

**THE WRITING OF THE PRIMAL SCENE(S):
THE DEATH OF GOD IN THE NOVELS OF WILKIE COLLINS**

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Abstract

Combining Derridean deconstruction with Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, my thesis explores the relationship between the nineteenth-century novel and the death of God as a transcendental signified, through two of Wilkie Collins's best known works. It argues that such texts repeat and destabilize one of the founding gestures of Western metaphysics – the distinction between *mnēmē* and *hypomnēsis* – and, indeed, are themselves put forth as a form of *hypomnēsis*. The Introduction suggests that the death of God constitutes the primal scene of the nineteenth-century novel. It explores the two primary figures involved: the labyrinth and the Ariadne figure, a substitute centre whose role is to curtail the play of language and help recall and resurrect the absent logos. It explores the relationship between the movement of this recollection and the movement of writing and, more particularly, the ways in which both are characterized by the idealizing movement of metaphor which allows *hypomnēsis* to masquerade as a form of *anamnesis*. Finally, it explores the phonologocentric similarities between the nineteenth-century detective novel and psychoanalysis. Chapter One is devoted to the relationship between realism and sensationalism. It suggests that the former is a repetition of the primal scene of philosophy as established in several Platonic dialogues. This chapter also defines and explores the ways in which sensationalism foregrounds the scene of writing which results from God's death. Chapter Two, concentrating on *The Woman in White*, explores the relationship between crime, detection and writing and accords particular attention to the ways in which the text

questions the metaphysics of presence through the failure of the father and memory.

The third and final chapter, a reading of *The Moonstone*, returns to the relationship between detective fiction and psychoanalysis as participants in Western metaphysics and follows the play of the *pharmakon* throughout Collins's text.

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Table of Contents

1.	Introduction: The Writing of the Primal Scene(s): (and) the Death of God.....	1
2.	Re(:) Turns, Repetitions, Representation: Realism <i>vs.</i> Sensationalism and the Trial of Writing.....	51
3.	“Crimes cause their own detection”: The Absent Father and the Failure of Memory in <i>The Woman in White</i>.....	117
4.	The Trail of the Trace/The Tracing of a Trail: Detective Fever and Psychoanalysis in <i>The Moonstone</i>.....	160
5.	Works Cited or Consulted.....	229

Introduction
The Writing of the Primal Scene(s): (and) the Death of God

Humankind's common desire is for a stable centre, and for the assurance of mastery – through knowing or possessing. And a book, with its ponderable shape and its beginning, middle, and end, stands to satisfy that desire.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Metaphor, therefore, is determined by philosophy as a provisional loss of meaning, an economy of the proper without irreparable damage, a certainly inevitable detour, but also a history with its sights set on, and within the horizon of, the circular reappropriation of literal, proper meaning. This is why the philosophical evaluation of metaphor always has been ambiguous: metaphor is dangerous and foreign as concerns intuition (vision or contact), concept (the grasping or proper essence of the signified), and *consciousness* (proximity or self-presence); but it is in complicity with what it endangers, is necessary to it in the extent to which the de-tour is a re-turn guided by the function of resemblance (*mimēsis* or *homoiosis*), under the law of the same.

Jacques Derrida

To proclaim that the nineteenth century witnessed the death of God as a transcendental signified is merely to repeat what Nietzsche announced more than a hundred years ago: "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him" (125). As a punishment for our sin, we are, like Milton's Satan, condemned to hell, to the "land of forgetfulness" (Psalms 88:12) and, more precisely, to the "forgetfulness" of the origins and presence associated with the lost logos. From our position of fallen exteriority, we turn back or re-turn "towards the lost or impossible presence of the absent origin,...nostalgic, guilty" (Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play" 292). This situation is, according to Ned Lukacher, the "dilemma of the

modern world," where each individual is forced

to recognize that "mourning is in error" but be nevertheless condemned to mourn; to be unable to remember the transcendental ground that would once again give meaning to human language and experience but also unable to stop mourning the putative loss of an originary memory and presence that doubtless never existed. (11)

Lukacher's statement clearly alludes to Jacques Derrida's description of the state of thought during the closure of metaphysics as a kind of *demi-deuil* (half-mourning) ("*Ja, ou le faux-bond*" 98). It is wholly appropriate that this figure is based on a nineteenth-century style of veil worn in the interval between mourning and the return to normality, for as we shall see, the nineteenth century may itself be figured as a veil which both separates and joins the history of metaphysics and its closure. More specifically, one might say that the nineteenth century is the veil which both joins and separates Derrida's "two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of play" (SSP 292).¹

Confronted with the death of God and the concomitant loss of memory and/as origins, Nietzsche immediately demands, "How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, console ourselves?" (125). This query is the question posed and problematized by the nineteenth-century novel and, as we shall see, it also constitutes its non-originary origin.² Within these texts, consolation, which can now

¹ The space of our fall from a heaven of presence to a hell of "forgetfulness" is exactly the space between *signum* and *res significata* and thus, constitutes the space of interpretation itself.

² As J. Hillis Miller asserts, "Most of the Victorian novelists have a different *starting*

be more appropriately defined as the ability to live with the dead-in-life, is either a matter of remembering and recollection or forgetfulness.

The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign, and which lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile. The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology—in other words, throughout his entire history—has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play. (Derrida, SSP 292)

Yet to posit an intimate relationship between the death of God and the nineteenth-century novel is, once again, to re-iterate a well-documented connection.³ Thus it

place [from the poets]. The situation which they confront with increasing clarity in their novels may most properly be defined not as the disappearance of God, but as the death of God (*The Form of Victorian Fiction* 31 emphasis mine). While the framework I outline in the following pages obviously does not apply to every nineteenth-century novel, it does shed new light on a surprisingly large and diverse number of them—hence my use of the generic term “the nineteenth-century novel”—including those of Charles Dickens, George Eliot, George MacDonald, George Meredith, Margaret Oliphant and other writers of domestic realism, Charles Kingsley, Bram Stoker, Thomas Hardy, Conan Doyle and other detective novelists, Oscar Wilde and, obviously, Wilkie Collins as well as other sensation novelists.

³ In his psychoanalytic study of narrative, *Reading for the Plot*, Peter Brooks ascribes the prodigious literary output of the period to “an anxiety at the loss of providential plots” (6). Barry Qualls’s exploration of emblematic language in nineteenth-century literature, *The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction*, claims that mid-century novelists articulated “the psychological experience of metaphysical homelessness which they shared with their readers” (11). In the most frequently cited passage of *The Theory of the Novel*, Georg Lukács declares that the “novel is the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God” (88). In his early phenomenological work, which shares Lukács’s interest in form, Hillis Miller reaches a similar conclusion: “The form taken by Victorian fiction implies a new notion of structure, and this new structure derives from the new metaphysical situation” (*FVF* 33). In his later post-structuralist writings, Miller moves away from this essentially mimetic view of fiction and

may appear that this text is always already a re-writing, a repetition, of other texts. In part, of course, it is, and is inevitably. Yet as the writings of Derrida have taught us, every repetition implies a difference. As we shall see, this difference is itself a question of repetition.

Combining Derridean deconstruction with Freudian and post-structuralist psychoanalysis, my thesis will illuminate certain nineteenth-century philosophemes that have hitherto remained as illegible as the white ink of metaphor. It will begin, by way of establishing a framework, by suggesting that the nineteenth-century novel, as a response to the death of God, re-enacts, repeats and re-writes one of the founding gestures of Western philosophy, the distinction between *mnēmē* (living memory) and *hypomnēsis* (artificial memory) and, in fact, is itself offered as a form of *hypomnēsis*.⁴ I will then proceed to explore two of Wilkie Collins's best known and most sophisticated texts, *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*, in order to trace the ways in which one particular author both conforms to *and* destabilises the gestures of the nineteenth-century novel as suggested by my introductory framework. As we shall see, this procedure will allow me both to confirm and complicate the ideas

complicates his earlier thesis by claiming that in every important Victorian writer, "some version of Christian-Platonic metaphysics is co-present with its undermining deconstruction" ("Theology and Logology in Victorian Literature" 281).

⁴ As Derrida suggests, "The opposition between *mnēmē* and *hypomnēsis* would thus preside over the meaning of writing. This opposition will appear to us to form a system with all the great structural oppositions of Platonism. What is played out at the boundary line between these two concepts is consequently something like the major decision of philosophy, the one through which it institutes itself, maintains

presented.

In the course of his discussion of the *pharmakon*, Derrida suggests:

What Plato is attacking in sophistic, therefore, is not simply recourse to memory but, within such recourse, the substitution of the mnemonic device for live memory, of the prosthesis for the organ; the perversion that consists of replacing a limb by a thing, here, substituting the passive, mechanical "by-heart" for the active reanimation of knowledge, for its reproduction in the present. (D 108)

The nineteenth-century novel is, precisely, a "mnemonic device", "prosthesis", "perversion". The role of God, as a transcendental signified, is to "place a reassuring end to the reference from sign to sign" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 49). His death opens the scene or space of writing, the ceaseless play of signifiers which entails both difference and deferral and, thus, simultaneously signals the death of *mnēmē* as *alētheia*: an unveiling that (re-)produces presence. What survives God is "the exigent, powerful, systematic, and irrepressible desire for such a signified" (Derrida, OG 49). This desire demands that the nineteenth-century novel functions as a form of *hypomnēsis*: a supplement or substitute designed as an aid to recall and (re-)memorialize the self-presence and *mnēmē* guaranteed by the lost logos. Assuming the role of both Frankenstein and his monstrous creation, the nineteenth-century novel reanimates dead matter, substitutes life for death, precisely by offering the mechanical in place of the living. Or, to re-figure this argument within the framework of figurality itself, one might say that the nineteenth-century novel is both *prosopopeia*, "the fiction of the voice-from-beyond-the grave" (de Man 77) and

itself, and contains its adverse deeps" (*Dissemination* 111).

performative apostrophe, "a trope of address to the absent, the inanimate, or the dead, that is, the days that are no more" (Miller, "Temporal Topographies" 147).

Yet the imperative of Western metaphysics demands that these texts deny, erase, or forget their status as *hypomnēsis* and present themselves as *anamnesis*. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* offers three definitions of *anamnesis*: 1 recollection (esp. of a supposed previous existence). 2 a patient's account of his or her medical history. 3 Eccl. the part of the anaphora recalling the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ" (39). Recollection, in turn, "is quite literally the repetition or presencing of the logos. Knowledge and recollection are thus bound to the identity of the subject in its inwardness, and in its ability to bring the logos to presence within itself" (Lukacher 46). Each of these definitions is relevant. According to David Farrell Krell, the history of metaphysics conceives of recollection as "in principle capable of restoring to full presence what is now absent" (165). Firmly located within this history, as well as its closure, the nineteenth-century novel is an attempt to recall and, indeed, resurrect the dead God.⁵ That this is, in fact, the case will be evinced through an exploration of the second definition, which highlights the complex relationship between a patient and his or her narrative, especially within psychoanalysis. As we shall see, the nineteenth-century novel and psychoanalysis

⁵ "Nostalgia is a recurrent feature of Victorian literature, ranging from a general assertion that things are not as they used to be in the old days, to attempts to *enter deeply into a lost world and recover its treasures*" (Chapman 4 emphasis mine). The idea of the nineteenth-century novel as a process of recovery, or uncovering, is one that we shall encounter again.

7

both use narrative as a means to control and master anxiety. Although I am fully aware of the dangers and difficulties of constructing the text as a patient, I do feel that our understanding of the nineteenth-century novel may profit by transporting such metaphors between disciplines and that the texts in question may be likened to the analysand suffering from a repetition compulsion. My text, in turn, will compulsively return to the complex and slippery relationship between *mnēmē*, *hypomnēsis*, *anamnesis*, metaphor and repetition.

Having said so much, or so little, it already becomes necessary to introduce a number of qualifications. I will defer, for the moment, the question of the relationship between psychoanalysis and literature, and concentrate on the other factors in this equation. First, I wish to distinguish myself from a number of recent theologians who have asserted a necessary and explicit connection between the death of God and deconstruction. Such writers assert that deconstruction "is the hermeneutics of the death of God, [and] the death of God is the (a)theology of deconstruction" (Taylor 70), or that deconstruction "is in the final analysis *the death of God put into writing*" (Raschke 3). Yet such claims are antithetical to deconstructive thought. As Derrida himself points out:

it would not mean a single step outside of metaphysics if nothing more than a new motif of "return to finitude," of "God's death," etc., were the result of this move. It is that conceptuality and that problematics that must be deconstructed. They also belong to the onto-theology they fight against. (OG 68)

I am not interested in exploring the supposed irreligiosity of deconstruction. Nor,

despite Lukacher's assertion that "the loss of memory of a divine origin mark[s] a crisis...at once personal and historical" (12), am I interested in documenting the irreligiosity of the individual writers of the period. The latter work has been undertaken elsewhere, and the essential mimeticism inherent in psychobiography has no place in a deconstructive endeavour.⁶

In asserting that the reading practices of Derrida are particularly well-suited for an illumination of the nineteenth-century novel, viewed as a response to the death of God, I am exploring the implications of a connection already identified by Derrida. As he suggests, "The sign and divinity have the same place and time of birth. The age of the sign is essentially theological" (OG 14). The increasingly widespread religious scepticism of the nineteenth century has certain inevitable consequences for its conception of language and the sign.⁷ These consequences are

⁶ For a discussion of religious doubt in the nineteenth century, see Lance St John Butler's *Victorian Doubt: Literary and Cultural Discourses* (1990); W. David Shaw's *Victorians and Mystery: Crises of Representation* (1990); Robert Lee Wolff's *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England* (1977); George Landow's *Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows: Biblical Typology in Victorian Literature, Art, and Thought* (1980); David Jasper's (ed.) *The Critical Spirit and the Will to Believe: Essays in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Religion* (1989); Peter K. Garrett's *The Victorian Multiplot Novel: Studies in Dialogical Form* (1980); and J. Hillis Miller's *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers* (1963).

⁷ According to Robert Lee Wolff, the Victorians "were troubled not only about what to believe and how to practice their religion, but also about whether to believe at all, and how continued belief might be possible. Doubts were fostered by the advances of science, which rendered the Bible's account of creation suspect; by the advance of scholarship, which showed that the books of the Bible must have been written down at widely different times; by ethical questions over certain Christian doctrines; by the impossibility of reconciling the concept of a wholly benevolent and

best explored, not through statements of personal conviction or doubt, but in the *écriture* of the period. As Kevin Hart reminds us, the "tradition of Derrida interpretation, which includes the tradition of Derrida translation, has almost exclusively taken *écriture* to mean simply 'writing'; its other meaning, 'scripture', has been ignored" (50). Following in the tracks of Hart, this thesis represents an attempt to redress the violence of interpretation and translation and to re-inscribe the always already irreducible polysemy of the term by exploring the relationship between scripture and writing in nineteenth-century *écriture*.

Before proceeding, it is also necessary to clarify what I mean by the death of God. Adopting the definition offered by Derrida, I use the term God to signify

the name and the element of that which makes possible an absolutely pure and absolutely self-present self-knowledge. From Descartes to Hegel and in spite of all the differences that separate the different places and moments in the structure of that epoch, God's infinite understanding is the other name for the logos as self-presence. (OG 98)

all-powerful God with the doctrine of eternal punishment for sinners. There seem at times to have been as many varieties of doubt as there were human beings in Victorian England" (2). A contemporary statement of the prevalence of religious scepticism is offered by Thomas Carlyle: "Never since the beginning of Time was there, that we hear or read of, so intensely self-conscious a Society. Our whole relations to the Universe and our fellow-man have become an Inquiry, a Doubt; nothing will go on of its own accord, and do its function quietly; but all things must be probed into, the whole working of man's world be anatomically studied" ("Characteristics" 83). It is not without significance that this "self-conscious" society is described as "artificial" (79) and is, throughout the essay, set up in opposition to the "natural society" (78). In this latter, "Religion was everywhere" and, indeed, constitutes the "life-centre of all," the source of "true health and oneness." Confirming the presence of the logos in this society, Carlyle insists that "Thought and voice of thought were...a unison" (79).

Thus God is the privileged name of the logos.⁸ But I would also argue that God is, in addition, an historically specific name for the logos.⁹ In "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", Derrida asserts:

the entire history of the concept of structure, before the rupture of which we are speaking, must be thought of as a series of substitutions of center for center, as a linked chain of determinations of the center. Successively, and in a regulated fashion, the center receives different forms or names. The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. (279)

In the nineteenth century, as in so many others, the name and form given to the centre is God.¹⁰ When God is called into question, so too are the centre and the ground. The death of God signals the death of the possibility of a pure "self-present self-knowledge." It necessitates the introduction of a substitute logos, a substitute centre. In other words, the death of God necessitates the borrowing of writing, of metaphor, of the metaphoricity of writing and the writing of metaphor, as that which both engenders and endangers a return to self-presence.

⁸ As Derrida himself suggests, "God and the logos are one" (*Glas* 77a).

⁹ The historical specificity of God's death is also recognized by Hillis Miller. "What does it mean: 'The death of God'? This phrase is not just an atheistical slogan or battle cry. It has a precise metaphysical meaning defining the experience of Western man at a certain moment in his history. The idea of the death of God unfolds in a single concept several related factors. It involves first a sense of the vanishing of any extrahuman foundation for man, nature, or society. This experience is unlike Arnold's sense of the disappearance of God. It means loss of belief in God's transcendence as well as loss of the sense of his immanence. God is now seen not only as no longer present within the depths of man and nature, but as no longer present beyond them either" (*FVF* 31).

¹⁰ As Dr. George Macdonald states in his novel *Robert Falconer* (1868), "God is the

The profound consequences of this borrowing, this substitution, are outlined by Derrida. I quote them at length as they have a bearing on all that follows.

The event which I called a rupture, the disruption I alluded to at the beginning of this paper, presumably would have come about when the structurality of structure had to begin to be thought, that is to say, repeated, and this is why I said that this disruption was repetition in every sense of this word. Henceforth, it became necessary to think both the law which somehow governed the desire for a centre in the constitution of structure, and the process of signification which orders the displacements and substitutions for this law of central presence—but a central presence which has never been itself, has always already been exiled from itself into its own substitute. The substitute does not substitute itself for anything which has somehow existed before it. Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse—provided we can agree on this word—that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely. (SSP 280)

We have (always) already witnessed the "moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse". Following the death of God, the nineteenth-century novel assumes the function of *hypomnēsis*. Yet in forgetting or erasing its status as such, in asserting itself as *anamnesis*, it replaces an external aid to memory (*hypomnēsis* or bad writing) with passive recollection (*anamnesis*, good writing, writing on the

centre of the universe" (cited in "Wilfrid Cumbermede and Poor Miss Finch" 478).

soul). Yet as Krell reminds us, "recollection or remembrance is a *being reminded*; it involves one thing *putting us in mind of another*" (13). Thus *anamnesis* always already functions like metaphor. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle states that metaphor

"consists of giving (*epiphora*) the thing a name (*onomatos*) that belongs to something else (*allogriou*), the transference being either from genus to species (*apo tou genous epi eidos*), or from species to genus (*apo tou eidous epi to genos*), or from species to species (*apo tou eidous epi eidos*), or on the grounds of analogy (*ē kata to analogon*)." (cited in Derrida, "White Mythology" 231)¹¹

The movement of *anamnesis* is, like that of metaphor, the movement of writing. If *anamnesis* is "capable of restoring to full self-presence what is now absent," of recalling and, indeed, resurrecting the dead God and the *mnēmē* and self-presence of which He is the name, it is as a scene of writing. Furthermore, the movement of *anamnesis*, like the movement of metaphor, can itself be seen as a figure for the movement of the primal scene of philosophy and, as we shall see, the nineteenth-century novel: that is, the inscription and erasure of nothing less than metaphor itself.

Above all, the movement of metaphORIZATION (origin and then erasure of the metaphor, transition from the proper sensory meaning to the proper spiritual meaning by means of the detour of figures) is nothing other than a movement of idealization. Which is included under the master category of dialectical idealism, to wit, the *relève* (*Aufhebung*), that is, the memory (*Erinnerung*) that produces signs, interiorizes them in elevating, suppressing, and conserving the sensory exterior.

¹¹ I cite Derrida's translation because, as Alan Bass points out, the "French translation of *epiphora* as 'transport' preserves a 'metaphoric' play on words that is lost in the English rendering 'giving.' Meta-*phora* and epi-*phora* have the same root, from the Greek *pherein*, to carry, to transport" (WM 231, TN 35).

(Derrida, WM 226)¹²

It is the initial inscription and subsequent erasure of this importation of/as writing, this substitution as/by metaphor, that constitutes the subject of this thesis: the ways in which, by introducing and forgetting writing and metaphor, the nineteenth-century novel simultaneously re-enacts both the founding gesture of metaphysics and its closure.

These prefatory remarks cannot come to a close without addressing the issue of exemplarity, without acknowledging the questions raised by the fact that I have chosen to explore a particular aspect of the ongoing "relation between the history of metaphysics and the destruction of the history of metaphysics" (Derrida, SSP 280), through a particular author: Wilkie Collins. Speaking of "the moment when language invaded the universal problematic," Derrida demands, "Where and how does this decentering, this thinking the structurality of structure occur?" He immediately concludes that it would be "somewhat naive to refer to an event, a doctrine, or an author in order to designate this occurrence" (SSP 280). Despite this disclaimer, anyone familiar with Derrida's writing will know that his critiques of all forms of self-presence proceed via an examination of the tensions and aporias, of the moments when writing exceeds its own boundaries, in illustrative examples (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Hegel, Freud) and couplings of examples (Lévi-Strauss and

¹² As Lukacher suggests, "The act of privileging the inner over the outer, and of privileging the presence of the logos in speech over the absence of the logos in writing, is the original metaphor. It is the result of the originary transference of the

Rousseau, Plato and Mallarmé). Following his exemplar and, indeed, re-figuring him as such, I too will proceed via examples. While certainly not arbitrary, my choice of Collins is representative and I might easily substitute this figure with others: Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, George Eliot, George Meredith, etc. Yet the fact remains that I have decided to write on Collins rather than any of these other figures. In order to make the reasons for this choice clearer, I would like to offer a passage from Derrida, a passage in which he explains and justifies his decision to write on Rousseau:

What is exorbitant in the reading of Rousseau? No doubt Rousseau, as I have already suggested, has only a very relative privilege in the history that interests us. If we merely wished to situate him within this history, the attention that we accord him would be clearly disproportionate. But that is not our intention. We wish to identify a decisive articulation of the logocentric epoch. For purposes of this identification Rousseau seems to be most revealing. (OG 162)

I too "wish to identify a decisive articulation of the logocentric epoch": the ways in which the nineteenth-century novel repeats and re-enacts the primal scene of philosophy as a response to the death of God. As we shall see, Collins participates in this "articulation" with both a certain self-awareness *and* a certain blindness. While he repeats what I shall identify as the quintessential gestures of this "articulation," he also destabilizes them precisely by refusing to efface the marks, the inscriptions, of his repetition. His texts are "exorbitant," always already characterized by an excess which exceeds the boundaries of their own logic. And

name of one thing to another thing, which is Aristotle's definition of metaphor" (49).

thus, "[f]or purposes of this identification [Collins] seems to be most revealing." I

will consider his texts as

a writing interested in itself which also enables us to read philosophemes—and consequently all the texts of our culture—as kinds of symptoms (a word which I suspect, of course, as I explain elsewhere) of something that *could not be presented* in the history of philosophy, and which, moreover, is *nowhere present*, since all of this concerns putting in question the major determination of the meaning of Being as *presence*, the determination in which Heidegger recognized the destiny of philosophy. (Derrida, *Positions* 7)

Precisely because Collins's writing "is interested in itself," that is, draws attention to its own textuality, it "enables us to read philosophemes" which might otherwise remain illegible and, more specifically, those philosophemes which govern the nineteenth-century novel as a whole.

Yet in concentrating on one particular author, this text will participate in the very system it seeks to destabilize. As the qualifications in the above passage foreground, "Regardless of whether one proceeds from the general law to the particular example of it (deductively) or the reverse (inductively), one is locked, in this system, into a logic of premise and conclusion; a logic of necessity and ultimately of evidence and truth" (Harvey, *Derrida and the Economy of Différance* 53).

This logic is the logic of the metaphysics of presence. Yet such a charge is easily answered. As Derrida points out,

There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. We have no language—no syntax and no lexicon—which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a

single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest. (SSP 280-81)

A related question that cannot be dismissed so easily is the inevitable reductionism associated with exemplarity; a reductionism founded upon a metaphysical conception of presence, representation, and Truth. To use a text, or texts, to illustrate a more generalized philosopheme is to risk reducing that text to the status of a signifier of a signified which exists independently of it. To do so within a thesis which presumes a certain relationship between literature and psychoanalysis is especially dangerous.

As we shall see in Chapter Three, Derrida uses Lacan's reading of Poe to illustrate how psychoanalysis, as a whole, tends to reduce fiction to Truth and, more specifically, a Truth which exists independently of it and is, in fact, the condition of its possibility. This tendency may, in turn, be seen to illustrate, more generally, the relationship between the sign and Truth within the history of Western metaphysics.

The maintenance of the rigorous distinction – an essential and juridical distinction – between the *signans* and the *signatum*, the equation of the *signatum* and the concept, inherently leaves open the possibility of thinking a *concept signified in and of itself*, a concept simply present for thought, independent of a relationship to language, that is of a relationship to a system of signifiers.... I have proposed to call a "transcendental signified," [that] which in and of itself, in its essence, would refer to no signifier, would exceed the chain of signs, and would no longer itself function as a signifier. (Derrida, P 19-20)

In the preceding pages and those which follow, constituting this introduction, and thus that which precedes all the rest, I have already made certain statements: in

response to the death of God, the nineteenth-century novel assumes the form of *hypomnēsis*; the nineteenth-century novel forgets or erases its status as such and posits itself as *anamnesis*; the nineteenth-century novel repeats the primal scene of philosophy; etc. To make such statements within one's introductory remarks is to "announce in the future tense ('this is what you are going to read') the conceptual content or significance...of what will *already* have been *written*. And thus sufficiently *read* to be gathered up in its semantic tenor and proposed in advance" (Derrida, *D* 7). As Derrida points out, "This is an essential and ludicrous operation...because, in pointing out a single thematic nucleus or a single guiding thesis, it would cancel out the textual displacement that is at work 'here'" (*D* 7). Such is the double bind inherent in every *book* of Derridean readings and especially, every thesis, which is, by definition, "a proposition to be maintained or proved" (*COD* 1268).

As we have already seen, it is impossible to escape the metaphysics of presence. All one can do is to acknowledge one's inevitable complicity and, like the *bricoleur*, adopt the tools of metaphysics to effect its destabilization. However, I do wish to emphasize that, despite the structural paradoxes of an academic dissertation on Derrida, the "single thematic nucleus" of this text can in no way exist independently of language, of the text(s in question), of their very textuality. A "single guiding thesis" will indeed govern my argument but not, as a transcendental signified, from without. I am not using the texts of Collins to exemplify a general Truth which exists independently of them but to which they inevitably refer. The

thesis of my thesis is (inextricably tied to) textuality. Thus, it may be likened, not to a transcendental signified, but to Derrida's notion of *différance*: a non-originary origin that determines the system from within and cannot exist without it. Like most prefaces and introductions, this one was written after the body of the text and may be said to double for my conclusion. Yet once again we have, after an illusory escape, slipped back into the language of metaphysics, thus reminding ourselves that we can never speak or write another language. If one is to destabilize this system, it must be through the text itself.

The Step from Psychoanalysis and Literature to Psychoanalysis/Literature

I have already suggested some of the dangers inherent in the relationship between psychoanalysis and literature. To apply the writings of Freud and his descendants as a transhistorical and, indeed, transcendental master code, to a literary text is to re-write that text as the mere signifier of a truth (Truth itself) which exists independently of it. It is to assume the stance of the analyst, mastering the text and thereby asserting one's own mastery (Mastery itself) by reducing the text to the status of the analysand or symptom; a patient to be cured, whose return to health confirms the healthy status of the psychoanalytic discipline as a whole. As we shall see in Chapter Three, this reduction usually entails the reduction of textuality, the elimination of the scene of writing. In a firm belief in its ultimate power, psychoanalysis thus fails to recognize the very textuality which ensures that any text (always) already eludes absolute control and absolute interpretation. As Shoshana

Felman points out, psychoanalysis "can thus but blind itself: blind itself in order to deny its own castration, in order not to see, and not to read, literature's subversion of the very possibility of psychoanalytic mastery" (*Writing and Madness* 239).

Although I will, in part, offer a psychoanalytic interpretation of the nineteenth-century novel, I hope to avoid the blindness of such readings, precisely by reading itself; by reading the text(uality) of psychoanalysis which, like an unruly unconscious, always escapes its own control. I will travel across the boundaries between disciplines (not a wholly inappropriate gesture in a text concerned with the movement of metaphor), not simply to challenge or reverse the traditional hierarchy between psychoanalysis and literature, but to reveal the two as parallel discourses.

The relationship between psychoanalysis and the nineteenth-century novel, especially the nineteenth-century detective novel, has already received a good deal of attention.¹³ The findings of such investigations are summed up neatly by Albert D. Hutter:

[L]ike a psychoanalysis, the detective story reorders our perception of the past through language. Although psychoanalysis and detective fiction are so different in conscious design and intent, they share a significant structural relationship, just as they share a close historical relationship. (191)

As is already suggested by the very syntax of Hutter's statement, these critics posit

¹³ Here and elsewhere throughout the thesis, I use the term detective fiction to refer to classic detective fiction, which upholds "the conventional [and phonologocentric] premise...of a basic congruence between language, thinking, and reality that is only temporarily obscured by the criminal" (Huhn 461).

psychoanalysis as the answer to the riddle posed by detective fiction. They explain the genre and, indeed, explain it away, in psychoanalytical terms. In accounting for the structural similarities between psychoanalysis and the detective novel and their historical contingency, in terms of "a popular demand for a sadistic return to the primal scene" (Pederson-Krag 16), "a new concern with psychological urges towards aggression and sexuality" (Cawelti 102), etc., psychoanalysis appropriates detective fiction in exactly the same way as *anamnesis* appropriates writing in the movement of metaphor.

In such readings, the psychoanalytic critics tend to ignore the text(uality) of both their own writing and that under consideration: the dance of signifiers which not only sidesteps their control but also reveals (*pace* Hutter) that psychoanalysis and detective fiction are *not* "so different in conscious design and intent." According to John G. Cawelti, the detective novel may be explained "at least in part by the decline of traditional moral and spiritual authorities" (104). Speaking more broadly, so too may the nineteenth-century novel and psychoanalysis. Anticipating things to come, one may say that the death of God as a transcendental signified, the loss of origins, is the primal scene of each. Furthermore, each responds to this death in a strikingly similar way. In the words of Geoffrey Hartman, each functions as "a displaced religious or metaphysical discourse in search of the logos" (*Saving the Text* 102).

According to Jacques Lacan, "what the psychoanalytic experience discovers in the unconscious is the whole structure of language" ("The agency of the letter in

the unconscious" 147)¹⁴ In the absence of a transcendental signified that "would place a reassuring end to the reference from sign to sign," language, psychical or otherwise, is nothing more than a limitless play of traces. The figure or *pharmakon* (as we shall see, the former is, precisely, the latter) which best captures the ever elusive movement of this play is the labyrinth.¹⁵ Symbolizing both chaos and order, the labyrinth is also the boundary between inside and outside and thus represents the site of "the very basis of *opposition* as such" (Derrida, *D* 103). As a response to the labyrinthine trail of traces which follows the death of God, both the detective and the psychoanalyst function as an Ariadne figure: a guide through the labyrinth and a substitute logos.

Far from following the incessant slippage, the infixable movement of the signifying chain from link to link, from signifier to signifier, [the Ariadne figure]...seeks to stop the meaning, to arrest signification, by a grasp, precisely...of the "clue", by a firm hold on the Master Signifier. (Felman, *Writing and Madness* 232)

¹⁴ Speaking of the title of this piece, Lacan states that by "'letter' I designate that material support that concrete discourse borrows from language" (147). Once again, what is at stake is writing as metaphor or metaphor as writing. For a discussion of the links between the psyche and language and, more particularly, the relationship between the mirror phase and the specular name, see Geoffrey Hartman's "Psychoanalysis: The French Connection" (1978). Also of interest is Clive Bloom's *Reading Poe Reading Freud* (1988), especially pp. 62-83.

¹⁵ According to Derrida, the *pharmakon* "would be a *substance*—with all that that word can connote in terms of matter with occult virtues, cryptic depths refusing to submit their ambivalence to analysis, already paving the way for alchemy—if we didn't have eventually to come to recognize it as an antisubstance itself: that which resists any philosopheme, indefinitely exceeding its bounds as nonidentity, nonessence, nonsubstance" (*D* 70).

According to Steven Marcus, at the end of a successful psychoanalysis, "one has come into possession of one's own story. It is a final act of self-appropriation, the appropriation by oneself of one's own history" (62). At this point, it may be helpful to recall our definition of *anamnesis*. *Anamnesis* is "1 recollection (esp. of a supposed previous existence). 2 a patient's account of his or her medical history. 3 Eccl. the part of the anaphora recalling the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ." Psychoanalysis and the nineteenth-century novel both function as a form of *anamnesis*. Through the telling of stories, the representation and repetition of certain narratives, each enables the patient/reader to recall a lost existence by resurrecting God in the form of the Ariadne figure who, in turn, is able to offer, once again, the possibility of a "self-present self-knowledge."

Psychoanalysis and the nineteenth-century novel are both firmly embedded in the history of the metaphysics of presence. The "conscious design and intent" of both is to "restor[e] to full presence what is now absent." It is, therefore, hardly surprising that both Freud and many nineteenth-century writers were, when discussing their own work, drawn to the figure of archaeology.¹⁶ As Malcolm Bowie points out, it was one of the first metaphors chosen by Freud to elaborate psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis, like archaeology, is the quest for, and the systematic study of, anterior states: for Freud *that which came before*, whether in the life of a civilisation or in the life of the mind, has a peculiar and

¹⁶ For a discussion of how this figure was used in the nineteenth century, see Steve Dillon's "The Archaeology of Victorian Fiction" (1993).

unparalleled capacity to organise our perception of *that which is....*
 Archaeology and psychoanalysis are, then, both concerned with burial
 and excavation, *with the making present of a previously lost past.* (Freud,
Proust and Lacan 18-9 third emphasis mine)

The importance of this figure and, as we shall see, figurality itself, is made explicit in *Studies on Hysteria*: "In this, the first complete analysis of a hysteria that I undertook...I arrived at a procedure *which I later elevated to a method* and deliberately employed: the procedure of clearing away, layer by layer, the pathogenic psychological material which we liked to compare with the technique of excavating a buried city" (139 emphasis mine).

Yet if the psychoanalyst may be likened to the archaeologist, so too may the other Ariadne figure of whom we are speaking. As Lawrence Frank argues:

The detective, like the geologist or paleontologist, explains a fact or an event by placing it within a chronological series; he then imaginatively transforms it into a chain of causes and effects, leading backwards in time *to some posited originating moment.* (368 emphasis mine)

The self-adopted figure of archaeology captures the phonologocentric tendencies shared by both psychoanalysis and the nineteenth-century (detective) novel: the desire to restore or recall to presence a buried (detoured rather than lost) truth or origin, a "supposed previous existence" and, in so doing, to resurrect Truth and/as Origin itself. That archaeology "as a discipline, in contrast to gentlemanly antiquarianism, had its conception in the Victorian period" and, indeed, "functions as [its] subterranean, governing metaphor" (Dillon 238; 239), is hardly surprising. The nineteenth century marks a crisis in the ongoing "relation between the history of

metaphysics and the destruction of the history of metaphysics." Moving, quite playfully, one step beyond, I would suggest that archaeology may be the figure for the tendencies and desires of the very history in which psychoanalysis and the nineteenth-century novel participate: the metaphysics of presence.

Yet if the figure of archaeology is illuminating, so too is Freud's use of figurality. According to Clive Bloom, metaphor allowed Freud to "give substance to concepts the nature of which would always leave them 'invisible', or at worst 'absent' from their symptomatic rendering" (*Reading Poe Reading Freud* 45). Using writing to make the absent present, restoring *mnēmē* though *hypomnēsis*, psychoanalysis proceeds to idealize and efface its inscriptions. Performing a sleight of hand before a blind audience, it substitutes the movement of writing for the movement of *alētheia*.¹⁷ This movement from inscription to erasure, the movement of metaphor, is characteristic of both psychoanalysis and the nineteenth-century novel.

Thus, instead of accounting for the latter in terms of the former, the texts of both should be examined for such symptoms of their participation in, and undermining of, Western metaphysics. Such an examination, viewing psychoanalysis and the nineteenth-century novel within the larger philosopheme of phonologocentrism, may help to account for certain coincidences and affinities. A particularly telling example of such affinities is the fact that Freud should share a

¹⁷ As Derrida suggests, the "movement of *alētheia* is a deployment of *mnēmē* through and through. A deployment of living memory, of memory as psychic life in its self-presentation to itself" (*D* 105).

profound interest in aphasia and, more generally, the disruption or breakdown of speech communication, with many nineteenth-century writers and, most obviously, Charles Dickens. According to Marcus, the young Freud

was also interested in the new discoveries that were taking place in the study of the anatomy of the brain and the nervous system, and in such related pathologies as aphasia and the battery of afflictions that accompanied syphilis in its advanced stages. One large connection between these pathologies and the neuroses, in particular hysteria, was that they tended to mimic each other. Hysterically distorted speech or hysterical loss of speech functions often was indistinguishable from the reduced or deformed speech functions of persons who had, from one cause or another, incurred damage of the brain. And vice versa. The blindnesses, paralyses, tics, lamenesses, spasms, pains, and phantom sensations of hysteria were all produced as well by syphilis in its tertiary phase. Indeed the nineteenth-century epidemics of venereal disease and hysteria were connected in a number of intimate ways. Not only was their symptomatology often convertible and interchangeable, but they often tended as well to occur coincidentally or in tandem, and in the same persons. The cultural and moral history of these entities still remains to be written. (7-8)

In contrast, I would argue that the "cultural and moral history of these entities," these shared preoccupations and coincidences, *has* already been written; it is the history of Western metaphysics. What remains is for this history to be *read*: to locate the "blindnesses, paralyses, tics, lamenesses, spasms, [and] pains" of its texts. Such a reading would re-write the texts of psychoanalysis and the nineteenth-century novel within the epoch of phonologocentrism. It would view the growing interest in breakdowns of speech communication as symptomatic of the more general crisis in the thematics of presence which followed the death of God. Thus Freud's interest in the related aphasic symptoms of syphilis and hysteria is simply another form of the

same anxiety that led the writer of *Bleak House* to burden Caddy Jellyby with a deaf and dumb infant and to reduce Sir Leicester Dedlock to a state where "all the *living languages*, and all the dead, are as one to him" (818 emphasis mine). It cannot be denied that such afflictions have a moral dimension; Caddy's abnormal offspring is, in fact, the natural offspring of a diseased society, so dominated by institutions that it has become devoid of personal responsibility. Yet these institutions are characterized precisely as/by Writing, its endless deferral of meaning. Read within the history of metaphysics, Sir Leicester's aphasia is understood not as a reaction to shame or worry, but rather, as a sign of the dangerous and debilitating effects of prolonged exposure to the play of signifiers. It is, precisely, just this sort of reading and re-writing that this thesis attempts.

The Death of God and the (Nor-Primary) Primal Scene

Forgetting is the essence of philosophy.

Ned Lukacher

After much deferral and several of what might, in another discourse, be termed detours, it is time to arrive at my point of departure: the same point of departure that doubles as my point of arrival or destination. Yet such specular non-movement is, perhaps, not inappropriate for a text that is (always) about to reach (beyond) Freud's *Beyond*. The death of God as a transcendental signified is the primal scene of the nineteenth-century novel. Furthermore, as a response to this death, the nineteenth-century novel re-enacts, repeats and re-writes the primal scene

of philosophy.

Freud first used the term "primal scene" (*Urszenen*), in the sense that we understand it today, that is, as "the scene where the child happens to witness sexual relations between its parents" (LaPlanche and Pontalis 335), in his *Wolf-Man – From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* (1918 [1914]). Yet even at this stage, the scene's status as originary (Origin itself) is already problematized.¹⁸ As Freud himself recognizes, the primal scene is not located in a single, definable, originating moment but, rather, in the deferred relationship of supplementarity between the posited scene and a later event that allows the absent to become present. Thus, the primal scene is located in what may be likened to the movement of metaphor.

