned the sacrifice of her mother before her. In the name of Morality, let him take her! In the interests of Virtue, let her get out of it if she can!” (526). Anne is a fallen woman, and it seems as though this novel will treat her as one by leaving her depleted of agency in the hands of a hateful husband. Even as Geoffrey plans Anne’s murder, the narrator belittles the reader’s shock as he calmly takes us through the steps of reasoning by which we might have predicted Geoffrey’s sordid plans:

Could a man, in his position in life, reason in this brutal manner? Could he act in this merciless way? Surely the thought of what he was about to do must have troubled him at this time! Pause for a moment—and look back at him in the past. Did he feel any remorse, when he was plotting the betrayal of Arnold in the garden at Windygates? [...] What he is now is the legitimate consequence of what he was then. [...] A temptation out of the common has passed his way. How does it find him prepared to meet it? It finds him, literally and exactly, what his training has left him, in the presence of any temptation small or great—a defenceless man. (578)

Geoffrey’s intimidating strength makes him morally defenceless, and so, according to the narrator, he may be simply a peg in the wheel of fortune that dominates the narrative.

Just as the novel points to a chain of predetermined events as a path which the plot might very well follow, so does *Man and Wife* seem to reinstate dichotomous notions of masculinity when Arnold marries his true love Blanche, and Geoffrey suffers a shameful and untimely death. However, the conclusions that this novel draws are anything but absolute. In his final moments, powerless to fight off even a “feeble old woman” (636), Geoffrey repeats his fall in the footrace, when “He rallied, and ran another step or two—swerved again—staggered—lifted his arm to his mouth with a hoarse cry of rage—fastened his own teeth in his flesh like a wild beast—and fell senseless to the ground” (495). Earlier in the novel, both Anne and her mother are described as having fallen senseless. So if there is a predetermined order in this novel, it is one whereby the fallen woman’s reputation is restored, while her seducer is depleted of agency and manhood. The last words of the novel describe Anne’s marriage to Sir Patrick as a union that “does honour to *him*, as well as to the lady who shares his position and name” (Collins 642). This reversal of fortune for the seemingly doomed fallen woman undermines gendered boundaries. Anne is only treated as fallen by the hateful Geoffrey. Otherwise, she is revered, and needs only await his sudden death before taking her rightful role as wife to Sir Patrick. Geoffrey, on the other hand, is ridiculed and despised by Sir Patrick, Collins’ narrator, and just about every other upright figure in the novel. Not only does Geoffrey live like a fallen character, but he also dies like one: shamed, destitute, and helpless.

<23> The fallen man in *Man and Wife* does not introduce the concept of blurred gender boundaries, nor is he the only discordant aspect of Collins’ novels. Rather, he reflects the often under-emphasized Victorian trend of breaking down the very categories that they seem to work so hard to set up. When Collins kills off his fallen man and frees his fallen woman to enjoy a life of agency, wealth, and respectability, he shows that limiting gendered distinctions, such as the fallen woman, are arbitrary, since they can easily be reversed by a stretch of the literary imagination. Collins’ Delamayn mocks the Victorian cult of athleticism, or Muscular Christianity, to which many of Collins’ contemporaries subscribed. As Donald E. Hall has noted, for Victorian intellectuals such as Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes, “‘manliness’ was synonymous with strength, both physical and moral, and the term ‘muscular Christianity’ highlights these writers’ consistent, and even insistent, use of the ideologically charged and aggressively poised male body as a point of reference in and determiner of a masculinist economy of signification and degradation” (Hall 9). Geoffrey Delamayn clearly discards this gendered Victorian category, as his muscular physique indicates neither physical nor moral strength. While Elaine Showalter has noted that the 1880’s and 1890’s “were decades of ‘sexual anarchy’, when all the laws that governed sexual identity seemed to be breaking down” (Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy* 3), I contend that anarchy is at the core of earlier Victorian texts. As a recurring figure throughout the nineteenth century, the fallen man shows that sexual instability and erotic open-endedness far predate their fin-de-siècle heyday, as they often render implausible the very notion of strictly governed sexuality. He is neither a rake, nor a gentleman, nor a muscular Christian, nor a dandy. The fallen man defies Victorian notions of gender identity because he appears to fit the mould of the fallen woman in most ways besides his gender. Collins does not represent a fallen woman suffering her miserable lot while the fallen man gets away with sexual improprieties. This plotline is replaced with Delamayn’s financial fall and untimely death, which grants the fallen woman agency, and keeps gendered categories fluid.

Endnotes

(1) Andrew Steinmetz, ESQ., Barrister-at-law, published *The Gaming Table* in 1870 in an attempt to “take cognizance of the social pursuits and practices that sap the vitality of a nation” (Steinmetz I: vii), since history often fails to do so. His strict views on gambling represent the Victorian anxieties surrounding gambling practices and consequences. (^)

(2) The nineteenth-century Scottish marriage law states that a man and woman who declare themselves married in a public place, and then spend the night in that same place, are legally married. Anne is aware of this law, and convinces Geoffrey to meet her at the Scottish inn so that they can be married, and their baby would be legitimate. Geoffrey sends the unsuspecting Arnold Brinkworth in his place, and tells him to introduce himself to the innkeeper as Anne’s husband. When bad weather keeps Arnold at the inn overnight, it seems as though he and Anne are man and wife (Collins 291). (^)

(3) According to Miller, monologism is “the working of an implied master-voice whose accents have already unified the world in a single interpretative center” (*Police* 25). (^)

(4) Sir Patrick’s sleuthing uncovers an incontrovertible Scotch marriage law, which gives precedence to a written communication establishing two people as *Man and Wife*. In an effort to convince Anne of his intention to marry her, Geoffrey sends a letter to her signed “Your Loving Husband Geoffrey Delamayn” (Collins 482). Though he sends this letter with Arnold, who announces himself as Anne’s husband, Geoffrey’s attempt to “say something spooney to quiet her” (Collins 106), renders him married to the woman whom he has disgraced. (^)

(5) In *Unstable Bodies*, Jill Matus makes the case for considering Victorian gender as “a spectrum of possibilities” (Matus 31) rather than a set of fixed categories. (^)

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