

Chapter 3: *Hide and Seek*

The Victorians' preoccupation with health is the "site" of Collins' third published novel. Athena Vrettos argues that "narratives of illness ... could shape how people perceived relationships between mind and body, self and other, private and public spheres"(2) and that "interpretation of bodies became an important form of social cartography" (8). However, through its mute heroine *Hide and Seek* brings into question any perception that bodily fitness is a condition of a person's worthiness¹ or that measurement of the body can predict interior identity or social progress. Furthermore, by stressing individuality the novel questions whether regularity, of form or personality, is "normal." And against a background of general interest in etymology and the origins of language, Collins examines the potential of visual communication in such a way as to question the assumed dependence of other forms of language on speech. This chapter is concerned with both these aspects of the novel.

Although the Chair of Comparative Philology at Oxford was not established till 1868, *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1840 was already expressing the need for a scientific study of language, consistent with Bacon's methodology of empirical research:

It is not only by treating philology as a proper science that its reputation can be sustained, or its progress promoted. If it is at all a fit subject of accurate investigation, it must be dealt with, like any other branch of inductive knowledge, by the twofold process of collecting extensively and minutely, the facts connected with it, and of endeavouring to generalise those facts into distinct laws. ("Grimm's Teutonic Grammar" 207)

In 1842 the Philological society was founded in London. Across the Channel, by 1866, there had been so much speculation about the origins of language (without the possibility then of proving any hypothesis) that the

¹ Such views were expressed in "Causistry" (1840). The article links health and morality. For example, "All fixed derangements of the health are doubly hostile to the moral energies" through the intellect unconsciously and consciously through the will (262). See also *Armada* (712) where Downward's snuggery is made to reflect negatively on the notion of mind-body connection.

Paris Societe de Linguistique banned the presentation of further papers on the subject (Sacks, *Voices* 122). Some theories focussed on imitation, theorising, for instance, that the picture writing systems of Egypt, China and the Americas represented objects, gestures or even the shape of a speaker's lips (Ree 86-87). Hensleigh Wedgwood observed that certain facial expressions and gestures were "natural signs" and interpreted them as "based upon and recognised from instinct, inherited habit or wilful imitation of nature" (quoted Stitt 17). Astronomer, John Herschel, writing to geologist, Charles Lyell, commented, "Words are to the anthropologist what rolled pebbles are to the geologist" (quoted Stitt 41). That is, old language is not lost, derivations and memory remain. Consistent with the idea of the indestructibility of matter, vestiges of language remain and enable a scholar to interpret the process of change that has occurred and link language theory, kinship and descent. In this context, Madonna's transition from verbal to visible language can be read as speculation of a re-discovery of a linguistic past--just as the narrative re-discovers her social past.

Collins ridiculed the "bow wow theory" of the origins of language (*Finch* 136), and shared with Dickens an interest in the Teutonic origins of English. ² Writers will come, Dickens recorded, closest to "all hearts with words [of Saxon origin] that are familiar in every home, and find their way even into the prattle of the nursery" (quoted Stitt 148-49). There are indications of that interest in both *Hide and Seek* and *Poor Miss Finch* through Zack and Finch's boy. In contrast to valued "plainness", characteristic of Saxon origins, Collins attributes a plethora of "-isms" to his authoritarian character, Thorpe, making him seem snobbish and artificial as a result (e.g. *Hide and Seek* 15-16). His diction expresses his

² In *David Copperfield* Betsy Trotwood prefers "Barkis" to that foreign-sounding "Peggotty".

pretension as clearly as does the facade of his house.