Neither fully present nor fully absent in itself, the primal scene is also the scene of ontological uncertainty. The consequences of this uncertainty for post-structuralist thought are fully explored in Lukacher's *Primal Scenes: Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis*, and his text may be said to function as a preface to my own. Dislocating the primal scene from its traditional, sexual moorings, Lukacher defines it as

an intertextual event that displaces the notion of the event from the ground of ontology. It calls the event's relation to the Real into question in an entirely new way.... [Primal scene] describe[s] the interpretive impasse that arises when a reader has good reason to believe that the meaning of one text is historically dependent on the reading of another text or on a previously unnoticed set of criteria,

¹⁸ For a discussion of the question of origins in Freud, see Derrida's "To Speculate—on 'Freud'" (1987). For a different reading of the same material, see Lukacher, pp. 19-67.

even though there is no conclusive evidential or archival means of establishing the case beyond a reasonable doubt... The primal scene is the figure of an interpretive dilemma; it is a constellation of forgotten intertextual events offered in lieu of a demonstrable, unquestionable origin. (24-5)

Thus Lukacher's conception of the primal scene comes to bear an uncanny (specular) resemblance to the Derridean text:

a network of textual referrals to *other* texts, a textual transformation in which each allegedly "simple term" is marked by the trace of another term, the presumed interiority of meaning is already worked upon by its own exteriority. It is always already carried outside itself. It already differs (from itself) before any act of expression. (P 33)

It is in this sense, primal scene as text, primal scene as a scene of writing, that I shall adopt the term in these pages. The primal scene of the nineteenth-century novel, the death of God as a transcendental signified, is "the enabling mechanism that explains and describes, rather than determining or causing," this genre (Lukacher 27). As Lukacher suggests, it is "the figure of an interpretive dilemma." Yet the loss of foundation, ground, or centre, associated with the death of God, means that it doubles as the non-originary origin of interpretation itself.

If the primal scene may be likened to a text, it can also be seen to be characterized by a degree of textuality, that is, division. The primal scene is always already divided, always already a repetition. As I have suggested, the primal scene of philosophy is the distinction between *mnēmē* and *hypomnēsis*. The purpose of this distinction, which is nothing less than the founding gesture of Western philosophy, was "to exclude or to lower (to put outside or below), the body of the written trace as

didactic and technical metaphor, as servile matter or excrement" (Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing" 197). The scene of writing is the scene of its own exclusion. Yet this exclusion is nothing more than a case of wilful forgetfulness which has, itself, been forgotten.

Through a process of re-inscription, Derrida reminds us that

between *mnēmē* and *hypomnēsis*, between memory and its supplement, the line is more than subtle; it is hardly perceptible. On both sides of that line, it is a question of *repetition*. Live memory repeats the presence of the *eidōs*, and truth is also the possibility of repetition through recall. Truth unveils the *eidōs* or the *ontōs on*, in other words, that which can be imitated, reproduced, repeated in its identity. But in the anamnestic movement of truth, what is repeated must present itself as such, as what it is, in repetition. The true is repeated; it is what is repeated in the repetition, what is represented and present in the representation. It is not the repeater in the repetition, nor the signifier in the signification. The true is the presence of the *eidōs* signified. (D 111)

Thus the founding gesture of philosophy, its primal scene, is nothing more or less than a movement towards idealization, that is, the movement of *anamnesis*, that allows philosophy to bypass the material representation of the signifier and proceed directly to the *eidōs* signified. As I have already suggested, this idealization is inextricably tied to a discussion of metaphor and metaphor, in turn, "seems to involve the usage of philosophical language in its entirety" (Derrida, WM 209).¹⁹

¹⁹ "The primal scene is always a metaphor. What is unique is that it is a metaphor of metaphoricity. A scene is substituted for an act of disjunction between force and meaning, just as within that act meaning is substituted for force. A scene of substitution is substituted for an act of substitution. There is both a reenactment and a reduplication" (Winquist 45).

Both metaphor and philosophical language demand a move from the figural to the proper, where

the first meaning and the first displacement are then forgotten. The metaphor is no longer noticed, and it is taken for the proper meaning. A double effacement. Philosophy would be this process of metaphorization which gets carried away in and of itself. Constitutionally, philosophical culture will always have been an obliterating one. (Derrida, WM 211)

It is precisely this initial inscription and subsequent erasure of writing, of the writing of metaphor and metaphor as writing, that constitutes the primal scene of the nineteenth-century novel. The scene of repetition is itself repeated.

In order for this hypomnesic substitute to function properly, it must be rendered invisible. As Derrida states, "Visibility should not be visible. According to an old, omnipotent logic that has reigned since Plato, that which enables us to see should remain invisible: black, blinding" ("Living On" 90-1). Thus, a "double effacement" must occur. First, the always already contaminated state of *mnēmē* by *hypomnēsis* must be denied or, more precisely, forgotten. Secondly, *hypomnēsis* must itself be forgotten, idealized, in order to re-present *mnēmē* through/as *alētheia*. A veil is lowered so that an unveiling may (re-)produce presence. What results is a form of *hypomnēsis* that erases its status as such and presents itself (presents presence itself) as *anamnesis*. Through its narratives and histories, the nineteenth-century novel recollects the dead God.²⁰ However, by denying the text(uality) of

²⁰ For a discussion of the role of narrative in theology, see T.R. Wright's *Theology and Literature* (1988) in which he suggests, "Telling stories...is functionally equivalent

recollection, its status as repetition, it not only recollects the dead God but actually resurrects Him. In the same way as the successful psychoanalysis through (the movement of) metaphor makes the absent present (it is "a final act of self-appropriation by oneself of one's own history"), so too does the nineteenth-century novel (re-)create the possibility of the "absolutely self-present self-knowledge" associated with the logos. And, by so doing, it negates the very means by which it was accomplished. For as Thomas Altizer states, "God or logos is the source and ground of the exclusion or negation of all alien sources of self-presence, and is so precisely because God is total presence, a presence which negates and excludes everything which cannot become present, and which cannot become present in consciousness or history" ("History as Apocalypse" 153).²¹ What this thesis will suggest, through a reading of the text(uality) of the primal scene, is that through the initial inscription and subsequent erasure of (the) writing (of metaphor), the nineteenth-century novel resurrects both God and *mnēmē* but also, and by the very same gesture, re-enacts their death, that is, "the moment when language invaded the universal problematic."

to believing in God', since both involve finding meaning and order in experience" (87).

²¹ "Henceforth the entire teleology of meaning, which constructs the philosophical concept of metaphor, coordinates metaphor with the manifestation of truth, with the production of truth as presence without veil, with the reappropriation of a full language without syntax, or in any case without a properly *unnameable* articulation that is irreducible to the semantic *relève* or to dialectical interiorization" (Derrida, WM 270).

The Metamorphoses of Ariadne in the Victorian Labyrinth

I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me.

John 14:6²²

In order to grasp the significance and implications of this repetition and/as substitution, it is necessary to consider the specific figures involved. As I have already suggested, the death of God condemns humanity to a hell of "forgetfulness" and, more specifically, to a "forgetfulness" of divine origins and *mnēmē*. Thus, it opens the scene or space of writing: an unending chain of signification. As I have already suggested, the hell of God's absence is best figured as a labyrinth whose digressions, detours, delays, and diversions aptly re-write the play of writing.²³ The labyrinth is "the boundary between without and within; it is the entrance to the tomb, it is the cave which is the entrance to the earth, and possibly it is the body of the earth mother" (Jackson Knight 253). Thus, it is the site of the "very basis of *opposition* as such" and its passages are the passages of

²² "'The Way' is known to all religions. Always it stands for the truth and the dynamic manifestation of the truth in the holy life, the life divine.... Indeed it may be said, that the Way is not just one religious concept amongst many others, or even the central concept in any one religion, but religion and the Way are synonymous" (Schnapper 17).

²³ Indeed, as Gaetano Cipolla states, "the labyrinth and the underworld are synonymous" (27). As he later suggests, "Losing the right path [i.e. faith, God] is equivalent symbolically to entering into an exitless labyrinth" (45).

metaphor, from (death to) life (to death).²⁴ Indeed, its "unpassable paths" are the figure of the fundamental aporia (of figurality). The labyrinth is also "the perfect oxymoron which opposes the chaos of its tortuous and dark corridors to the geometric precision of its external forms" (Cipolla 120). Symbolizing both order and chaos, depending on one's perspective (transcendent or immanent, transcendental signified or *différance*), it is also a figure of the "two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of play." The appeal and advantages of this figure to the Derridean reader are obvious: the labyrinth assumes a place beside *différance*, *pharmakon*, supplement and hymen as yet another Derridean hinge or non-originary origin. Yet this recognition was anticipated more than a century ago, when the nineteenth-century novelists adopted the labyrinth as the most apposite figure through which to explore the various oppositions which both support Western metaphysics and affect its ultimate destabilization.²⁵

²⁴ "The boundary (between inside and outside, living and nonliving) separates not only speech from writing but also memory as an unveiling (re-)producing a presence from re-memoration as the mere repetition of a monument; truth as distinct from its sign, being as distinct from types. The 'outside' does not begin at the point where what we now call the psychic and the physical meet, but at the point where the *mnēmē*, instead of being present to itself in its life as a movement of truth, is supplanted by the archive, evicted by a sign of re-memoration or of commemoration" (Derrida, *D* 108-9)

²⁵ According to Richard Maxwell, labyrinths, along with crowds, panoramas and paperwork, are the four central figures of the nineteenth-century novel (one should note that the connection between the first and fourth of these figures is not fortuitous). As he suggests, "These subjects were pursued so ardently that they came to have a significance larger than the literal realities named" (*The Mysteries of Paris and London* x).

More specifically, the nineteenth-century novelists adopted the labyrinth as a figure for the emerging city. The connection between the nineteenth-century novel and urbanization is well-documented.²⁶ As Miller suggests, the former was "called into being to deal with the conditions of urbanized life" (*The Disappearance of God* 50). What I wish to draw attention to is the fact that the "specific conditions of life in the city express most concretely the new mode of existence which is coming into being for industrialized man" (Miller, *DG* 4).

The city is the literal representation of the progressive humanization of the world. And where is there room for God in the city? Though it is impossible to tell whether man has excluded God by building the great cities, or whether the cities have been built because God has disappeared, in any case the two go together. Life in the city is the way in which many men have experienced most directly what it means to live without God in the world. (Miller, *DG* 5)

It is undeniable that the growing emphasis on city life in the nineteenth-century novel is a response to the urbanization associated with the Industrial Revolution. However, I would argue, in contrast to Miller ("the city is the literal representation"), that the city is also a *figure* for the godless world.²⁷ That this is, indeed, the case, is substantiated by the fact that the figure of city becomes more and more indissociable

²⁶ See R.A. Forsyth's *The Lost Pattern: Essays on the Emergent City Sensibility in Victorian England* (1976) and Raymond Williams's *The English Novel: From Dickens to Lawrence* (1987).

²⁷ As Charles Dickens states in *Household Words*, "the Railway Terminus Works themselves [synonymous with the city] are a picture of our moral state" ("An Unsettled Neighbourhood" 291).

from the figure of the labyrinth.²⁸ The following passage, taken from Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*, is entirely representative of how the nineteenth-century novel conflates the figures of city and labyrinth.

You couldn't walk about in Todgers's neighbourhood, as you could in any other neighbourhood. You groped your way for an hour through lanes and bye-ways, and court-yards, and passages; and you never once emerged upon anything that might be reasonably called a street. A kind of resigned distraction came over the stranger as he trod these devious mazes, and, giving himself up for lost, went in and out and round about and quietly turned back again when he came to a dead wall or was stopped by an iron railing, and felt that the means of escape might possibly present themselves in their own good time, but that to anticipate them was hopeless. Instances were known of people who, being asked to dine at Todgers's, had travelled round and round for a weary time, with its very chimney-pots in view; and finding it, at last, impossible of attainment, had gone home again with a gentle melancholy on their spirits, tranquil and uncomplaining. Nobody had ever found Todgers's on a verbal direction, though given within a minute's walk of it. Cautious immigrants from Scotland or the North of England had been known to reach it safely, by impressing a charity-boy, town-bred, and bringing him along with them; or by clinging tenaciously to the postman; but these were rare exceptions, and only went to prove the rule that Todgers's was in a labyrinth, whereof the mystery was known but to a chosen few. (185)

As Dorothy Van Ghent points out in the article that first immortalized this passage,

²⁸ As Wendy B. Faris suggestively asserts, "The labyrinth has persisted from classical through contemporary literature as image and as structural design in urban writing, highlighting the interdependence of those two entities, the city and the text" (6).

A telling example of the connection between labyrinth and city appears in the *Strand Magazine* in 1908. A game entitled "The labyrinth of London" comprised a map of the city and the following instructions: "The traveller is supposed to enter by the Waterloo Road, and his object is to reach St Paul's Cathedral without passing any of the barriers which are placed across those streets supposed to be under repair" (cited in Bord 155).

"Todgers's is, in a sense, all of London, as London is the whole world" (35). Walking through such streets is simply a figure for the metaphysical state of humanity after the death of God, where each individual is trapped within a labyrinthine chain of signifiers.

One should note that the use of this figure is not unique to the nineteenth century.²⁹ Since the medieval period, the labyrinth has been evoked as a figure for the Christian's experience of the world after the Fall. Yet such labyrinths differ from their nineteenth-century counterparts in two significant ways. Although the wandering pilgrim may feel lost, his or her footsteps are, in fact, directed towards the centre, or salvation, by divine grace, faith, Christ Himself.

"I have watched you, my son, while you were straying, but I did not wish to see you stray any longer, and have brought you to me by leading you into yourself.... Indeed you have been and are mine from all eternity, but you did not know it before. Long ago have I prepared the happiness for you to which I shall now lead you, but you did not understand it. I have led you to myself by strange paths, through byways and turns, but you knew it not, nor did you comprehend what I, the guide of all my elect, have meant thereby; for you have not perceived my work upon you." (Comenius 104-5)

With such a guide directing one's steps, the labyrinth is nothing more than a detour.

Like the Lacanian letter, such a pilgrim will "always arrive at [his or her]

²⁹ For a discussion of the nature and history of the labyrinth, see Gaetano Cipolla's *Labyrinth: Studies on an Archetype* (1987); Penelope Reed Doob's *The Idea of the Labyrinth from Classical Antiquity through the Middle Ages* (1990); S.H. Hooke's *The Labyrinth: Further Studies on the Relation between Myth and Ritual in the Ancient World* (1935); W.H. Matthew's *Mazes and Labyrinths: Their History and Development* (1970 [1922]); Jill Purce's *The Mystic Spiral: Journey of the Soul* (1974); and Janet Bord's *Mazes and Labyrinths of the World* (1976).

destination" ("Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" 72). Furthermore, the pre-nineteenth-century labyrinth is a structure still very much governed by a centre. Once again, I refer to Comenius's highly influential *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*, to establish the function of the centre in these labyrinths. The double veil, or hymen, that characterizes Comenius's centre is not, in itself, typical of pre-nineteenth-century labyrinths. But the illusory security it figures is absolutely representative of the role of the centre within every metaphysical structure.

Thereupon I entered the temple called Christianity, and espying in the innermost part of the choir a curtain or a screen, I went directly toward it... It was then for the first time that I realized what that corner was: namely, that it was called *praxis christianismi*, the truth of Christianity. The curtain which separated it from the rest was twofold: the outward, which could be seen from the outside, called *contemptus mundi*, the contempt of the world, was darker in color; the other, inner curtain was resplendent, and was called *amor Christi*, the love of Christ; these two curtains, I observed, separated and divided this place from the rest; but the inner was not visible from the outside. (111)

This double curtain, a figure for the separation of inside from outside, of the centre's complete independence from the structure it governs, is exactly what allows it "to orient, balance, and organize the structure...but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the *play* of the structure" (Derrida, SSP 278).³⁰ And, surely enough, Comenius's centre is the

³⁰ It is important to recognize that Comenius's curtain, although doubled, is still a curtain which both separates *and* joins. Indeed, by doubling the curtain and thereby hoping to maintain the centre's power to escape structurality, he actually foregrounds the centre's vulnerability and inadvertently draws attention to its very structurality.

foundation or ground of the very oppositions upon which Western metaphysics is based.

I passed within the enclosure and.... was filled with unspeakable joy, for I saw everything just the opposite to the conditions in the world. For in the latter I had seen blindness and darkness everywhere, here nothing but dazzling light; in the world fraud, here truth; the world had been full of disorder, here existed nothing but the most excellent order; in the world, bustle, here peace; there worry and anxiety, here joy; in the world want, here abundance; there slavery and subjection, here liberty; in the world everything toilsome and laborious, here all was easy; there the most lamentable accidents everywhere, here perfect safety. (112)

In contrast, the nineteenth-century labyrinth, as a figure of the state of the world following God's death, is a radically different entity. If the steps of the pre-nineteenth-century pilgrim are directed by God, thus reducing the labyrinth to a mere detour, the "absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely" (Derrida, SSP 280). Furthermore, following the death of God, the nineteenth-century pilgrim wanders in a labyrinth without a centre, a labyrinth whose Minotaur is, precisely, absence. Lacking a centre "which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions" (Derrida, SSP 289), the movement of the nineteenth-century labyrinth is the movement of play, of supplementarity. It is both the space and the scene of writing.³¹

³¹ At this point it may be of interest to consider the following passage from *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*, co-written by Dickens and Collins. In so doing, the reader should bear in mind two points. First, that the convoluted structure of the woven mat is precisely labyrinthine and secondly, that "text" derives from *texere*, to weave. "In one gallery...there was a poor little dark-chinned, meagre man, with a

As I have already suggested, the nineteenth century is precariously (im)balanced between the "two interpretations of interpretation": "The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play.... [while the] other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play" (Derrida, SSP 292).³² This first impulse, the driving force of Western metaphysics, demands that the nineteenth-century novelists attempt to curtail the chain of signification that is the labyrinth by introducing an Ariadne figure who functions as a substitute or supplement to the absent logos.³³ Hence, we have another in the "series of

perplexed brown and pensive face, stooping low over the matting on the floor, and picking out with his thumb and forefinger the course of its fibres.... I stopped to look at him, and it came into my mind, that probably the course of those fibres as they plaited in and out, over and under, was the only course of thing in the whole wide world that it was left to him to understand—that his darkening intellect had narrowed down to the small cleft of light which showed him, 'This piece was twisted this way, went in here, passed under, came out there, was carried on away here to the right where I now put my finger on it, and in this progress of events, the thing was made and came to be here.' Then, I wondered whether he looked into the matting next, to see if it could show him anything of the process through which *he* came to be there, so strangely poring over it. Then, I thought how all of us, GOD help us! in our different ways are poring over our bits of matting, blindly enough, and what confusions and mysteries we make in the pattern" (403). In this passage, the confusion of the Godless world is represented in the figure of the mat and, more precisely, the mat as text.

³² As Walter Kaufman suggests, "Man often craves religious certainty *in direct proportion* to his profound and tormenting doubts" (26 emphasis mine).

³³ The relationship between the Ariadne figure and the logos for whom it stands in the place of as substitute, is exactly that of Thoth, the god of writing, and his father Ra, the sun god of presence. "As a substitute capable of doubling for the king, the father, the sun, and the word, distinguished from these only by dint of representing, repeating, and masquerading, Thoth was naturally also capable of totally supplanting them and appropriating all their attributes. He is added as the

substitutions of center for center."

This substitute centre assumes a variety of forms in the nineteenth-century novel. At the extradiegetic level, it appears as the omniscient narrator. In *The Form of Victorian Fiction*, Miller argues that the convention of the narrator as general consciousness of the community "is so crucial to nineteenth-century English fiction, so inclusive in its implications, that it may be called the determining principle of its form" (63). This narrator is associated, above all, "with a collective mind which pre-exists the first words of the novel and will continue when they end" (67). Thus the narrator putatively exists independently from the novel in which it appears and, more precisely, as an extralinguistic signified. Moreover, this narrator, as substitute centre, undertakes all the functions of a transcendental signified:

[The nineteenth-century] novelist...possessed an extraordinary ambition, to grasp and encompass the "whole horizon" of "what earth is" and "has to show," to allow readers to experience something like the "*absolute presence of reality*" in the pages of a book. In undertaking this project, these novelists arrogated the power of "commissioned spirits" to set their readers, along with themselves, in a position of overview, as if pinnacled high above the world they viewed. (Arac 2 emphasis mine)³⁴

essential attribute of what he is added to, and from which almost nothing distinguishes him. He differs from speech or divine light only as the revealer from the revealed. Barely" (Derrida, *D* 90). One should remember that another name for Thoth is "bull among the stars," thus calling to mind the Minotaur of the labyrinth (Derrida, *D* 92).

³⁴ One should also recall Carlyle's description of the man of letters as "the light of the world; the world's Priest;—guiding it, like a sacred Pillar of Fire, in its dark pilgrimage through the waste of Time" (*On Heroes* 135).

This desire for transcendence is epitomized by the narrator of Dickens's *Dombey and*

Son.³⁵

Oh for a good spirit who would take the house-tops off, with a more potent and benignant hand than the lame demon in the tale.... Bright and blest the morning that should rise on such a night: for men, delayed no more by stumbling-blocks of their own making, which are but specks of dust upon the path between them and eternity, would then apply themselves, like creatures of one common origin, owing one duty to the Father of one family, and tending to one common end, to make the world a better place!

Not the less bright and blest would that day be for rousing some who never have looked out upon the world of human life around them, to a knowledge of their own relation to it. (738-9)³⁶

³⁵ The idea of perspective as a substitute for the centre is explored by John Hollingshead in an article entitled "All Night on the Monument." "If a man...wishes to take a calm and dispassionate review of the paths he has been pursuing; to see how far he has wandered from the right track, or whither his *blind, unguided, walled-in steps* now lead him.... let him take up his position upon the misty mountain-tops which frequently shut in great cities, or, if nature fails him, let him labour to the summit of one of those lofty monuments—*those lighthouses of the land*—which dwellers in crowded places have always loved to raise *in the centre* of their homes" (145 emphases mine).

³⁶ While the most obvious implications of this passage are social and moral, Dickens's use of the Asmodeus figure allows for an alternative reading. According to Jacques Barzun and Wendell Hertig Taylor's *A Catalogue of Crime*, detection means "'taking the roof off,' i.e., uncovering what is hidden. In the Spanish literary tradition, the Devil occasionally offered one of his favorites the entertainment of looking into all the houses of a town by taking the roofs off. Detectives are consequently sons or disciples of the Devil" (cited in Ousby 1). In calling for "a more potent and benignant hand," Dickens and other nineteenth-century writers, rewrite the Devil as God. As this definition suggests, there is a certain similarity between the extradiegetic and diegetic forms of the Ariadne figure. The idea of detection as "uncovering" also calls to mind the figure of archaeology as used by both Freud and the nineteenth-century detective.

The desire to assume the transcendent position of the dead God is not limited to nineteenth-century novels. As Arac states, "Popular periodicals of the 1830s and 1840s, bearing titles as *Asmodeus in London*, had placed the city in overview 'at [the reader's] feet' and lifted 'away...the roofs of the houses'" (47). This same desire is also

At the diegetic level, the Ariadne figure often assumes the form of the doctor, lawyer, police officer, or, as I have already suggested, the detective.³⁷ The paradigmatic example of this figure is Dickens's Detective Bucket, "who mounts a high tower in his mind, and looks out far and wide" (*Bleak House* 824). John Carey describes this character as "perform[ing] the mythical function of the saviour, the unraveller [*the saviour as unraveller*], who finds and shows the lost adventurers the clue to the labyrinth. Bucket enters the story almost like a supernatural figure – a mythical god, arriving on earth to take a hand in mortal affairs" (185).

Mr Snagsby is dismayed to see, standing with an attentive face between himself and the lawyer, at a little distance from the table, a person with a hat and stick in his hand, who was not there when he himself came in, and has not since entered by the door or by either of the windows. There is a press in the room, but its hinges have not creaked, nor has a step been audible upon the floor. Yet this third person stands there, with his attentive face, and his hat and stick in his hands, and his hands behind him, a composed and quiet listener. He

evident in non-fictional writings of the period such as John Henry Newman's *The Idea of a University*. "First of all we must ascend; we cannot gain real knowledge on a level.... It matters not whether our field of operations be wide or limited; in every case, to command it, is to mount above it. Who has not felt the irritation of mind and impatience created by a deep, rich country, visited for the first time, with winding lanes, and high hedges, and green steepes, and tangled woods, and everything smiling indeed, but in a maze? The same feeling comes upon us in a strange city, when we have no map of the streets. Hence you hear of practised travellers, when they first come into a place, mounting some high hill or church tower, by way of reconnoitring its neighbourhood. In like manner, you must be above your knowledge, not under it, or it will oppress you; and the more you have of it, the greater will be the load" (160-1).

³⁷ As the doctor of Mary Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* suggests, "physicians and lawyers are the confessors of this prosaic nineteenth century" (374).

is a stoutly built, steady-looking, sharp-eyed man in black, of about the middle-age. Except that he looks at Mr Snagsby as if he were going to take his portrait, there is nothing remarkable about him at first sight but his ghostly manner of appearing. (*Bleak House* 361)

Despite the number of forms in which the Ariadne figure may appear, its function remains constant: to act as a substitute logos and, by curtailing the play of writing, to constitute a new centre and guide for the hapless pilgrim.³⁸

The role of the centre or guide is made clear in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Making his way through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Christian is saved by

³⁸ In the myth of the Cretan labyrinth, Daedalus has two means of escape: the thread and flight. The first of these means seems to bear a resemblance to the diegetic Ariadne figure whose thread retraces the labyrinth itself. Thus it may be likened to Derrida's concept of *différance* which governs the system from within and is inextricably tied to its text(uality). In contrast, the second means of escape, flight, is associated with the position of transcendence assumed by the extradiegetic Ariadne figure, the narrator. This latter figure is much closer to the traditional notion of a centre as transcendental signified, that which governs the system from without and escapes structurality.

Although this thesis is not a comparative study, I would argue that this distinction may enable us to identify the position of Wilkie Collins within the overall development of the nineteenth-century novel in terms of how it deals with the death of God as a transcendental signified. For instance, the labyrinths within the novels of Charles Dickens and George Eliot tend to be governed by an extradiegetic Ariadne figure or omniscient narrator, thus aligning them with "the saddened, *negative*, nostalgic, guilty, Rousseauistic side of the thinking of play." In contrast, the Ariadne figures introduced into Collins's labyrinths tend to be of the diegetic variety and their threads are both indissociable and indistinguishable from the writing of the labyrinth itself. Furthermore, many of Collins's novels are composed by multiple narrators, thus fracturing the centre (as we shall see in Chapter Three, the violence associated with this fracturing is, precisely, the violence of writing). Together, these two factors place Collins on the other side of the thinking of play, "the Nietzschean *affirmation*,...the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin" (Derrida, SSP 292). For a radically different reading of the labyrinth within Collins, than the one presented here, see Peter Thoms's *The Winding of the Labyrinth: Quest and Structure in the Major Novels of Wilkie*

virtue of the fact that he is guided by the inner light of faith: "*His candle shineth on my head, and by his light I go through darkness*" (111). As Stanley Fish makes clear in his discussion of Bunyan, this inner light is indissociable from the presence of God, God as presence, and the *mnēmē* over which He presides. "Memory is the repository of the master's rule, the source of the inner light, the pulpit that the Holy Ghost preaches in" (250).³⁹ Bearing these connections in mind, it is interesting to consider how the nineteenth century rewrites, or re-figures, the inner light of Bunyan's pilgrim:

Gas to teach me; gas to council me; gas to guide my footsteps, not over London flags, but through the crooked ways of unseen life and death, of the doings of the great Unknown, of the cries of the great Unheard. He who will bend himself to listen to, and avail himself of, the secrets of the gas, may walk through London streets, proud of being an Inspector—in the great police force of philosophy—and of carrying a perpetual bull's eye in his belt. Like his municipal brother he may perambulate the one-half world, while "Nature seems dark and wicked dreams abuse the curtain'd sleep." Not a bolt or bar, not a lock or fastening, not a houseless night-wanderer, not a homeless dog, shall escape that searching ray of light which the gas shall lend him, to see and to know. (Sala 46)

The inner light of true faith has been replaced by the artificial and external light of gas. *Mnēmē* has been re-written as *hypomnēsis*. Furthermore, this substitute guide is associated not with God as a transcendental signified, but with the substitute logos

Collins (1992).

³⁹ In Book Ten of his *Confessions*, St Augustine says to God, "Thou...has vouchsafed to dwell in my memory, since I learnt Thee.... Sure I am, that in it Thou dwellest, since I have remembered Thee, ever since I learnt Thee, and there I find Thee, when I call Thee to remembrance" (248).

or Ariadne figure, "an Inspector – in the great police force of philosophy."⁴⁰

This may be an apposite time to remind the reader that the "clue," the *sine qua non* of both police work and detection, is etymologically related to "clew," "a ball of thread or yarn, esp. with reference to the legend of Theseus and the labyrinth" (COD 210). And, quite clearly, the purpose of the Ariadne figure is to provide the clue or thread which guides the pilgrim through the labyrinth.

I don't remember my mind running once on the end of the cravat yesterday, and I am certain I never looked at it. Yet I had the strangest dream concerning it at night. I thought it was lengthened into a long clue, like the silken thread that led to Rosamond's Bower. I thought I took hold of it, and followed it a little way, and then got frightened and tried to go back, but found that I was obliged, in spite of myself, to go on. It led me through a place like the Valley of the Shadow of Death, in an old print I remember in my mother's copy of the Pilgrim's Progress. I seemed to be months and months following it, without any respite, till at last it brought me, on a sudden, face to face with an angel whose eyes were like Mary's. He said to me, "Go on, still; the truth is at the end, waiting for you to find it." (Collins, "The Diary of Anne Rodway" 148)

Yet because the Ariadne figure is introduced precisely by figurality, because the centre is re-established precisely by inscription, because *mnēmē* is created precisely by *hypomnēsis*, the nineteenth-century novel, in one and the same gesture, limits "the play of structure" and "extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely." It simultaneously resurrects God and *mnēmē* while repeating their death (through

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the relationship between the emergence of the policeman and that of photography, as part of the "elaborate network of visual technology that revolutionized the art of seeing in the nineteenth century" (135), see Ronald R. Thomas's "Making Darkness Visible: Capturing the Criminal and Observing the Law in Victorian Photography and Detective Fiction" (1995).

repetition).

That this is indeed the case is confirmed by even the briefest consideration of Ariadne's thread itself. As Hillis Miller suggests, the "image of the line...cannot be detached from the problem of repetition" (*Ariadne's Thread* 17). In order for Ariadne's thread to guide the pilgrim through the labyrinth, the figure of the thread, the line of (the) writing by which it is constituted, must repeat, or re-write, the endless chain of signification that is the labyrinth. Thus the thread, as (a) repetition, is as indistinguishable from the labyrinth as *mnēmē* is from *hypomnēsis*. They are separated only "by the invisible, almost nonexistent, thickness of that *leaf* between the signifier and the signified" (Derrida, *D* 112). The (scene of exclusion is the) scene of inclusion (is the scene of exclusion).

Speculations on a Game

Having established that the nineteenth-century novel repeats or re-enacts the primal scene of philosophy, it is now possible to move one step further and suggest that the nineteenth-century novel re-enacts this scene in a particular form, namely, that of the *fort:da* game of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Before advancing any further, it may be useful to recall the two-part structure of this game, which functions, for Freud, as a figure of the repetition compulsion.

This good little boy...had an occasional disturbing habit of taking any small objects he could get hold of and throwing them away from him into a corner, under the bed, and so on, so that hunting for his toys and picking them up was often quite a business. As he did this he gave vent to a loud, long-drawn-out "o-o-o-o", accompanied by an

expression of interest and satisfaction. His mother and the writer of the present account were agreed in thinking that this was not a mere interjection but represented the German word "*fort*" ["gone"]. I eventually realized that it was a game and that the only use he made of any of his toys was to play "gone" with them. One day I made an observation which confirmed my view. The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it. It never occurred to him to pull it along the floor behind him, for instance, and play at its being a carriage. What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very skilfully throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive "o-o-o-o". He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful "*da*" ["there"]. This, then, was the complete game—disappearance and return. (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 284)

According to Freud's speculations, this game of substitution is itself a re-enactment of the mother's departure, that is, the departure of Presence itself. Having thus established its meaning, Freud is initially troubled by his grandson's tendency (the child is nobody less) to repeat the first, unpleasant stage of the game, that of departure, with far more frequency than the second, more obviously gratifying stage of return, for this predilection appears to question the mastery and dominance of the Pleasure Principle. The implications of this questioning are profound, for as Derrida reminds us, the "mastery of the PP is none other than mastery in general" ("Coming into One's Own" 131). Happily, Freud is able to reassert the dominance of the Pleasure Principle by re-writing the repetition of the game (the repetition that is the game), as a movement from passivity to activity, that is, as the movement of mastery.

At the outset he was in a *passive* situation—he was overpowered by the experience; but, by repeating it, unpleasurable though it was, as a game, he took on an *active* part. These efforts might be put down to an

instinct for mastery that was acting independently of whether the memory was in itself pleasurable or not. (BPP 285)

Speaking of the specular movement of these games, that of the grandfather as well as the grandson, Derrida argues:

It [the game] (he) [Freud] pretends to distance the PP in order to bring it (him) back ceaselessly, in order to observe that itself it (himself he) brings itself (himself) back (for it (he) [sic] has in it(him)self the principal [sic] force of its (his) own economic return, to the house, his home, near it(him)self despite all the difference) [sic], and then to conclude: it (he) is still there, I am always there. *Da*. The PP maintains all its (his) authority, it (he) has never absented it(him)self. ("To Speculate—On 'Freud'" 302)

In so doing, Freud assumes the role of God or logos "as total presence, a presence which negates and excludes everything which cannot become present, and which cannot become present in consciousness or history." The impulse which guides Freud's speculations, which demands and guarantees the mastery of the Pleasure Principle (Mastery itself), the impulse of Western metaphysics as a whole, is also the guiding impulse of the nineteenth-century novel.⁴¹ Indeed, as I have already suggested, the nineteenth-century novel is, as much as Ernest and Freud himself, suffering from a repetition compulsion. In the same way as the child re-

⁴¹ As I have already stated, Peter Brooks attributes the enormous literary output of the nineteenth century to "an anxiety at the loss of providential plots." He continues, "the plotting of the individual or social institutional life story takes on new urgency when one no longer can look to a sacred masterplot that organizes and explains the world. The emergence of narrative plot *as a dominant mode of ordering and explanation* may belong to the large process of secularization, dating from the Renaissance and gathering force during the Enlightenment, which marks a falling-away from those revealed plots—the Chosen People, Redemption, the Second Coming—that appeared to subsume transitory human

enacts his anxiety about the loss of his mother through a process of substitution (the toys are not employed as such), and Freud re-enacts his anxiety about the dominance of the Pleasure Principle through a process of substitution (the game as repetition compulsion), so too does the nineteenth-century novel re-enact its anxiety about the death of God through a process of substitution: the novel as *hypomnēsis*. And, in the very same way that the game itself is a process of substitution, so too is the nineteenth-century novel.

The first stage of the game, the disappearance of Mother/Presence/Pleasure Principle/Mastery/God/*Mnēmē*, is re-enacted in the figure of the labyrinth, the infinite chain of signification produced by God's death. The second stage of the game is re-enacted through the introduction of the Ariadne figure and, more precisely, Ariadne's thread, which guides the pilgrim through the labyrinth. This thread is nothing more or less than a repetition of the string attached to the reel which guarantees its safe return, that is, the return of Mother/Presence/Pleasure Principle/Mastery/God/ *Mnēmē*. And in the very same way that Freud and his grandson pretend "to distance the PP in order to bring it (him) back ceaselessly," so too does the nineteenth-century novel create the labyrinth only to assert the mastery of the Ariadne figure, who differs from God "only as the revealer from the revealed" and, thus, to assert Mastery itself. What repeats itself, in Freud and, as a repetition of a repetition, the nineteenth-century novel, is the "indefatigable motion in order to

time to the timeless" (*Reading for the Plot* 6 emphasis mine).

reject, to set aside, to make disappear, to distance (*fort*), to defer everything that appears to put the PP into question" (Derrida, SF 295). Thus, the labyrinth, like metaphor itself, "is determined...as a provisional loss of meaning, an economy of the proper without irreparable damage, a certainly inevitable detour, but also a history with its sights set on, and within the horizon of, the circular reappropriation of literal, proper meaning" (Derrida, WM 270).

What we shall see in the pages that follow, in the re-tracing of (the figure [and figurality] of) the labyrinths of/as the nineteenth-century novel, is that the repetition of this "indefatigable motion," the motion of Western metaphysics as a whole, is itself characterized by the motion of repetition. And thus, for every step that the nineteenth-century novel takes towards "the lost or impossible presence of the absent origin," it simultaneously and by the very same gesture, moves a step closer to "the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin" (Derrida, SSP 292). The effects of this movement, which is best described as a double rather than a non-movement, may be heard, that is, read, in "the vibrations of cracked walls, of collapsing partitions, of trembling supports, of threatened impermeability, etc., in a word all the signs of what [Derrida has] formerly called a deconstruction" (Derrida, *The Post Card* 508). It is to that deconstruction that I now (re-)turn.

Chapter One
Re(:) Turns, Repetition, Representation: Realism vs.
Sensationalism and the Trial of Writing

re- prefix. 1. indicating return to a previous condition, restoration, withdrawal, etc.: *rebuild; renew; retrace; reunite*. 2. indicating repetition of an action: *recopy; remarry*. [from Latin] Usage. Verbs beginning with *re-* indicate repetition or restoration.

Collins English Dictionary

"It is to that deconstruction that I now (re)turn." As always, such a return entails (re)writing. In a text dominated by the logic of the preface and that particular prefix, a text dedicated to (re)tracing the ways in which the sensation novel (re)inscribes and uncovers (*recovers*) the white writing of metaphor with the black ink of the pharmakon, it is not a wholly inappropriate gesture to represent (a representation that makes no claims to re-present) the non-originary (itself a product of numerous re-writings) opening of this chapter.

"In 1883 Anthony Trollope made the following assertion:

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 generally supposed to take delight in the elucidation of character. They who hold by the other are charmed by the construction and gradual development of plot. (226-7)

This passage, from *An Autobiography*, suggests itself as a useful point of departure."

So reads the type of the beginning.

Having called into question the entire logic of the destination in a future chapter, it becomes necessary to re-write, or re-inscribe, the debate between realism and sensationalism within the space of writing and, more precisely, the space of writing as the space of the *re-*. For as we shall see, this debate does not constitute a "point of departure" but, rather, a return to and repetition of the primal scene of philosophy as represented in the Platonic dialogues. Yet this is only the first of several repetitions and resemblances that demand attention.

Just as the debate between realism and sensationalism mimes the contorted (a)logic of that odd couple (coupling, marriage, hymen), namely, he who does not write and his secretary, scribe, copyist (I am referring of course to Socrates and Plato or, according to a certain representation, Plato and Socrates, the possibility of substituting one for the other is not irrelevant here), so too does nineteenth-century realism, the codified movement of natural representation, itself represent an attempt to return to "a previous condition" and, more specifically, a return to and representation of the presence and truth associated with the epoch before the death of God. Having said this much, it is perhaps not necessary to (re)iterate the importance of recalling the debate between realism and sensationalism to the reader's mind. As Derrida suggests, the "place of interest, then, this corner between literature and truth, will form a certain angle. It will be a figure of folding back, of the angle ensured by a fold" (*D* 177). In returning to this debate by way of the prefix, I will, by angling into the corners, lay bare and destabilize, in one and the same gesture, the

join, as architectural hymen, of the monument that houses Western metaphysics and, under its law, a whole tradition of literary criticism; the join which links precisely by a cut and therefore separates or divides *mimēsis* as/from imitation, *hypomnēsis* as/from *mnēmē* and repetition as/from (re)presentation. In devoting a considerable space to both Plato's interpretation of *mimēsis* and nineteenth-century realism, some will inevitably feel that they are being subjected to an unnecessary delay, a detour of repetitions. Yet this detour is, in fact, necessary. For it will allow us to mark a turn between what I would designate as a literature based on the relationship between the word and the world, and a new literature based on the relationship between the word and the system of language. Yet before it is possible to begin, we must, in a manner not unlike the very novels to which I will allude, set the scene: a courtroom, a battle, a play and a game but, above all, a scene of writing as/and repetition.