It is noticeable, too, that the exchange between Thorpe and Mr Goodworth relies heavily on a description of Thorpe's body language that contradicts the words spoken:

‘It's no use looking in that way, Thorpe, ‘ growled the old gentleman; ‘I'm not to be put down by looks at my time of life.’ (14)

Thorpe's coldness (that he euphemistically tries to justify as “rationalism”) is satirised visually also:

On the wall opposite hung several lithographed portraits of distinguished preachers, in and out of the Establishment -- mostly represented as very sturdily-constructed men with bristly hair, fronting the spectator interrogatively and holding thick books in their hands. (14)

Here, early in the novel, readers find Collins distinguishing between what is observed and what is spoken to suggest how deceptive words can be. And later, a discussion between Blyth and Mat shows how observation can be distorted by experience: Mat, with a carpenter's eye, comments on the physical condition of the five-barred gate in Blyth's drawing; the artist is concerned for the “creased and ragged condition of the paper on which the sketch [is] made” (324). These examples point to an awareness of the limitations of both visual and verbal recording and illustrate how readily one mode interacts with the other.

At a time when dialects were studied,³ not just as curiosities but also as purer remains of an earlier language, Collins found much pleasure in recording Cornish variants throughout *Rambles Beyond Railways* where he paid special attention to local terms and pronunciations and where his report on the old miracle plays of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries included a specimen of Cornish language with a note explaining how “the ancient Cornish tongue had altered and deteriorated; and was indeed changing into English at the period of [the] play” (205).

³Stitt reports that Muller regarded any dialect as a complete system of language (19).

In *Hide and Seek* the speech of Mrs Peckover provides a typical example of Collins' acute ear and reflects Collins' serious interest in the spoken variants of the language. All Mary's history is reported in the uneducated speech of Mrs Peckover. Though she is shown as self-conscious about her diction and want of grammar, she is a better communicator than Thorpe or the critics at Blyth's picture showing. Collins does not undervalue dialect and gives to Mrs Peckover generosity of size, nurturing care and language. Her speech is not designed for comic effect but is shown simply as a variant that poses no threat to morality or social cohesion. Rather than imposing a "superior" style on characters, Collins accurately represents their singleness by describing their speech, using it as a form of identification and classification: Mrs Peckover is presented, and dignified, as one of the deserving poor. It is not irrelevant that her kindly sensitive mention of Mary's name, at a critical moment, can discharge Mat's aggression on the instant (373)--signifying that words are a powerful force and that the power is located in the people using them and in the associations they engender. Furthermore, her acts of sympathy are shown as genuine, quite unlike acts of public philanthropy that pass as "charity" (represented through Godfrey Ablewhite in *The Moonstone*) or the interference of busybodies (like Dickens' Mrs Jellyby).

Voice, Collins demonstrates, is particular to individuals and a part of their identities. Although the text is not a literal transcript of actual speech, Collins manages to suggest Mrs Peckover's dialect in the structures of the written mode and he captures for instance the rhythms of Peggy Burke's free tongue (82-83). Mrs Blyth's voice, readers are told, is "low" in tone, and despite illness and pain, always cheerful, and varies "musically and pleasantly" (142). Zack's slang is used artistically to represent his immaturity. Given his skill in recording speech and using dialogue to

distinguish and describe characters, it is all the more remarkable that Collins has chosen to write about a speechless heroine--unless it is, as I claim, to recognise in signing a symbolic representation similar to that understood as "language." This appears to be part of a larger investigation into the connecting powers of the mind where, as in language, the senses merely *suggest* outer objects with which they have no real but only an arbitrary connection.

Collins' correspondence deplors "affectation of language and obscurity of meaning" (*Letters* 469). In his fiction words count: he writes "data" in italics to suggest the specialist status of the word in *Rambles*; "alibi", just coming into general use from its legal origins, he diplomatically explains for readers of *The Law and the Lady* (297)⁴. He makes enquiries about slang used in athletics for *Man and Wife* (*Letters* 324). And while he uses "photograph" in *The Law and the Lady*, in *The Woman in White* he prefers "sun picture" as the term appropriate to the time setting of that novel. When the devilish vivisector of *Heart and Science* is described as "occult" Collins playfully uses the term in its narrow medical sense. But, given the "devilishness" of Benjulia's portrayal, the more familiar meaning also exerts an influence that links the nineteenth-century physiologist to the mediaeval alchemist. Drawing attention to the history of words signals an understanding that over time ambiguities could occur and reinforces the idea that words are arbitrary labels for ideas.