Of Prescriptions and Pharmacies

prescription *n.* 1 the act or an instance of prescribing. 2 a a doctor's (usu. written) instruction for the composition and use of a medicine. **b** a medicine prescribed. 3 (in full **positive prescription**) uninterrupted use or possession from time immemorial or for the period fixed by law as giving a title or right. 4 a an ancient custom viewed as authoritative. **b** a claim founded on long use.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary

The Republic, Cratylus, the Sophist, Phaedrus. Each of these dialogues is, to varying degrees and in varying ways, a representation of the primal scene of philosophy. That is, each is devoted to patrolling and mastering the boundaries

between inside and outside, as "the very basis of *opposition* as such," in the name of a Master who needs no introduction, at least not to his legitimate citizens. Indeed, to require one is to reveal yourself as a foreigner (to Truth). In their war against illegitimate or, should we say, improper importation (a word chosen deliberately for its taint of commerce), the Master's servants keep a particularly vigilant eye out for the usual suspects, those trespassers who, according to his law, must be prosecuted: sophistry, rhetoric, and poetry.

Collecting them all in a single cell, the Master sends down his judgement in a familiar prescription from Book Ten of *The Republic* which records his "refusal to admit all imitative poetry [*mimēsis*]" (595). His motive is clear: the poet or *mimetes* "destroys the reasoning part [of the soul].... [and] implants an evil constitution" in its place (605). The Master's logic *appears* irrefutable. The *mimetes*, of whom the poet is only a type, "produces its work quite removed from truth, and also associates with that element in us which is *removed from insight*" (603 emphasis mine). To admit *mimēsis* would be to allow the non-living, death itself, into the realm of the living logos. Thus charged, *mimēsis* bears a specular resemblance, like that between two siblings (twins?), to writing during the reign of the logos.

[W]ithin this epoch, reading and writing, the production or interpretation of signs, the text in general as fabric of signs, allow themselves to be confined within secondariness. They are preceded by a truth, or a meaning already constituted by and within the element of the logos. Even when the thing, the "referent," is not immediately related to the logos of a creator God where it began by being the spoken/thought sense, the signified has at any rate an

immediate relationship with the logos in general (finite or infinite), and a mediated one with the signifier, that is to say with the exteriority of writing. (Derrida, OG 14-5)

This resemblance, between a certain interpretation of *mimēsis* and of writing, will grow ever more striking, until the two are wed in an incestuous marriage. Yet the trial over which Plato presides is not as simple as all that. As Derrida reminds us, "Only a blind or grossly insensitive reading could indeed have spread the rumor that Plato was *simply* condemning the writer's activity. Nothing here is of a simple piece" (D 67). Indeed, the event is fraught with contradictions. Of necessity: "No one when he speaks of false words, or false opinion, or idols, or images, or imitations, or appearances, or about the arts which are concerned with them, can avoid falling into ridiculous contradictions" (Plato, *Sophist* 370-1). Such contradictions are a killer. Literally. Rumours of parricide reverberate throughout the courtroom.

In order to (re)trace the first of such contradictions, we must return to the cell to interrogate the prisoners or, since they are, by definition, unable to speak for themselves, their representatives: the texts. Considering that what is at stake is nothing less than the relationship between literature and truth and thus, within a certain frame, Literature itself, are we not licensed to look for a loophole? And is this not exactly what Plato offers us? Having refused entrance to all *mimēsis*, Plato qualifies this blanket condemnation with a *proviso* that "such specimens of poetry as are hymns to the gods...are to be received into a city" (*Republic* 310). This is not

simply one exception among many, but *the* exception, *mimēsis*, quite literally, in the *service* of Truth. To cross over the border, to move from inside to outside, in the name and service of Truth is, it appears, an acceptable evil.

This first contradiction signals a more fundamental contradiction, a contradiction within *mimēsis* itself. Prescriptive practice has allowed this concept to be translated (a word whose etymology is not a foreigner to the logic we are addressing) simply as imitation. As we shall see, however, *mimēsis* is always already divided, doubled, folded back upon itself to form a hymen which both separates and joins itself from its other as itself. The scene of this fold and of Plato's interpretation of it is one that we shall have to return to.

In attempting to master *mimēsis*, Plato has been caught in play. Yet his prescriptions and patrols constitute something much more than a mere exercise, the play or games of children. They are undertaken in a spirit of deadly earnest precisely to prevent play (of *mimēsis* as/and writing) by upholding the boundaries of inside and outside as the basis of those oppositions most necessary to philosophy: speech *vs.* writing and *mnēmē* *vs.* *hypomnēsis*.¹ Yet even considering the stakes at

¹ "It is not enough to say that writing is conceived out of this or that series of oppositions. Plato thinks of writing, and tries to comprehend it, to dominate it, on the basis of *opposition* as such. In order for these contrary values (good/evil, true/false, essence/appearance, inside/outside, etc.) to be in opposition, each of the terms must be simply *external* to the other, which means that one of these oppositions (the opposition between inside and outside) must already be accredited as the matrix of all possible opposition" (Derrida, *D* 103).

hand, Plato is a nervous player. Irrationally so. *Mimēsis* is, by nature and essence or, more precisely, its lack thereof, external to Truth. As such, it should be purely harmless and constitute no threat to the innate purity of the inside. Why, then, all the fuss?

Could it be that Plato has underestimated the hand of his opponent who is, in reality, in possession of a trick? a trick so spectacular so as to warrant the title of the magician? And what of the magician's trick? Is it not the ability to disappear (never simply absent, it is always a case of surreptitious movement) and reappear where he is least expected or, in the case of Plato, least welcome? Once remarked, the resemblance between *mimēsis* and the magician is striking. *Mimēsis* like/as the magician, possesses the ability to move between realms, to transgress the boundaries between inside and outside and, in fact, destabilize them. As Plato admits in Book Three of *The Republic*, despite its position of fallen exteriority, "the practice of imitation, if it is begun in youth and persisted in, leaves its impress upon character and nature, on body and voice and mind" (395 emphasis mine). (The "practice" of which Plato speaks is one we shall encounter again.) It appears that this non-simple *mimēsis* can never be contained by the logic of inside vs. outside, that is, by Logic itself. If it could it would know its proper/*propre* place and would not stray from it (nor encourage others to do so). Both inside and outside (internal and external), *mimēsis* is always (more than) double. It is, (non-)simply and (non-)essentially, a

pharmakon.² Hence its danger and Plato's nervousness.

Confronted by this threat which exceeds his control and invades and infects Platonic logic, Plato refuses to admit defeat. Always already carried away by the play of the game, he calmly sips a cup of tea (the kettle is nearby), deals himself a new hand, doubles the stakes and lays on the table a prescription, a remedy, a remedy through prescription, precisely by doubling what is already doubled, cutting what is already cut. This change of tactics should not come as a surprise, least of all to the player in question. Plato is nothing if not a bluffer. The trump which he now produces, out of his own pocket, and which allows him to turn defeat into victory, is to claim that he has known all along of his opponent's duplicity (a duplicity he sees with his own) and has, in fact, been depending on it. The most serious of players, the Master of the pharmacy, now reveals himself to be a user of the very drug he is most cautious of prescribing, the *pharmakon*. This move allows Plato to cut and fold the deck (a word whose various significations, not least its slang usage as a "packet of narcotics" [COED 300], are not irrelevant) in order to separate good *mimēsis* from bad, *mimēsis* as remedy from *mimēsis* as poison. This is the move of a master, of mastery itself: "to dominate [the ambiguity of the *pharmakon*] by

² "If the *pharmakon* is 'ambivalent,' it is because it constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, etc.)" (Derrida, *D* 127).

inserting its definition into simple, clear-cut oppositions: good and evil, inside and outside, true and false, essence and appearance" (Derrida, *D* 103).

Thus we have, not arrived, but returned, to the aforementioned scene: the fold of *mimēsis* and of Plato's interpretation; a scene which doubles as the origin of metaphysics and, as it is also the scene of (the re- of) writing, its closure.³ This scene is characterized by violence (a violence to which Plato is loath to admit and will consistently attribute to his victim), for his interpretation is nothing less than a cut and, in fact, the central in(de)cision of philosophy. Having said so much, it is necessary to defer (a deferral that should not be thought of as a detour) to the texts and, more specifically, the parallel movements of (in) the *Sophist* and *Phaedrus*.

In the process of casting a net by which to capture the Sophist, whose elusiveness is already signalled by his title as magician, the Eleatic Stranger and Theaetetus find themselves tangled in yet another "ridiculous contradiction," the need to distinguish between good and bad copies.⁴ Having demonstrated at great

³ The translation of the *pharmakon* from remedy *and* poison to simple remedy entails "the transference of a nonphilosopheme into a philosopheme. With this problem of translation we will thus be dealing with nothing less than the problem of the very passage into philosophy" (Derrida, *D* 72).

⁴ The difficulties that the two speakers encounter in their discussion of the supplement or *pharmakon* (for it is nothing else), are hardly surprising. In answer to the question, "Why is the surrogate or supplement dangerous?" Derrida states: "It is not, so to speak, dangerous in itself, in that aspect of it that can present itself as a thing, as a being-present. In that case it would be reassuring. But here, the supplement is not, is not a being (*on*). It is nevertheless not a simple nonbeing (*mē on*), either. Its slidings slip it out of the simple alternative presence/absence. That is

cost (nothing less than parricide and impropriety), that non-being possesses being, they are able to distinguish between two types of image-making: likenesses or images and phantasms or simulacra. The basis on which the Eleatic Stranger maintains the distinction between these two types of image-making is ontological and, in fact, the basis of ontology itself. According to his argument, a likeness is a copy based on knowledge and, more specifically, a knowledge of Being (to know Being and the knowledge which comes from Being). It is image-making as a representation of the essence, the *eidos*, of what is being imitated. In contrast, the simulacrum, and it is within this category that the Sophist is (not) contained, is mere falsehood, characterized by ignorance (of Truth, of Being, of the Truth of Being, Being as Truth).

In speaking of images, the two speakers are devoting themselves to mere amusement, to what is, by definition, non-serious. Yet the implications of their debate are, as John Johnston suggests, profoundly serious.

Platonism as a whole depends on the triumph of the good copies over the simulacra, which, because of their demoniac character, must be repressed and prevented from "rising to the surface" and insinuating themselves into social life. Truth itself is at stake, for if copies remain true to the model, by reproducing its likeness (and thereby participating in the Idea), the simulacra have no true model. In fact, the overwhelming presence of simulacra would displace all true models or, more radically, imply their non-existence; in either case, the very possibility of truth would be destroyed. (17-8)

the danger" (D 109).

"Platonism as a whole depends on the triumph of the good copies over the simulacra." Yet surely such a dependence is unhealthy, even dangerous. To depend on *any* copy is to participate in (the repetition of) writing. Despite his various denials and claims that he did not, as it were, inhale (thereby infecting the breath, the soul), Plato's use of that dangerous supplement, the *pharmakon*, is not a mere aberration, an isolated case. Indeed, his dependence on the *pharmakon* dominates each of the aforementioned dialogues and, most of all, *Phaedrus*.

Through a method we should already recognize as suspect, namely the myth of Thoth and his King as Father (like all myths, this is a scene of patriarchy and parricide), Plato is able to dismiss writing as a tool worthy only of the Sophist. For if the latter is, like the magician, a "man of non-presence and non-truth" (Derrida, *D* 68), writing, "external signs" (Plato, *Phaedrus* 275), is a foreigner to Truth, a trick or mere amusement. As I (re)trace the intricacies of this scene in Chapter Two, I shall move on, as swiftly as Plato himself, to the goal of this most necessary of trans(di)gressions. Turning away from a family of low-birth to one of high, two families that are, nevertheless, intimately related, Plato introduces "the legitimate brother of written speech" (276). Unlike his unfortunate and rebellious sibling, good writing "is written on the soul together with understanding;...[and thus] knows how to defend itself, and can distinguish between those it should address and those in whose presence it should be silent" (276).

A pattern is beginning to emerge. All in the name of Truth. Simulacra and

bad writing are lowered, excluded as foreigners to Being as Truth. They are buried (unworthy of the very act) as the non-living, death itself. In contrast, images and good writing are "living and animate" (Plato, *P* 276) within the Truth of Being. In each case, what enables Plato to separate good from bad, remedy from poison, is a cut which reduces what is double to what is single. Simple. Yet the cut which separates is also a cut which joins. As Derrida has already suggested, good writing, writing on the soul, can only be named through its opposite, its other. That is, through the writing of metaphor and the metaphoricity of writing. Thus it appears that Plato has, once again, transgressed his own laws, his own borders. Yet this transgression is, in actuality, a mere detour which, guided by Truth, is sure of a safe return. The metaphor which names writing is, according to a logic with which we are already familiar, an idealization, the first of many, a history's worth. It "confirms the privilege of the logos and founds the 'literal' meaning then given to writing: a sign signifying a signifier itself signifying an eternal verity, eternally thought and spoken in the proximity of a present logos" (Derrida, *OG* 15). Both exceptional and definitive, it is yet another example of writing in the service of the Master.

Having (re)traced the movements of (in) the *Sophist* and *Phaedrus*, we may now (re)turn to the game where we left Plato laying down a prescription in order to separate good *mimēsis* from bad. What makes this move (im)possible is that *mimēsis* is always already double. It is, as Derrida suggests, characterized by an "'internal' duplicity" (*D* 186). It is precisely this "'internal' duplicity" that Plato seeks to sever.

Bad *mimēsis* is rejected, expelled through a prescription that has governed every interpretation (of it), Interpretation itself. For as Derrida states, "mimesis, all through the history of its interpretation, is always commanded by the process of truth":

1. either, even before it can be translated as imitation, *mimēsis* signifies the presentation of the thing itself, of nature, of the *physis* that produces itself, engenders itself, and appears (to itself) as it really is, in the presence of its image, its visible aspect, its face... *Mimēsis* is then the movement of the *physis*, a movement that is somehow natural (in the nonderivative sense of this word), through which the *physis*, having no outside, no other, must be doubled in order to make its appearance, to appear (to itself), to produce (itself), to unveil (itself); in order to emerge from the crypt where it prefers itself; in order to shine in its *alētheia*. In this sense, *mnēmē* and *mimēsis* are on a par, since *mnēmē* too is an unveiling (an un-forgetting), *alētheia*.

2. or else *mimēsis* sets up a relation of *homoiosis* or *adaequatio* between two (terms). In that case it can more readily be translated as imitation. This translation seeks to express (or rather historically produces) the thought about this relation. The two faces are separated and set face to face: the imitator and the imitated, the latter being none other than the thing or the meaning of thing itself, its manifest presence. A good imitation will be one that is true, faithful, like or likely, adequate, in conformity with the *physis* (essence or life) of what is imitated; it effaces itself of its own accord in the process of restoring freely, and hence in a living manner, the freedom of true presence.

In each case, *mimēsis* has to follow the process of truth. The presence of the present is its norm, its order, its law. It is in the name of truth, its only reference – *reference* itself – that *mimēsis* is judged, proscribed or prescribed according to a regular alternation. (D 193)

In cutting *mimēsis* in two, Plato's interpretation opens up the primal scene of philosophy, the history of metaphysics, as the possibility of "a discourse about what is, the deciding and decidable *logos* of or about the *on* (being-present)" (Derrida, D 191). Yet at the very same moment and by the very same gesture, he announces its

closure. For whether *mimēsis* is configured as a process of *alētheia* or as a process of adequation, it is, of necessity, a process of repetition, of iteration, of writing. All according to the Master's own law, the law of truth, which is, as Derrida reminds us, nothing but "the possibility of repetition through recall. Truth unveils the *eidos* or the *ontōs on*, in other words, that which can be imitated, reproduced, repeated in its identity" (D 111).

Yet if truth is dependent on "repetition through recall," it is also dependent on forgetfulness, on forgetting the very repetition which makes it possible. What engenders also endangers. Bad *mimēsis* (as well as sophistic, *hypomnēsis*, simulacra and bad writing) is so defined because "[w]hat is repeated is the repeater, the imitator, the signifier, the representative, in the absence, as it happens, of *the thing itself*" (Derrida, D 111). Good *mimēsis* (as well as dialectics, *anamnesis*, likenesses and writing on the soul) is both acceptable and exceptional because "[t]he truth is repeated; it is what is repeated in the repetition, what is represented and present in the representation. It is not the repeater in the repetition, nor the signifier in the signification. The true is the presence of the *eidos* signified" (Derrida, D 111). Thus, according to Plato's interpretation, *mimēsis* is characterized by the movement of metaphor, to which it is not unrelated, as an initial inscription and subsequent erasure of the importation of/as writing. With a wave of his wand, Plato determines the entire history of the relationship between literature and truth as a denial, negation, and idealization of the very writing which constitutes its

(im)possibility.

Thus the curtain falls on the primal scene of philosophy, a disappearing act that has yet to be surpassed. But before we may proceed to the second act of this play, the debate between realism and sensationalism, it remains to roll the credits. First and foremost, we must correct a foreseeable oversight on the part of Plato who, we will not say neglected, but rather forgot, to acknowledge the debt he owes to the *pharmakon*. It would be difficult to underestimate the part played by this character, both behind the scenes and on centre-stage as understudy to the Master himself (where he substituted him so admirably as to render it difficult to distinguish them). Indeed, we would not be amiss in claiming that were it not for the *pharmakon*, none of the above would have been possible.

The Rise of Realism

The Realism that best suits the purposes of common expression consists in declaring the absolute, permanent, and unconditional existence of an outer world.... This would exist whether perceived or not; it preceded sentient life, and for anything we may know, may outlast it.

Alexander Bain, *The Emotions and The Will*

I would like to begin this second scene, the scene of realism, by returning to the first and, more specifically, by (re)turning to a scene in *Cratylus*, that dialogue of representationalism and names (proper, conventional, and arbitrary). In so doing, I will situate the scene (the ambiguity of the reference is [ir]relevant) within its

(im)proper place: the "logic" of the re-(turn)(petition)(semblance).

In the course of the dialogue, Hermogenes accuses Socrates of being "inspired," of acting under the influence of a "superhuman" (read occult) phenomenon. Responding to this charge, Socrates replies:

Yes, Hermogenes, and I believe that I caught the inspiration from the great Euthyphro of the Prospaltian deme, who gave me a long lecture which commenced at dawn: he talked and I listened, and his wisdom and enchanting ravishment has not only filled my ears but taken possession of my soul, and to-day I shall let his superhuman power work and finish the investigation of names – that will be the way; but tomorrow, if you are so disposed, we will conjure him away, and make a purgation of him, if we can only find some priest or sophist who is skilled in purifications of this sort. (396-7)

We must first question the source of this "inspiration". Capable of seduction, through its "enchanting ravishment," of "possession," of slipping across and destabilizing the boundaries between inside and outside, the suspect bears a striking resemblance (one of the many that we have encountered) to the *pharmakon*. We should not forget that Euthyphro is nothing other than a sophist and therefore, according to a genealogy we have already traced, an intimate relation of writing. Having identified the source of inspiration, we may proceed to its movement and treatment. First (it is figured as an) aid. Socrates uses, nay depends upon, the *pharmakon* in order to reveal (his) meaning. Under its influence (he has, according to the etymology of the charge, inhaled), he strays from his proper place, the realm of the proper itself, to engage (to marry) the forbidden and illegitimate other (of the same). Yet once the *pharmakon* has fulfilled or supplemented Socrates's needs, he

refigures it as a poison and, in fact, a *pharmakos* which, like Euthyphro before it, must be purged, expelled by nothing less than itself as a counterpoison.⁵

The movement of this scene – the initial borrowing and subsequent expulsion of the *pharmakon* – is the movement of the primal scene of philosophy, a scene and movement that can also be figured as an idealization. Yet it is also the movement of nineteenth-century realism which, according to "a certain interpretation," is a movement of erasure, of forgetting and forgetfulness (in order to remember, to recall).⁶ That nineteenth-century realism should mimic the logic of Plato, should repeat and re-present his interpretation of *mimēsis* in relation to truth, is hardly surprising. Plato's interpretation is prescriptive.

[It is] the act or the speculative decision of...the whole of a history. *Inter Platonem et Mallarmatum*, between Plato and Mallarmé – whose proper names, it should be understood, are not real references but indications for the sake of convenience and initial analysis – a whole history has taken place. This history was also a history of literature if one accepts the idea that literature was born of it and died of it, the certificate of its birth as such, the declaration of its name, having coincided with its disappearance, according to a logic that the hymen will help us define. (Derrida, *D* 183)

As Lukacher points out, "Derrida does not provide even a hint of what this 'history' between Plato and Mallarmé might look like.... he tells us only that by the time of

⁵ According to Derrida, the "character of a *pharmakos* has been compared to a scapegoat. The *evil* and the *outside*, the expulsion of the evil, its exclusion out of the body... – these are the two major senses of the character and of the ritual" (*D* 130).

⁶ Throughout the thesis, I use the term realism to refer strictly to English realism.

Mallarmé, the beginning [of the end] had begun in earnest" (170). Nineteenth-century realism, as a literary practice and critical code, reached its high mark in the 1850s and 60s, the latter decade doubling as that in which Mallarmé began publishing. Located at the beginning of the beginning of the end, realism is particularly fraught, loaded. As we have already seen, the history and space in question are the history and space of the re-, and in order to represent the ways in which realism is a repetition of and return to Platonic *mimēsis*, it will be necessary to retrace certain resemblances, resemblances which are themselves inextricably related to repetition.

Any single work devoted to the study of realism will reveal the difficulties involved in attempting to use the term in a consistent or even meaningful way.⁷ It is not my intention to clarify or contribute to this confusion in any way. Any attempt to reduce this term to a state of stasis, stability, belongs to the very discourse we are calling into question. My comments, necessarily brief, will be limited to three (not unrelated) issues: the relationship between realism and truth; realism as a regulative concept; and realism as a system of exclusion.

First and foremost, nineteenth-century realism is a mimetic art. Yet having

⁷ The difficulties surrounding the use of this term are neatly summarized by Marshall Brown in "The Logic of Realism: A Hegelian Approach" (1981). For a work which combines historical and modern material, see Lilian R. Furst's collection of essays, *Realism* (1992). George Levine's *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley* (1981), one of the few modern full-length studies of English realism, is particularly useful.

said so much, so little, I have already said too much and must cut it down to size. I am speaking, at this point, of a *mimēsis* that "can more readily be translated as imitation." That is, *mimēsis* as *homoiosis*. In this sense, realism aims to (re)produce an accurate imitation or good likeness of the external world. Thus, James Fitzjames Stephen asserts that every novel should attempt to offer a "perfect representation of life" (181). More than a decade later, Stephen's position is echoed by E.S. Dallas, who claims that "the question of supreme interest in art, the question upon which our whole interest in art is, [sic] what are its relations to life" (287). Before proceeding, we must pause to consider the implications of the relation which both critics evoke. It is a relation based on the ontological possibility of "a discourse about what is, the deciding and decidable *logos* of or about the *on* (being-present)." It is also a repetition of/as a hierarchy.

First there is what is, "reality," the thing itself, in flesh and blood as the phenomenologists say; then there is, imitating these, the painting, the portrait, the zographeme, the inscription or transcription of the thing itself. Discernability, at least numerical discernability, between the imitator and the imitated is what constitutes order. And obviously, according to "logic" itself, according to a profound synonymy, what is imitated is more real, more essential, more true, etc., than what imitates. It is anterior and superior to it. (Derrida, *D* 191)

This ontological decision is the basis, or ground, the very possibility of nineteenth-century realism. It is reflected in its very vocabulary: copy, transcript, photograph, daguerreotype, mirror and portrait. And even when the relation *appears* to be called into question, say, for example, by George Eliot, who admits that "the mirror is

doubtless defective; the outlines will sometimes be disturbed, the reflections faint or confused" (*Adam Bede* 221), such questions serve only to confirm it.

It goes without saying that, according to this same decision, *mimēsis* as *homoiōsis* is, as much as its other (as itself), governed by the law of truth. And even the most cursory reading of nineteenth-century criticism will confirm that truth is the first and only criterion by which to judge the relation between literature and life.⁸ In 1859, the *Edinburgh Review* decrees that "A novel is good in proportion to its truth to nature; no matter where the scene is laid, or what the characters may be" ("*Adam Bede*" 223). According to W. Fraser Rae, "A Novel is a picture of life, and as such ought to be faithful" (203). In the *Westminster Review*, a contributor claims that "Truth calls not for praise, but demands acknowledgement. Novels claim to illustrate the instructiveness of life; but this instructiveness, however, is in direct proportion to the truth of the picture" (cited in Carroll, *George Eliot* 187). Such statements could easily proliferate beyond the boundaries of this text to constitute a book, and I will content myself with one final, definitive example. Fiction "is at the core of all truths of this world; for it is the truth of life itself" ("To Novelists – and a Novelist" 442).

⁸ The three volumes of John Charles Olmsted's *A Victorian Art of Fiction* (1979) offer a wide selection of criticism ranging from 1830 to 1900. For studies more specific to the mid-century, see David Skilton's (ed.) *The Early and Mid-Victorian Novel* (1993); Richard Stang's *The Theory of the Novel in England 1850-1870* (1959); and Kenneth Graham's *English Criticism of the Novel 1865-1900* (1965).

In order to trace the next repetition of resemblance, we must return to the good copy of the *Sophist*. As the reader will recall, this type of image is distinguished from its other (as itself), the simulacrum, by its grounding in a knowledge of Being. According to this same logic, the nineteenth-century imitator wishing to produce a good copy, a true likeness, must ground it in the direct and actual knowledge of experience. This belief is neatly captured in G.H. Lewes's *dictum*, "Let him paint what he knows" ("The Lady Novelists" 131). As he goes on to elaborate, "the author is bound to use actual experience as his material, or else to keep silent" (139). Thus Jane Austen deserves high praise: "Of all imaginative writers she is the most *real*. Never does she transcend her own actual experience, never does her pen trace a line that does not touch the experience of others. Herein we recognize the first quality of literature" (134). Lewes's stress on the importance of a grounding in knowledge is shared by George Eliot, who defines "[g]reat writers" as those "who have modestly contented themselves with putting their experience into fiction" ("Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" 450). Following the law of truth, experience, or knowledge of the essence of the imitated, is the (next most) essential property of the good copy.

Thus, we come to the last repetition of resemblance, the repetition which "effaces itself of its own accord in the process of restoring freely, and hence in a living manner, the freedom of true presence." True to the letter of Plato's logic, nineteenth-century realism is a movement of effacement, of forgetfulness, amnesia,

of precisely what makes it possible: "the repeater, the imitator, the signifier, the representative." Realism, as a movement (of idealization), is founded upon a convention of denial: a denial of nothing less than convention itself. It is *tekhnē* masquerading as *physis*, the artificial as the natural. As George Levine suggests, realism "can in these terms be defined as a self-conscious effort...to make literature appear to be describing directly not some other language *but reality itself*" (*The Realistic Imagination* 8 emphasis mine). Thus, according to the *Westminster Review*, "the highest art is that which, to superficial observers, seems to be no art at all" ("The Progress of Fiction as an Art" 360). This is confirmed by Lewes, who asserts that "the *truest* representation, effected by the *least expenditure* of means, constitutes the highest claim of art" ("The Novels of Jane Austen" 101) and, elsewhere, that the "construction must not seem mechanical, but natural, organical.... The artist must be careful in his selection, yet never suffer us to feel that there has been a selection; he must not permit us to see the strings and pulleys of his puppets.... Directly the machine creaks, our illusion vanishes" (Lewes, "A Word about *Tom Jones*" 334). Hence the *Westminster Review* deems that he "who, whilst using the highest art conceals it so thoroughly as to allow the incidents to arise out of the natural sequence of events...has reached the highest excellence of his art" ("The Progress of Fiction as an Art" 374). Thackeray is complimented for his "simplicity" (Lancaster 202) and George Eliot is recognized as a superior artist precisely because

The artificial elements of the story are...kept within bounds, the

tendency to sacrifice to their exigencies is compensated by a reference to the actual results of experience, and a closer resemblance than usual is thus established between the conceptions of fiction and the realities of the world. ("Recent Novels – Scenes of Clerical Life and White Lies" 9)

To aim for transparency, effacement, in order to allow realism to efface, in turn, the opposition between art and nature, *tekhnē* and *physis*, is to idealize writing, to exalt it, to raise it (like a father?), to rehabilitate "external signs" through a process of interiorization.⁹ Each of these moves is part and parcel of a certain "practice of imitation" that we have already encountered and will have cause to return to. Yet for now, I will abandon it as the mere prerequisite of what follows.

If nineteenth-century realism is a repetition of *mimēsis* as *homoioōsis*, it doubles (is doubled) as *mimēsis* as *alētheia*. Not content simply to offer an exactly accurate representation of truth, based on adequation, the realists aspire to an unveiling that presents presence itself. As Miller suggests:

The mimetic paradigm always involves, covertly or overtly, just those elements present in Fra Lippo Lippi's defense of realistic art: the goal (however unattainable) of an exact reproduction of the appearances of reality; an appeal to "truth" as the correspondence between things as they are and things as they are in their imitative copies; some reference to a transcendent deity or ideal spirit as the guarantee of that truth, the Truth behind all specific mimetic truths; an apparently contradictory, but actually consistent, introduction of the notion of art as revelation, *alētheia*, truth as uncovering rather than truth as adequation or as scrupulously accurate replica. *Truth as reproduction leads to truth as revelation.* ("Nature and the linguistic moment" 202

⁹ For a discussion of the relationship between *tekhnē* and *physis* in *mimēsis*, see Derrida's "Economimesis" (1981).

emphasis mine)¹⁰

Thus we are now speaking of a kind of *mimēsis* that "inevitably entails the condemnation of imitation, which is always characterized as being servile" (Derrida, "Economimesis" 9). This type of *mimēsis* aims at nothing less than vivification, not a representation of life but life itself, "living and animate."¹¹ Thus, according to Lewes, every author must ask him or herself, "Have you created a living figure?" ("Basil" 1142). Austen is commended precisely because "instead of telling us what her characters are, and what they feel, she presents the people, *and they reveal themselves*" ("The Novels of Jane Austen" 105 emphasis mine). Trollope, in turn, is complimented for his ability to "make his characters live and breathe and move before us" (cited in Smalley 126). The characters of George Eliot receive similar praise because they "are not only true portraits...they are living beings" ("A New Novelist" 567) and, according to the *Spectator*, "have a life and body of their own" ("George Eliot's Moral Anatomy" 1263). In her correspondence, Eliot herself confirms the role of *mimēsis* as *alētheia*. Having identified what Arnold called "the application of ideas to life" as the only true line of development for the English

¹⁰ Although this is a text which calls into question the relationship between original and copy, I cannot forebear pointing out that I encountered Miller's argument at a very late stage in the writing of this chapter and thus it serves as a confirmation rather than a point of origin, of my own non-originary thesis.

¹¹ It is during the nineteenth century that we encounter, for the first time, assertions that literature actually enlarges one's circle of friends and acquaintances.

novel, she goes on to specify that these ideas must become "thoroughly *incarnate*" and must be represented by "*breathing individual forms*" (Haight vol IV 300-1 emphases mine). While it is generally dangerous to conflate English and French brands of realism, both are united in Zola's decree that "*l'Écran réaliste est un simple verre à vitre, très mince, très clair, et qui a la prétention d'être si parfaitement transparent que les images le transversent et se reproduisent ensuite dans leur réalité [the realist screen is plain glass, very thin, very clear, which aspires to be so perfectly transparent that images may pass through it and remake themselves in all their reality]*" (cited in Grant, *Realism* 28 emphases mine). Thus it appears that nineteenth-century realism aspires to bring what is, by definition, dead matter, to life, to resuscitate it by endowing it with *psyche*. And it hopes to do so precisely by denying, idealizing, or simply forgetting (the repeater of the repetition of) the writing that makes its recovery possible. For the power of revival, of reanimation, is the property of Thoth: the "god of resurrection" and the "god of writing, who knows how to put an end to life, [who] can also heal the sick. And even the dead" (Derrida, *D* 93; 94).¹²

In order to proceed, it seems that we must return, once again, to *Cratylus* and, more specifically, the Cratylean dream where "an image is no longer an image when

¹² It is not without significance that the sensation novel is criticized, for reasons that are soon to be revealed, precisely for its inability to vivify. As M.W. Townsend states in his obituary article on Collins, "He just could not vivify, and he knew it; and it is this limitation which will always keep him out of the first rank of English novelists" (396).

something is added or subtracted" (432). Let us (re)call the argument to mind.

Soc. I should say...that the image, if expressing in every point the entire reality, would no longer be an image. Let us suppose the existence of two objects: one of them shall be Cratylus, and the other the image of Cratylus; and we will suppose, further, that some God makes not only a representation such as a painter would make of your outward form and colour, but also creates an inward organization like yours, having the same warmth and softness; and into this infuses motion, and soul, and mind, such as you have, and in a word copies all your qualities, and places them by you in another form; would you say that this was Cratylus and the image of Cratylus, or that there were two Cratyluses?

Crat. I should say that there were two Cratyluses. (432)

According to the logic of this dream, images and names "would be the doubles of [the original], and no one would be able to determine which were the names and which were the realities" (432). By dividing what is always already double(d), the realists hope to offer exactly this type of double: a double which is capable of substituting for the original. Yet in so doing, the realists are, like irresponsible parents, exposing their offspring to grave danger. Within the logic of the Cratylean dream, the relationship between image and reality functions in the same manner as Thoth and his King.

As a substitute capable of doubling for the king, the father, the sun, and the word, distinguished from these only by dint of representing, repeating, and masquerading, Thoth was naturally also capable of totally supplanting them and appropriating all their attributes. (Derrida, *D* 90)

Such is the threat that *mimēsis* always already poses to itself.

Let us continue our investigation into *Cratylus* a little further. According to

Benjamin Jowett, "Cratylus is of the opinion that a name is either a true name or not a name at all. He is unable to conceive of degrees of imitation; a word is either the perfect expression of a thing, or a mere inarticulate sound" (256). Bearing this description in mind, we may turn to the following statement by Lewes.

A distinction is drawn between Art and Reality, and an antithesis established between Realism and Idealism which would never have gained acceptance had not men in general lost sight of the fact that Art is a Representation of Reality – a Representation which, inasmuch as it is not the thing itself, but only represents it, must necessarily be limited by the nature of its medium, the canvas of the painter, the marble of the sculptor, the chords of the musician, and the language of the writer, each bring with them peculiar laws; but while thus limited, while thus regulated by the necessities imposed on it by each medium of expression, Art always aims at the representation of Reality, *i.e.* of Truth; and no departure from truth is permissible, except such as inevitably lies in the nature of the medium itself. ("Realism in Art" 493)

In maintaining that a representation differs from "the thing itself," Lewes appears to recognize the impossibility of the Cratylean dream. Despite this acknowledgement, however, he immediately goes on to conclude that "Realism is thus the basis of all Art, and its antithesis is not Idealism but *Falsism*" (493). Straying from the path of his own logic, he brings his argument back in line with that of Cratylus. The lure of the illusion is, it seems, too strong to be resisted.

What allows Cratylus to assert that "a name is either a true name or not a name at all," is a belief in "the simple truth...that he who knows names knows also the things which are expressed by them" (435), which Socrates interprets to mean, "as the name is, so also is the thing" (435). As the following passage from her diary

suggests, this is a belief shared by George Eliot.

The desire [to name] is a part of a tendency that is now constantly growing in me to escape from all vagueness and inaccuracy into the daylight of distinct, vivid ideas. The mere fact of naming an object tends to give definiteness to our conception of it – *we have then a sign that at once calls up in our minds the distinctive qualities which mark out for us that particular object from all others.* (Haight vol II 251 emphasis mine)

Eliot's desire to move from shadowy "vagueness" into "the daylight of distinct, vivid ideas," is reminiscent of another Platonic scene, the allegory of the cave. The movement of this scene records the prisoner's move from the realm of the sensible towards that of the intelligible, from the imitated and imitating towards the reality. It is nothing less than the movement of and into philosophy itself. This is exactly the move which the nineteenth-century realists hope to achieve through the Cratylean dream of naming: to bypass the material signifier in order to present reality itself, the *eidos* of the signified. Yet the impossibility of doing so is written into the scene itself. Without involving ourselves in the multiple intricacies of this scene and those to which it is intimately related (the scene of the sun and that of the dividing line), we may simply state that Plato, in the act of offering an allegory, acknowledges the impossibility of direct access to the ideal. He must resort to an image that resembles it, repeats it. And thus, the passage into philosophy is marked by the inscription of writing. Returning to the aforementioned passage by Eliot, we may note a similar problematic. As presented, Eliot's conception of language is based on a notion of innate plenitude rather than difference. Thus, every name (*nom*) functions as a

proper name. Indeed, Eliot, like Cratylus, cannot seem to conceive of an improper name. Yet anyone familiar with Derridean deconstruction will recognize a countermovement that destabilizes Eliot's position.

To name, to give names...such is the originary violence of language which consists in inscribing within a difference, in classifying, in suspending the vocative absolute. To think the unique *within* the system, to inscribe it there, such is the gesture of the arche-writing: arch-violence, loss of the proper, of absolute proximity, of self-presence, in truth the loss of what has never taken place, of a self-presence which has never been given but only dreamed of and always already split, repeated, incapable of appearing to itself except in its own disappearance. (Derrida, OG 112)

A "self-presence which has never been given but only dreamed of." Such is the impossible yet irresistible situation of the realists.

In order for a name to function, it must be recognizable, repeatable, iterable and must therefore always already sacrifice its status as unique, proper, propitious.¹³ Necessarily inscribed into the system, into difference (*différance*) and arbitrariness, it always already needs to be supplemented. And this is exactly the argument which Socrates puts to his young disciple Cratylus: resemblance always "has to be supplemented by the *mechanical aid* of convention" (435 emphasis mine). As much as the realists share with Cratylus the dream of a name endowed with innate

¹³ As Thomas Dutoit suggests, every naming is, according to the logic of that prefix we have already encountered, a re-naming: "the hyphen in *re-nommant* stresses the repetition of naming, of naming as originally re-naming, a repetition that in the sur-name first constitutes the name, the proper name. The surname is a repetition (and a forgetting) that conceals the sur-name, itself a repetition" (xi).

plenitude, they also appear to recognize the truth of Socrates's *dictum*. In order to present a name or image capable of substituting for the reality, realism must always already have effected a prior substitution, supplementation, of a "mechanical aid" for living truth. Yet in order for this trick to be successful, it must be performed as a sleight-of-hand, a vanishing act that makes itself disappear. I have already suggested that the conventions of realism are based on a strict policy of self-denial. So too have most modern commentators on the subject. In suggesting that "Most Victorians...dismiss fiction which acknowledges an awareness of its own conventions and practices, or allows its techniques to be seen rather than seeming to put the reader directly in touch with its 'content'" (122), David Skilton is stating what has long been accepted as a salient feature of the movement. Yet another, related, question has not received adequate attention: the effect of conventionality itself.

As Jonathan Culler, amongst others, has suggested, literature, like all writing, has been set adrift, orphaned by its parent. Thus abandoned, it is unable to function as writing *en tēi psuschēi*, that is, writing "capable of sustaining itself in living dialogue, capable most of all of properly teaching the true, as it is *already* constituted" (Derrida, *D* 154). In yet another process of substitution and supplementation, however, conventions step in to assume the role of "stepfather" and enable meaning by allowing the reader "to naturalize texts and give them a relation to the world" (*Structuralist Poetics* 132; 136). According to my reading, conventions thus conform to the process of idealization that we have already encountered. They allow the

artificial to appear natural, *tekhnē* to assume the mask of *physis*. More precisely, the process of naturalization effects a safe passage from outside to inside, reinscribing the "external signs" of literal writing onto the soul where the competent reader always already recognizes them as his or her own. Thus, adhering to a contract established long ago, we return to "the practice of imitation" in Plato, where imitation "*if it is begun in youth and persisted in, leaves its impress upon character and nature, on body and voice and mind*" (emphasis mine). This practice is nothing other than a process of naturalization, of internalization where, according to the old, conventional, adage, practice makes perfect and sufficient practice entitles one to the distinction of being (a) natural.

However aptly suited to its needs, this process is in no way unique to nineteenth-century realism. What makes it worthy of remark is the support it receives through critical hegemony. For if the process of naturalization ensures that all traces of artificiality are erased, wiped away, the critical hegemony of realism ensures that the process itself is erased, wiped away as an artificial, "mechanical aid." And thus, like the *parergon*, the critical hegemony of realism acts as a frame or support "which has as its traditional determination not that it stands out but that it disappears, buries itself, effaces itself, melts away at the moment it deploys its greatest energy" (Derrida, *Truth in Painting* 61). As René Welleck suggests, realism was "a regulative concept, a system of norms dominating a specific time" (225). So

much so that the novel and the realistic novel became synonymous terms.¹⁴ Works which did not adhere to realism's norms were construed as "curiosities of literature [to which the] word 'novel,' as applied to them, is an absurd misnomer" ("The Moonstone: A Novel" 235). I would argue that this level of hegemony was absolutely essential to realism fulfilling its role as good writing, writing on the soul. For if it was to function properly, that is, naturally, realism could not have been one practice amongst many. Thus it is, of necessity, "a theory of exclusion as well as inclusion" (Welleck 241). It constitutes, as much as the primal scene of philosophy, an attempt to patrol and master the boundaries between inside and outside. More specifically, it seeks to prevent any other practice from becoming naturalized. For should all practices appear equally natural, all would appear equally *unnatural*. The artificiality of the inside, of the natural, would be laid bare.

Having traced the various ways in which nineteenth-century realism is a return to and repetition of the primal scene of philosophy, the ways in which it mimes the contorted alogic of Plato's interpretation of *mimēsis*, there remains only one last issue to be addressed. As I have already suggested, the nineteenth-century novel, as a response to the death of God, functions as a form of *hypomnēsis*: a supplement or substitute designed as an aid to recall and (re-)memorialize the self-presence and *mnēmē* guaranteed by the lost logos. Yet in order to do so, these texts

¹⁴ As Henry James demands in "The Art of Fiction," "What is either a picture or a novel that is *not* of character? What else do we seek in it and find in it?" (34).

must deny, erase, or forget their status as *hypomnēsis* and present themselves as *anamnesis*. Nineteenth-century realism is no exception. Indeed, I would argue that it is a movement of erasure and idealization precisely in order to remember, to recall. Each of the many processes of substitution which it entails is designed to aid the master substitution: the introduction of a substitute centre. Consider the following.

[George Eliot] is the first great *godless* writer of fiction that has appeared in England; perhaps, in the sense in which we use the expression, the first that has appeared in Europe. To say this may sound a paradox or an insult; but it is neither. And this will appear presently, when we have explained the meaning which we attach to the obnoxious word *godless*.

We must remember that generally, up to the present time, human conduct was, amongst serious people, supposed to bear reference, before all things, to some power above ourselves, and of a different nature.... And this conception has so penetrated our modern civilization, that it has been implied in the entire lives and thoughts of numbers who not only never thought of affirming it, but who even posed as deniers of the belief upon which it rested.... But now amongst the vast changes that human thought has been undergoing, the sun that we once all walked by has for many eyes become extinguished; *and every energy has been bent upon supplying man with a substitute*, which shall have, if possible, an equal illuminating power.... This substitute at present is, it is true, somewhat nebulous; but the substance it is composed of is already sufficiently plain. The new object of our duty is not our Father which is in Heaven, but our brothers and our children who are on earth. (Mallock 562 third emphasis mine)

Substituting what is always already another substitution, the name and form given to the centre by nineteenth-century realism is the domestic community. And as Richard Stang suggests, "English realism in the late fifties and sixties seemed to many critics to limit itself more and more to the middle class domestic novel" (180).

Their choice of substitute is not arbitrary. As Alexander Welsh explains:

That truth should be stressed in domestic contexts and linked so persistently to love is not surprising. The English definition of truth is very ample: contrary to the usage of most European languages the English word stands for both loyalty, in a whole range of personal relations, and truth-telling, the correspondence of words or other signs to facts. The faithful correspondence of words to reality, and of persons to each other, was vividly present to the Victorians as the secure basis of...love. (167)

A similar argument is expressed by Nicholas Rance, who argues that "the cult of the domestic epic in the mid-nineteenth century is seen to reflect a nostalgia for the intimacy of orality, and the concomitant illusion of the neat correspondence of concepts to reality" (44). God, as a transcendental signified, may be dead yet the realist's substitution is so fully capable of supplementing and supplanting Him that "[t]his fact...is probably little suspected by the majority of...readers" (Mallock 564). To offer any such substitute is to participate in the central "rupture" of the history of Western metaphysics, the "moment when, in the absence of a centre or origin, everything became discourse" (Derrida, SSP 280). In spite of this participation, realism remains an essentially conservative endeavour. With all its shifting, sliding movements, it is still

Turned towards the lost or impossible presence of the absent origin,...saddened, *negative*, nostalgic, guilty.... [It] seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign, and which lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile. (Derrida, SSP 292)

The Rise of Sensationalism: Wilkie Collins and the "Discordant Mosaic"

As I have suggested, realism is dependent upon a double effacement which is, in turn, dependent upon its hegemony: critical, artistic, and cultural. Yet with the 1859 serialization of Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, "a most striking and original effort, sufficiently individual to be capable of originating a new school in fiction, ha[d] been made" (Oliphant, "Sensation Novels" 565). And thus the naturalness of realism came under threat by that most unnatural of entities, the sensation novel.¹⁵

According to Oliphant, this "new school" was an unfortunate but inevitable product of its times; a mirror turned back on recent history.

Ten years ago the world in general had come to a singular crisis in its existence. The age was lost in self-admiration. We had done so many things that nobody could have expected a century before – we were on the way to do so many more, if common report was to be trusted.... What a wonderful change in ten years!... We who once did, and made, and declared ourselves masters of all things, have relapsed into the

¹⁵ Although a certain group of authors – Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade, Mary Braddon and Mrs. Henry Wood among others – were all collected under the rubric of "sensational novelists," their aims and practices diverged widely. Within this group, it is Mary Braddon who most closely resembles Collins, especially in her *Lady Audley's Secret* (1861-2). In works such as Reade's *Hard Cash* (1863) or *Foul Play* (1869), the requirements of social criticism compete with those of sensationalism, producing a rather different sort of novel. Most divergent of all is Mrs. Henry Wood's *East Lynne* (1861). In this novel, according to Nicholas Rance, "what is sensational is not, as in the fiction of Collins and Braddon, the suggestions of gaps and contradictions in the moral code, but the purported consequences of straying from it" (4). Rance's distinction between radical and conservative sensation novels (5) is extremely useful and it should be noted that I use the term to refer to the former.

natural size of humanity before the great events which have given a new character to the age.... it is only natural that art and literature should, in an age which has turned out to be one of events, attempt a kindred depth of effect and shock of incident. (564-5)

While I agree that the sensation novel did reflect certain characteristics of the period, the diminution of the confidence of control as much as the general sense of upheaval, the situation is not as straightforward as Oliphant makes it out to be. As Jenny Bourne Taylor suggests:

"Sensation" was one of the keywords of the 1860s. It encapsulated the particular ways in which the middle-class sense of cultural crisis was experienced during that decade, and its overlapping multiple meanings were conflated in one of its most discussed manifestations, the sensation novel. In one sense this wasn't so much a coherent literary tendency or genre, more a critical term held together by the word "sensation" itself, and anxieties about what it might signify. (2)

The sensation novel does not simply reflect the state of unease that characterized the decade, it actively and knowingly contributes to it. It is, in itself, a source of anxiety, especially for the realists. But before we turn our attention to the relationship between the two, we must address another issue.

The rise of sensationalism did not signal the end of realism. The two movements co-existed. Uneasily. And thus, we must consider them as two very different responses to anxiety, an anxiety whose "origins" I would locate within the crisis of faith in the logos and the concomitant destabilization of the sign. Yet while realism is, in ways that we have already seen, affected by this crisis, it chooses largely to ignore it and indeed compensate for it. As Kenneth Graham suggests,

realism is "to a large extent stylized in order to reassure" (32). It fulfils this role by introducing a substitute logos precisely to curtail the play of substitutions and to re-stabilize the sign. In contrast, the sensation novel is an attempt, not to replace the absent logos, but to come to terms with the world of its absence. It denies the centre in any of its manifestations, throwing into question the stable relationship between signifier and signified. Thus, it opens the scene and space of writing, where meaning is found not in the mimetic one-to-one correspondence between the word and the world but in the relation of the word and the system of language. This tendency to acknowledge and, indeed, foreground the lack of centre and ensuing scene of writing, not only defines the difference between realism and sensationalism, it also allows me to assert, in opposition to Bourne Taylor, that the sensation novel does, in fact, constitute a distinct literary genre.¹⁶

Turning now to the relationship between realism and sensationalism, we must begin by considering the nature of anxiety itself. Without involving ourselves in a discussion of the unlocatable and shifting position of anxiety within psychoanalysis, we may still assert that the question of anxiety is always already inextricably tied to the boundaries between inside and outside.¹⁷ In *Inhibitions*,

¹⁶ It also accounts for the prevalence of certain terms which appear repeatedly throughout the realist's critique of sensationalism – unnatural, mechanical, and illegitimate – all the familiar faults and flaws of writing.

¹⁷ For a discussion of the difficulties in determining the place and position of anxiety within psychoanalysis, see "Beyond anxiety: the witch's letter" (152-67), in

Symptoms and Anxiety, Freud explains that anxiety is "a reaction to a situation of danger" (128). As such, it plays a key role in constituting, maintaining and supplementing the boundaries between inside and outside. For as Samuel Weber suggests, a "danger, by definition, entails a certain exteriority with respect to that which it endangers, an aspect that Freud retains in his notion of 'real' or objective danger" (*Return to Freud* 154). Yet as Weber proceeds to demonstrate, the position of the danger, like that of anxiety, is difficult to determine.

The more realistically danger is considered, however, the less it can be used to define anxiety, which, as Freud laconically remarks, is rarely the most realistic, in the sense of effective, response to an objective menace. The danger to which anxiety may be considered a response, therefore, cannot be defined purely from its realistic, external side; it must in some way be related to that which it endangers. (154-5)

Thus it seems that anxiety arises as a response to an internal deficiency and, more specifically, as Freud proceeds to suggest, the loss of the mother (as presence). Or, to translate this into Lacanian terms, what anxiety signals to the subject is its own lack.

While anxiety signals a threat (internal or otherwise), it is, in itself, "only an affective signal" (126) that in no way alters the economic situation produced by over-excitation. It thus needs to be supplemented by the defensive act of repression. And thus, as Freud suggests, anxiety "sets repression in motion" (110). As we know from *Studies on Hysteria*, repressed material which is not discharged gives rise to neurotic symptoms. The rise of anxiety, therefore, is accompanied by the introduction of

Samuel Weber's *Return to Freud* (1991).

phobias. As Freud suggests:

phobias have the character of a projection in that they replace an internal, instinctual danger by an external, perceptual one. The advantage of this is that the subject can protect himself against an external danger by fleeing from it and avoiding the perception of it, whereas it is useless to flee from dangers that arise from within. (*ISA* 126)

Through a process of supplementation and substitution, an external threat is displaced into a position of exteriority. Thus relocated, the subject may flee from the threat and obviate anxiety.¹⁸

The implications for the relationship between realism and sensationalism are quite clear. Sensationalism is a threat and source of anxiety precisely because it brings to light, uncovers (recovers) and re-inscribes what realism takes such pains to conceal: its own lack, deficiency, of a centre. Unable to cope with this internal threat, realism responds by displacing the lack, as the source of anxiety, onto an external phenomenon, sensationalism, which it can, at the very least, avoid and, at best, eliminate.

Only when one sees the relationship between realism and sensationalism in

¹⁸ Time and space allowing, it would be interesting to develop this discussion through Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), where he destabilizes the boundaries between body and soul, inside and outside, by positing an intimate yet ambiguous relationship between anxiety and innocence ("This is the profound secret of innocence, that it is at the same time anxiety" [41]) and the fall which, in his text, comes to bear a certain resemblance to the arche-trace. Yet because the play of supplementarity which dominates this text demands careful and sustained analysis, I will defer this reading to a future time.

these terms, does the former's response to the latter, as contradictory as that of Plato to *mimēsis*, become intelligible. If the realists themselves were to be believed, the sensation novel represented nothing more than a mere aberration, albeit widespread, in literary taste and decorum. As Dallas suggests, the "demand for sensation is but the reaction from over-wrought thinking. Sensation is more striking in its effects, and we cannot help noticing it. But it is shallow to pick out the frivolities of the day as its regnant characteristic" (300). A similar opinion is offered by a reviewer for the *Athenaeum*, who confirms that the sensation novel is "a transient school" and "Mr. Wilkie Collins probably does not expect that any of his works will live" (D.E. Williams 203). Yet if the sensation novel is only "a transient school," why all the fuss? Widely dismissed, such novels were also widely reviewed and attacked with a vehemence disproportionate to their supposed ephemerality. The answer to this enigma may be found in the reviews themselves, in the presence of certain figures, figures that we have encountered before, which weave themselves throughout the attack on sensationalism, namely: drugs, disease, contamination and infection. Consider the following condemnation by Henry Mansel.

Excitement, and excitement alone, seems to be the great end at which [sensation novels] aim – an end which must be accomplished at any cost by some means or other, "si possis, recte; si non, quocunque modo." And as excitement, even when harmless in kind, cannot be continually produced without becoming morbid in degree, works of this class manifest themselves as belonging, some more, some less, but all to some extent, to the morbid phenomena of literature -- indications of a wide-spread corruption, of which they are in part both the effect and the cause; called into existence to supply the cravings of a

diseased appetite, and contributing themselves to foster the disease, and to stimulate the want which they supply. ("Sensation Novels" 482-3)

Three years later, with the publication of Collins's *Armadale*, the *Westminster Review* produces an even more hysterical account of this threat.¹⁹

There is no accounting for tastes, blubber for the Esquimaux, half-hatched eggs for the Chinese, and Sensation novels for the English. Everything must now be sensational. Professor Kingsley sensationalizes History, and Mr. Wilkie Collins daily life. One set of writers wear the sensational buskin, another the sensational sock. Just as in the Middle Ages people were afflicted with the Dancing Mania and Lycanthropy, sometimes barking like dogs, and sometimes mewing like cats, so now we have a Sensational Mania. Just, too, as those diseases always occurred in seasons of dearth and poverty, and attacked only the poor, so does the Sensational Mania in Literature burst out only in times of mental poverty, and afflict only the most poverty-stricken minds. From an epidemic, however, it has lately changed into an endemic. Its virus is spreading in all directions, from the penny journal to the shilling magazine, and from the shilling magazine to the thirty shillings volume. ("Belles Lettres" 269-70)

As the two above reviews suggest, sensationalism is consistently constructed as both a disease and a drug. While the interaction of these two figures appears complementary, it is actually the site of a fundamental contradiction, an aporia in realism's response to sensationalism. If the latter functions like a drug, it is never as a drug that can be translated as a *pharmakon*. In the hands of the realists, the sensation novel is non-ambivalent. Harboring no curative powers, it is a "subtle

¹⁹ If, as D.A. Miller suggests, the sensation novel "feminizes" its implicitly male readers, there is no reason to exempt the critic from this process (*The Novel and the Police* 146-91).

poison," pure and simple ("Recent Novels: their Moral and Religious Teaching" 108). Yet when the realists liken the sensation novel to a disease, it assumes one of the key "characteristics" of the *pharmakon*: that is, the ability to transgress and destabilize the boundaries between inside and outside. Transformed from an "epidemic" to an "endemic," this disease is always already (moving) inside: geographically ("The faults of the French school are creeping into our literature, and threaten to flourish there" [M.-M.- 210]);²⁰ in terms of class (it "may boast, without fear of contradiction, of having temporarily succeeded in making the literature of the Kitchen the favourite reading of the Drawing room" [Rae 204]); and even in terms of the community itself ("To Mr. Collins belongs the credit of having introduced into fiction those most mysterious of mysteries, the mysteries which are at our own doors" [James, "Miss Braddon" 593]). The realists, like Plato, maintain "both the exteriority of writing *and* its power of maleficent penetration, its ability to affect or infect what lies deepest inside" (Derrida, *D* 110). Thus the scene of criticism is as marked by dividing lines as the primal scene of philosophy. In suggesting, in the course of a review which contains both realistic and sensational works, that "It is

²⁰ Consider the following passage from A.C. Swinburne's obituary article on Collins: "The criminal [Lydia Gwilt] who dies of her own will by her own crime, to save the beloved victim whom it has accidentally brought to the verge of death, is a figure which would have aroused the widest and the deepest sympathy of English readers *if only she had not been the creation of an Englishman. Had a Frenchman or an American introduced her, no acclamation would have been too vehement to express their gratitude*" (593 emphasis mine).

good to turn aside from these feverish productions – and we think it right to make as distinct a separation as the printer's skill can indicate between the lower and the higher ground" ("Novels" [1867] 275), Oliphant is only making explicit a gesture which is implicit throughout the realist's response to sensationalism. As we shall see, the purpose of this gesture was "to exclude or to lower (to put outside or below), the body of the written trace" (Derrida, FSW 197).

As Derrida reminds us, Plato "is obliged sometimes to condemn *mimēsis* in itself as a process of duplication, whatever its model might be, and sometimes to disqualify *mimēsis* only in function of the model that is 'imitated'" (D 187). True to form, the realist's response to sensationalism follows this same "schematic law." Sometimes, it is condemned for its use of questionable or inferior models and sometimes for more intrinsic reasons. Lyn Pykett describes the sensation novel in the following terms:

These electrifying novels of "our own days" were mainly distinguished by their devious, dangerous and, in some cases, deranged heroes and (more especially) heroines, and their complicated plots of horror, mystery, suspense and secrecy. The sensation plot usually consisted of varying proportions and combinations of duplicity, deception, disguise, the persecution and/or seduction of a young woman, intrigue, jealousy, and adultery. The sensation novel drew on a range of crimes, from illegal incarceration (usually of a young woman), fraud, forgery (often of a will), blackmail and bigamy, to murder or attempted murder. (*The Sensation Novel* 4)

When one considers that what constituted acceptable subject matter for the novelist was still very much determined by "the cheek of the young person," the reaction to

sensationalism's impropriety is hardly surprising.²¹ According to Oliphant, such works are "dangerous and foolish...as well as false, both to Art and Nature" ("Sensation Novels" 567). Speaking of Collins, H.F. Chorley puts the case more strongly.

We are in a period of diseased invention, and the coming phase of it may be palsy. Mr. Wilkie Collins belongs to the class of professing satirists who are eager to lay bare the "blotches and blains" which fester beneath the skin and taint the blood of humanity.... Doubtless such writhen creatures [as Lydia Gwilt] may live and breathe in "the sinks and sewers" of society – engendered by the secret vices and infirmities of those who were answerable for their existence and who encourage their misdoings; but when we see them displayed in Fiction with all the loving care of a consummate artist, (and without any such genuine motive as led formerly Hogarth and latterly Mr. Dickens not to show a horror without a suggestion towards its cure,) we are oddly reminded of a line in Granger's West Indian poem, "The Sugar Cane," – "Now, Muse! let's sing of Rats!" ("Armada" 732)

The motivating fear behind all such attacks is made clear by the *London Review*. Sensation novels "scatter impressions calculated to shake that mutual confidence by which societies and, above all, families are held together, to abate our love of simple unpretending virtue, in fact, almost to destroy our faith in its reality" ("Recent Novels: their Moral and Religious Teaching" 108). If one re-reads this statement, having recalled that the role of the domestic community in the realistic novel was nothing less than a substitute centre or logos, he or she will have come very close to

²¹ As Thackeray suggests, "I am thankful to live in times when men no longer have the temptation to write so as to call blushes on women's cheeks, and would shame to whisper wicked allusions to honest boys" (cited in Stang 195).

recognizing a much more serious threat posed by the sensation novel. It is not simply the case that the scandalous world of such works is immoral. It is, in a new sense, *godless*. And we must, before proceeding, consider what this "new sense" might entail.

As I have already suggested, the nineteenth-century novel is designed to supplement the absent *logos* with a substitute centre. The sensation novel is no exception to this practice. As we shall see, the Ariadne figure assumes a prominent role in such works. Yet in order for this process of substitution to function properly, that is, invisibly, a "double effacement" must occur (Derrida, WM 211). And this is exactly what the sensation novel refuses to do. It inscribes a substitute *logos* but fails to efface the marks of its inscription. And thus, if a god presides over the world of the sensation novel, it is not as "the name and element of that which makes possible an absolutely pure and absolutely self-present self-knowledge" (Derrida, OG 98). It is, rather, a god inexorably written, a god of writing, *Thoth* himself. And he presides not over a realm of presence, *mnēmē, alētheia*, but over a scene of writing.

In order to make this clearer, let us take a moment to consider the figures involved and, more specifically, the significance of those figures employed to represent realism and sensationalism: the portrait and the chain. When the realists liken their works to the pictorial arts, they are speaking of painting as *zōgraphia*; that is, "inscribed representation, a drawing *of the living*, a portrait of an animate model"

(Derrida, *D* 136).²² Like a particular conception of autobiography, it "*seems* to belong to a simpler mode of referentiality, of representation" (de Man 68 emphasis mine). Indeed, its only referent is reference itself.²³ And to ensure that this is always the case, it is surrounded by a self-effacing frame, a *parergon*, that excludes all that is not present to itself, presence itself. Always already double, divided, this frame is not mere ornament, it is designed to allow for nothing less than the erasure or idealization of the figurality of the figure itself.

In contrast, the figure of the chain is the figure of figurality, of writing, the endless play of signification.²⁴ As such, it calls into question the very notion of

²² George Eliot's comparison of her work to Dutch paintings, whose figures are "real breathing men and women" depicted with that "rare, precious quality of truthfulness" (*Adam Bede* 222; 223), is entirely typical of the way in which the realists employ the pictorial analogy.

²³ As Walter Kendrick suggests, the "figure of character painting implies that there is a structure in the real world which preexists and governs its fictional representation" (20).

²⁴ As the figure of the chain is less familiar than its realistic counterpart, I offer the following typical example to indicate how it was employed. Speaking of Collins's *No Name* (1863), Alexander Smith complains, "every trifling incident is charged with an oppressive importance: if a tea-cup is broken, it has a meaning, it is a link in a chain; you are certain to hear of it afterwards. In a short time, however, you discover the writer's trick. If a young lady goes into the garden for a moment before dinner, you know that some one is waiting for her behind the laurels. If two people talk together in a room in [sic] a hot summer day, and one raises the window a little, you know a third is crouching on the gravel below, listening to every word, and who will be prepared to act upon it at the proper time. Everything in these books is feverish and excited; the reader is continually as if treading on bombshells, which may explode at any moment" (183).

referentiality, reference itself, which constitutes the basis of realism.

By focusing the reader's attention on the chains that constitute a novel's plot, [the sensationalists] made of fiction merely a game, an activity which dictates its own rules and which stands to the real world in at best an arbitrary relation. Much of the outrage inspired in mid-Victorian critics by the sensation novel came from their perception that the value of the elements in such a novel depended primarily, like that of links in a chain, on their relation to other elements in the same novel – and not, like that of the brush strokes in a portrait, on their correspondence to something in the real world. (Kendrick 21)

This shift in emphasis, from extra to intra-referentiality, where each signifier relates not to some external signified but only to the other signifiers in the text, undermines the realist paradigm. The phonologocentric notion of a signifier's innate plenitude is dispelled as illusory and language is revealed as arbitrary. As one reviewer suggests,

To [Collins's] view.... Life is a sort of chess-board, in which the pieces have indeed a different value; *but this arises not from anything in the material of which they are made, but from the particular moves to which, by the rules of the game, they are restricted.* ("Wilfrid Cumbermede and Poor Miss Finch" 479 emphasis mine)

Anyone familiar with contemporary critiques of the sensation genre will recognize the game analogy. It appears with the same regularity as that of the chain, to which it is not unrelated. Collins's novels are dismissed as "a mere puzzle" ("*No Name and Thalatta*" 84). They intrigue us "as a Chinese puzzle might, or a charade, or an ingenious mathematical problem, or a trick of sleight-of-hand with a pack of cards" (D.E. Williams 202). In likening Collins's novels to a game, the nineteenth-century

critics were more astute than they realized. Thoth, the "god" (in this context the word must not be put under erasure, but beyond erasure and in writing) of the sensation novel is also the inventor of games or play. And play is the operative principle for Collins. Meaning, for him, is generated not through the transparent relationship between the word and the world, guaranteed by the presence of the logos, but rather, through the play of language made possible by its absence. Through a process of difference and deferral, each signifier must be inscribed within the system of language and become inhabited by the trace of others. Thus the *Spectator's* characterization of Collins's texts as "a discordant mosaic instead of a harmonious picture" ("Armada" 638) is particularly apposite. Each individual signifier, like the component parts of a mosaic, is, when seen in isolation, arbitrary and illegible. Only when they are placed in relation to others, inscribed within a system, are they rendered legible.

Thus it appears that Collins's novels conform to what Miller designates as a "linguistic moment." As he suggests:

The linguistic moment tends to involve a recognition of the irreducibly figurative nature of language, a seeing of language not as a mere instrument for expressing something that could exist without it - - a state of mind or an element of Nature - but as in one way or another creative, inaugurating, constitutive (but constitutive of what?). Also of moment in the linguistic moment is a more or less explicit rejection of unitary origin. Single sources are replaced by some self-generating diacritical structure of repetition with a difference. ("Nature and the linguistic moment" 211)

In order to trace the movement and effects of this "moment," it may be helpful to

turn to the texts themselves. While almost any of Collins's works would serve the purpose, *The Law and the Lady* (1874-5) is a particularly apposite choice. For as we shall see, it is a text dominated by the play of the *pharmakon*. The novel centres on the trial of Eustace Macallan for the murder of his first wife, but it is also, equally, a trial of writing. Accused of administering a dose of poison *in her medicine*, Macallan is charged with a verdict of "Not Proven" and is thus simultaneously *both/neither* innocent *and/nor* guilty.²⁵ Yet the play of the *pharmakon* does not stop here. As the novel gradually reveals, the poison, arsenic, was procured and ingested *as a remedy* and, more specifically, "as a remedy for the defects – the proved and admitted defects – of her complexion" (150), by the victim herself. Or, to rephrase this slightly, what the novel gradually reveals is that the *pharmakon* is introduced as an artificial aid, cosmetic (paint/dye), to supplement and compensate for what is naturally lacking/lacking in nature.²⁶ As we shall see, this movement towards the revelation of the lack is typical of the sensation novel as a whole, of its tendency to move from inscription and erasure to re-inscription.

²⁵ As Collins informs his reader, "When the jury are in doubt whether to condemn or acquit the prisoner brought before them, they are permitted, in Scotland, to express that doubt by a form of compromise. If there is not evidence enough, on the one hand, to justify them in finding a prisoner guilty, and not evidence enough, on the other hand, to thoroughly convince them that a prisoner is innocent, they extricate themselves from the difficulty by finding a verdict of Not Proven" (101).

²⁶ As Derrida reminds us, the writing of/as the *pharmakon* "is like a cosmetic concealing the dead under the appearance of the living" (D 142).

When the novel opens, the writing of the trial, the trial of writing, is literally buried: effaced and erased. Assuming a false name, Macallan meets and marries his second wife, Valeria. Within a few days of the wedding, however, an accident acquaints her with the knowledge of her husband's deception and she embarks on a process of detection. From its very inception, this process is associated with the power of the *pharmakon*. Determined to extract information from Major Fitz-David, an old friend of Macallan's, Valeria inexplicably, for the first and last time in her life, resorts to "paints and powders" (57) in order to charm him. While she, unlike her predecessor, limits herself to an external application of the *pharmakon*, its effects are not so easily contained. As Derrida reminds us, the *pharmakon* "makes one stray from one's general, natural, habitual paths and laws" (D 70). And sure enough, Valeria notes that from the moment she resigned herself to its use, "I seemed in some strange way to have lost my ordinary identity – to have stepped out of my own character" (57-8). When she arrives at the Major's house, she is informed that he is bound by his word of honour not to reveal her husband's secret. He is, however, unable to resist the power of this "charm, this spellbinding virtue, this power of fascination" (Derrida, D 70) and finally concedes, for good or ill, that the clue which she seeks may be found somewhere within the confines of the room in which they are standing and, furthermore, that he will allow her to conduct a thorough search of the premises. The scene of this investigation, a chapter entitled "The Search," is, I would argue, one of the most significant in Collins's *corpus*. It is a scene of writing

whose play marks the constant slippage between signifier and signified, where "every signified is also in the position of a signifier" (Derrida, *P* 20). And thus, it calls into question the very notion of the referent, reference itself.

The room itself (its space as spacing) may be said to function as a synecdoche for the text as a whole. Yet if it is a figure of the written text, it is also a figure of the text *as* writing, figurality itself. Within the room and, indeed, the text as a whole, arbitrary and meaningless signifiers/signifieds (the significance lies in the impossibility of distinguishing between the two) are made meaningful through their very presence within the system which constitutes both. The room's function as a synecdoche for writing is mirrored in the preponderance of written documents within it. Sifting through a collection of fossils, Valeria concentrates on "the curious paper inscriptions" (77). She searches through a collection of old accounts books, "looking into each book, and opening and shaking it uselessly, in search of any loose papers which might be hidden between the leaves" (78), before proceeding to a collection of bills "neatly tied together, and each inscribed at the back" (78). Examining a pack of cards, counters, and markers (the playthings of Thoth), Valeria finds that "No writing – no mark of any kind – was visible on any one of them" (77). Indeed, her whole investigation is conducted under the assumption "that the clue of which I was in search must necessarily reveal itself through a written paper of some sort" (82). In concentrating her attention on writing and inscriptions, Valeria also identifies the proper sphere for the reader's own efforts.

Valeria's determination that meaning is to be found only in and through writing is particularly apposite. For each of the "relics" (78), "fragments" (78), "remains" (82) and "traces" (82) which she examines is, like the signifiers of the language system, meaningless until it is inscribed into a chain of signification where it refers to the other elements with which it is necessarily in relation. As Derrida reminds us, the "first consequence to be drawn from this is that the signified concept is never present in and of itself, in a sufficient presence that would refer only to itself" (*"Différance"* 11). And thus, this scene challenges the traditional (realist) concept of the sign as "the representation of a presence...constituted in a system (thought or language) governed by and moving toward presence" (*"Différance"* 10)²⁷ by introducing traces which exceed the "alternative of presence and absence" (*"Différance"* 20). In short, by introducing traces which function as traces, the scene, through its status as synecdoche or analogue, makes clear the ways in which the sensation novel as a genre lays bare the buried writing of the realists as the non-originary origin of both the possibility *and the impossibility* of the presence they sought to present.

As each signifier leads, in turn, to others, Valeria's ultimate discovery is endlessly delayed. Having finally determined that "My business in that room (I was

²⁷ That is, the sign as an "operation of supplementation...not exhibited as a break in presence but rather as a continuous and homogeneous reparation and modification of presence in the representation" (Derrida, "Signature Event Context" 5).

certain of it now!) began and ended with the bookcase" (84), her investigation is deferred by the sight of a set of keys that lure her (lead her astray) from the bookcase and into an examination of the locked cupboards. Indeed, she laments that the "longer I searched, the farther I seemed to remove myself from the one object that I had it at heart to attain" (86). Yet by following the chain of signification, Valeria gradually discovers the truth about her husband. The first step towards this discovery is a drawer which "literally contained nothing but the fragments of a broken vase" (78). These fragments, like all signifiers, remain illegible when relying on a correspondence to some real signified in the external world. Valeria, significantly, is unable "to estimate the value of the vase, or the antiquity of the vase - or even to know whether it was of British or foreign manufacture" (81). When the fragments are viewed, however, as a link in the chain of signification, they lead her to another important discovery. This discovery, significantly, is an absence or, more precisely, "a vacant space on the top of the bookcase" (81).²⁸ This vacancy, in turn, directs Valeria's attention back to the bookcase and to her eventual discovery of a "plainly-bound volume" (93) hidden "in the space between the bookcase and the wall" (93). This volume is, in fact, the complete report of the trial of Eustace Macallan for the alleged poisoning of his wife. In what has become a "textual labyrinth panelled with mirrors" (Derrida, *D* 195), the report of the trial constitutes

²⁸ For a discussion of the relationship between writing and absence, see Derrida's "Signature Event Context" (1988).

yet another figure of the text: another room to be investigated. Yet, significantly, this text within a text does not, in announcing the truth about her husband, place an end to the play of signifiers but, in fact, perpetuates the play by introducing new signifiers, new objects for investigation, which, in turn, lead still to others.

Having recovered the hidden report, the first act which Valeria undertakes in her new role as detective is to read it; an activity the reader is allowed to participate in by virtue of the fact that she transcribes it, in its entirety, into the text. I am not simply suggesting that the acts of reading and writing are inextricably connected, although this is the case, but, more important, that the process of detection in the sensation novel is precisely an act of re-inscription, re-writing – a re-writing of nothing less than writing itself, the very writing which the realists and the entire history to which they belong, have attempted to efface, to bury. It is not without significance that Valeria's efforts culminate in the recovery of a letter which details the exact circumstances of the victim's death from within the depths of a dust-heap. As I have already suggested, the detective, like the psychoanalyst, may be likened to the archaeologist who desires to restore or recall to presence a buried truth or origin. Yet in the sensation novel, what the detective recovers are the traces of writing as repetition which always already destabilize the very notions of truth and origin. In other words, what the process of detection restores is nothing less than the text itself.

This entire process is, for Valeria, governed by the desire to transform "that underhand Scotch Verdict of Not Proven, into an honest English verdict of Not

Guilty" (116). That is, to transform a nonphilosopheme into a philosopheme. Yet as we have already seen, the process of detection is always already contaminated by the writing of/as the *pharmakon* and thus is always already at odds with her desire. Thus it appears that the movement of detection towards the text, towards re-inscription, is problematized by a countermovement. This fundamental contradiction demands consideration and, in order to do so, we must turn to the figures involved.

The Criminal and the Detective

I have already identified one of the major differences between the detective and the sensation novel and, in Chapter Three, I will demonstrate that there is as much that divides the two genres as unites them. At least part of the difficulty in any such comparison stems from the fact that the detective novel "has never had a definite, universally accepted meaning" (Stewart 21).²⁹ Yet, if one accepts Regis

²⁹ Both Martin A. Kayman's *From Bow Street to Baker Street: Mystery, Detection, and Narrative* (1992) and R.F. Stewart's *...And Always a Detective: Chapters on the History of Detective Fiction* (1980) explore the various interpretations of this genre and are a useful introduction to the subject, although Ian Ousby's *Bloodhounds of Heaven: The Detective in Fiction from Godwin to Doyle* (1976), remains the most comprehensive study of the history of the genre, to date. A.E. Murch's *The Development of the Detective Novel* (1958) deals with a lot of nineteenth-century material that is largely ignored elsewhere, while Anthea Trodd's *Domestic Crime in the Victorian Novel* (1989) approaches the question more generally, considering texts not dealt with in traditional studies of detective fiction. For Wilkie Collins's influence on the detective novel, see Robert P. Ashley's useful, if dated, essay, "Wilkie Collins and the Detective Story" (1951).

Messac's basic premise that the detective novel is "*un récit consacré avant tout à la découverte méthodique et graduelle, par des moyens rationnels, des circonstances exactes d'un événement mystérieux*" (cited in Stewart 12), it does seem to bear a resemblance to the sensation novel. For as Frances Browne argues, *The Woman in White* initiates "a host of cleverly complicated stories, the whole interest of which consists in the gradual unravelling of some carefully prepared enigma" (1428). Setting aside, for the moment, the difficulties involved in such a comparison, one thing can be said with certainty. Characters such as Valeria Macallan, Walter Hartright, and Franklin Blake all function, and function primarily, as detectives.

In *The Gay Science*, Dallas argues that although sensation novels

represent circumstances and incident as all-important, and characters amid the current of events as corks upon the waves, they gradually introduce one character who, in violent contrast to all the others, is superior to the plot, plans the events, guides the storm, and holds the winds in the hollow of his hand. It is quite wonderful to see what this one picked character can do in these stories in comparison with the others, who can do nothing. He predominates over all else. (294)³⁰

This "one character" who "guides the storms" is, in each case, the detective. If Collins creates a godless labyrinth out of the deferral and play among signifiers, he also introduces an Ariadne figure to guide the reader through it. The presence of this figure is not, as Dallas surmises, an "artistic error" (295) but only the indication of a

³⁰ It is appropriate that Dallas adopts a biblical metaphor to describe the Ariadne figure (Isaiah 40.12; Mark 4.41), highlighting how this figure becomes a substitute for the absent God.

tension which characterizes all of Collins's texts and, indeed, the nineteenth-century novel as a whole.

In what has become a standard text for those interested in the detective novel, "The Typology of Detective Fiction," Tzvetan Todorov states that "at the base of the whodunit we find a duality.... This novel contains not one but two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the detective" (44).³¹ Applying Paul Ricoeur's dialectical characterization of action to Todorov's definition, Peter Huhn is able to conclude:

The two components of every act – freedom and constraint – here occur in a specific arrangement. Under this perspective, writing a crime story essentially functions as an act of freedom. The criminal attempts to realize himself and to gratify his desires by freeing himself from the restraints of society and its defining norms. By means of his story the criminal creates for himself a free place, a place of his own outside society's order. And as long as he is in exclusive possession of his story, he is, literally, free. The detective, on the other hand, acts as society's agent in order to restrict this freedom and bind the criminal again to the constraining rules of society through arrest and punishment (imprisonment or execution). (460)

The significance of Huhn's argument becomes more apparent when we translate it into terms more appropriate to a discussion of language. The inevitable remainder of the crime is the presence of certain telltale traces, signifiers which are, at least temporarily, divorced from their signifieds and which refer not to some external

³¹ Todorov's description applies equally well to the sensation novel. This is confirmed by Collins himself when he states, in an article on *The Woman in White* written for *The Globe* in 1887, "The destruction of...identity, represents a first division of the story; the recovery of...identity marks a second division" (rpt. Sucksmith 596).

present reality but only to other traces. Speaking of the concept of the trace, Derrida states:

Whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present. This interweaving results in each "element" – phoneme or grapheme – being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system.... Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces. (P 26)

And thus, as he suggests in *Of Grammatology*, the trace marks "the disappearance of origin" (61). The freedom associated with the story of the criminal is enacted, therefore, through language. Freed from the restraints, not of society, but of the logos, the criminal sets the play of language in motion. Yet to associate the play of language with the criminal is tantamount to a *criminalization* of the play of language. While Collins seems to recognize that the endless reference between signifiers is a natural result of the death of God, he also seems to characterize it as a dangerous and threatening development.

In order to combat this threat, he introduces an Ariadne figure: the detective. The story of this character is, as Huhn suggests, a story of constraint and, more specifically, the constraint of language. Despite what I have just suggested about the story of the criminal, the crime, in the vast majority of Collins's novels, is associated with an attempt to hide or bury a written document, to render its play stationary and erase the traces it produces. Yet as Lukacher reminds us, "evading the space of

representation is the special prerogative of the criminal.... The originality of the crime is invariably judged by its capacity to erase its traces" (228). The crime, like realism, is dependent upon a "double effacement." And thus it seems that Todorov's two stories, that of the criminal and that of the detective, can, in the sensation novel, be refigured as the story of (re-inscription and) erasure and the story of re-inscription (and erasure). For it is exactly this erasure or "double effacement" which the detective seeks to expose or reveal and, as we have already seen, to reveal through a process of re-inscription. Yet the detective writes the signifiers into the system, not to celebrate the play of language associated with the criminal, but in order to curtail it. The sole function of such characters is to place an end to "the reference from sign to sign" (Derrida, OG 49) and reduce language to a single, coherent meaning. According to Huhn's argument, the detective "bind[s] the criminal...to the constraining rules of society through arrest and punishment (imprisonment or execution)." In the sensation novel, however, the fate of such criminals as Miserrimus Dexter, Count Fosco and Godfrey Ablewhite is left to other hands. Thus the detective may be said to act, not as the "agent of society," but as the agent for the absent logos. As a substitute logos, he or she is not so much interested in imprisoning the criminal as imprisoning the play of language associated with his or her story.

As I have already suggested, the sensation novel inscribes a substitute centre but refuses to erase the traces of its inscription, and thus the Ariadne figure

resembles no one so much as Thoth. If one recalls the passage from Collins's "The Diary of Anne Rodway," quoted in the Introduction, it becomes clear that to live in the sensation text is to inhabit a godless world "like the Valley of the Shadow of Death" (DAR 148). In such a world, truth is no longer guaranteed by a transcendental signified, but is available only through the play of language. It is the movement between signifiers, like links in a chain, which allows the "end of the cravat" (DAR 148), itself a fragment and the only trace of the crime, to lengthen "into a long clue, like [a] silken thread" (DAR 148). This "thread" transforms the detective into an Ariadne figure. By inscribing signifiers into the system of language, linking each to the others, he or she creates the "thread" which guides him or her through the circuitous paths of the labyrinth towards the centre as truth. Yet this truth, which is meant to place an end to the endless "reference from sign to sign" is, itself, dependent on the play of language.

It is, already, becoming difficult to keep track of the various moves and countermoves which characterize Collins's texts. Yet it remains necessary to introduce one more: the realism of sensationalism. The "quarrel among various forms of belief and unbelief" thus continues (Miller, "Theology and logology" 280), assuming, every more clearly, the character of a game of chess.

The Realism of Sensationalism

Thus far, my argument has characterized the sensation novel as an impulse

antithetical to realism. While this is certainly true, one must acknowledge that the sensation novel remains highly dependent on realism for its very subversiveness.