Furthermore, Collins' pleasure from words was matched by his understanding. In 1854, the same year that *Hide and Seek* was published, Collins reviewed Robert Bell's edition of Chaucer's poetry and praised Bell for making accessible Chaucer's poetry in Chaucer's language.

Mr Bell has made it his business, in the first instance, to secure the greatest possible purity of text; and in the second place, to print the text word for

⁴ The OED records the use in law from 1727. Thackeray and Macaulay used it in late 1850s. It appeared in *Saturday Review* Mar. 15, 1862.

word and letter for letter, exactly as his own researches and the labours of others informed him that Chaucer wrote it. ("Chaucer" 1215)

Collins reassures the general reader:

Learn, with very little exertion, one or two preliminary lessons... and you must be careless indeed if you cannot follow it with perfect ease... any reader of average intelligence who will pay proper attention to the Editor ... may feel assured of reading it easily as well as usefully, to the end. (1215)

Scott was the novelist Collins most admired and Scott's *The Antiquary* the novel Collins claimed to prefer. Not only is that novel saturated with the history of Scottish language and speculation about its origins (e.g. bk. 1 ch. 6 and bk. 3 ch. 8) but there is also plenty of amusing exchange over double meanings (e.g. interrogation in bk. 3 ch. 8). The reference (in vol. 3 ch. 13) to Indian Banians who use both sign and voice may be a point for comparison with *Hide and Seek*.⁵

Collins' own preference was for "plain" language, that is, language that is precise and uncluttered and self-consciously he insists on this quality within the fiction. For instance, *After Dark* (1856) carries the message that stories are to be told directly "in plain speech" (23). When William questions his wife, "Who is to do the eloquent descriptions and the striking reflections, and all that part of it?" Leah's reply is direct: nobody is to undertake such a useless task:

'The eloquent descriptions and the striking reflections are just the parts of a story-book that people never read. Whatever we do, let us not, if we can possibly help it, write so much as a single sentence that can be conveniently skipped. '(28)

The science that had taught that ideas were triggered directly by external impressions would require "eloquent descriptions" to stimulate thought. But the new understanding of perception would reduce the requirement

⁵The comparison doesn't end there. Book two, chapter twelve uses a hair ring to establish a link with the past. Blyth and Mat, with their eccentricities, have prototypes in Monkbarns and Edie.

for external descriptions. As the narrator in *Poor Miss Finch* points out, the skill in describing a character is to know when to stop:

‘The most tiresome information that I am acquainted with, is the information that tells us of the virtues of an absent person -- when that absent person happens to be a stranger.’(51)

In 1861, the same year that Collins wrote his preface for *The Dead Secret*, in “careful revisal” of the 1854 edition of *Hide and Seek* he has “abridged, and in many cases omitted, several passages in the first edition, that make larger demands upon the reader’s patience than [he] should now think it desirable to venture on if [he] were writing a new book”(5). Stylistically as part of his “truthfulness,” Collins was committed to eliminating anything superfluous. His conciseness and use of dialogue was noted and approved even before revision to cut the longer descriptive passages:

There are no lofty conversations swelling out the volumes while the author takes breath and thinks how to prepare the next incident. There are no redundant platitudes sprawling over the fatigued pages. There are no ‘How often do we find,’ no ‘So true it is that man,’ &c. No sermons. the dialogue is dramatic -- put there either to carry on the story or fetch out the traits of character. (“Unsigned Review, *Leader*” 57)

However, “plainness” of language and the use of dialogue did not prevent Collins from exploiting traditional emblems and associations. For instance Collins accommodates new botanical interest within the traditional practice of flower symbolism.⁶ In *Hide and Seek* “Arthur Carr” is an amateur botanist and collector of varieties. Mary and “Arthur” meet in a garden but the story moves beyond convention when we find “Arthur” teaching Mary about geraniums (not iconic roses or lilies; but geraniums, hybridised red pelargoniums, new in horticulture) and dried

⁶ Waters (124) explains that plants like scarlet geraniums were considered to have only “colour, ornamentation, and docility” and to speak of “homogeneity, ephemerality and absence of ‘personality’” --an apt description for “Arthur Carr.” Subsequently, however, it can be understood that Thorpe’s attraction to botany reflects the gentler side of his personality that is seeking escape from the shallowness of the commercial world where his duty (he thinks) lies.

ferns and passion flowers. "Hard botanical names" (264) tell of a growing romance and hint at a sexual encounter.