According to Kendrick:

In order for the novel to provide its sensations, there must somewhere be texts which are trusted to be transparent. This is the faith of mid-Victorian realism, and *The Woman in White* is as firmly grounded in it as any novel by Trollope or George Eliot. Yet, at the same time, *The Woman in White* violates the realist's faith at every turn. (34)³²

Yet it is not simply the case that the sensationalists require the prior existence of realism, and its ensuing phonologocentric values, as a norm to react against. They actually incorporate certain aspects of realism into their novels, dislocating them, in the process, from their accepted moorings. More specifically, the sensationalists adopt one particular feature of the realistic novel. Eschewing the practice of their Gothic predecessors, they, for the most part, locate their stories within a familiar, domestic environment.³³ The ensuing contrast between "the intensity of the passion,

³² Kendrick's comments are anticipated by more than a century in the writings of Alexander Bain. In "Mystery and Other Violations of Relativity," he argues: "'Mystery' [is] a term greatly abused, in various ways, and especially by disregarding its relative character. Mystery supposes certain things that are plain, intelligible, knowable, revealed; and, by contrast to these, refers to certain other things that are obscure, unintelligible, unknowable, unrevealed" (388). This article, written in 1868, introduces certain ideas which are remarkably sophisticated for their time. Bain's basic thesis, that "all knowledge is double, or is the knowledge of contrasts or opposites; heavy is relative to light; up supposes down; being awake supposes the state of sleep" (383), anticipates Derrida's concept of the supplement.

³³ The relationship between the gothic and the sensation novel is explored in Tamar Heller's *Dead Secrets: Wilkie Collins and the Female Gothic* (1992). Heller concludes that "Collins's novels, in fact, are often paradoxically Gothic plots that end

the violent spasmodic action of the piece, and its smooth commonplace environments" ('Esmond' and 'Basil'" 586), amounts to little less than a revolution in literature and more than justified the critics in seeing the sensation novel as a "new school in fiction." In his review entitled "Miss Braddon," Henry James asserts: "To Mr. Collins belongs the credit of having introduced those most mysterious of mysteries, the mysteries which are at our own doors. This innovation gave a new impetus to the literature of horrors" (593). The issue is discussed, at greater length, by Henry Mansel:

The Sensation novel, be it mere trash or something worse, is usually a tale of our own times. Proximity is, indeed, one great element of sensation.... [A] tale which aims at electrifying the nerves of the reader is never thoroughly effective unless the scene be laid in our own days and among the people we are in the habit of meeting.... [W]e are thrilled with horror, even in a fiction, by the thought that such things may be going on around us and among us. The man who shook our hand with a hearty English grasp half an hour ago – the woman whose beauty and grace were the charm of last night... – how exciting to think that under these pleasing outsides may be concealed some demon in human shape, a Count Fosco or a Lady Audley! He may have assumed all that heartiness to conceal some dark plot against our life or honour,...she may have left that gay scene to muffle herself in a thick veil and steal to a midnight meeting with some villainous accomplice. (488-9)³⁴

with the containment of the Gothic as the site of subversion and literary marginality" (8). In contrast, I would locate the subversive element of sensation fiction in its foregrounding of the inextinguishable play of language. This identification allows one to differentiate the sensation novel from both the Gothic and the detective novel.

³⁴ Unlike many of his followers, such as Charles Reade and Mary Braddon, who predate their material three or four years in order to allow them to conclude in the present time, all four of the novels Collins produced in the 1860s are set back initially to the late 1840s. The significance of this practice is identified by Nicholas Rance,

As both James and Mansel's comments suggest, the criminal is, in the sensation novel, both invisible and omnipresent. No longer occupying a "place of his own outside society's order," he or she has been incorporated into the community. The significance of this incorporation cannot be overstated. In a novel like *Bleak House*, Dickens purportedly presents a community of originary innocence, a community that is corrupted only through the introduction of a foreign violence: the writing of Chancery Court. The situation, in Collins, is radically different. By depicting the criminal as an integral part of the community, Collins ensures that the community is always already criminalized: always already characterized by the play of language associated with his or her story. In so doing, he foregrounds, once again, that (the play of) writing is always already internal.

The paradigmatic structure of the detective novel may be summarized in the following terms:

Most classical detective novels start out with a community in a state of stable order. Soon a crime (usually a murder) occurs, which the police are unable to clear up. The insoluble crime acts as a destabilizing event, because the system of norms and rules regulating life in the community has proved powerless in one crucial instance and is

who points out that "the sensation plots of *The Woman in White* and *Armada* culminate in what Lydia Gwilt in *Armada* sacrilegiously refers to as 'the worn-out year eighteen hundred and fifty-one'" (82): the year of the Great Exhibition. In doing so, Collins challenges the Victorian sense of confidence associated with the age of equipoise and "den[ies] even the briefest period of mid-Victorian 'calm'" (82). This practice is part and parcel of Collins's attempt to destroy the realistic notion of the stable community, an issue I will discuss below.

therefore discredited.... At this point the detective takes over the case, embarks on a course of thorough investigations, and finally identifies the criminal, explaining his solution at length.... By reintegrating the aberrant event, the narrative reconstruction restores the disrupted social order and reaffirms the validity of the system of norms. (Huhn 452)

In contrast to the detective novel, the sensation novel does not presuppose the existence of "a community in a state of stable order." The community is, in fact, always already destabilized by the presence of the criminal. Far from representing an "aberrant event," the destabilization associated with the crime is, for Collins, a norm. According to Huhn, "Applying the finally discovered truth to restoring the disrupted social order does not normally pose any problems. The criminal – and with him the threat to society – is simply eliminated" (461). The detective, in the sensation novel, cannot restore what, in actuality, never existed. Because the criminal, and the play of language associated with his or her story, are omnipresent, the "threat" can never be "simply eliminated." This will be confirmed if we return, momentarily, to *The Law and the Lady*. As I have already pointed out, Valeria's process of detection culminates in the retrieval of a letter which explains the exact details of the poisoning. Although it reveals that Macallan's first wife committed suicide, it does not extricate Macallan. He remains both/neither innocent and/nor guilty. The play of the *pharmakon*, like the play of language, can never be simply eliminated. What the sensation novel reveals is its continued presence in the very place it is least welcome: the heart of the community, the inside.

Thus it appears that the detective in Collins is best interpreted, not as an effective constraint to the play of language, but rather, as the *desire* for such constraint. This figure, who combats the play of language but never actually conquers it, is indicative of a tension which characterizes Collins's entire *corpus*. Each of his novels expresses the desire for constraint while, simultaneously, denying the possibility of its fulfilment. This tension finds its analogue in *Armadale* in the form of Major Milroy's clock. Brought down in the world by "unfortunate speculations" (210), Major Milroy sequesters his family in the country and devotes his life to building a model of the Strasbourg Clock. If the detective functions as a substitute logos, so too, in an even more limited way, does the Major's clock.

By a psychological sleight of hand the major metamorphoses the turmoil in his life into a problem of clockmaking, where he seeks repetition without alteration and a simple, more knowable model of the world. The artificial quest for order thus springs from a current lack of order, from a sense of loss that engulfs the major. A bewildered figure, the major is "an old-fashioned man" caught up in a world in transition, trying to shore up or find replacements for cultural truths that no longer stand firm. His clock is his version of a world of design. (Zeitzi and Thoms 502)

Yet the clock itself is flawed. As the Major is forced to admit, "there are defects in it which I am ashamed to say I have not yet succeeded in remedying as I could wish. Sometimes the figures go all wrong, and sometimes they go all right" (269). If the clock represents an attempt to recapture the order previously guaranteed by the logos, an order symbolized in the original Strasbourg Clock, it is also a testament to the impossibility of achieving such order. In this way, it functions as an analogue

for the tension which characterizes all of Collins's writings. In fact, Zeitz and Thoms's description of Major Milroy applies equally well to Collins himself. As the following two chapters will demonstrate, he too is "a bewildered figure...caught up in a world in transition." Collins's creations, like that of Major Milroy, express a desire for a lost order while, simultaneously, acknowledging that it is no longer available. Precariously located in the space between Derrida's "two interpretations of interpretation," they enact the "dilemma of the modern world" (Lukacher 11).

Chapter Two
**"Crimes cause their own detection": The Absent Father
and the Failure of Memory in *The Woman in White***

I am told that it is of the last importance to ascertain the exact date of that lamentable journey, and I have anxiously taxed my memory to recall it. The effort has been in vain. I can only remember now that it was towards the latter part of July. We all know the difficulty, after a lapse of time, of fixing precisely on a past date unless it has been previously written down. That difficulty is greatly increased in my case by the alarming and confusing events which took place about the period of Lady Glyde's departure. I heartily wish I had made a memorandum at the time.

The history of the interval which I thus pass over must remain unrecorded. My heart turns faint, my mind sinks in darkness and confusion when I think of it. This must not be, if I who write am to guide, as I ought, you who read. This must not be, if the clue that leads through the windings of the story is to remain from end to end untangled in my hands.

As I have already suggested, Margaret Oliphant credits *The Woman in White* with "originating a new school in fiction." While this is certainly true, the novel is best seen as the culmination of a process of experimentation which coincided with Collins's first attempts as a novelist. With the possible exception of *Antonina*, an historical romance, each of the works preceding this one is characterized by the presence of certain *topoi* of sensationalism: crime, disguises, secret marriages, missing wills, illegitimacy, questions of identity, labyrinths and detection. Such things abound in Collins's novels and short stories of the 1850s. Yet prior to *The*

Woman in White, these elements of sensation remain as foreign or anomalous fragments imported into the framework of a domestic or, equally conservative, melodramatic novel. Thus a contemporary reviewer of *Basil* is lead to conclude:

The scenery, the dramatis personae, the costumery, are all the most familiar every-day type, belonging to an advanced stage of civilization; but there is something rude and barbarous, almost Titanic, about the incidents; *they belong to a different state of society.* ("Esmond' and 'Basil'" 586 emphasis mine)

While the reviewer correctly identifies what was to become one of the defining characteristics of Collins's novels – the realism of sensationalism – in such novels as *Basil*, *Hide and Seek*, or *The Dead Secret*, it appears that realism and sensationalism are not so much yoked together as thrust upon each other, in a manner that foregrounds their very incompatibility. Only in *The Woman in White* does Collins finally incorporate sensational elements into what might be described, according to Derrida's definition, as a text; that is, incorporate them into a framework that is non-properly and non-uniquely their own. And thus, with the appearance of *The Woman in White*, the sensation novel was born. By engaging in a sustained and careful reading of the writing of this text, this chapter will demonstrate what has hitherto largely remained at the level of speculation: namely, that the sensation novel repeats and enacts certain gestures which, as I have already suggested in the Introduction, characterize the nineteenth-century novel as a whole, but that it does so without effacing the repeater, the movement and effects of repetition itself. And,

furthermore, that the sensation novel lays bare, foregrounds, the death of God, as the death and failure of presence and *mnēmē*, that renders these gestures necessary.

Oliphant's article, one of the first attempts to define the genre, concentrates on two scenes: Walter Hartright's ghostly meeting with Anne Catherick on the normally "uneventful road" (50) to London, and his subsequent recognition of the uncanny resemblance between this woman and his new drawing pupil, Laura Fairlie. For Oliphant, these two scenes constitute exactly that quality which makes the sensation novel sensational. Yet if this is indeed the case, they also suggest how the play of language is written into the very heart of the genre. Anne Catherick appears to Walter, "dressed from head to foot in white garments" (47), as if she had "that moment sprung out of the earth or dropped from the heaven" (47). As Walter informs the reader, "every drop of blood in my body was brought to a stop by the touch of [her] hand" (47). Thus Anne appears as the quintessential figure of sensation. According to D.A. Miller's reading of this scene, Anne's touch signals the moment when, "Released from – and with – the Woman, nervousness touches and enters the Man" (152).¹ Like Miller, I too read this scene as a moment of contagion, but, in contrast, I would argue that what is passed on, introduced, precisely *not* as a

¹ Miller's entire reading is based on the thesis that the novel "makes nervousness a metonymy for reading, its cause or effect" (151). In contrast, I would argue that nervousness is, in this text, a metonymy for writing: for the play of language which gives rise to *sensation*.

foreign infection, is the play of writing. As will become increasingly clear, Anne is a figure of writing, of the ways in which language, in the absence of a logos, ceaselessly moves along in an endless chain of signification. Having entered the text as a lack, an absence, devoid of origin or meaning, she remains, like a certain conception of writing, in a position of fallen exteriority, divorced from the immediacy of meaning and truth. Her status as an empty signifier is confirmed by the ease with which her identity is, in the course of the novel, denied or given away by those more powerful than herself.

As a figure of writing, it is hardly surprising that Anne has escaped from a lunatic asylum. For according to an enduring prescription and a genealogy we have already traced, writing may be likened to madness and must, for this reason, be contained (Derrida, *D* 187 FN 14c). What is surprising is Walter's response to this knowledge. The "terrible inference which those words [lunatic asylum] suggested flashed upon [him] like a new revelation" (55):

What had I done? Assisted the victim of the most horrible of all false imprisonments to escape; or cast loose on the wide world of London an unfortunate creature, whose actions it was my duty, and every man's duty, mercifully to control? I turned sick at heart when the question occurred to me. (55)

As Ann Cvetkovich points out, "Walter's rather hysterical pronouncements about the consequences of his action suggest that it is being loaded with a significance that cannot be found within the event itself" (32). And, surely enough, it is. If Anne

represents an absence, a signifier that is never fully present, she is also a signifier who is inhabited by the trace of another and, more specifically, Laura Fairlie. Walter's exaggerated reaction is rendered intelligible only when their meeting is placed, like a link in a chain, within "a textual transformation" where "each allegedly 'simple term' is marked by the trace of another term, [where] the presumed interiority of meaning is already worked upon by its own exteriority" (Derrida, *P* 33). Thus, it is only appropriate that he records the experience, "trac[ing] these lines, self-distrustfully, with the shadows of after-events darkening the very paper [he] writes on" (50).

Struggling to write of his early impressions of Laura Fairlie, Walter confesses that

Mingling with the vivid impression produced by the charm of her fair face and head, her sweet expression, and her winning simplicity of manner, was another impression, which, in a shadowy way, suggested to me the idea of something wanting. At one time it seemed like something wanting in *her*: at another, like something wanting in myself, which hindered me from understanding her as I ought. The impression was always strongest in the most contradictory manner, when she looked at me; or, in other words, when I was most conscious of the harmony and charm of her face, and yet, at the same time, most troubled by the sense of an incompleteness which it was impossible to discover. Something wanting, something wanting – and where it was, and what it was, I could not say. (76-7)

The answer to Walter's final queries is, quite simply, the text itself. Viewed in isolation, Laura remains "incomplete" and illegible. Only when he re-inscribes her

into the network of referrals that is the text is he able to recognize that the "something wanting' was my own recognition of the ominous likeness between the fugitive from the asylum and my pupil at Limmeridge House" (86). This recognition relies, not on the strength and veracity of Walter's own memory, but only on the written reminder of Mrs. Fairlie's correspondence, a circumstance which should, in itself, already alert us to the fact that all is not as it should be. Within the realm of the living logos, *mnēmē* has no need to be supplemented by *hypomnēsis*.

Let us consider the matter more closely. First, we already know that the domestic community functions, for the realists, as a substitute centre that replaces the dead God. Secondly, anyone who has the slightest familiarity with nineteenth-century constructions of gender will also know that the linchpin of this community is, adopting Patmore Coventry's immortal phrase, "the angel in the house."² Virtuous and innocent, to the point of being childlike, Laura Fairlie occupies just this position. And thus, in identifying her (as a) lack, Walter identifies the lack which

² "The house mistress, ideally the wife, was the lynch pin of the static community. It was she who waited at home for the return of the active, seeking man. Her special task was the creation of *order* in her household, the regular round of daily activity set in motion and kept smoothly ticking over by continued watchfulness; doing everything at the 'right' times, keeping everything and everybody in the 'right' place" (Davidoff *et al.* 154-5). For a particularly sophisticated and engaging discussion of nineteenth-century constructions of gender, see Mary Poovey's *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (1988). For a discussion of the politics of gender in the sensation genre, see Lyn Pykett's *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (1992).

always already characterizes the centre. A lack which, as we shall see, not only necessitates a process of substitution but actually constitutes its possibility. A lack which, as we have already seen, the realists and the entire history to which they belong, endeavour to efface. Furthermore, as I have already suggested, Anne is a quintessential figure of sensation, a figure (inextricably tied to the) written. As such, her status as illegitimate (she is nothing other than the bastard offspring of Philip Fairlie) is hardly surprising. In contrast, Laura is easily recognizable as the typical heroine of domestic realism. Yet in linking these two figures together, in recognizing the specular resemblance between them, Walter suggests, in a gesture typical of the sensation novel as a whole, how the legitimate is always already contaminated by the trace of its other, the illegitimate; how realism is always already contaminated by the trace of sensationalism, that is, by nothing less than writing itself.

As we saw in Chapter One, the play of language that ensues upon God's death is not, for Collins, a wholly welcome development. It is criminalized precisely to foreground its threatening nature and, because it represents a threat, to marginalize it. In order to combat its dangers, Collins introduces an Ariadne figure, the detective, as a substitute logos. The role of this figure is to curtail the play of language, and thus he or she is indicative of a desire to restore the order previously guaranteed by the logos. Yet the methods of the detective are, as I shall

demonstrate, indistinguishable from those of the criminal: both must engage in the play of language. And thus, the substitute centre (always already) participates in the very activity it is designed to eliminate. Designed to recall and resurrect a realm of unmediated truth and meaning, the detective also constitutes an acknowledgement that it is no longer available, has never been available. This tension, between the desire for a lost order and the acknowledgement of its impossibility, is captured in the idea that "crimes cause their own detection" (255). This chapter will suggest that the play of language is both criminal *and* legitimate: it is the precondition, the non-originary origin of both crime and its detection. If there is no crime without writing, there is no justice without it either.

The Play of the Text/The Text as Play

That God is dead is a fact rarely acknowledged by the characters themselves. Throughout the novel, they consistently attribute the meaning of mysterious events to Providence or Fate. According to Walter:

The night when I met the lost Woman on the highway was the night which set my life apart to be the instrument of a Design that is yet unseen. Here, lost in the wilderness, or there, welcomed back in the land of my birth, I am still walking on the dark road which leads me, and you, and the sister of your love and mine, to the unknown Retribution and the inevitable End. (296)

Later, when Walter encounters a Laura seemingly resurrected from the dead, he asserts, "I believe in my soul that the hand of God was pointing their way back to

them, and that the most innocent and most afflicted of His creatures was chosen in that dread moment to see it" (451). *The Woman in White* is often identified by modern critics as one of Collins's more conservative texts precisely because Providence is upheld as a source of meaning and order.³ While this novel is, perhaps, more conservative than *Armada* or *The Moonstone*, it is not characterized by the presence of a logos. The text itself belies such assumptions. Neither God nor Fate is responsible for either the labyrinth or the thread which guides the characters through it. Both are created by the play of language.⁴ Hartright himself is forced to admit that the "terrible story of the conspiracy so obtained was presented in fragments, sadly incoherent in themselves, and widely detached from each other" (445). His role as an Ariadne figure is to transform such fragments into a coherent narrative. Yet he is only able to do so by re-inscribing each element into a network of traces. Thus it is only appropriate that he feels himself to be "linked already to a

³ For an example of such readings, see Peter Thoms's *The Windings of the Labyrinth: Quest and Structure in the Major Novels of Wilkie Collins* (1992) and Jerome Meckier's "Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*: Providence Against the Evils of Propriety" (1983).

⁴ While it would be helpful if I could trace the play of traces which constitutes the labyrinth (and the thread), to do so represents an impossibility. To record them would be tantamount to re-writing the novel in these pages. This impossibility is acknowledged by Collins himself. In the 1860 Preface to the novel, Collins warns the reviewer off the attempt to do the same, insisting that "no small portion of this space [the novel] is occupied by hundreds of little 'connecting links,' of trifling value in themselves, but of the utmost importance in maintaining...the entire narrative"

chain of events" (101), while the various other narrators attempt "to add...new links to the chain of events, and to take up the chain itself at the point where, for the present only, Mr Hartright has dropped it" (150).

In an article entitled "How I Write My Books: Related in a Letter to a Friend," Collins reveals how his plans for *The Woman in White* altered in the course of writing it:

The scene of my opening chapters is in Cumberland. Miss Fairlie (afterwards Lady Glyde); Mr. Fairlie, with his irritable nerves and his art-treasures; Miss Halcombe (discovered suddenly, like Anne Catherick), are all waiting the arrival of the young drawing-master, Walter Hartright. No: this won't do. The person to be first introduced is Anne Catherick. (rpt. Sucksmith 597)

Thus Collins acknowledges the centrality of the woman in white. Whichever path the characters follow in the labyrinth, it leads back to this character. This is confirmed when Walter decries that their first meeting "set [his] life apart to be the instrument of a Design" (296) and again when he insists that "'the woman in white is a living influence in our three lives. The End is appointed – the End is drawing us on – and Anne Catherick, dead in her grave, points the way to it still!" (471). As the characters become ever more entangled in the labyrinth, Anne comes to assume, for them, the status of a logos: the origin and source of all meaning. Yet Collins denies even this most fragile of authorities. Like the sophist, writing itself, Anne is nothing

(rpt. Sucksmith xxxvi). Like Collins, I must refer the reader to the text itself.

if not elusive. She slips away from the most powerful of her would-be captors: first escaping from the asylum, then eluding Walter, Marian, Percival, and even a host of professional detectives before she dies and dies too early, thus eluding Fosco's control. Furthermore, Anne, far from possessing the plenitude of an ordinary signified, let alone a transcendental, is an empty signifier; devoid of innate plenitude and dressed completely in white, she is literally a blank. The signal features by which the characters are able to identify her are themselves based on a lack. When Fosco inquires of Percival how he is to recognize her, he answers, "I'll tell you in two words. She's a sickly likeness of my wife" (355). Anne's identity is constituted by the very lack of an identity. She is, as a young school boy suggests, Laura's "ghaist," her trace (110).

Most important, however, Anne is debarred from the very possibility of functioning as a logos by her illegitimacy. As Derrida suggests, the Platonic schema, "which sets up the whole of Western metaphysics in its conceptuality,"

assigns the origin and power of speech, precisely of *logos*, to the paternal position.... Not that logos is the father, either. But the origin of logos is *its father*. One could say anachronously that the "speaking subject" is the *father* of his speech. And one would quickly realize that this is no metaphor, at least not in the sense of any common, conventional effect of rhetoric. *Logos* is a son, then, a son that would be destroyed in his very *presence* without the present *attendance* of his father. His father who answers. His father who speaks for him and answers for him. Without his father, he would be nothing but, in fact, writing. (D 76-7)

Anne is, both literally and metaphorically, fatherless. "[W]andering like a desire or like a signifier freed from *logos*.... [she] has no essence, no truth, no patronym" (Derrida, *D* 145). And as we shall see, it is in this capacity more than any other that Laura and, anticipating things to come, Percival himself, resemble her. Far from constituting a *logos*, Anne Catherick highlights its very absence. Throughout the novel, she is pursued because it is believed that she holds the key to the text's secret: the illegitimacy of Sir Percival Glyde. Yet, in actuality, she knows nothing more than that such a secret exists, a fact which she does not hesitate to communicate to Percival. Her mother's description of the scene of this communication is, quite paradoxically, telling.

"Beg my pardon, directly," says [Laura], "or I'll make it the worse for you. I'll let out your Secret. I can ruin you for life if I choose to open my lips." My own words! – *repeated* exactly from what I had said the day before – *repeated*, in his presence, as if they had come from herself. He sat speechless, as white as the paper I am writing on, while I pushed her out of the room.... I tried to set things right. I told him that she had merely *repeated*, like a parrot, the words she had heard me say and that she knew no particulars whatever, because I had mentioned none. I explained that she had affected, out of crazy spite against him, to know what she really did *not* know. (557 all but last emphasis mine)

Like writing within the Platonic schema, sophistic and hypomnesia, Anne, the supposed origin and source of all meaning, is guilty of "repeating without knowing" (Derrida, *D* 74); a repetition in which what "is repeated is the repeater, the imitator, the signifier, the representative, in the absence, as it happens, of *the thing itself*"

(Derrida, *D* 119). Thus her story is crucial not in and of itself, but because it leads to other stories, other texts: the letters of Mrs. Fairlie and Mrs. Catherick, the announcement of Laura's wedding, the story of Mrs. Clements, etc. These texts lead still to others: the boundaries of play are limitless. The "woman in white" is not, therefore, the origin or source of meaning, but only another signifier in a chain of signifiers which leads the characters in a circuitous dance: a dance that is mirrored in her very flight.

In destabilizing the notion of the centre, Collins also destabilizes those values which are traditionally associated with it: more specifically, the tendency to valorize presence over absence, speech over writing. In the Preamble to the novel *Hartright* asserts:

If the machinery of the Law could be depended on to fathom every case of suspicion, and to conduct every process of inquiry, with moderate assistance only from the lubricating influences of oil of gold, the events which fill these pages might have claimed their share of the public attention in a Court of Justice.

But the law is still, in certain inevitable cases, the pre-engaged servant of the long purse; and the story is left to be told, for the first time, in this place. (33)

Although the Preamble identifies certain shortcomings in the legal system, this does not, according to Philip O'Neill, "deter Collins from telling the story as a trial is conducted in court. The law may be biased but Collins decides to adopt some of its methods" (99). While this may be true, I would argue that Collins offers the story *in*

lieu of a trial and, in so doing, engages in a very different epistemological paradigm.

According to Martin Kayman, the codification and emerging dominance of the law during the last three hundred years may be read as a response to the growing secularization that characterized this same period.

If the sciences of medicine and psychology come first to complement and gradually to substitute religious codes in determining the constitution of the physical and spiritual human subject, the social and ethical subject becomes rewritten by modern law as the privileged paradigm for the achievement of secular justice and truth. (8)

Thus it appears that law is yet another substitution in the history of "substitutions of center for center" (Derrida, SSP 279). As Kayman suggests, it is the "master code...of the secular state," "the *source* of authority rather than its instrument" (34). It is, more precisely, a substitute *logos*. And it is exactly in its capacity as such that Collins interrogates it.⁵ Law fails, not because it is the "pre-engaged servant of the long purse," but because it is firmly embedded in the metaphysics of presence. In this novel, lawyers are the advocates of the authenticity of the spoken word. Hence Mr. Gilmore worries that he should be "obliged to commit to writing questions which ought always to be discussed on both sides by word of mouth" (163). When Walter applies for legal guidance, he is informed that "[w]hen an English jury has to choose

⁵ For a discussion of the role and consequences of force in law's authority, see Derrida's "The Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" (1992).

between a plain fact *on* the surface and a long explanation *under* the surface, it always takes the fact in preference to the explanation" (463). Hence, the lawyer will concede that "the identity of Lady Glyde as a living person is a proved fact to Miss Halcombe and yourself. But you come to me for a legal opinion. *As a lawyer, and as a lawyer only*, it is my duty to tell you, Mr Hartright, that you have not the shadow of a case" (462 emphasis mine). Law fails because, believing in a transparent and "natural" relationship between signifier and signified, it takes things for granted. It is unwilling to recognize the meaning which results from the play constantly at work under the surface of language.⁶

This failure is recognized by Walter himself:

If we had been rich enough to find legal help, what would have been the result? The gain (on Mr Kryle's own showing) would have been more than doubtful – the loss, judging by the plain test of events as they had really happened, certain. The law would never have obtained me my interview with Mrs Catherick. The law would never have made Pesca the means of forcing a confession from the Count. (640)

The interview with Mrs. Catherick and the Count's confession, both crucial to the

⁶ In *Wilkie Collins: Women, Property and Propriety*, O'Neill views *The Woman in White* as an exploration of appearances *versus* reality, deceptive surfaces *versus* veiled truths. He asserts that the text foregrounds the "danger of always accepting things at face value" (100). While O'Neill's basic premise is sound, I interpret the text's tendency to reveal the "danger of always accepting things at face value," not solely as a means of "questioning the value of propriety" (106) but, more generally, as a means of questioning the tenets of phonologocentrism itself.

solution of the mystery, are made possible only through the play of language. Each is simply a product, and a part, of a whole series of signifiers and other traces. Furthermore, the testimony of such individuals is only enabled to become meaningful because Walter openly suspects the phonocentric correspondence between the spoken word and truth. When he first hears Mrs. Catherick's story, he wonders:

Was it possible that appearances in this case had pointed one way while the truth lay all the while unsuspected in another direction?... Here – if I could find it – here was the approach to the Secret, hidden deep under the surface of the apparently unpromising story which I had just heard. (492)

The "approach to the Secret" does indeed lie "hidden deep under the surface of the ...story," in the play of language: the system of traces which reveal as much as they conceal. Such traces remain undetected by the blind phonologocentrism of the law.⁷ Having thus revealed the law to be characterized by a certain flaw, or lack, Walter

⁷ Consider the following passage from Walter's narrative: "*Judging by the ordinary rules of evidence*, I had not the shadow of a reason, this far, for connecting Sir Percival Glyde with the suspicious words of inquiry that had been spoken to me by the woman in white. And yet, I did connect him with them. Was it because he had now become associated in my mind with Miss Fairlie, Miss Fairlie being, in her turn, associated with Anne Catherick, since the night when I had discovered the ominous likeness between them? Had the events of the morning so unnerved me already that I was at the mercy of any delusion which common chances and common coincidences might suggest to my imagination?" (101 emphasis mine). According to Bourne Taylor's reading of this scene (114), Walter is suffering from monomania. I will only add that the source of this "madness" is the writing he is here engaging with.

offers a written text and a text as writing as a substitute, or supplement, to it. In contrast to the former, this text recognizes, indeed is constituted by, the play of language. Hence it is in this site of shadowy signifiers, never fully present, that the meaning, inaccessible to self-presence, is located.

Yet the failure of the law, as a failure of presence, gives way before a much more fundamental failure of presence, that of the father. This is a text proliferated with orphans and bastards: Anne Catherick, Marian Halcombe, Percival Glyde and Walter himself are all bereft of the benefits of a father.⁸ Yet nowhere are the effects of this lack more apparent than in the case of Laura Fairlie. The death of her father, like the death of God, necessitates the introduction of a substitute, hence the appearance of Frederick Fairlie as her guardian. As we shall see, however, this substitute is no more effective than the original.⁹ Fairlie's first significant failure as a father-figure is to condone a marriage settlement that, as Mr. Gilmore insists, "no daughter...should be married to any man alive under" (183). As the reader is aware, this omission, this failure, of the substitute sets in motion a chain of events which

⁸ It would be interesting to speculate whether the proliferation of orphans in nineteenth-century literature as a whole might be read as a manifestation of the crisis of faith in the metaphysics of presence.

⁹ In addition to being the father of Anne Catherick, Philip Fairlie is also guilty of coercing Laura to marry Percival in the first place, expressing his desire for their union on his deathbed.

culminates in the substitution of Laura and Anne Catherick. Throughout this process of substitution, which "no transcendental signified...can come to limit, bound, or control" (Derrida, *D* 89), the absence of the guardian (of presence) is consistently foregrounded. Contemplating Laura's wedding day, an act which substitutes Lady Glyde for Laura Fairlie, one identity for another, Marian laments "the melancholy absence of any male relative of Laura's" (209).¹⁰ And again, that no "father, no brother – no living creature but the helpless, useless woman who writes these sad lines" is available to protect her (216). Later, when the extent of Percival's villainy becomes known, Marian determines to apply to Fairlie for aid, for as she suggests to Laura, "Your uncle is your nearest male relative, and the head of the family. He must and shall interfere" (324). Yet Fairlie steadfastly refuses to assume responsibility for his ward and his narrative contribution concludes with the following disclaimer:

I believe I have reached the limits assigned to me. The shocking circumstances which happened at a later period did not, I am thankful to say, happen in my presence. I do beg and entreat that nobody will be so very unfeeling as to lay any part of the blame of those circumstances on *me*. I did everything for the best. I am not answerable for a deplorable calamity, which it was quite impossible to

¹⁰ As Bourne Taylor points out, "Laura's transformation into Anne Catherick and incarceration in the asylum are but a re-enactment of their dress rehearsal – her transformation into Lady Glyde and incarceration in marriage" (118). For obvious reasons, it is highly significant that the substitution of Laura for Anne, often considered to be the originary, the central substitution of the text, is only a repetition of another.

foresee. I am shattered by it – I have suffered under it, as nobody else has suffered. (378)

The failure of the father has certain inevitable consequences, most notably, it signals the failure of memory. If "*The Moonstone* is a novel about remembering" (Bourne Taylor 178), *The Woman in White* is a novel about forgetting, about the very situation to which the nineteenth-century novel is a response: the failure of *mnēmē* and the always already constant need for it to be supplemented by *hypomnēsis*. Nowhere is this failure and supplementation more apparent than in Fairlie's encounter with his "dead-alive" niece (441) – a phrase that neatly captures the status of all who become inscribed in writing. Through a repetition of the process of substitution accomplished through marriage, Percival and Fosco succeed in robbing Laura of her identity for the second time. Yet according to the prescriptions upheld by the metaphysics of presence, the evils of writing should be capable of being overturned by the superior powers of presence. With implicit faith in this system, Marian returns Laura to the protective presence of the father, only to find it lacking.

Let it be enough to say that Mr Fairlie declared, in the most positive terms, that he did not recognize the woman who had been brought into his room – that he saw nothing in her face and manner to make him doubt for a moment that his niece lay buried in Limmeridge churchyard, and that he would call on the law to protect him if before the day was over she was not removed from the house. (449-50)

Thus Walter is forced to acknowledge that the "vile deception which had asserted

her death defied exposure even in the house where she was born, and among the people with whom she had lived" (450). The family's failure to recognize Laura, the failure of *mnēmē* and presence, leads Walter to conclude that the key to the restoration of her identity lies not in the community or the law, but in writing. It is significant that it is a written document, the letter of Sir Percival Glyde to Count Fosco, announcing the date of Laura's departure from Blackwater Park, that eventually restores her – in a manner reminiscent of the powers of Thoth – to the realm of the living.

Yet if the "vile deception" of which Walter speaks is exposed and remedied through writing, it is no less true that it is perpetrated and made possible by it as well. Its non-originary origins lie in Percival and Fosco's recognition that identity is not constituted by innate plenitude but only through the act of naming: "inscribing within a difference, in classifying, in suspending the vocative absolute" (Derrida, *OG* 112). But the fact that identity is constituted by writing (inscription) rather than presence (innate plenitude) is only made possible by the prior failure of presence: "But for the fatal resemblance between the two daughters of one father, the conspiracy of which Anne had been the innocent instrument and Laura the innocent victim could never have been planned" (575). And thus, it is hardly surprising that the community itself, traditionally the realm of self-presence, is shown to be complicit with writing.

It was plain that Anne Catherick had been introduced into Count Fosco's house as Lady Glyde – it was plain that Lady Glyde had taken the dead woman's place in the Asylum – the substitution having been so managed as to make innocent people (the doctor and the two servants certainly, and the owner of the mad-house in all probability) accomplices in the crime. (452 emphasis mine)

In becoming an accomplice, presence itself is criminalized. Yet its criminalization is only made possible by its prior failure. Far from being a site of ordinary innocence, it is shown to be always already tainted by writing, by absence itself. Even the home, traditionally the very heart of the community, is criminalized, threatening:

The commonest consideration for Lady Glyde's safety forced on Miss Halcombe the necessity of resigning the struggle to do her justice, and of removing her at once from the place of all others that was now most dangerous to her – the neighbourhood of her own home. (451)¹¹

Truth and meaning, traditionally located in the realm of self-presence, are, in the absence of such a realm, located in the written text and the text as writing. That they should be positioned in writing which is, according to the tenets of Western metaphysics, always already twice removed from the truth of the *eidos*, is decidedly anti-phonocentric. Yet Collins takes this one step further and creates a text

¹¹ Once presence is shown to be contaminated by absence, it will not come as a surprise that the authority and authenticity of the voice are destabilized. When Fosco visits Mr. Fairlie to solicit the latter's written instructions that Lady Glyde is to pass a night in the Count's house, a visit which is essential to the success of his plans, he states, "My presence here (to my own great inconvenience) is the proof that I speak sincerely" (375). Yet neither speech nor presence affords such proofs any longer. As the reader is aware, the Count's intentions are anything but sincere.

which is, properly speaking, constituted by copies: copies of letters and copies of other documents, such as Fosco's confession, the marriage register, Laura's death certificate, the engraving of Laura's tombstone, Marian's diary, etc. To copy is to take yet another step away from the realm of presence associated with the voice, further obscuring the "natural" relationship between phonic signifier and the signified. As Derrida suggests, copyists may be seen as "*strangers* to the language which they transcribe; the copyist or his reader is by definition a stranger to the living use of language" (OG 227).

Ironically, Walter, as an Ariadne figure – a substitute logos – can only be described as a copyist: he traces the elusive play of language by re-inscribing, copying, each trace into a system. It is not without importance that the words "trace," "traceable," and "retrace" appear, by my count, fifty-four times in the text and each time in reference to the process of detection. In so doing, Walter suggests how all meaning, all truth, is always already a process of (re-)inscription. To reiterate Derrida on this point:

The disappearance of truth as presence, the withdrawal of the present origin of presence, is the condition of all (manifestation of) truth. Nontruth is the truth. Nonpresence is presence. Differance, the disappearance of any originary presence, is *at once* the condition of possibility *and* the condition of impossibility of truth. (D 168)

All speech is a form of writing, all writing a re-writing. Whether in spoken or written form, meaning is always the product of inscription, a fact highlighted by the

text as a collection of copies and, within the text, by the two marriage registers: the original which lies, and the copy which holds, *in the very space which is writing*, the truth. Like the titular postcard, writing functions as an "open but illegible letter" (Derrida, *PC* 12). Hence Walter is initially confused by the seemingly correct appearance of the original marriage register at Old Welmingham. Only later does he realize that "[s]moothly and fairly as appearances looked in the vestry, there was something wrong beneath them – there was something in the register-book, for aught I knew, that I had not discovered yet" (523). In order to make this discovery, Walter must engage in the play which operates under the surface of language. The truth is not located in the plenitude of the original, but only in the *difference* between this register and the copy, in the writing which is a *re-writing*. Furthermore, this truth, itself a blank, is located in a blank: "That space told the whole story!... [He] was not Sir Percival Glyde at all,...he had no more claim to the baronetcy and to Blackwater Park than the poorest labourer who worked on the estate" (529). This lack, or absence, of a name is itself revealed in an absence: the domain of writing.

The (Writing of) Crime (as Writing)

At the centre of *The Woman in White* is the criminal act of writing. Derrida describes writing as both a "miserable son" and "a son abandoned" (*D* 145). Guilty of patricide, it is, simultaneously, a victim itself. This characterization has a long

history, a history that returns to the primal scene of philosophy. In *Phaedrus*, Plato argues:

[O]nce a thing is committed to writing it circulates equally among those who understand the subject and those who have no business with it; a writing cannot distinguish between suitable and unsuitable readers. And if it is ill-treated or unfairly abused it always needs its parent to come to its rescue; it is quite incapable of defending or helping itself. (275)

At its most fundamental level, writing is iterable and hence open and unprotected.

Hence when Walter examines the marriage register at Old Welmingham:

[He] was struck by the insecurity of the place in which the register was kept. The door of the press was warped and cracked with age, and the lock was of the smallest and commonest kind. [He] could have forced it easily with the walking-stick [he] carried in [his] hand. (519)

Yet the very quality which renders writing vulnerable – its iterability – also renders it dangerous, capable of misrepresentation and manipulation. This duality allows writing to function as the site and possibility of Percival's crime and, simultaneously, as the site and possibility of Walter's detection.

Upon the death of his mother, Percival learns that he is, in fact, illegitimate: nameless. His father "promised to do what he could for his son. He died having done nothing – not having even made a will" (550). Thus we see that Percival's crime is necessitated by the prior failure of the father, his father's "abject duplicity and reckless violence" (530), all the familiar crimes of writing. Both "miserable" and

"abandoned," the "son (who can blame him?) wisely provided for himself" (550) by seeking out the marriage register at Old Welmingham.¹² His first intention is only "to tear the leaf out (in the right year and month), [and] destroy it" (551). Or, to rephrase this, to *erase* all traces of the absence of a marriage.

But when he came to look privately at the register for himself, he found at the bottom of one of the pages for the year eighteen hundred and three a blank space left, seemingly through there being no room to make a long entry there, which was made instead at the top of the next page. The sight of this chance altered all his plans. (551-2)

The space of (in) writing allows Percival the opportunity to correct the omission of the father – of presence – by writing in the forged marriage of his parents. In giving himself an identity, Glyde literally inscribes himself out of (and into) a blank – the blank of the page and the blank of writing which divides him in a moment from himself. In so doing, he commits himself to a life of patricide and, simultaneously, victimhood. The seductive movement from erasure to writing that characterizes this scene and, in fact, the novel as a whole, represents a strange reversal of the idealizing movement of metaphor. And thus, it suggests the ways in which this genre re-writes the white writing of metaphor in the black ink of the *pharmakon*; the

¹² Percival's choice of parish is dictated by the fact that the clergyman who presided during the year of the "wedding" is dead and his memory cannot be called upon for verification, thereby suggesting, quite literally, the finitude of living memory.

ways in which the sensation novel refuses to efface and, indeed, consistently foregrounds the writing of metaphor and the metaphoricity of writing.

From the moment when Percival usurps the role of the father as progenitor, he lives in fear of discovery. The iterability of writing, which allows him to commit the crime, also holds the possibility of its detection. Glyde must, therefore, live in fear of the play produced by his inscription. Believing Anne Catherick to be possessed of his secret, he attempts to curtail her movement and re-situate her within a position of exteriority by imprisoning her – as a disturbing and disturbed trace – in the asylum. Yet the very impossibility of his task is mirrored by Anne's ability to elude capture: play can never be contained.

A "wayward, rebellious son" (Derrida, *D* 145), it is hardly surprising that Percival wastes his ill-gotten inheritance.¹³ He marries as a means to escape his financial embarrassments. If Laura had been willing to *sign* away her fortunes, Percival's crimes would have been limited to the forgery of the marriage register and the imprisonment of Anne – to writing and erasure; they are, seemingly, inescapable. Yet Laura, in a rare moment of self-assertion, refuses to sign the document which will transfer control of her inheritance to her husband.

¹³ It is interesting that the text describes Percival in exactly these same terms, noting that the relationship between Fosco and Percival is that of "a good-humoured father...[and] a wayward son" (245). Thus, yet again, the dead or absent father is supplemented by a substitute and, more significantly, a substitute who is, like his

Jonathan Culler summarizes the argument presented by J.L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Words*, in the following terms:

[A] signature is supposed to attest to the presence to consciousness of a signifying intention at a particular moment. Whatever my thoughts before or after, there was a moment when I fully intended a particular meaning. The notion of a signature thus seems to imply a moment of presence to consciousness which is the origin of subsequent obligations or other effects. (*On Deconstruction* 125-6)

In *The Woman in White*, the question of "a signifying intention" is problematized by the fact that the substance of the document in question is "hidden in the part which [Percival] still held folded up under his hand" (266) and thus the intentions captured by the signature remain unknown. Laura herself demands, "If my signature pledges me to anything...surely I have some claim to know what that pledge is?" (267). Yet even if this were not the case, it would still be appropriate to say that Laura is *unable* as much as *unwilling* to sign her name. If a signature implies a "moment of presence to consciousness," Laura is unable to fulfil the necessary preconditions. Introduced into the text always already characterized by a lack, she is herself never fully present. Furthermore, she is to sign herself as "Lady Glyde," a name which places her one step further away from even the illusion of an independent, self-present identity.

original, always already implicated in the play of writing.

Laura's inability to sign her name is not unique; it does not represent, to borrow a phrase from Austin, an infelicitous accident. On the contrary, it highlights the manner in which all signatures are disabled by the very movement which enables them.

[T]he condition of possibility of those effects [of signature] is simultaneously, once again, the condition of their impossibility, of the impossibility of their rigorous purity. In order to function, that is, to be readable, a signature must have a repeatable, iterable form; it must be able to be detached from the present and singular intention of its production. It is its sameness which, by corrupting its identity and its singularity, divides its seal [*sceau*]. (Derrida, SEC 20)

Laura's refusal to sign suggests a desire to distance herself from a system of language which denies her a self-present identity; her inability to do so attests to the impossibility of fulfilling this desire. And thus, once again, we see a tension between a desire for the self-presence associated with the logos and, simultaneously, the acknowledgement that it does not exist.

Fuelled by his need for money and his growing fear that Laura has become acquainted with his secret, Percival determines that he must destroy Laura's identity in order to preserve his own. As I have already suggested, this crime is made possible by the iterability and hence arbitrariness of writing, which allows identities to be exchanged as easily as a set of clothes (448). Yet it is this very same writing which contains, within its traces, the possibility of its discovery. The duplicity of writing, its status as the non-originary origin of both crime and its detection, is most

clearly marked in the Brotherhood, that mysterious organization to which both Fosco and Pesca belong. Membership in this society is, like crime itself, illegible. According to Pesca, "the laws of the Brotherhood are the laws of no other political society on the face of the earth. The members are not known to one another" (596). These criminals are hidden, "sometimes under the every-day respectability and tranquillity of a man like me – sometimes under the grinding poverty, the fierce squalor, of men less lucky, less pliable, less patient than I am" (595-6), but they are, above all, invisible. Yet crime is, by the very same gesture which renders it invisible and secret, also rendered legible and open. It cannot help but produce, as an act of writing, the traces by which it may be detected. Hence the invisible membership is "identified by a secret mark, which [they] all bear, which lasts while [their] lives last" (596). This "secret mark" contains within itself the legible/illegible, secret/open nature of writing that ensures that "crimes [do indeed] cause their own detection." Assuming a false name and identity, Fosco believes that he has effectively erased the "mark" of his membership in the Brotherhood. Yet his fate belies such an assumption. The mark, or trace, of crime can never be simply eliminated. It remains, never simply present, as the never simply absent element in the other traces in the network. Believing himself to have been identified, Fosco flees, seemingly from himself, from the indelible mark he bears. Yet his movements are traced, like Anne's, until he is discovered dead, "struck with a knife or dagger exactly over his

heart" (643). It is significant that even in death, the mark is not *erased*, but written over, *re-written*, as a "T" for "Traditore" (644).

Nowhere does Fosco state his mistaken assumption about the possibility of erasing traces more clearly than in the philosophy of crime he offers at Blackwater Park. When Sir Percival suggests that the eerie lake "looks just the place for a murder" (253), the Count remonstrates: "What is your solid English sense thinking of? The water is too shallow to hide the body, and there is sand everywhere *to print off* the murderer's footsteps. It is, upon the whole, the very worst place for a murder that I ever set my eyes on" (253 emphasis mine). It is, speaking more precisely, an environment conducive to the production of traces. Criminals, for Fosco, are not divided into moral and immoral individuals, but only "fools" and "wise men" (254): those who leave disturbing traces and those who erase them:

[T]here are foolish criminals who are discovered, and wise criminals who escape. The hiding of a crime, or the detection of a crime, what is it? A trial of skill between the police on one side, and the individual on the other. When the criminal is a brutal, ignorant fool, the police in nine cases out of ten win. When the criminal is a resolute, educated, highly-intelligent man, the police in nine cases out of ten lose. (256)

In protest, Laura and Marian assert that "crimes cause their own detection." It is not they who are naive, believing in the "admirable sentiments...stated at the tops of

copy-books" (254), but Fosco.¹⁴ In producing traces, crimes do indeed cause their own detection. This is writ large and small in both this chapter and in the text as a whole; in the multitude of traces that permeate it: in a recently cleaned tombstone (114), Percival's nagging cough (215), the blood of a stray dog (260), footsteps in the sand (312), the word "LOOK" written in the sand (319), a misplaced seal (326), a "strangely crumpled" letter (365), a blank page (368), the strange choice of Percival and Mrs. Catherick's meeting place (514), a blank in a marriage register (529), the "stain" on Mrs. Catherick's character (552), the Count's letters from Italy (584), the "traces" of shock on the Count's face when he recognizes Pesca (605), and many other such trifles – a word which punctuates the text, by my counting, no less than thirty-seven times. Because crimes may be detected through their traces, the "trivial and terrible walk hand in hand together" (546). As we have already seen, this is a lesson learned too late by Count Fosco.

Belying the long tradition of viewing Fosco as the more sophisticated of the two criminals in this text, it is Percival who recognizes that crimes must inevitably cause their own detection and, in so doing, he reaches a level of understanding unattained by the Count. That Percival recognizes the danger of traces may, in part,

¹⁴ The Count's reference to "copy-books," designed to imply the simplicity of Laura and Marian's views, is undercut through its connection to Anne's letter of warning which is described as being written in a "cramped, conventional copy-book character" (104). It is precisely through such a network of traces that the belief that

be explained by the fact that he is himself created by writing – the forged record of his parent's marriage. Both patricide and victim, guilty of being his own progenitor and, simultaneously, powerless, Percival is the personification of writing:

[W]ritten discourse, in its "proper" meaning – that which is inscribed in sensible space – is deformed at its very birth. It is not well born: not only, as we have seen, because it is not entirely viable, but because it is not of good birth, of legitimate birth. It is not *gnēsios*. It is not exactly a commoner; it is a bastard. By the voice of its father it cannot be avowed, recognized. It is outside the law. (Derrida, *D* 148)

Percival is the "bastard" son of a father who is, himself, deformed (551), but is he – is writing itself – limited to such exteriority, to existing "outside the law"? Inherent in phonologocentric thought is the belief that writing is violent. According to Christopher Norris, the "effect of writing will...be to break those peculiar ties – of paternal sanction on the one side and filial obligation on the other – that serve to ensure the passage of authentic truth from each generation to the next" (31). Yet the basis of the relationship between father and son is the name and to name is to commit, as Derrida suggests, the "first violence" (*OG* 112). The violence of naming, of writing itself ("how can we deny the practice of writing in general to a society capable of obliterating the proper?" [Derrida, *OG* 110]), is not an external violence but an internal one: presence is always already criminalized, always already characterized by the violence of writing. It is only when presence fails to commit

"crimes cause their own detection" is validated.

this necessary violence that Percival himself must act as a criminal. Through this act of writing, Percival, and the text as a whole, corrects and compensates for the lack which always already characterizes presence. Yet in the very same gesture, he/it reinscribes nothing other than the lack itself.

Living in mortal fear of the traces his crime produced, of the discovery to which they may lead, Percival makes one final and futile attempt to erase them. Yet in so doing, he erases not the traces of the crime but only himself. Significantly, the fire which scorches him leaves only his face untouched, yet this fact remaining, he is still a man devoid of an identity.

Detection, *Mnēmē*, *Hyponnēsis*

In the previous chapter, I suggested that Collins's detectives engage in the play of language not to celebrate it but in order to curtail it. The process of detection is, precisely, a re-tracing, a re-writing of the crime into its solution. Nowhere is this more evident than in *The Woman in White*, where Walter, as a general editor, rewrites the disparate and diverging fragments of testimony into a single, coherent narrative:

I shall relate both narratives, not in the words (often interrupted, often inevitably confused) of the speakers themselves, but in the words of the brief, plain, studiously simply abstract which I committed to writing for my own guidance, and for the guidance of my legal advisor. So the tangled web will be most speedily and intelligibly unrolled. (435)

I have also suggested that this narrative is offered to the reader in lieu of a trial, thereby positioning truth and meaning in writing, the play of language, rather than in the realm of self-presence. And thus the text demonstrates that writing must necessarily supplement an always already lacking or failed presence, just as *hypomnēsis* must necessarily supplement an always already lacking or failed *mnēmē*.

As we have already seen, the relationship between speech/writing and *mnēmē/hypomnēsis* has a long history. In *Phaedrus*, when Thoth offers writing to King Thamus, the king rejects it, declaring:

[Y]ou, who are the father of writing, have out of fondness for your offspring attributed to it quite the opposite of its real function. Those who acquire it will cease to exercise their memory and become forgetful; they will rely on writing to bring things to their remembrance by external signs instead of on their own internal resources. What you have discovered is a receipt for recollection, not for memory. (275)

The king/father objects to writing because "under the pretence of supplementing memory, writing makes one even more forgetful; far from increasing knowledge, it diminishes it" (Derrida, *D* 100). What is in question here, as we have already seen, is "the subtle difference between knowledge as memory and nonknowledge as remembrance, between two forms and two moments of repetition" (Derrida, *D* 135). Knowledge as memory – living memory – is produced in presence and preserved in the spoken word over which the *logos* presides. Nonknowledge and

rememoration is produced by writing which is, in fact, external to memory, external to the logos.

While the phonic signifier would remain in animate proximity, in the living presence of *mnēmē* or *psuchē*, the graphic signifier, which reproduces it or imitates it, goes one degree further away, falls outside of life...and puts it to sleep in the type of its double. Whence the *pharmakon's* two misdeeds: it dulls the memory, and if it is of any assistance at all, it is not for *mnēmē* but for *hypomnēsis*.... It is a debilitating poison for memory, but a remedy or tonic for its external signs. (Derrida, *D* 110)

Yet as we have already seen in Mr. Fairlie's inability to recognize Laura, the living memory of presence is always already debilitated.

When Fairlie orders Laura and Marian to leave his house, Walter concludes that "effort need not have been given up as hopeless yet" (450):

When [Laura's] memory could be trusted once more to serve her, she would naturally refer to persons and events in the past with a certainty and a familiarity which no imposter could simulate, and so the fact of her identity, which her own appearance had failed to establish, might subsequently be proved, with time to help her, by the surer test of her own words. (450)

Time disillusioned Walter of any such hope and he is eventually forced to admit that her "memory of events, from the period of her leaving Blackwater Park to the period of our meeting in the burial-ground of Limmeridge Church, was lost beyond all hope of recovery" (576). Walter resorts to writing when he has given up

all hope of appealing to my recognition of Laura, or to Marian's recognition of her, in proof of her identity.... [When the] one remaining chance, which I had at first thought might be trusted to

serve us – the chance of appealing to her recollection of persons and events with which no imposter could be familiar, was proved, by the sad test of our later experience, to be hopeless. (454-5)

The always already failed living memory of the character who, it should be remembered, occupies the position of the centre of the centre, leaves Walter no alternative but to turn to writing as the only source, the true site, of memory. For as Derrida demonstrates, memory is always-already a process of inscription, always already a participant in writing:

Memory is finite by nature.... A limitless memory would in any event be not memory but infinite self-presence. Memory always therefore already needs signs in order to recall the non-present, with which it is necessarily in relation.... Memory is thus contaminated by its first substitute: *hypomnēsis*. (D 109)

The crucial relationship between writing and memory is commented on by Marian herself:

In the perilous uncertainty of our present situation, it is hard to say what future interests may not depend upon the regularity of the entries in my journal, and upon the reliability of my recollection at the time when I make them.... Anyway, it is only a trifling matter, and I am almost ashamed to put it down here in writing – it seems to set the forlornness of our situation in such a miserably vivid light. We must have little indeed to depend on, when the discovery that my memory can still be trusted to serve us is hailed as if it was the discovery of a new friend! (307)

Yet it is not Marian's living memory, *mnēmē*, that can be "trusted," but rather, the writing of her memories, *hypomnēsis*. The text is punctuated by constant references to the limitations of *mnēmē* and the need for it to be supplemented by *hypomnēsis*:

Walter's need to consult Mrs. Fairlie's written correspondence in order to recall the resemblance between Anne and Laura (68); Mrs. Michelson's inability to remember the date of Laura's journey "in the absence of any written memorandum on the subject" (436); Laura's similar inability to recall the date through her omission "to make a memorandum beforehand of the day on which she took the journey" (445); Walter's determination to "keep this letter...to help my memory when the time comes" to confront the Count (469); etc.

It is not simply the case that memory, as a sign of the truth, is always already a participant in writing. (Written) memory (as writing) is essential because it reproduces the trifles, the traces, by which the crime may be solved. As an Ariadne figure, Walter is a writer and, more precisely, a copyist. He re-traces the play of traces buried in writing. Initially, such traces are mere "fragments, sadly incoherent in themselves, and widely detached from each other." Yet in (re-)writing the story of the crime, Walter (re-)inscribes such fragments into the network of traces, traces of traces, like links in a chain. By engaging in play, he is able to transform a case that "had been a puzzle from the first" (441) into a coherent narrative.

When Walter questions Pesca about the Count, the latter insists, "I hold no thread, in my mind, between that man Fosco, and the past time which I call back to me for your sake" (594). The thread of which Pesca speaks – the thread which links the present and the past and, in fact, makes the absent present (and the present

absent) – is the sole property of the Ariadne figure. He alone can untangle "the clue that leads through the windings of the story" (433). By connecting the inevitable traces of the crime, the Ariadne first creates the "thread" and then uses it to guide the characters through the labyrinth towards meaning. Detection is, as much as crime, an act of writing.

Walter engages in the process of detection – in writing itself – to restore a lost presence.

That house shall open again to receive her in the presence of every soul who followed the false funeral to the grave – that lie shall be publicly erased from the tombstone by the authority of the head of the family, and these two men shall answer for their crime to ME, though the justice that sits in tribunals is powerless to pursue them. (465-6)

When the novel concludes, Laura's identity has been revived, the tombstone erased, and Sir Percival and Count Fosco are both dead. According to Sue Lonoff, one "must not underestimate Collins's own desire for a neat and happy ending.... Whatever the internal oppositions, Collins's conclusion restores equilibrium. Justice is meted out, mysteries are elucidated, wanderers return, and marriages are made and strengthened" (*Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers* 101; 107). Yet a careful reading of the text's conclusion reveals Lonoff's assumptions to be naive. The values of self-presence, consistently undermined throughout the text, are further destabilized by its conclusion. As a reward for his efforts, Walter claims Laura for

his bride. Yet in naming her Laura Hartright, he, in one and the same gesture, divorces her from the realm of self-presence and re-inscribes her into writing, thus repeating the violence of the criminals he himself condemned.¹⁵ The final pages also see the illegitimate inheritance of Sir Percival Glyde replaced by the legitimate inheritance of Walter's son, "the Heir of Limmeridge" (646). But because this inheritance is also passed on through the violence of naming, it comes to bear a striking resemblance to that which it replaces. Walter's legitimate son, through the very name that renders him so, is made complicit with writing, by a father who is, no less than Percival's father, Percival himself, a product and producer of writing. Yet the ultimate irony of this novel, overwritten by questions of identity, is that it is told, by Walter's own admission, "under feigned names" (563). Stolen or retrieved, each of the characters' identities is, finally, arbitrary.

By way of conclusion, I would like to return to a scene which, in itself, calls into question the very notion of a conclusion, the certainties such a concept entails. A scene which is, moreover, paradigmatic of the manner in which the sensation novel functions for Collins. In order to set the scene, however, we must first

¹⁵ This third substitution confirms a pattern which, in turn, confirms that the process of substitution, even when it is used to restore the realm of presence associated with the absent transcendental signified, "can go on infinitely in the element of the linguistic permutation of substitutes, of substitutes for substitutes" (Derrida, *D* 89). And thus, in the process of re-establishing the centre it actually destabilizes it by enacting a logic which exceeds its control.

consider the circumstances which produce it. On the very day on which Fosco elucidates his philosophy of crime at the boat-house, Laura returns home only to find that she has lost her brooch, a "little keepsake" (216) whose value lies precisely in its associations with a happier epoch: the time when she lived happily in the house of her guardian with Marian and Walter Hartright; a time when she could maintain the illusion of a self-present identity, unaware of the fact that she was always already characterized by a lack. Understandably distraught, Laura determines to spare no efforts to retrieve the lost article and the following day initiates a search for it. Returning to the boat-house, Laura, unable to retrace it through her own efforts, comes face to face with Anne Catherick. Significantly, it is this figure of writing and play who restores what she has lost. Yet at the very moment of doing so, Laura recognizes, for the first time, the specular resemblance between them, the resemblance which foregrounds her own lack. Terrified of being discovered by those who wish to imprison her, Anne runs away, pausing only to arrange to meet Laura the following day to reveal Percival's secret. This scene, the preamble as it were, to that in question, bears a specular resemblance to the primal scene of the nineteenth-century novel: the death of presence and *mnēmē*, the borrowing of writing and *hypomnēsis* in order to supplement what is thereby shown to be always already lacking, and the subsequent erasure of nothing less than this very writing.

Turning now to the scene itself, Laura returns according to plan only to find that Anne is nowhere to be found. Yet the traces of her presence (absence) remain in the form of "some marks in the sand" (319); the very sand which, according to Fosco's premonition, is capable of retaining the traces of crime (as writing). Examining these "marks" more closely, she discovers that they are actually "a word written in large letters": "LOOK" (319). Digging into the earth, she recovers a written note by Anne, a note concerning the secret that lies at the centre of the text. Thus far, the movement of this scene represents a reversal of the movement of idealization which characterizes the realist novel and the entire history to which it belongs. This idealizing movement is neatly captured in Anne's gesture of writing and hiding the note: writing is borrowed, distrustfully, in order to make the absent centre manifest (a centre which, as we have already seen, is nothing but the repetition of the repeater in the absence of the essence of the repeated itself) and then the very writing which makes the restoration of the centre possible is buried, effaced. Thus, in yet another paradoxical reversal, the quintessential figure of sensation repeats and re-enacts the gestures of realism. Yet the scene does not end here. Surprising Laura with the note in her hand, Percival reveals that this process of idealization is *itself* a process of repetition. As he confesses, "I dug [the note] up out of the sand two hours since, and buried it again, and wrote the word above it again, and left it ready to your hands" (321). Thus it appears that the quintessential movement of metaphysics is

indistinguishable from that of the criminal, the figure of play. Furthermore, Percival's own actions – uncovering only to subsequently re-cover the traces of writing – are paradigmatic of the movement of crime. Yet they are also, as we have seen, paradigmatic of the movement of detection. The Ariadne figure digs up the hidden/effaced traces of the crime but does so only to rebury or re-efface them, in the desire to restore the realm of presence associated with the logos that he or she substitutes for.

Thus we see that the sensation novel repeats and enacts the gestures which characterize the nineteenth-century novel as a whole in its response to the death of God. But at the very same time, it foregrounds, demands that the readers "LOOK" at, the repetition of the writing of its repetition. It re-presents and resurrects the centre, but it is a centre inextricably written. A centre which both fulfils and denies the very possibility of the desire to return to the presence of presence. And thus, this novel of forgetting, of the failure of memory is also, paradoxically, characterized by a refusal to forget its own forgetfulness. Each of these irreconcilable contradictions is best seen as the textual enactment of a tension which characterizes all of Collins's work and the nineteenth-century novel as a whole. Turning now to *The Moonstone*, we will trace the ways in which Collins engages with these tensions in an increasingly complex and sustained way. In this, the final chapter of the thesis, I will return to those issues which preoccupied me in the Introduction and, more

specifically, the relationship between detection and psychoanalysis.

Chapter Three
**The Trail of the Trace/The Tracing of a Trail: Detective-Fever and
Psychoanalysis in *The Moonstone***

"I made a private inquiry last week, Mr Superintendent," he said.
"At one end of the inquiry there was a murder, and at the other
end there was a spot of ink on a tablecloth that nobody could
account for. In all my experience along the dirtiest ways of this
dirty little world, I have never met with such a thing as a trifle yet."

"There seems much ground for belief, that *every* sensory impression
which has once been recognized by the perceptive consciousness, is
registered (so to speak) in the brain, and may be reproduced at
some subsequent time, although there may be no consciousness of
its existence in the mind during the whole intermediate period."

In beginning this chapter I am (always) already embarking on a rather
labyrinthine path, approaching *The Moonstone* via that curiously incestuous triptych
of texts: Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter," Jacques Lacan's "Seminar on "The
Purloined Letter,"" and Jacques Derrida's "*Le facteur de la vérité*." The purpose of this
detour is not to delay my ultimate arrival, nor simply to appear to deviate from the
proper route. It is, rather, to situate my discussion of *The Moonstone* within a scene
of writing that calls into question the very possibility of arrival and of detour itself.

In the final sentence of his Seminar, Lacan asserts that "a letter always arrives
at its destination" (72). This is illustrated and/or proved (my indecision is, as we
shall see, both significant and necessary) by Poe's letter which is not, as in

Baudelaire's translation, stolen (*volée*), but merely purloined: prolonged or delayed.¹

According to the logic of the Seminar, a "certain reappropriation and a certain readequation will reconstitute the proper, the place, meaning, and truth that have become distant from themselves *for the time of a detour*" (Derrida, "*Le Facteur de la vérité*" 436 emphasis mine). As Barbara Johnson points out, such an assertion is, for Derrida, tantamount to affirming the "absolute decipherability of the literary text" (475). The act of deciphering, of unveiling a hidden truth, is central both to the genre which is said to originate with Poe and to psychoanalysis. If "detective fiction can be read as a prototypical expression of the mechanisms that underlie all narrative – that keep the reader always engaged, suspenseful" (Bourne Taylor 18), it can also be read as the "prototypical expression" of psychoanalysis.

[L]ike a psychoanalysis, the detective story reorders our perception of the past through language. Although psychoanalysis and detective fiction are so different in conscious design and intent, they share a significant structural relationship, just as they share a close historical relationship. (Hutter 191)

In *Mystery and Its Fictions*, David L. Grossvogel asserts that the reader's encounter with the text is fundamentally "*durational*: we agree to maintain our expectation of a solution (we agree to assume there is a mystery) for a *period of time*" (95), the time of reading the text. Thus one may say that detective fiction is

¹ Throughout this chapter, I use the word "purloined" in the sense that Lacan adopts, to indicate that the letter in question is one "whose course has been *prolonged* (etymologically, the word of the title)" (SPL 59).

dedicated to the detouring of truth. Furthermore, this truth, like Lacan's letter, is merely purloined: temporarily put aside. Although both may suffer a detour, their ultimate arrival is never in question. The issues of Truth and decipherability (veiling/ unveiling) are central to all of the texts examined in this chapter. For Poe and Lacan, they are inextricable, their proximity guaranteed by the logos. They both participate in a phonologocentric system of truth that allows for detour but not for the possibility of non-arrival: the "double, repetition, recording, the mimeme in general are excluded from this system, along with the entire graphematic structure they imply" (Derrida, FV 472). This detour is, as we have already seen, nothing other than the detour into writing necessitated by the death of God and, more precisely, the movement of idealization that guarantees His safe return.

Although *The Moonstone* has been named "the first and greatest of English detective novels" (T.S. Eliot 136), it is a fundamentally divided text and, as such, is at odds with the phonocentric detective fiction produced by Poe and his followers which is, above all, intolerant of the division associated with writing. *The Moonstone* is concerned with not one but two investigations: the investigation into the loss of the diamond and the investigation of the unconscious. The former undoubtedly participates in the phonologocentric tradition of detective fiction. The latter, however, devoted to a study of the always already divided nature of the self, is set within a scene of writing which not only destabilizes the assumptions shared by Poe and Lacan and, more generally, by detective fiction and psychoanalysis, but those of

the first investigation as well. Thus *The Moonstone* both relies upon *and* calls into question the notion of the detour as a necessary departure from, in order to return to, self-presence. In supplementing the well-known debate between these three texts with a fourth, this chapter, by exploring *The Moonstone* as both a divided text and a text *as* division, will explore the ways in which Collins repeats and re-enacts the gestures of metaphysics *and* destabilizes them.² It will examine the ways in which

² My choice of supplement is hardly arbitrary. That Collins was familiar with "The Purloined Letter" is evinced by his significantly titled short story "The Stolen Letter" (1848). This story bears many striking similarities to the original but it is the manner in which Collins departs from Poe that is of interest here. Such is the nature of Poe's letter that Lacan is able to transform it into a transcendental signified which places "a reassuring end to the reference from sign to sign." In contrast, Collins's letter, whose signified is revealed to be a confession of forgery – a trespass of the sign – foregrounds how all language is the sign of a sign. Unlike Poe's letter which "will be where it always will have been, always should have been, intangible and indestructible via the detour of a *proper*, and properly *circular*, itinerary" (Derrida, FV 425), Collins's letter is hidden, rather arbitrarily, under the carpet. In the original, Dupin "knows where [the letter] must *be found* in order to return circularly, adequately to its proper place" (Derrida, FV 439). Removed from the locality which guarantees its ultimate arrival, the realm of self-presence, Collins's investigator is enabled to retrieve the letter only through writing: a copy of a written memorandum whose illegibility alerts him to its significance and eventually informs him of the letter's location. Although Collins's text does not escape from the metaphysics of presence, no text ever does, it does consistently highlight the scene of writing by which it is constituted. More generally, I would argue that each of Collins's texts explores, without totalizing, the division of writing (*le quart de l'écriture*) and thus *The Moonstone* constitutes a singularly appropriate fourth (*le quart*) with which to supplement the debate between the three.

For a discussion of the importance of numbers within this debate, see Barbara Johnson's "The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida" (1977) and John T. Irwin's lesser known, but insightful, piece, "Mysteries We Reread, Mysteries of Rereading: Poe, Borges, and the Analytic Detective Story; Also Lacan, Derrida, and Johnson" (1986).

the two fundamentally contradictory investigations enact a tension between the desire to return to a realm of self-presence and an acknowledgement that such a realm does not exist.

Lacan's "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" is an investigation of the repetition compulsion as elaborated by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. It proposes to use Poe's "The Purloined Letter" as an illustration of "the decisive orientation which the subject receives from the itinerary of a signifier" (Lacan, SPL 40). Isolating "the two scenes of the real drama" (SPL 47) from Poe's tale, Lacan establishes two intersubjective triads, corresponding to the Oedipal situation, from the three glances which structure the theft of the letter, first by the Minister and, subsequently, by Dupin. Within these triads, each subject who possesses the letter becomes, in turn, possessed by it and, under its influence, assumes a new position which, in turn, displaces the others. Thus, "their displacement is determined by the place which a pure signifier – the purloined letter – comes to occupy in their trio. And that is what will confirm for [Lacan] its status as repetition automatism" (SPL SPL 45).

Lacan's entire argument hinges upon the "materiality" of this "pure signifier" whose signified is, simply, irrelevant. He insists that this "materiality is *odd* [*singulière*] in many ways, the first of which is not to admit partition" (SPL 53). Derrida is not surprised that Lacan should find this "materiality" "*odd*," for Lacan "retains only its ideality. He considers the letter only at the point at which it is

determined (no matter what he says) by its content of meaning," which allows it to "circulate, intact, from its place of detachment to its place of reattachment, that is, to the same place" (FV 464). It is, precisely, this "materiality," as intolerance to partition, that allows Lacan to conclude that while a letter may suffer a detour, it will "always arrive at its destination." For Derrida, as I have already suggested, such a conclusion can only arise from a system of truth as readequation. "In question is indeed a regulated *circulation* which organizes a return from the detour toward the hole. A transcendental reappropriation and a transcendental readequation fulfilling an authentic contract" (FV 437). Lacan, like Dupin before him, reappropriates the letter: he corrects a deviation and returns it to its proper destination in what amounts to a process of readequation. This process, for Derrida, implies "a theory of the letter as an indivisible locality" (FV 438). It is precisely these phonologocentric assumptions, and their place within Lacan's Seminar, which are explored in "*Le facteur de la vérité*." For Derrida, it is not a question of "rescuing something like literature or literary form from the grasp of psychoanalysis" (FV 432), but of destabilizing the "singular *unity* of the letter [as] the site of the contract of the truth with itself" (FV 439).

According to "*Le facteur de la vérité*," Lacan's Seminar is, like all phonologocentric gestures, guilty of repressing writing. In isolating, as its object, the two triangular scenes of dialogue, the Seminar eliminates a third: the scene of writing, as both "the narrated content of the writing (the signifier, the written, the

letter)" and "the operation of writing" itself (Derrida, FV 436). Far from spurious, Lacan's violent framing of the two scenes is dictated by "the demand for truth" (Derrida, FV 436). It permits, contrary to Lacan's stated intentions, the signifier to be transformed into a signified and, in fact, the transcendental signified of psychoanalysis: "'woman' as veiled/unveiled castration" (Derrida, FV 439). Thus what is at stake, for Lacan and Derrida and, anticipating things to come, for Poe himself, is not "this or that truth, but is the truth itself, the truth of the truth" (Derrida, FV 426).

Lacan's singular or indivisible signifier is wholly dependent on this elimination of the scene of writing, as the "notions of indivisibility (protection from partition) and of locality are themselves indissociable; they condition each other" (Derrida, FV 424). Such a notion of indivisibility, where a letter cut into "small pieces...remains the letter it is" (Lacan, SPL 53), corresponds, according to Derrida, to an "*idealization*" and, more specifically, an idealization of the "*point de capiton*" which staples the signifier to the signified" (FV 464).³ The only locality where such an idealization can occur is the voice. Therefore, Lacan must locate the letter, the letter as truth, and, in fact, the Seminar as a whole, within a "speech whose meaning remains out of reach of partition" (Derrida, FV 464). By reintroducing the scene of writing back into both "The Purloined Letter" and "Seminar on 'The Purloined

³ As Alan Bass points out, "*Capitonner* means to quilt; *point de capiton* is Lacan's term for the 'quilted stitch' that links signifier to signified" (Derrida, FV 464 TN 36).

Letter," Derrida unleashes the destabilizing dissemination which threatens Lacan's fragile phonologocentrism by guaranteeing the letter's "always possible partition" (FV 444). This "always possible partition" destroys the possibility of an unequivocal meaning, always identical to itself, and guarantees that a letter may always *not* arrive at its destination.

Although Derrida's critique may centre upon Lacan, his ultimate target is nothing less than the "philosophy of psychoanalysis" as a whole.

The letter, Lacan claims, shows little tolerance for partition. I have tried to demonstrate that this axiom was dogmatic and inseparable from a whole philosophy of psychoanalysis. Indeed, it made the entire analytical interpretation possible while it also assured that interpretation of its hermeneutic power over the kind of writing we call literary. (Derrida, "My Chances/*Mes Chances*" 10)

Thus as David Carroll argues, "*Le facteur de la vérité*" is an attack on "psychoanalysis's claims to universality, evident in the manner in which it projects and therefore finds itself, that is, finds confirmation of itself everywhere, without ever investigating the effects on it of the contexts in which it finds itself" ("Institutional Authority vs. Critical Power" 118). Yet, if this is the case, is it not "*odda*" that Derrida himself fails to investigate one particularly obvious, even seductive context, a context that is itself devoted to investigations, namely detective fiction? Is this omission, or reduction, not rendered all the more "*odda*" by the fact that Lacan himself raises the question of genre? And finally, is it not *odder still* that Lacan's immediate neutralization of the question of genre is allowed to pass without comment, even though an identical

gesture, the neutralization of the narrator, fuels Derrida's entire argument?

It does not, however, seem excessive, before pursuing this line of inquiry [that of the repetition compulsion], to ask whether the thrust of the tale and the interest we bring to it – to the extent that they coincide – do not lie elsewhere.

May we view as simply a rationalization (in our gruff jargon) the fact that the story is told to us as a police mystery?

In truth, we should be right in judging that fact highly dubious as soon as we note that everything which warrants such mystery concerning a crime or offense – its nature and motives, instruments and execution; the procedure used to discover the author, and the means employed to convict him – is carefully eliminated here at the start of each episode. (Lacan, SPL 45)

Although Derrida insists on situating "The Purloined Letter" within what he refers to as the "Dupin trilogy" (FV 459), his discussion of the trilogy does not constitute a discussion of genre. Although elsewhere he insists that there is no such thing as a "genreless text" ("The Law of Genre" 65), "*Le facteur de la vérité*" never touches upon the traits, structures, or typical forms which, if not constituting membership, do, at least, constitute participation in a genre. Nor does he come to terms with Poe as the father of this genre, even though his paternity is as unquestionable as that of Freud. One might ask why, when so much of his critique is devoted to a discussion of doubles and the effects of doubling, does Derrida fail to acknowledge the doubling of Poe and Lacan? For as we shall see, Poe is, as much as Lacan, *un facteur de la vérité*: "discoursing on the truth of the text, and then in general proffering the discourse on truth, the truth on truth" (Derrida, FV 414). Yet in eliminating what one might designate a fourth scene, the genre of nineteenth-

century detective fiction, Derrida reduces *les facteurs de la vérité* to *un facteur* and, in fact, *le facteur*. And, in so doing, he ignores a context that has profound implications for our understanding of both Lacan and psychoanalysis as a whole.

As I have already suggested, Hartman describes psychoanalysis as "a displaced religious or metaphysical discourse in search of the logos" (*Saving the Text* 107). One would be hard pressed to discover a more apt description of Poe's tales of detection. Psychoanalysis and detective fiction, Poe and Lacan, all are concerned with the search for and restitution of the truth as Truth. Even a brief examination of the "Dupin trilogy" as detective fiction, concentrating on its traits, structures and typical forms, will reveal certain striking similarities between Poe and Lacan. In so doing, it will destabilize psychoanalysis's authority by revealing a context which simply cannot be framed, or reduced, and thus dominated.

Les facteurs de la vérité

In a footnote appended to the republication of "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," Poe explains that the tale is based on the real murder of Mary Cecilia Rogers and thus, "all argument founded upon the fiction is applicable to the truth: and the investigation of the truth was the object" (140-1). That truth, rather than mystery or obscurity, is indeed the "object" of these tales of detection is confirmed by Poe himself in his oft-quoted letter to Philip C. Cooke.

These tales of ratiocination owe most of their popularity to being something in a new key. I do not mean to say that they are not

ingenious – but people think them more ingenious than they are – on account of their method and *air* of method. In the "Murders in the Rue Morgue," for instance, where is the ingenuity of unravelling a web which you yourself (the author) *have woven for the express purpose of unravelling?* (Ostrom 328 second emphasis mine)

As David Van Leer points out, this letter reminds the reader that

truth in fiction has a special character. It is not discovered after the fact, but created before the fact to appear as if discovered.... The question of how detection discovers truth becomes that of how detection constructs it – not clarifying obscurities which have, after all, been invented to be clarified, but *using a fictional act of clarification to make extratextual truth possible.* (74-5 emphasis mine)

Poe's detective fiction is, as I have already suggested, a "discourse in search of the logos." When the fictional detective, Dupin, engages in the search for a fictional truth, he is engaged in nothing less than a search for the logos. In discovering the former he, simultaneously, asserts the existence of the latter and thus of Truth itself. It is this relationship between truth and the Truth which led the *Daily Telegraph* to lament, when confronted with the Vidil case, that "We have no Poe amongst us now to penetrate this mystery, and arrive through a dark labyrinth of evidence and deduction at that mental standpoint where all becomes open and clear" (cited in Altick 135).⁴

This relationship between fiction and truth is further elaborated in Poe's 1842 review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*.

⁴ For details of the Vidil case and other sensational crimes, see Richard D. Altick's *Evil Encounters: Two Victorian Sensations* (1987).

We have said that the tale has a point of superiority even over the poem. In fact, while the *rhythm* of this latter is an essential aid in the development of the poem's highest idea – the idea of the Beautiful – the artificialities of this rhythm are an inseparable bar to the development of all points of thought or expression which have their basis in *Truth*. But Truth is often, and in very great degree, the aim of the tale. Some of the finest tales are tales of ratiocination. (573)

Truth, the truth as Truth, is the "object" or "aim" of the detective genre. Furthermore, this truth is not, according to Poe, to be found in the "artificialities" of the poetic signifier but, anticipating Lacan's idealization of the "*point de capiton*," in the "natural" unified sign of the tale. It is not surprising, therefore, that Dupin builds his "hopes of a full solution to the riddles" presented by "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" on two words: "*Mon Dieu!*" (130). God, or the logos, is the only "site of the contract of the truth with itself" (Derrida, FV 439). Only the proximity of the logos to itself, a proximity traditionally associated with the voice, can guarantee the unity of the signifier and the signified, unequivocal meaning, absolute decipherability, and the Truth. Yet the similarities between Poe and Lacan do not end here.

Truth, for Poe and Lacan and, more generally, detective fiction and psychoanalysis, is the product of "Exhibiting, denuding, undressing, unveiling: the familiar acrobatics of the metaphor of the truth" (Derrida, FV 415). As we already know, Todorov suggests that detective fiction actually comprises two separate stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. This division is (*pace* Derrida) most evident in the "two scenes of the real drama" of Poe's tale: the original theft of the letter by Minister D— and its subsequent re-theft by Dupin. In

"On Reading Poetry: Reflections on the Limits and Possibilities of Psychoanalytical Approaches," Shoshana Felman demands,

In what sense, then, does the second scene in Poe's tale, while repeating the first scene, nonetheless differ from it? In the sense, precisely, that the second scene, through the repetition, allows for an understanding, for an *analysis* of the first. This analysis through repetition is to become, in Lacan's ingenious reading, no less than an *allegory of psychoanalysis*. (147)

Yet if this second scene is, indeed, an "*allegory of psychoanalysis*," it is an "*allegory of psychoanalysis*" as detection.

Todorov's first story, that of the crime, corresponds to an act of veiling that creates clues which function, temporarily, as uninterpretable signifiers divorced from their signifieds. The second story, in turn, corresponds to an act of unveiling and readequation which rejoins the signifier to its proper signified and thus renders it decipherable. As Peter Huhn points out, part of the detective's task, in the second story, is to separate "the relevant signs from the mass of nonrelevant facts around it, until he is finally able to *reduce the polyvalence to one true meaning*" (455 emphasis mine). Thus the second scene, the scene of deciphering, or analysis, discards the disguises, lifts off the veils, to reveal the truth of the *Stoff* and the *Stoff* as the truth. What both Poe and Lacan fail to recognize, what they, more precisely, repress, is that this second scene is also an allegory of the repetition which constitutes the iterability of writing: the iterability which allows for meaning but, by the very same gesture, precludes the possibility of the reduction which would allow for "one true

meaning." In terms of the issues raised by this text, it is an allegory of how the nineteenth-century relies upon, only to repress, the repetition of writing as the detour which allows for and disallows a return to self-presence.

Although Todorov insists that in "their purest form, these two stories have no point in common" (44), it is essential to both Poe and Lacan that they are fundamentally and irrevocably united. Only the "unity of the veil (veiling/unveiling)" (Derrida, *FV* 418) can guarantee the unity of the letter and thus its ultimate arrival: the arrival of Truth itself. This "unity of the veil," essential to both Poe and Lacan, may be illuminated by a discussion of the theory of abduction first elaborated by Charles S. Peirce. Nancy Harrowitz describes abduction as "a theory developed to explain a preexisting fact" (182) and outlines the process in the following terms:

Noticing the observed fact is the first step. A rule then suggests itself to explain the origin of the observed fact. The observed fact is consequently read through the hypothetically posited rule and the case is abducted. The rule, then, generates the intelligibility of the observed fact, and the observed fact is read through the rule. (190)

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida claims that "Peirce goes very far in the direction that I have called the de-construction of the transcendental signified" (49).⁵ Yet abduction, in the hands of both Poe and Lacan, is decidedly phonologocentric. Lacan's "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" concludes that "a letter always arrives at its

⁵ For a discussion of Derrida's reading of Peirce, see Jeffrey Barnouw's "Peirce and Derrida: 'Natural Signs' Empiricism *Versus* 'Originary Trace' Deconstruction" (1986).

destination." But is this conclusion not, in actuality, its point of departure? Does this truth, this truth as Truth, this law, this law as Law, not guide his hand as "*Le facteur de la vérité*" throughout the entire Seminar? Is this not already signalled to the reader by the fact that "The Purloined Letter," as presented by Lacan, is always already unveiled, always already reduced to its truth, the Truth, as the *Stoff* of the Oedipal triangle?

Lacan proposes to use Poe's tale as an illustration, or example, of the rule, or law, that "a letter always arrives at its destination." But it is only the "observed fact" that the letter of the tale does ultimately arrive that allows him to establish this law: "Thus it is that what the 'purloined letter,' nay, 'the letter in sufferance' means is that a letter always arrives at its destination" (SPL 72). Lacan's logic is, not coincidentally, as circular as the itinerary of the letter itself. Abduction is "the step in between a fact and its origin; the instinctive, perceptual jump which allows the subject to guess an origin which can then be tested out to prove or disprove the hypothesis" (Harrowitz 182). But in Lacan's Seminar, law and example are conflated within the "unity of the veil." The "step in between," the leap of faith, is eliminated.

Harrowitz claims that the basis of the principles of Dupin's method is abduction (193). These principles are established, for the first time, in the mind reading scene of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." Speaking of this scene, Derrida argues:

The narrator himself explains how Dupin...*divines* the narrator's mind.

And he recounts that when the narrator believes the other to fathom his soul, he is in truth only analysing symptoms.... Instead of divining – by intuition, luck, or chance – he enters calculations built upon the accidents in a story of a fall, and he symptomalizes contingency. ("My Chances/*Mes Chances*" 11-12)

Thus in Derrida's reading, Dupin does not "*divine*" the truth but abducts it. Yet as Harrowitz is forced to acknowledge, in this scene "the process of the abduction and the relationship of the process to the observed fact and the case is problematic. The process works not only 'backwards'...but 'forwards' as well" (190). Functioning as a logos, Dupin conflates, or unites, rule and example in exactly the same manner as Lacan.

This scene is significant for several reasons. It occurs in the first tale of the trilogy which, as Derrida points out, "can also be read as a preface to 'The Purloined Letter'" ("My Chances/*Mes Chances*" 11). Moreover, "it is supposed to be representative. That is, we are led to feel that Dupin can read thoughts whenever he chooses, not only when the reverie has been specially arranged for discovery, but always" (Daniel 107). Finally, the scene itself establishes a law, namely that Dupin's powers of analysis are infallible, for which the body of the tales form the examples: "The narrative which follows will appear to the reader somewhat in the light of a commentary upon the propositions just advanced" (Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" 98). Yet the law itself is only established by the tales. As numerous critics have demonstrated, the structure of each of the tales is designed to facilitate this

conflation.⁶

Ironically, it is Lacan himself who identifies the conflation, or "unity of the veil," in "The Purloined Letter." Lacan dismisses the tale as a work of detective fiction because he feels that the tale does not really constitute a mystery. As he suggests, the problem "is limited to the search for and restitution of the object of [the] deceit, and it seems rather intentional that the solution is already obtained when it is explained to us" (SPL 45). The detour, or delay, of Truth is, in this third and final tale of the trilogy, simply eliminated: "the intricacies of reasoning...have become unnecessary to the method. Dupin is now more seer than scientist" (Knight 61).

Lacan's supposition is confirmed by Grossvogel, who asserts:

"The Purloined Letter" does not even attempt to create a "mystery." Here, it is not so much that the clues are inadequate as the fact that Dupin intuits instantly what has happened; his story recounts events with which we are already acquainted: the retrospective narrative demonstrates Dupin's resolute genius without any uncovering – no formal cover was drawn in the first place. (96)

Because "The Purloined Letter" "does not even attempt to create a 'mystery,'" Lacan dismisses it as detective fiction. But it is, precisely, the "unity of the veil," the very

⁶ For a discussion of the structure of Poe's tales, see Grossvogel's *Mystery and Its Fictions: From Oedipus to Agatha Christie* (1979), especially the Introduction and "The Purloined Letter: The Mystery of the Text"; Robert Daniel's "Poe's Detective God" (1971); Nancy Harrowitz's "The Body of the Detective Model: Charles S. Peirce and Edgar Allan Poe" (1983); Charles E. May's *Edgar Allan Poe: A Study of the Short Fiction* (1991); David Van Leer's "Detecting Truth: The World of the Dupin Tales" (1993); and Stephen Knight's *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (1980), especially "...his rich ideality' – Edgar Allan Poe's Detective".

basis of his exclusionary gesture, which renders it the perfect text to "illustrate" the law of the truth as the two "indissociable" values of "adequation" and "veiling-unveiling" (Derrida, FV 463). One can only echo Lacan in declaring that "It is, no doubt, no accident that this tale revealed itself propitious to pursuing a course of inquiry which had already found support in it" (SPL 40-1).

In "Institutional Authority vs. Critical Power," Carroll asserts that

Poe's "fiction" is treated by Lacan as an illustration of a truth that now can be called "Freudian," and thus Lacan is in the position of claiming that the journey from psychoanalysis through literature back to psychoanalysis can and must be completed, thus realizing also the usurpation of literature's authority over psychoanalysis by making literature serve its ends. (118)

In raising the question of genre and thereby demonstrating that Lacan is merely repeating the same phonologocentric gestures of detective fiction, my aim was not, any more than it was Derrida's, simply to reverse the positions and assert the authority of literature over psychoanalysis. Nor was my aim to exculpate Lacan by suggesting that "if the form of Lacan's text (his writing) is itself homologous with that of Poe, how then can one claim that Lacan has reduced Poe's text?" (Harvey, "Structures of Exemplarity" 262). My aim was, rather, to suggest that "The Purloined Letter" and "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" detective fiction and psychoanalysis, are all participants in Western metaphysics. And thus they form part of "a much more complicated and longer historical-inter-textual process that no historical moment and no text encloses or controls, even a radically self-reflexive text" (Carroll

121).

My discussion of *The Moonstone* which, inevitably, some will feel has been delayed for far too long, does, in actuality, depend on this delay. Detective fiction and psychoanalysis, as "displaced religious or metaphysical discourse[s] in search of the logos," form an important part of the textuality of *The Moonstone* and they are, as we shall see, discourses that Collins works within and against. Echoes of Poe and Lacan will, of necessity, reverberate throughout.

The Fourth (*le quart*) Text: Writing and *The Moonstone*

As I have already suggested, *The Moonstone* is a fundamentally divided text and a text very much concerned with the division of writing and writing as division. Yet it is also a text which denies such division and upholds the unity associated with the logos and the voice. These two contradictory impulses are explored through the text's two investigations: the investigation into the purloined diamond and the investigation of the unconscious. While inter-related, the two are, to some extent, geographically and textually distanced from each other. Although they involve very different and, in fact, irreconcilable visions of the titular diamond, the Moonstone is at the heart of each investigation and thus suggests itself as the most suitable point of departure for my own investigation of the text. The fact that I have suggested that the first investigation centres on a *purloined*, rather than a *stolen*, diamond should already acquaint the reader with the direction which my argument

will assume. The Indians' diamond, as opposed to Rachel's, and this is an important distinction, is, like Poe and Lacan's letter, merely purloined: temporarily put aside.

In the course of clarifying a family dispute, occasioned by nothing less than the Moonstone itself, the Prologue documents its history from the eleventh century to the days following the storming of Seringapatam in 1799. It describes how the diamond, "devoted to the service of a god" (34), is itself transformed into a logos, when the "deity breathed the breathe of his divinity on" it (34). This logos belongs, finds its origin and destination, "in the forehead of the four-handed Indian god who typifies the Moon" (33). In its proper place, the Moonstone remains "inviolable" (34) for centuries, protected by the god Vishnu, his agents in the form of "three guardian priests" (35), and his unequivocal curse that promises "certain disaster to the presumptuous mortal who laid hands on the sacred gem" (34). Yet the inviolability of this logos is thrown into question when, during the "reign of Aurungzebe, Emperor of the Moguls" (35), an officer seizes the diamond and launches it on a detour. In order to retain its identity as a logos and remain capable of returning via a detour to its proper destination, which is its origin, the diamond must remain intolerant of partition. For if "it were divisible, it could always be lost en route" (Derrida, FV 464). As long as the diamond remains in its proper site, within, one might say, the sight of God, it is, as surely as Lacan's letter, guarded against partition. For as Derrida points out, "the notions of indivisibility (protection from partition) and of locality are themselves indissociable" (FV 424). Yet in removing

the stone from its proper site, the officer removes it from a system which corresponds neatly to Lacan's "system of the symbolic... [which] always attempt[s] to protect the letter from... fragmentation" (FV 444). Once removed, the diamond becomes vulnerable.

As the Prologue documents, the diamond, like the purloined letter, passes, in the course of its detour, from hand to hand. If it is no longer under the watchful eye of the deity, it remains under the eyes of his lieutenants, the three Brahmin priests. Under their protective gaze, the diamond remains intact and thus retains its power as a logos. Its curse strikes all who come to hold it and each "perished miserably" (35). Like Dupin, the guardians of the logos must only await an opportunity to retrieve it and return it to its proper destination. Such is the history of the Moonstone until the Spring of 1799. Yet all of this is, as it were, a prelude to the introduction of John Herncastle. Lured by his "love of the marvellous" (35), Herncastle determines to "see the Diamond on his finger" (35). The confusion following the battle of Seringapatam affords him the opportunity to murder the stone's guardians and remove the diamond from the handle of a dagger belonging to "Tippoo, Sultan of Seringapatam" (35). Yet in so doing, he is merely rendering more vulnerable what was already vulnerable, removing what was already missing from its proper place and continuing a detour that had already begun. Thus the Prologue documents a logos, its loss, and the origins of what is, literally, a search for the lost logos. This search follows the diamond through its various detours in the

text and through the detour which is the text: a text which both guarantees and questions the possibility of arrival.

Herncastle's seizure of the diamond signals a move from the Prologue to the novel proper and from the India of 1799 to the England of 1848. Thus the diamond's detour traverses textual, temporal, and geographical boundaries. In one sense, such migrations do not signal a change in the Moonstone's status as a logos. As long as it remains intact, it remains "capable of refind[ing] its proper meaning in its proper place." That the diamond "must never risk being lost, destroyed, divided, or fragmented without return" (Derrida, FV 438) is confirmed by Herncastle himself. Returning to England, he deposits the gem in a bank and instructs his lawyer that, in the event of his death by violence, the diamond is to be sent secretly to Amsterdam. "It was to be deposited in that city with a famous diamond-cutter, and it was to be cut up into from four to six separate stones" (71). Speaking of Herncastle's plan to Betteredge, Franklin Blake remarks that

"the integrity of the Diamond, as a whole stone, is here artfully made dependent on the preservation from violence of the Colonel's life. He is not satisfied with saying to the enemies he dreads, 'Kill me – and you will be no nearer to the Diamond than you are now; it is where you can't get at it – in the guarded strong-room of a bank.' He says instead, 'Kill me – and the Diamond will be the Diamond no longer; its identity will be destroyed.' What does that mean?" (71)

The answer to this final query is that the diamond, "cut up into from four to six separate stones," will no longer function as a logos. Unlike Lacan's letter which, cut up into "small pieces...remains the letter it is," the identity of the diamond will be

destroyed the moment it suffers partition. As Murthwaite suggests, there "is an end of its *sacred identity* as *The Moonstone*" (109 emphasis mine).

Yet in another sense, a crucial one, the status of the diamond does change upon its entry into the novel proper: that is, upon its entry into the house of Lady Verinder. Speaking of the "*proper meaning*" of Lacan's letter, Derrida states: "The letter having a (single) place of origin and destination, and remaining what it is *en route* (what guarantees this?), it has a proper meaning" (FV 438). Although the Moonstone has "a (single) place of origin and destination," the stability of its meaning is no longer guaranteed. It changes and changes radically "*en route*." Already susceptible to division, it becomes itself divided. As a logos and a logos that is missing from its place, the Moonstone is both a transcendental signified and the signifier of the very lack of a transcendental signified. Both divisible and divided, the diamond, from the moment it enters the novel proper, is associated with writing as *pharmakon*: irreducible and irreconcilable contradiction. As we shall see, Collins's novel is, as much as Plato's pharmacy, dominated by the play of this ambivalent non-substance, by the chain of its significations.⁷

⁷ It is apt that T.S. Eliot chooses to compare *The Moonstone* to *Bleak House* rather than *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* which, as Sue Lonoff argues, was written, in part, as a rejoinder to Collins's novel ("Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins" 163). *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* mercilessly and violently reduces opium from a poison *and* a cure to a simple poison, associated only with the violence of Jasper and the Princess Puffer. Thus it seems that Dickens, like Plato, attempts to master the ambiguity of the *pharmakon*, "to dominate by inserting its definition into simple, clear-cut oppositions: good and evil, inside and outside, true and false, essence and

The diamond is, quite literally, written into the plot: bequeathed to Rachel Verinder through the will of Herncastle. As it appears, it is itself indeterminate, its very meaning – good or evil, poison or cure – impossible to establish. The unequivocal voice of God, promising "certain disaster to the presumptuous mortal who laid hands on the sacred gem," is replaced by a writing which is, like all writing, both polysemic and indeterminate. When Franklin Blake demands of Betteredge, "In bringing the Moonstone to my aunt's house, am I serving [Herncastle's] vengeance blindfold, or am I vindicating him in the character of a penitent and Christian man?" (75), it is impossible to choose between these two interpretations and reduce it to a single unequivocal meaning. Similarly, when Lady Verinder learns of Herncastle's gift, she too is faced with the indeterminable question of whether "the legacy of the Moonstone [was] a proof that she had treated her brother with cruel injustice? or was it a proof that he was worse than the worst she had ever thought of him?" (96).

The diamond, introduced by writing, as writing, is present in the novel proper for only a single evening: the birthday dinner of Rachel Verinder. Yet during this period, it does not function as a transcendental signified, nor even as a simple signified, "a unit of meaning," but, rather, as a signifier, "that which produces

appearance." In so doing, he treats the writing of *The Moonstone*, the writing which is *The Moonstone*, as a sacrificial *pharmakos*, an excess or accident which must be eliminated.

certain *effects*" (Johnson 464). Like Lacan's letter, the diamond appears to possess all who come in contact with it. Looking back at the party, Betteredge is "half inclined to think that the cursed Diamond must have cast a blight on the whole company" (101). Under its influence, the unequivocal and stable meaning of a speech guarded by the logos is destabilized. Whenever the company "did speak they were perpetually at cross purposes" (103). Infected by writing, speech is characterized by "a miserable *lack of life*" (105 emphasis mine) and Betteredge can only reiterate that the "Devil (or the Diamond) possessed that dinner-party" (105).

Whatever effect the diamond, as a signifier, exercises when present, such effects are magnified beyond quantification the moment it is *stolen*. The effects of this stolen logos are captured in Betteredge's lamentation that the "cursed Moonstone had turned us all upside down" (118). According to Derrida, the "system of logocentric repression" is founded upon "presence as consciousness, self-presence conceived within the opposition of consciousness to unconsciousness" ("Freud and the Scene of Writing" 197;198). This system "was organized to exclude or to lower (to put outside or below), the body of the written trace as a didactic and technical metaphor, as servile matter or excrement" (Derrida, FSW 197). Re-enacting the primal scene of the nineteenth-century novel, the theft of the diamond unleashes what has been traditionally repressed and reverses, turns "upside down," certain phonologocentric assumptions. Writing, always repressed as "that which threatens presence and the mastering of absence" (Derrida, FSW 197), is unleashed. The theft

of the logos signals the death of any hope of placing "a reassuring end to the reference from sign to sign." In its absence, all that remains is a scene of writing. Furthermore, as soon as the threat of writing is unleashed, "presence as consciousness" is devalued and placed into the secondary position of exteriority, while the unconscious assumes the dominant and internal position it once assumed. In so doing, the theft of the diamond creates a space "which ignores contradiction to the extent that contradiction belongs to the logic of speech, discourse, consciousness, presence, truth, etc" (Derrida, *P* 101 FN 13). Thus what remains is not only a scene of writing, but a scene of writing as *pharmakon*: a scene where the irreducible and irreconcilable contradictions of writing are safe from the violence of translation as reduction.

The theft of the diamond is not so much a secular as a metaphysical mystery. As Franklin suggests, it is not "a matter of twenty thousand pounds," the estimated value of the diamond, but "a matter of quieting Rachel's mind" (130). It is, more precisely, a matter of quieting, or controlling, the threatening forces of writing and the unconscious that have been unleashed. Thus, the theft of the diamond from Rachel's boudoir initiates the second investigation of the text: the investigation of the always already divided nature of the individual, inhabited by a conscious and an unconscious self whose interaction is, as we shall see, "irreducibly graphic" (Derrida, *FSW* 199). This second investigation throws into question the metaphysical basis of Poe's detective fiction, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and the first

investigation itself.

Faced with the uncertainty engendered by the loss of the logos, it is hardly surprising that Betteredge, a figure who, in many ways represents the nineteenth-century worldview, finds comfort in the illusionary and artificial order symbolized in the harnessing of a pony: "In the infernal network of mysteries and uncertainties that now surrounded us, I declare it was a relief to observe how well the buckles and straps understood each other!" (129). Yet this desire to return to, or recall, a lost order is not unique to Betteredge. The entire household, with the notable exceptions of Rachel and Rosanna, participate in the illusion that the logos is merely *purloined*, rather than stolen. They eagerly await the arrival of Sergeant Cuff as an Ariadne figure who will retrieve the detoured logos and, until so doing, function as its substitute: a source of order and meaning.

Although Blake insists that "when it comes to unravelling a mystery, there isn't the equal in England of Sergeant Cuff!" (132), he is not, in the context of this investigation, a wholly adequate detective.⁸ Indeed, he conducts his entire

⁸ Cuff's inadequacy is first revealed to the reader, even before he begins his investigation, through his predilection for roses. Walking through Lady Verinder's rosary, the Sergeant remarks: "This is the shape for a rosary – nothing like a circle set in a square. Yes, yes; with walks between all the beds. But they oughtn't to be gravel walks like these. Grass, Mr Gardiner – grass walks between your roses; gravel's too hard for them" (134). What this seemingly inconsequential episode suggests is that Cuff, like Fosco before him, desires to create an environment free from traces. He praises the circular shape of the rosary because it does not allow for anything or anyone to remain hidden, but demands that the gravel walks, which allow for audible and visual traces, be replaced by the silence of grass. Refusing, in

investigation under the illusion that the diamond has merely been purloined. Before the end of his first day on the case, the Sergeant asserts, "First, that I have no evidence before me, yet, that the Diamond has been stolen; *I only know that the Diamond has been lost*. Second, that *my* business here with the servants is simply to ask them to lay their heads together and help me to find it" (140 first emphasis mine). Cuff's "business" is, like Dupin's before him, to "find" the diamond and return it to what he believes to be its proper destination, Rachel. In restoring it, he will restore the "meaning and truth that have become distant from themselves for the time of a detour." This "demand for truth leads to putting aside the scene of writing," the divisible and divided nature of the diamond, which guarantees that it can always be "destroyed, divided, or fragmented without return." Further investigation merely confirms his phonologocentric thesis and he is able to conclude emphatically that "*Nobody has stolen the Diamond*" (143).

"Miss Verinder has been in secret possession of the Moonstone from first to last; and she has taken Rosanna Spearman into her confidence, because she has calculated on our suspecting Rosanna Spearman of the theft. There is the whole case in a nutshell." (173)

In naming Rachel and Rosanna as criminals, Sergeant Cuff, as we shall see, both discovers and fails to discover the truth. In any event, he is dismissed from the case

the course of his investigation, to speak in the house, where "doors and listeners have a knack of getting together" (149-50), he prefers, not the fresh, but the "open air" (150), which is not conducive to the production of traces. It is this phonologocentric desire to deny and eliminate the traces of writing, writing as a trace, which signals Cuff's inadequacy.

and subsequently retires. Although he comes out of retirement to identify Godfrey Ablewhite as the thief who stole the diamond, his achievement is qualified by the recognition that "the novel viewed as a piece of writing...has far more important secrets to reveal than the secret of who stole the Moonstone" (Murfin 659).

The Self as Division

In texts such as *Bleak House* or Eliot's *Middlemarch*, the omniscient narrator plays a large role in creating and sustaining a community that is capable of functioning as a substitute for the lost logos. As I have already suggested, the traditional Victorian narrator acts as "a spokesman for the general consciousness of the community" (Miller, *FVF* 72). He or she is "an all-embracing consciousness which surrounds the minds of the characters, knows them from the inside, but also sees them in terms of their relations to one another and in terms of the universal facts of human nature which they exemplify" (Miller, *FVF* 83). Yet in *The Moonstone*, no such community exists.

According to Martin Priestman, Ablewhite's "semi-accidental acquisition of the diamond is not what stops the society of the novel in its tracks. What does so is the breakdown of confidence when the diamond disappears" (173). Such a statement suggests that the diamond, as an external force, does violence to what was, before its introduction, a stable society. A similar argument is put forth by Kayman, who suggests that "from the moment [the diamond] is hidden it reveals

that the major figures it touches all have a secret which, in one way or another, isolates them from their community and brings them into potential conflict with the Law which should bind them" (196-7). Such arguments appear to find support in the novel. Like a *pharmakon*, Blake acts "like an aggressor or a housebreaker, threatening some internal purity and security" (Derrida, *D* 128). Confronted with the confusion engendered by the loss of the diamond, he remonstrates with himself, "When I came here from London with that horrible Diamond,...I don't believe there was a happier household in England than this. Look at the household now! Scattered, disunited – the very air of the place *poisoned* with mystery and suspicion!" (223 emphasis mine).

Furthermore, unlike *The Woman in White*, where "the 'loss' of Laura was told through multiple viewpoints" (Bourne Taylor 180) which reveal a community always already criminalized by writing, the loss of the diamond has a single narrator, Gabriel Betteredge. To a certain extent, Betteredge does indeed function as "a spokesman for the general community." Yet it would be more accurate to suggest that he is the "spokesman" for a lost community. The tone of his narrative is both wistful and nostalgic. Above all, it is characterized by the narrator's desire to maintain a belief in the order, stability, and honour of the Verinder name. This desire for order finds its analogue in Betteredge's constant applications to *Robinson Crusoe*, in what amounts to a form of secular bibliomancy and also, inadvertently, reminds the reader of the role of the nineteenth-century novel as *hypomnēsis*. Yet the

order and stability he craves are, at the time of writing, already lost. What the text ultimately reveals is that they were always already lost. The only "Law" capable of binding the community, "the contract of truth with itself in logos" (Derrida, FV 439), is always already destabilized by writing.

The moment the Moonstone is stolen, all that remains is, literally, a scene of writing: the written narratives contributed by Betteredge, Miss Clack, Bruff, Blake, Jennings, Cuff, etc. Yet these narratives do not form the basis of the stable community envisaged by Betteredge and Blake, Priestman and Kayman. The nature of these writings – subjective, distorted, incomplete, and often contradictory – belies D.A. Miller's assertion that "the novel is thoroughly *monological* – always speaking a master-voice that corrects, overrides, subordinates, or sublates all other voices it allows to speak" (54). Miller's argument, already couched in a phonocentric vocabulary, reduces the irreconcilable contradictions of writing to the unequivocal and unified meaning of speech. Yet *The Moonstone*, as comprised by these writings, is a text "whose essence is irreducibly graphic" (Derrida, FSW 199). It reveals the always already divided nature of the self as consciousness/unconsciousness and represents their interaction, in writing, as writing. This division, which precludes the possibility of monologism and throws into question not only the notion of a stable and unified community, but the notion of a stable and unified self, is best explored through Derrida's "Freud and the Scene of Writing."

In "Freud and the Scene of Writing," Derrida traces, from *Project for a Scientific*

Psychology to "Note on 'The Mystic Writing Pad,'" Freud's various attempts to conceive of an apparatus that will capture, simultaneously, the two requirements of memory: "an unlimited receptive capacity and a retention of permanent traces" (Freud, "Note on 'The Mystic Writing Pad'" 227). Within these various attempts, Derrida notes a "strange progression":

a problematic of breaching is elaborated only to conform increasingly to a metaphoric of the written trace. From a system of traces functioning according to a model which Freud would have preferred to be a natural one, and from which writing is entirely absent, we proceed toward a configuration of traces which can no longer be represented except by the structure and functioning of writing. (FSW 200)

Of particular interest to Derrida is Freud's conception of memory, as put forth in the *Project*, as an "hypothesis of 'contact barriers' and 'breaching'" (FSW 200) and, more specifically, breaching as difference. This breaching "presupposes a certain violence and a certain resistance to effraction. The path [of memory] is broken, cracked, *fracta*, breached" (Derrida, FSW 200).

According to Freud's hypothesis, there are two kinds of neurones: permeable and non-permeable. The permeable, or perceptual, neurones would "offer no resistance and thus retain no trace of impression" (Derrida, FSW 200-1). In contrast, the non-permeable neurones "would oppose contact-barriers to the quantity of excitation, [and] would thus retain the printed trace: they 'thus afford a possibility of representing (*darzustellen*) memory'" (Derrida, FSW 201). Thus memory is constituted by the resistance to breaching and, more precisely, the difference of the

forces between breaches: "An equality of resistance to breaching, or an equivalence of the breaching forces, would eliminate any *preference* in the choice of itinerary. Memory would be paralyzed" (Derrida, FSW 201). A memory which originates in violence, in differences rather than plenitudes, already bears a striking resemblance to writing. Yet the similarities do not end here. According to Derrida, all these "differences in the production of the trace may be reinterpreted as moments of deferring" (FSW 202). The deferral of repetition is, in actuality, the non-originary origin of memory.

[R]epetition does not *happen to* an initial impression; its possibility is already there, in the resistance offered *the first time* by the psychical neurones... [I]n the *first time* of the contact between *two* forces, repetition has begun. Life is already threatened by the origin of the memory which constitutes it, and by the breaching which it resists, the effraction which it can contain only by repeating it. (Derrida, FSW 202)

Thus the conscious text is no longer a full presence, nor is it a transcription of a text "*present elsewhere* as an unconscious one to be transposed or transported" (Derrida, FSW 211). The unconscious text, produced by deferral and repetition, is always already "a weave of pure traces, differences in which meaning and force are united - - a text nowhere present, consisting of archives which are *always already* transcriptions" (Derrida, FSW 211).

Memory is always already written and, like writing, requires both temporalization ("a detour, a delay, a relay") and spacing ("to be not identical, to be other, discernible" [Derrida, "*Différance*" 8]). As such, it finds its perfect analogue in

the Mystic Writing-Pad. In this model, preconsciousness and consciousness are represented by the celluloid sheet and the waxed paper while the wax slab represents the unconscious. This "small contrivance" is remarkable for Freud, because its "construction...provide[s] both an ever-ready receptive surface and permanent traces of the notes that have been made on it" (Note 228). It is remarkable, for Derrida, because its stratified nature captures the temporalization and spacing of memory.

Temporality as spacing will be not only the horizontal discontinuity of a chain of signs, but also will be writing as the interruption and restoration of contact between the various depths of psychical levels.... Traces...produce the space of their inscription only by acceding to the period of their erasure. From the beginning, in the "present" of their first impression, they are constituted by the double force of repetition and erasure, legibility and illegibility. (FSW 225-6)

Thus memory is the trace produced by the system of violent interactions between the conscious and the unconscious. Its content and structure are represented as "irreducibly graphic."

Such a conception of memory represents a profound challenge to phonologocentrism, a challenge "unknown to classical philosophy" (Derrida, FSW 199). Yet Freud, ultimately, cannot escape the metaphysics of presence. Although his own model confirms the finite nature of memory, its inevitable participation in writing, he insists, like Plato before him, that the writing on the Pad is merely an external representation of an unconscious that is an unerasable, incorruptible and permanent presence. Thus he refuses to see the implications of his own argument,

namely, that life, presence and *mnēmē* must be supplemented by the non-living machine, absence, and *hypomnēsis* or *tekhne*.

The arguments put forth in "Freud and the Scene of Writing" are highly relevant to a discussion of *The Moonstone*, for this text is very much concerned with the nature and problems of memory. As Bourne Taylor asserts, "*The Moonstone* is a novel about remembering; about how, and under what conditions, the unconscious past might be reclaimed, about how its traces might be interpreted and understood, about how this might be transmitted to posterity" (178). Yet I would suggest that it is also a novel about "remembering" the dead God; "about how, and under what conditions," this absent logos "might be reclaimed." As we have already seen, both the "unconscious past" and the lost logos may only be "reclaimed" *through writing, as writing*; a process which is represented in the text by the multiple narratives of the characters.

The early pages of Betteredge's narrative contain an account of a peculiar proceeding on the part of the three Brahmins in search of the diamond:

[T]hey all turned to their little English boy, as if they expected *him* to help them. And then the chief Indian...said to the boy, "Hold out your hand.".... Upon that, the Indian took a bottle from his bosom and poured out of it some black stuff, like ink, into the palm of the boy's hand. The Indian – first touching the boy's head, and making signs over it in the air – then said, "Look." (50)

"[L]ooking into the ink in the hollow of his hand" (50), the boy is able to see Blake and confirm that he is in possession of the diamond. Although this episode is

dismissed as "a foolish waste of ink" (50) and mere "'hocus-pocus'" (73), it is, in actuality, a paradigm for the manner in which the "unconscious past" may be "reclaimed," of how the trail of the trace, which is memory, may itself be traced through writing. As Murthwaite explains, "their boy is unquestionably a sensitive subject to the mesmeric influence – and, under that influence, he has no doubt reflected what was already in the mind of the person mesmerizing him" (332).

According to Bourne Taylor, mesmerism

does not provide a coherent alternative model of the unconscious as a "place" so much as a set of allusions that enables different processes of transference to take place and various forms of psychic power to be connoted; forms of power which can be 'traced back, by rational means, to natural causes', but which also frustrate any consistent cognitive framework. (195)

The "different processes of transference" are, precisely, "processes" of writing which create a trail of traces between the conscious and the unconscious and thus allow material to be transferred from one to the other. The ink in the boy's hand is an analogue for the means by which this trail can be "traced" through writing. The desire to trace this trail, the trail of the trace, infects the characters like a fever and, more precisely, a "*detective-fever*" (160). This fever is, like the cause of the crime which initiates it, both a "disease" (160) and a cure. The *pharmakon* is, it seems, inescapable.

As Murfin points out, the ink in the boy's hand, undoubtedly Indian, is itself a *pharmakon*, being both dye and perfume (662). That night, Betteredge's attempt to

surprise the Indians is given away by his "feet [which] betrayed [him] on the gravel" (81), and he is only able to recover a small bottle, "containing a thick-sweet-smelling liquor, as black as ink" (82 emphasis mine). As Murfin suggests, perfume "supposedly brings out attractive individual essences while covering over others that are less attractive" (662). Like writing, it both conceals and reveals, renders the self both legible and illegible. When one recalls that this "black stuff" or "sweet-smelling liquor," described only as "like ink," "as black as ink," bears an uncanny resemblance to that other *pharmakon* – opium – the paradigm is complete.

Complying with a request made by Franklin Blake, each character is engaged to contribute to "a record of the facts to which those who come after us can appeal" (39), thereby suggesting, yet again, the finitude of *mnēmē* and the need for it to be supplemented by *hypomnēsis*. Each of these narratives functions in much the same way as the ink by which they are constituted, that is, they are designed to both reveal *and* conceal information. As we shall see, what they attempt to conceal is nothing less than writing itself and, more specifically, its divisionary powers. Designed to tell the "story of the Moonstone," each narrative, in actuality, constitutes a story of the self. As Betteredge laments, "I am asked to tell the story of the Diamond, and, instead, of that; I have been telling the story of my own self" (45). Yet even as a story of the self, these narratives are, at best, characterized by certain lacks or absences. As Miss Clack points out, "It will be easy for Mr Blake to suppress what may not prove to be sufficiently flattering in these pages to the person chiefly

concerned in them" (235). Blake hastens to assure her that "Nothing will be added, altered, or removed, in her manuscript, or in any of the other manuscripts which pass through my hands" (235). Yet he is no more able to control writing, its simultaneous legibility and illegibility, than he is the unconscious. Like Freud, writing on the "Mystic Writing Pad," each character records his or her memories, in writing, as writing. If we imagine, as does Freud, "one hand writing upon the surface of the Mystic Writing-Pad while another periodically raises the covering-sheet from the wax slab" (Note 232), we shall have a concrete representation of how each character both records and suppresses their memories; how each attempts to erase or conceal certain material by burying it in the unconscious, so as to present only a shiny celluloid exterior. As Derrida suggests, writing "is like a cosmetic concealing the dead under the appearance of the living" (*D* 142). Like perfume or dye, ink conceals as much as it reveals.

Always already distanced, or removed, from the "absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning" (Derrida, *OG* 12), these narratives do not even constitute what Norris refers to as "a faithful *transcription* of self-present speech" (83). What they do reveal, they reveal "unconsciously', through lapses, or symptomatic mannerisms" (Bourne Taylor 181). Their system is not "primarily that of what someone *meant-to-say* (*un vouloir-dire*)" (Derrida, *D* 95), but of what they meant *not* to say. "[P]resence as consciousness, self-presence conceived within the opposition of consciousness to unconsciousness,"

is destabilized by the absence of/in a writing which both conceals and reveals an unconscious that is itself not present, but always already "a weave of pure traces."

In what is, perhaps, the best known of the psychoanalytical approaches to the novel, "Dreams, Transformations, and Literature," Hutter asserts: "With the discovery of a murdered Ablewhite, the real thief who had seen Franklin pick up the stone and had relieved Franklin of it while he slept, the solution is completed. The novel begins where it began, in India, with the stone restored to its rightful place" (193). To a reader familiar with "*Le facteur de la vérité*," it should come as no surprise that Hutter's interpretation is fundamentally reductive. What is surprising is that it is, precisely, the unconscious that is reduced. Hutter's reading of the novel reduces the second investigation, that of the unconscious, into the first, that of the purloined logos. In contrast, Murfin, viewing it primarily as a symbolic representation, argues that Godfrey's unmasking represents not the "solution" to the crime but, rather, "duplicitous identity, the fact that there is a known and an obvious self, and, under it, another self that is more difficult to see and know, and that may itself be duplicitous" (660).

In the Sixth Narrative, Sergeant Cuff announces that "Godfrey Ablewhite's life had two sides to it" (506):

The side turned up to the public view, presented the spectacle of a gentleman, possessed of considerable reputation as a speaker at charitable meetings, and endowed with administrative abilities, which he placed at the disposal of various Benevolent Societies, mostly of the female sort. The side kept hidden from the general notice, exhibited

this same gentleman in a totally different character of a man of pleasure, with a villa in the suburbs which was not taken in his own name, and with a lady in the villa, who was not taken in his own name, either. (506)

Yet Godfrey's life is in no way unique. What the novel ultimately reveals is that every individual is both divided and duplicitous. Characterized by the "irreducibly graphic" interaction between consciousness and unconsciousness, every character is a testament to the fact that "presence as consciousness" is always already contaminated by absence; the legitimate always already characterized by the illegitimate. In much the same way as Rosanna adopts a cloak to conceal her deformed shoulder, each of the characters attempts to cloak the criminal writing of the unconscious under a waxed or celluloid exterior. Yet like Rachel, whose feelings "have repeatedly got beyond her control, at the very time when it was plainly in her interest to conceal them" (212), each of the characters is threatened by an unconscious which escapes their control and threatens to resurface in their writing, as writing.

As both the thief who steals the diamond and the chief instigator of the investigation into its disappearance, Franklin Blake, with "many different sides to his character" (76), is only the most obvious example of the divided and duplicitous self. Yet if Blake is the thief, the other characters are not so much his innocent victims as his criminal accomplices. Driven by "a motive under the surface" (450), each is guilty of a crime (of/as writing) and desperately trying to suppress it within

the unconscious. Like the diamond itself, each character functions not as a stable and unified entity, but as a *pharmakon*: that which has "no stable essence" (Derrida, *D* 125).

Sergeant Cuff's investigation leads him to believe that Rachel Verinder is guilty of making away with her own diamond. This conclusion is based on the fact that Rachel has done her best to suppress vital evidence: refusing to have her wardrobe searched, leaving the house, etc. Yet Rachel's actions are undertaken, not to conceal the diamond, but to conceal Blake's guilt and, in addition, her guilty love for a man she knows to be a thief. It is this love and sexual attraction which must, at the cost of her "innocence," remain hidden "below the surface" (318). Yet it appears that her feelings for Blake cannot remain suppressed, and they resurface, as contradictory and irreconcilable as the man who inspired them.

"Oh, how can I find words to say it in! How can I make a *man* understand that a feeling which horrifies me at myself, can be a feeling that fascinates me at the same time? It's the breath of my life, Godfrey, and it's the poison that kills me – both in one!" (279)

The play of the *pharmakon* is, not coincidentally, as uncontrollable as the play of the unconscious.

Once again, it is Sergeant Cuff who concludes that "Miss Verinder had an accomplice among the female servants in the house" (208), namely, Rosanna Spearman. His conclusion is based on the supposition that there is a *causal* link between Rosanna's suspicious behaviour and Rachel's refusal to facilitate his

investigation. Yet the link is not causal but *coincidental*. Cuff is right in supposing that Rosanna "is simply an instrument in the hands of another person" (158), but this "person" is not Rachel, but Blake himself. Rosanna's actions do not represent an attempt to conceal the diamond as much as an attempt to conceal Blake's guilt. Discovering his paint-stained nightgown, she suppresses it in what is, as we shall see, the novel's most powerful representation of the unconscious: the Shivering Sands. The suppression of Blake's guilt is a product of her own suppressed attraction for him: an attraction which, because of class differences, must be concealed. As Betteredge remarks,

People in high life have all the luxuries to themselves – among others, the luxury of indulging their feelings. People in low life have no such privilege. Necessity, which spares our betters, has no pity on *us*. We learn to put our feelings *back into ourselves*, and to jog on with our duties as patiently as may be. I don't complain of this – I only notice it. (200 second emphasis mine)

Betteredge's seemingly innocuous remark will return, like the unconscious and, indeed, one might add, as the unconscious, to threaten Blake and destabilize the prospect of closure offered by the novel's conclusion.

Of course, Blake's most important accomplice is Godfrey Ablewhite. Yet the importance of his actions, relieving Blake of the diamond and transporting it to London, does not lie in the misguided assumption that they exonerate Blake from guilt. Although, under the second dose of opium, Blake expresses concern for the safety of the diamond, it is equally possible, as Bruff suggests, that he "might have

taken it...through natural depravity" (265). At the end of the novel, Blake's motives remain as indeterminate as Herncastle's will and the diamond itself. Godfrey's actions are important because they reveal that the crime is a product of the interaction of the conscious and the unconscious self. The two are, in this case, inextricable.

In *"To double business bound": Essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology*, René Girard asserts that all mythical and literary depictions of the Plague share certain common elements. Chief among these is what he describes as "a scapegoating project, that is,...an attempt to make that crisis look like the responsibility of a single individual" (146). It seems that an identical impulse fuels detective fiction. Detective fiction is reassuring only to the extent that it is able to represent the crime as an aberrant event, a plague which temporarily disrupts an otherwise stable and coherent community. Thus, as William Aydelotte points out:

[t]he criminal is a scapegoat. He is the cause of and can justly be blamed for all the troubles of the detective-story world.... The detective story evades the complex issues of life and saves us the effort of analysing the sources of our difficulties by presenting every problem as one of personal morality. The criminal therefore must be a single individual, who can eventually be identified. (312)

Detective fiction is founded upon the belief that the conscious and unconscious components of an individual "can be completely separated and that, as a consequence, innocence and guilt can be determined" (Murfin 660). As we shall see, *The Moonstone* both denies and participates in this fiction.

Confronted by his own guilt, Blake remarks, "We often hear...that guilt can look like innocence. I believe it to be infinitely the truer axiom of the two that innocence can look like guilt" (388). As if to bear out Blake's statement, Bruff asserts: "Rachel's own innocence is (as her mother knows, and as I know) beyond a doubt. Mr Ablewhite's innocence is equally certain – or Rachel would never have testified to it. And Franklin Blake's innocence, as you have just seen, unanswerably asserts itself" (266). Yet each of these individuals is, in fact, guilty. What *The Moonstone* ultimately reveals is that innocence and guilt, legitimacy and illegitimacy, are as inextricable as the consciousness and unconsciousness in the production of memory:

[A]ll people and events have at least two sides and...the line between innocence and guilt, legitimacy and illegitimacy, is about as fine as the one running between Blake and Godfrey Abelwhite [sic] as their hands touch to transfer the diamond, about as fine as the one, in other words, that separates the active but unconscious taking of the gem and the passive but conscious acceptance of it. (Murfin 660)

The Moonstone identifies not a criminal, but the criminal in everyone. If *The Woman in White* presents a community always already criminalized by the play of writing, *The Moonstone* advances this position one step further, demonstrating that every individual is always already criminalized by a memory that can only be represented as writing. Just as the diamond is characterized by "a defect, in the shape of a flaw, in [its] very heart" (71), so too are all the characters. This "flaw," furthermore, may be said to act as the figure of the lack which always already characterizes presence, which lies at the "very heart" of the centre. While the characters may, in a gesture

that is entirely typical of the history of Western metaphysics, attempt to repress this "flaw," to "put [it] outside or below," it can no more be extricated and thereby eliminated than the writing which constitutes it.

The Self Divided

As Ezra Jennings reveals, Franklin Blake "entered Miss Verinder's sitting-room and took the Diamond, in a state of trance, produced by opium" (435). As Jennings informs him,

the latest and most vivid impressions left on your mind – namely, the impressions relating to the Diamond – would be likely, in your morbidly sensitive nervous condition, to become intensified in your brain, and would subordinate to themselves your judgement and your will – exactly as an ordinary dream subordinates to itself your judgement and your will. (442)

"Operating through seduction," opium makes Blake "stray from [his] general, natural, habitual paths and laws" (Derrida, *D* 70). It unleashes the unconscious and allows the contradictions, always already inherent in his character, to play freely.

It is of no small importance that Blake, who functions like a *pharmakon*, commits the crime not, as he supposes, while intoxicated or sleep-walking, but under the influence of what can only be described as a *pharmakon*, opium. For if this "all-potent and all-merciful drug" (430) poisons his life, it also effects its cure. Like writing, it is both legitimate and illegitimate. The first dose of opium, administered by the well-respected Doctor Candy, acts as a poison, causing Blake to steal the

diamond and suppress the crime within his unconscious. While the second dose, administered by the disreputable Jennings, has much the same effect, causing Blake to steal the crystal which substitutes for the diamond, it acts as a cure. This cure is, as Blake suggests, "a matter of the past" (405) and, more specifically, a matter of revealing the past: the suppressed memory or unconscious crime. The cure effected by opium is itself dependent on that other *pharmakon* which so closely resembles it, the ink of writing: both the written memories of the characters, their narratives, and the writing of memory.

As I have already suggested, Sergeant Cuff's phonologocentrism renders him unequal to the indeterminacy of writing, the characters, and the crime itself. The only individual capable of dealing with the play of the *pharmakon* is a *pharmakeus*: "A being that no 'logic' can confine within a noncontradictory definition" (Derrida, *D* 117). This "being" is, of course, Ezra Jennings. Forced by disease to operate continually under the influence of that *pharmakon*, opium, it is hardly surprising that Jennings is a site of irreconcilable contradictions. His nature, as a *pharmakeus*, is already evident in his appearance and is captured most forcibly in his hair, which

by some freak of Nature, had lost its colour in the most startlingly partial and capricious manner. Over the top of his head it was still of the deep black which was its natural colour. Round the sides of his head – without the slightest gradation of grey to break the force of the extraordinary contrast – it had turned completely white. The line between the two colours preserved no sort of regularity. At one place, the white hair ran up into the black; at another, the black ran down into the white. (371)

In this man, who is "old and young both together" (417), Blake is able to detect "the mixture of some foreign race in his English blood" (420). Moreover, as Jennings himself admits, "some men are born with female constitutions – and I am one of them!" (422). Thus, he "operates as the point at which the different kinds of oppositions at work in the novel break down (east/west, dark/light, rational/occult, masculine/feminine)" (Bourne Taylor 192). Like the opium on which he depends, both a "palliative" (430) and a vengeful demon "pursuing [him] through a series of frightful dreams" (447), Jennings is both a healer and a sorcerer. When Doctor Candy falls ill, Jennings prescribes a remedy which "two physicians of established local repute" (421) view as poisonous. Although he saves Candy's life, he continues to suffer from "the merciless dislike and distrust" (448) of his neighbours and "nobody who can help it will employ [him]" (448).

Although an unlikely couple, Blake and Jennings feel drawn to each other. As Blake admits, "Ezra Jennings made some inscrutable appeal to my sympathies, which I found it impossible to resist" (417). Similarly, Jennings wonders "What is the secret of the attraction that there is for me in this man?" (448). The "secret" of their mutual attraction is that Ezra Jennings is Blake's double and, more precisely, the embodiment of his unconscious self. Like Blake, Jennings lives under the shadow of "an accusation which has rested upon [him] for years" (428). As he informs his new friend:

"There are circumstances in connexion with it that tell against me. I

cannot bring myself to acknowledge what the accusation is. And I am incapable, perfectly incapable, of proving my innocence. I can only assert my innocence. I assert it, sir, on my oath, as a Christian." (428)

Although Jennings may, because of this accusation, suffer from "suppressed misery" (427), as Blake's unconscious he is, as their continual encounters evince, "irrepressible" (409).

In "The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida," Barbara Johnson demands:

What is the relation between a divided unity and a duality? Are the two *two's* synonymous? Is a "Bi-Part Soul," for example, actually composed of two wholes? Or is it possible to conceive of a division which would not lead to two separable parts, but only to a problematization of the idea of unity? (472)

The relationship between Blake and Godfrey, in the unconscious/conscious stealing of the diamond, seems to conform to Johnson's notion of a "problematization of the idea of unity." The relationship between Blake and Jennings, however, is rather different. In this case, it appears that the conscious and unconscious components of every individual have indeed been separated into two distinct "wholes," where Blake's guilt, and the consequences of this guilt, "merciless dislike and distrust," are displaced onto Jennings. This displacement allows Collins to transform Jennings from a *pharmakeus* to a *pharmakos*. As I have already suggested, the "character of a *pharmakos* has been compared to a scapegoat. The *evil* and the *outside*, the expulsion of the evil, its exclusion out of the body... – these are the two major senses of the character and of the ritual" (Derrida, *D* 130). As we shall see, the expulsion of this scapegoat will play an important role in the conclusion of the novel. As Derrida

suggests, the expulsion of the *pharmakos* entails the return of writing "to being what it *should never have ceased to be*: an accessory, an accident, an excess" (D 128). Yet even before Jennings, as a criminal "accessory," is expelled, even while he still exists as the embodiment of Blake's displaced unconscious, writing has already been eliminated. In separating the conscious and unconscious components into two separate individuals, Collins denies their interaction which is "irreducibly graphic."

Before considering Jennings's narrative, it is necessary to discuss one other double, one other *pharmakos*: Rosanna Spearman. For if Jennings is the embodiment of Blake's displaced unconscious, Rosanna fulfils an identical role with reference to Rachel. If one can say that Rosanna's guilt is externalized in her deformed shoulder, one may also say that she is deformation personified: the living externalization of the writing of Rachel's guilty unconscious. Like her double, Rosanna is acutely aware of Blake's guilt, determined to suppress it and, despite his crime, overwhelmed by love for him.

According to Bruff, the difficulty faced by Blake in his attempts to prove his innocence is "how to make [Rachel] show her *whole mind* in this matter without reserve" (387 emphasis mine). This difficulty is compounded by Rachel's doctors, who recommend "plenty of exercise and amusement for [her], and strongly urge [Lady Verinder] to keep her mind as much as possible from dwelling on the past" (245). In other words, they recommend that Rachel protect herself by repressing the writing of the unconscious in an attempt to uphold "presence as consciousness, self-

presence conceived within the opposition of consciousness to unconsciousness." As the embodiment of Rachel's unconscious, Rosanna is offered no such protection. She cannot escape writing. To be inhabited by such writing is to be inhabited by death, the non-living machine. Appropriately, then, this character who writes what her double cannot, appears "not like a living woman, but like a creature *moved by machinery*" (186 emphasis mine). The difficulty, identified by Bruff, is thus overcome through Rosanna who, in her letter to Blake, reveals all that Rachel would conceal. This letter bears scrutiny, not only as an account of Rachel's unconscious, but also because it is the best example of how the "unconscious past" is "reclaimed" through writing, as writing.

The Scenes of Writing

Rosanna's contribution to the "record of the facts" comprises two letters. The first, a brief memorandum, contains only the instructions to locate the second, a long and detailed love letter, which names Blake as the criminal who stole the diamond. Like the memories they relate, both letters are represented as "irreducibly graphic."

Preparing for the possibility of her own suicide, Rosanna slips away to Cobb's Hole, to the room of her only friend, Lucy Yolland, to write both letters. Although the memorandum is sealed in a letter addressed to Lucy herself, Rosanna insists on surrendering it to the postal system, rather than leaving it at its destination, its origin. As Sergeant Cuff discovers,

Nancy had seen her slip out with a letter in her hand, and stop the butcher's man who had just been delivering some meat at the back door. Nancy had heard her ask the man to post the letter when he got back to Frizinghall. The man had looked at the address, and had said it was a round-about way of delivering a letter, directed to Cobb's Hole, to post it at Frizinghall – and that, moreover, on a Saturday, which would prevent the letter from getting to its destination until Monday morning. Rosanna had answered that the delivery of the letter being delayed till Monday was of no importance. (194)

The "round-about" deferral of writing allows Rosanna, whose repeated attempts to *speak* her mind have failed, to commit suicide, to dispatch herself, as it were, before the letter arrives. Anticipating Jennings's unmarked grave, Rosanna buries herself, her guilt and Rachel's, in the Shivering Sands: in an unconscious that leaves no trace, no mark, of what it conceals. As Lucy's father informs the Sergeant, "What the Sand gets, the Sand keeps forever" (198). Yet if Rosanna herself is permanently buried, her unconscious thoughts, sealed in a japanned tin submerged in the Sands, resurface through the play of language, through a literal chain of signifiers.

When Lucy finally receives the letter, she attempts to deliver it to its final destination, Franklin Blake. Yet her attempt to act in the service of the postal system is forestalled by the addressee's hasty departure for parts unknown. Thus the deferral of writing is extended for many months until Blake returns to England following the death of his father. Still oblivious of his own guilt, Franklin returns to the scene of the crime to resume his search for the diamond's thief. His inquiries gain a new momentum upon receipt of Rosanna's message. Mirroring the play of writing, the "envelope contained a letter: and this, in its turn, contained a slip of

paper" (354). The letter fails to announce "the meaning of [Rosanna's] behaviour to [Blake]" (354) and only directs him to the memorandum. The play among signifiers continues as the memorandum, in turn, directs him to seek another piece of writing by going to the Shivering Sands and, having located a particular spot, "to *pull the chain*" (354). Following this trail of signifiers, which mirrors the trail of the trace which is memory, Franklin awaits the turning of the tide and watches the Sands, "the awful shiver that crept over its surface – as if some spirit of terror lived and moved and shuttered in the fathomless deeps beneath" (356). As Franklin soon discovers, this "spirit of terror" is, precisely, the criminality lurking in his own unconscious.

Considering that the object of his search turns out to be nothing less than the confession of Rosanna's suppressed sexuality, the secret of his own nocturnal visit to Rachel's boudoir, and the tell-tale stain on his nightgown, Blake's actions are appropriately sexual. Lowering himself onto the body of the Sands,

I closed my eyes at the moment when the point of the stick first entered the quicksand. The instant afterwards, before the stick could have been submerged more than a few inches, I was free from the hold of my own superstitious terror, and was throbbing with excitement from head to foot. Sounding blindfold, at my first attempt – at that first attempt I had sounded right! The stick struck the chain. (357)

In pulling up the case attached to the chain, Blake is pulling up nothing less than Rosanna's unconscious and his own. In violently prying open the lid, he is opening the pathways, the breaches, between consciousness and unconsciousness, which

constitute memory. Inside the tin, Blake discovers a letter and a nightgown. The former, always subject to deferral, is put aside and he examines only the latter. Spreading it out, he "instantly discovered the smear of the paint from the door of Rachel's boudoir" (358). As he informs the reader:

My eyes remained rivetted on the stain, and my mind took me back at a leap from present to past. The very words of Sergeant Cuff recurred to me.... "Find out whether there is any article of dress in this house with the stain of paint on it. Find out who that dress belongs to.... If the person can't satisfy you, you haven't far to look for the hand that took the Diamond." One after another those words travelled over my memory, repeating themselves again and again with a wearisome, mechanical reiteration. (358 emphasis mine)

It is, perhaps, only appropriate that it is a mark of paint which identifies the criminal. For as Derrida points out, "*pharmakon* also means paint, not a natural colour but an artificial tint, a chemical dye that imitates the chromatic scale given in nature" (D 129). Yet in this case, paint, which resembles writing in being both artificial and imitative, does not so much conceal as reveal the guilty unconscious.

The chain of significations continues. The mark of paint leads Blake to a mark of ink:

I had discovered the smear on the nightgown. To whom did the nightgown belong?... The nightgown itself would reveal the truth; for, in all probability, the nightgown was marked with its owner's name. I took it up from the sand, and looked for the mark. I found the mark, and read – MY OWN NAME. (359)

To borrow a phrase from Geoffrey Hartman, this mark represents a "*scene of nomination*" ("Psychoanalysis: The French Connection" 94). As Hartman suggests,

the act of naming has a "haunting, fixative, unifying effect.... [T]he specular name can produce a hallelujah and magnifying language that mimics a sublimity associated with the divine logos. This is so even if the identifying name, the '*nom unique*' or '*nom propre*,' is accusatory" (94). While this "*scene of nomination*" is certainly "accusatory," can it be said that it has the "fixative, unifying effect" which Hartman describes? Does Rosanna, in naming Blake, in any way create his identity? These questions are best examined through Derrida's "Telepathy."

In this article, Derrida's argument is driven by the question of why "the theoreticians of the performative or of pragmatics take so little interest...in the effects of the written object, the letter in particular?" (7). For according to Derrida, a letter is, precisely, a performative that creates or produces its own addressee, although it does so without any conscious intent. As he states, "one cannot say of the addressee that s/he exists before the letter" (6), but only that s/he "would let her/himself be produced by the letter"(5) [*Le destinataire, lui ou elle, se laisserait produire par la lettre* ("*Télépathie*" 239)]. Ironically, Derrida's premise gains support from Lacan's Seminar.

Although Lacan suggests that there is only one proper destination for the purloined letter, its origin, the fact that the letter determines the actions and position of each of the characters in the triad suggests that each one is, in fact, the addressee of the letter. Each is created by the letter in exactly the sense that Derrida suggests in "Telepathy." In contrast, *The Moonstone* problematizes the idea of a letter as a performative that produces its own addressee. For it cannot be said that Rosanna's

letter creates or produces the criminal to whom it is addressed. In naming Blake, Rosanna does not so much create, or fix, his identity as destroy it. In revealing his unconscious crime, she destabilizes his identity as a stable, unified individual, but not by creating, or producing, the division between his conscious and unconscious components but, rather, by revealing his always already divided nature, the "flaw" that exists in his "very heart."

In the only section of the piece to deal explicitly with the issue of interiority/exteriority, Derrida insists, "I am not putting forward the hypothesis of a letter which would be the external occasion, in some sense, of an encounter between two identifiable subjects – and who would already be determined" (5). Yet here, as elsewhere, the emphasis is not on the site of the letter (internal or external) but on the nature of the subject (determined or not). And despite Derrida's insistence to the contrary, it is impossible to conceive of a letter which, through division, produces the self appropriate to it, produces what did not exist before its arrival, as anything but an external form of violence. By placing writing in a position of exteriority, "Telepathy" appears to participate in the system of metaphysics which Derrida, elsewhere, takes such pains to deconstruct.

In the hope that the nightgown is, somehow, "a liar" (360), Blake turns to Rosanna's letter. But like all writing, this letter, which is itself copied into the text, merely repeats the marks which have already identified him as the thief who stole the Moonstone. Confronted with the "horrible position" (360) which the writing of

the nightgown and letter have revealed him to be in, Blake confesses, "I don't know of a living creature who can be of the slightest use to me" (370). But as the "words passed [his] lips, some person outside knocked at the door of the room" (370). This "person" is Ezra Jennings, and his fortuitous arrival results in what he later describes to Blake as "a *marked* day in your life, and in mine" (431 emphasis mine). It is not without significance that Jennings arrives in the capacity of a healer, soliciting wine for his patients, for this is precisely the role he will assume for Blake.

The first step towards the cure effected by this *pharmakos* is for Jennings to establish that Blake took the diamond unconsciously, under the influence of a dose of opium administered by Doctor Candy. The difficulty involved in doing so is, of course, that Candy has "lost his memory in [a] fever, and he has never recovered more than the wreck of it since" (371). Yet in what is, perhaps, the novel's most powerful scene of writing, Jennings reveals that the lost traces of writing, the suppressed unconscious past, can indeed be reclaimed through writing.

Jennings's experience as a doctor has led him "to doubt whether we can justifiably infer -- in cases of delirium -- that the loss of the faculty of speaking connectedly, implies of necessity the loss of the faculty of thinking connectedly as well" (423). He is right to insist that this hypothesis constitutes not only a "medical" theory but a "metaphysical theory" (438) as well, for it participates, with a strange but not unfamiliar twist, in the opposition between a good and a bad writing. As we have already seen, "the good and natural is the divine inscription in the heart

and the soul; the perverse and artful is technique, exiled in the exteriority of the body" (Derrida, *OG* 17). Good writing is located within the proximity of the logos and within this logos, "the original and essential link to the *phonē* has never been broken" (Derrida, *OG* 11).

Phonē, in effect, is the signifying substance given to consciousness as that which is most intimately tied to the thought of the signified concept. From this point of view, the voice is consciousness itself. When I speak, not only am I conscious of being present for what I think, but I am conscious also of keeping as close as possible to my thought, or to the "concept," a signifier that does not fall into the world, a signifier that I hear as soon as I emit it, that seems to depend upon my pure and free spontaneity, requiring the use of no instrument, no accessory, no force taken from the world. Not only do the signifier and the signified seem to unite, but also, in this confusion, the signifier seems to erase itself or to become transparent, in order to allow the concept to present itself as what it is, referring to nothing other than its presence. The exteriority of the signifier seems reduced. (Derrida, *P* 22)

The twist, alluded to above, lies in the fact that, in Jennings's theory, it is not writing but speech which is the technical and exterior representation. Speech is indistinguishable from writing. Thus, "'signifier of the signifier' no longer defines accidental doubling and fallen secondarity. 'Signifier of the signifier' describes on the contrary the movement of language" (Derrida, *OG* 7).

Doctor Candy's illness affords Jennings the opportunity to demonstrate successfully his theory. Yet the means by which he does so demonstrate, in turn, that the writing on the soul is identical to its external representation; living memory, *mnēmē*, is always already characterized by *hyponnēsis*. Sitting by Candy's bedside,

Jennings is

"able to take down the patient's 'wanderings,' exactly as they fell from his lips.... At odds and ends of time...I reproduced my shorthand notes in the ordinary form of writing – leaving large spaces between the broken phrases, and even the single words, as they had fallen disconnectedly from Mr Candy's lips. I then treated the result thus obtained, on something like the principle which one adopts in putting together a child's 'puzzle.'" (423-4)

Candy's memory is represented by two sheets of writing. The first, representing the unconscious, contains only "the broken words, as they dropped from his lips" (424). As Jennings himself realizes, these unconscious traces, each as arbitrary as a solitary piece of a "child's 'puzzle,'" have no innate plenitude. Like writing, they operate through a system of difference and repetition. The second sheet, representing the conscious, contains Jennings's rewriting of the "broken words" into complete sentences, a process that renders them legible. The system of interaction between these two sheets, between the conscious and the unconscious, is itself a process of repetition. Speaking of his attempts to rewrite Candy's unconscious ramblings into the conscious text, Jennings informs Blake that in his fever, Candy "reiterated certain words and phrases a dozen times over, fifty times over, just as he attached more or less importance to the idea which they represented. The repetitions, in this sense, were of some assistance to me in putting together these fragments" (437). And thus, through a process of re-writing and repetition, Jennings is able to reclaim the unconscious past and prove that Blake stole the diamond unconsciously. Yet it is not without significance that "the repetitions are not transferred" (437) to the page which

represents consciousness, that is, that the repetitions, repetition itself, are erased. Consciousness is restored by excluding the writing which always already threatens it. Despite this erasure, however, Jennings's experiment confirms that Candy's lost recollection is itself a trace and that the "unconscious text is already a weave of pure traces, differences in which meaning and force are united -- a text nowhere present, consisting of archives which are always already transcriptions." The oppositions between good/bad writing, *mnēmē/hypomnēsis*, internal/external all collapse upon the recognition that in "all senses of the word, writing thus *comprehends* language" (Derrida, OG 7).

Jennings's experiment, in which he creates a "smooth and finished texture out of the ravelled skein" (438), is central to the solution of the mystery and, more generally, to the reader's understanding of the importance of writing in the novel as a whole. Indeed, the way in which he reclaims the unconscious past through writing, as writing, may be seen as an analogue for the way in which the reader must approach this text, how he or she must rewrite the fragmented testimony of each character into a legible, meaningful whole. Yet it is also an analogue for the way in which the nineteenth-century novel as a whole resurrects the realm of presence by borrowing and subsequently erasing the repetition of writing.

On the strength of Jennings's success in reclaiming Candy's lost memory, Blake agrees to participate in a second experiment, an experiment described by Bourne Taylor as an "opium-induced re-enactment of an opium-induced action, set

up by an opium-dependent doctor" (175). Before allowing him to proceed, however, Jennings insists on demonstrating that "Science sanctions [his] proposal" (440) and calls upon the theories of William Carpenter and John Elliotson for support. In so doing, this *pharmakeus* appears to introduce another element of undecidability into what is already a *pharmakon*-dominated experiment. For as Bourne Taylor points out,

In conflating Carpenter and Elliotson in this way Collins is condensing two figures whose names...would have had very different resonances in the 1860s: Carpenter, the respected voice of mainstream physiological psychology; Elliotson, the marginalized advocate of mesmerism. (183)⁹

Yet does Collins, in actuality, conflate these two individuals? Do their two theories not, in fact, correspond to the two separate and distinct objectives of the experiment as outlined by Jennings? For as he states, "It is a question with me whether the experiment which I propose as a means of vindicating your innocence, may not also be made a means of recovering the lost Diamond as well" (443). As the diamond is not "lost" but stolen, it is inevitable that the experiment should fail to achieve its second objective. Elliotson's "lost parcel" theory falling to the wayside, I shall limit my attention to Carpenter and the question of establishing Blake's "innocence."

⁹ For a discussion of the theories of Elliotson and Carpenter, see Hutter's "Dreams, Transformations, and Literature"; and Martin Kayman's *From Bow Street to Baker Street: Mystery, Detection and Narrative*, pp. 204-9. For a more general discussion of nineteenth-century psychology, see Bourne Taylor's *In the Secret Theatre of the Home* and, for Carpenter and Elliotson, pp. 174-206.

If, for the moment, one reduces *The Moonstone* to two scenes, Blake's theft of the diamond on the night of Rachel's birthday party and his subsequent re-theft of the crystal which replaces the stolen Moonstone some months later, it comes to bear a striking resemblance to "The Purloined Letter" as presented by Lacan. As Felman asserts, the second scene differs from the first in that the former "through the repetition, allows for an understanding, for an *analysis* of the first." As I have already suggested, this second scene is best seen, not as an "*allegory of psychoanalysis*," but as an allegory of the repetition which constitutes the iterability of writing and, hence, its simultaneous legibility and illegibility. As Jennings informs Blake:

"We shall have put you back again into something assimilating to your nervous condition on the birthday night. If we can next revive, or nearly revive, the domestic circumstances which surrounded you; and if we can occupy your mind again with the various questions concerning the Diamond which formerly agitated it, we shall have replaced you, as nearly as possible, in the same position, physically and morally, in which the opium found you last year. In that case we may fairly hope that *a repetition of the dose will lead, in a greater or lesser degree, to a repetition of the results.*" (439 emphasis mine)

Jennings's experiment is based on the following "physiological principle" expounded by Carpenter:

"There seems much ground for the belief that *every* sensory impression which has once been recognized by the perceptive consciousness, is registered (so to speak) in the brain, and may be reproduced at some subsequent time, although there may be no consciousness of its existence in the mind during the whole intermediate period." (440)

In asserting that "*every* sensory impression...may be reproduced," that no trace is ever lost or erased, Carpenter appears to fall into the same metaphysical trap as

Freud. As Derrida suggests, "An uneraseable trace is not a trace, it is a full presence, an immobile and incorruptible substance, a son of God" (FSW 230). In spite of this phonologocentrism, Carpenter's "configuration of traces," like Freud's in "Note on 'The Mystic Writing-Pad,'" cannot "be represented except by the structure and functioning of writing" (Derrida, FSW 200). Becoming legible only by being "recognized," "registered," and "reproduced," these traces always already participate in the system of repetition and deferral that is writing. Following Carpenter's theory, Jennings's experiment is an attempt to re-write the past and, in so doing, render it legible. Although the "repetition of the dose" of opium does indeed lead to a "repetition of the results" – Blake steals the substitute diamond – the experiment both vindicates his innocence *and* confirms his criminality. The act of writing, itself divisionary, reveals the always already divided nature of the individual, inhabited by a conscious and an unconscious self whose interaction is "irreducibly graphic."

Yet in another sense, the experiment does indeed vindicate Blake's innocence by taking the first step towards the elimination of his guilt: the elimination of the division within him and the division of writing. Like the successful psychoanalysis as/*and anamnesis*, Jennings's experiment is designed to "restor[e] to full presence what is now absent" (Krell 165), to re-write the lost unconscious trace into "presence as consciousness." Yet Blake awakens after the experiment, "perfectly ignorant of all that [he] had said and done under the influence of opium – from the time when the drug first laid its hold on [him], to the time when [he] opened [his] eyes, in Rachel's

sitting-room" (484). Thus it appears that Jennings, in re-writing Blake's criminal unconscious, actually erases it and writes it into his own self. In revealing the writing within, he exorcizes it to a position of exteriority. The scene of writing is the scene of its own exclusion. Once externalized, writing is quickly eliminated. As I have already suggested, the displacement of Blake's unconscious guilt onto Jennings, allows Collins to transform him from a *pharmakeus* to a *pharmakos*. All that remains for the cure to be effected is the sacrifice that will restore the "purity of the inside" (Derrida, *D* 128) by ridding it of writing. And upon Jennings's death, the cure is complete. His unmarked grave contains not only his life's writings, "the bundle of letters, the unfinished book, and the volumes of the Diary" (515), but the writing of his double, the writing of Blake's unconscious.

Jennings's death, coupled with that of Godfrey Ablewhite, frees Blake from his own unconscious criminality and allows him to be reunited with Rachel, whose own criminality is eliminated by the death of Rosanna. In an early encounter with Blake, Jennings prophesies, "Perhaps we should all be happier...if we could but completely forget!" (419). One need only add that what is to be forgotten is the writing of the criminal unconscious, the repetition of writing which restores "presence as consciousness." Needless to say, Jennings's desire for complete forgetfulness, a desire shared by the nineteenth-century novel as a whole, is fulfilled. Blake and Rachel's happiness, their marriage and the advent of their first child, is achieved at the expense of Ezra Jennings and Rosanna Spearman, whose deaths

signal the repression of the writing of memory as "that which threatens presence and the mastering of absence." *Anamnesis*, as a moment of unforgetting, is achieved precisely by an act of forgetfulness. If the theft of the diamond, by turning the characters "upside down" and unleashing writing and the unconscious, re-enacts the primal scene of the nineteenth-century novel, *Collins*, at the conclusion of the novel proper, turns them right side up again by excluding writing and thus restoring and resurrecting a realm of "self-present self-knowledge" (Derrida, *OG* 98).

For as soon as the divisionary, or disseminating, powers of writing are eliminated, the Moonstone is capable of functioning as a *logos* once more. It is, moreover, guaranteed to arrive at its proper destination: not the "bosom of a woman's dress" (526) which was, after all, merely a part of the detour it suffered, but at its origin. As Murthwaite informs the reader in the Epilogue,

after the lapse of eight centuries, the Moonstone looks forth once more, over the walls of the sacred city in which its story first began. How it has found its way back to its wild native land – by what accident, or by what crime, the Indians regained possession of their sacred gem, may be in your knowledge, but is not in mine. (526)

As we have seen, the Moonstone finds "its way back," not through an "accident," or a "crime," but through the elimination of writing as an accident, by the elimination of the criminal unconscious. Through this elimination, a "certain reappropriation and a certain readequation...reconstitute the proper, the place, the meaning and truth that have become distant from themselves for the time of a detour."

According to Hutter:

Dreaming and detective fiction are connected by a common latent structure; and in order to perceive that structure, we require that literary criticism – like current analytic dream interpretation – subordinate an earlier libido theory into a model of conflict resolution, a model no longer exclusively aimed at wish-fulfilment or the most primitive conflicts of childhood. (207)

Yet the conclusion of *The Moonstone*, sorely at odds with the rest of the novel, is, precisely, an act of "wish-fulfilment," and, as such, corresponds to Aydelotte's definition of detective fiction as a "wish-fulfilment fantas[y] designed to produce certain agreeable sensations in the reader, to foist upon him illusions he wants to entertain and which he goes to this literature to find" (69). As we have seen, this definition applies equally well to the nineteenth-century novel as a form of *hypno-mnēsis*. In eliminating writing, Collins acts out his desire to eliminate what threatens presence and destabilizes the logos and thus he repeats and re-enacts the inaugurating gesture of Western metaphysics. Yet it seems that he himself is aware of the futility of the gesture. Although the logos has arrived at its proper destination, its origin, the final words of the novel, "What will be the next adventure of the Moonstone? Who can tell!" (526), introduce an element of uncertainty which is indicative of the fragility of Collins's belief in the logos. Furthermore, as Murthwaite points out, the world of the novel is still a world devoid of a logos: "You have lost sight of it in England, and (if I know anything of this people) you have lost sight of it forever" (526). Although writing has been repressed, in the

absence of a logos, it threatens to resurface and destroy the tottering edifice Collins has constructed.

In burying herself, the writing of her criminality and Rachel's, in the Shivering Sands which is, as I have already suggested, a symbol of the unconscious, Rosanna joins the "hundreds of suffocating people under it – all struggling to get to the surface" (58). It is not surprising, therefore, that Blake, while searching for her hidden letter, is struck by

A horrible fancy that the dead woman might appear on the scene of her suicide, to assist [his] search – an unutterable dread of seeing her rise through the heavy surface of the sand, and point to the place – forced itself into [his] mind, and turned [him] cold in the warm sunlight. (357)

If one recalls Betteredge's speech, quoted above, which links the working class with repression, Lucy Yolland's threat, "the day is not far off when the poor will rise against the rich" (227), assumes a new resonance. This threat, directed specifically towards Blake, "I pray to Heaven they may begin with *him*" (227), belies Yolland's assertion that "What the Sand gets, the Sand keeps for ever." Although Jennings and Rosanna take the writing of Blake and Rachel's criminal unconscious to the grave, such writing is, as Collins takes such pains to demonstrate, irrepressible. The writing which is memory can always resurface and, once unleashed, will threaten "presence as consciousness" and the happiness achieved by "completely forget[ting]."

Hutter's reading of the novel concludes with the assertion that the "ultimate

conflict of *The Moonstone* is not within the novel but within the reader who must distrust the story's various narratives in order to create his own more authentic story" (208). Yet his reading is, in fact, a translation which "produce[s] on the *pharmakon* an effect of analysis that violently destroys it, reduces it to one of its simple elements" (Derrida, *D* 99). As we have seen, *The Moonstone* is a text in perpetual contradiction with itself. It is a text which explores, without resolving, the oppositions which support Western metaphysics: presence/absence, speech/writing, consciousness/unconsciousness, *mnēmē/hypomnēsis*, life/death, and through the exploration of inside/outside, "the very basis of *opposition* as such." Furthermore, writing both within and against the phonologocentric tradition, the novel is itself an irreconcilable contradiction, a *pharmakon* that seduces the reader without offering the satisfaction of a resolution. As such, it is a testament to the fact that "nothing simply escapes metaphysics.... that [a] text both obeys metaphysical constraints and challenges them" (Bass 75).

Reminders

If the conclusion is lacking at the end, it is also lacking in the beginning.

Soren Kierkegaard

The time has come to abandon a writing always already abandoned; a writing which, thus disseminated, always already resists summation. According to the "ludicrous" logic of the preface (Derrida, *D* 7), I opened this thesis by presenting

certain conclusions which I arrived at after the fact, that is, at its close. I shall conclude this thesis, therefore, by making a gesture toward a certain opening, a certain path or trajectory that remains to be followed.

Speaking of the first metaphor, the metaphor which borrows and effaces writing in order to name that which is good/pure, only in terms of what is evil/contaminated, a metaphor which inaugurates the primal scene of philosophy, Derrida states:

As was the case with the Platonic writing of the truth in the soul, in the Middle Ages too it is a writing understood in the metaphoric sense, that is to say a *natural*, eternal, and universal writing, the system of signified truth, which is recognized in its dignity. As in the *Phaedrus*, a certain fallen writing continues to be opposed to it. There remains to be written a history of this metaphor, a metaphor that systematically contrasts divine or natural writing and the human and laborious, finite and artificial inscription. It remains to articulate rigorously the stages of that history. (OG 15)

This thesis represents my contribution to the "history of this metaphor." By exploring the ways in which the writing of Wilkie Collins, a writing "interested in itself which also enables us to read philosophemes" (Derrida, P 7), repeats and, through its repetitions, destabilizes the primal scene of philosophy, I have attempted to "articulate" one particular "stage" of this history; a stage which has not, for reasons that themselves need to be articulated, received adequate attention. In necessarily limiting myself to the texts, the textuality, of one author, I have, to adopt an appropriate analogy, contributed only one link to a chain that remains to be written. In order to illuminate fully Collins's position between the "two interpretations of

interpretation, of structure, of play" (Derrida, SSP 292), that is to say, in order to recognize how close he comes to the "Nietzschean *affirmation*," while still remaining on the "saddened, *negative*, nostalgic, guilty Rousseauistic side of the thinking of play" (Derrida, SSP 292), it would be necessary to inscribe his texts into a network of other texts. To engage in a Derridean reading, that is, a deconstruction, of the *écriture* of/in Collins within the context of the much larger project of deconstructing the texts of Dickens, of Eliot, of Hardy, of all those other nineteenth-century novelists for whom art is "both hope and memory" (Reed 414) and, simultaneously, the death of hope, the death of memory, as the price of a joyous freedom. It is to that deconstruction that we must now (re)turn.

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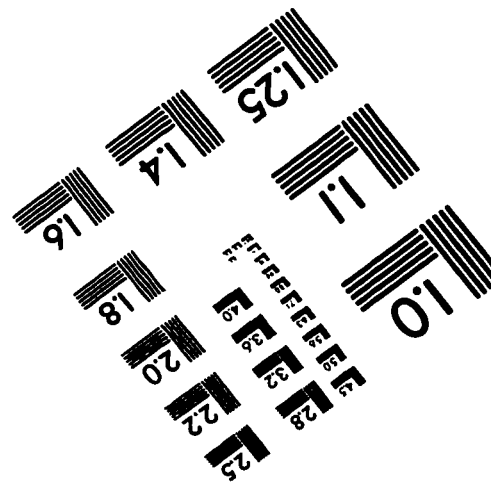
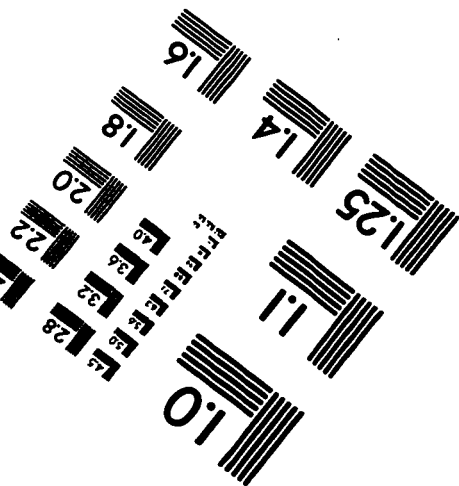
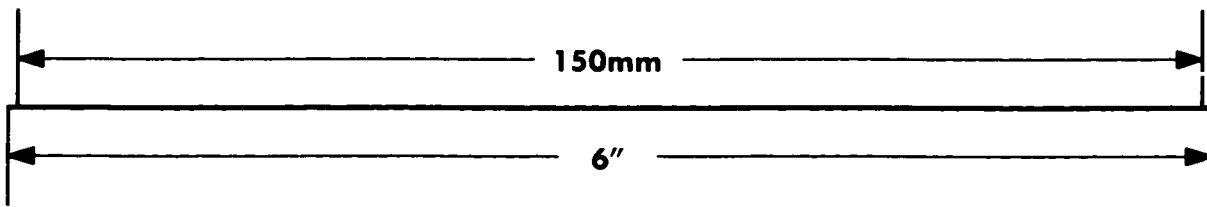
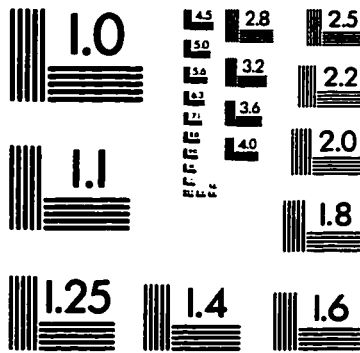
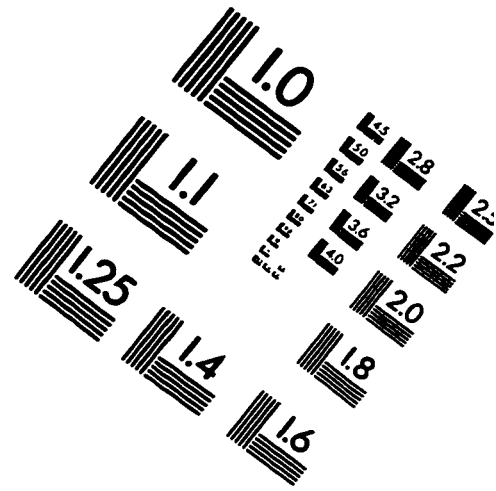
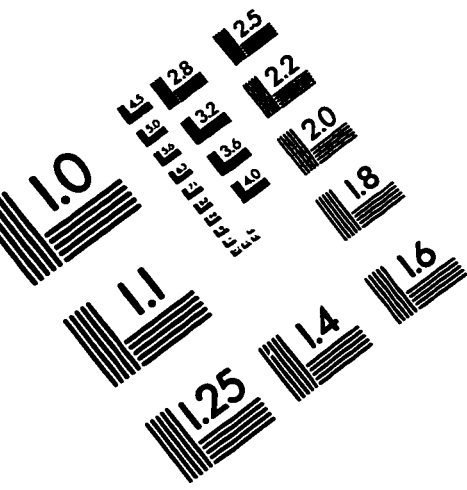
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