The red "geranium" was a hybrid of two pelargoniums brought to England from the Cape in the late eighteenth century. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1842 used the specific example of hybrid pelargoniums/cape geraniums in its discussion of varieties and hybridisation. The matter was of concern to science as part of the larger study of embryology. For botanists the puzzle remained whether or not a hybrid could produce seed true to type. The seed of the "hybrid," Carr-Thorpe, does run true to type: the distinctive hair colouring of young Zack's biological inheritance leads Mat to Thorpe. The subject of heredity continued to attract Collins' attention: in *No Name* (1863) Frank Clare's representation (e.g. in chapter eight) is consistent with the theory of degeneration and in *The Legacy of Cain* (1888) Collins discusses the possibility of "lurking hereditary taint" (e.g. 221).

In *Rambles Beyond Railways* (1851), relying on respect for his readers' general intelligence and their curiosity, Collins had explored the advantages of recording fact and fancy side by side. *Rambles* records both myths and history about Tintagel and Arthur's victories over the Saxons (232-35). Describing the sand ridge between Loo Poo and the sea (91), Collins gives the explanation of tidal and storm action and the legend of giant Tregeagle dropping his sack of sand.⁷ He goes on to state how imagination may be triggered by legend rather than by antiquarian studies (41) and he follows up this sequence with a report of the Cheese-Wring (44), giving first the theory of Druid construction and then the geological explanation of wearing and washing, to conclude by registering his

⁷ Similarly in the fiction Collins offers both uncanny and plausible explanations for events. In *Hide and Seek*, for instance, he balances such possibilities at the first meeting between Mat and Madonna (331-34).

astonishment at rock scenery that excites “a curiosity that even science may wonder at” (45). These examples indicate that, early in his career, Collins understands that the representation of Nature is the business of *both* Art and Science. He shared this view with the scientist, W.B. Carpenter, who said:

The Artist serves as the Interpreter of Nature, not when he works as the mere copyist, delineating that which he sees with his bodily eyes, and which we could see as well for ourselves; but when he endeavours to awaken within us the perception of those beauties and harmonies which his own trained sense has recognised. (Carpenter, “Presidential Address” 417)

In his art criticism Collins praises Maclise’s “Caxton’s printing Office” for “its perfect verisimilitude” (“Exhibition” 3) and appreciates “the astonishing varieties of expression and character exhibited in the different groups” (4) and the blend of “mental anxiety and physical fatigue... developed in the face of Caxton” (4), qualities that produce “truth to Nature.” Additionally, he admires its “*striking dramatic power.*” It is noticeable that the dramatic power comes from visualising Caxton’s *feelings* rather than his activity. The artist’s appreciation of the inward man is what counts and indicates Collins’ respect for the interpretive eye that sees what is not actually visible. At the same time, Collins disapproves of exaggeration or “any *appearance* of trickery in colour, or artifice in arrangement” (4). He praises Landseer’s “Midsummer Night’s Dream” for “*carry[ing] the power of illusion as far as illusion will go*” (5). I have added the emphases to stress how far the “realism” Collins values goes beyond copying and is a product of the artist’s creative mind that uses illusion to make visible an understanding that others may miss.

Wonderment succeeds knowledge and art interprets fact. In *Hide and Seek* this is the lesson of the painting of the bachelor squire’s hack: without tone, light and shade (forbidden in the artist’s commission) the

artist scornfully gives the squire what he wants, “a sign-board instead of a picture”(55).⁸ This incident demonstrates that there are different truths. Artistic truth is not necessarily the same as an empiric measurement. Each has its own validity. Yet they are not independent of each other:

Fancy and Imagination, Grace and Beauty, all those qualities which are to the work of Art what scent and colour are to the flower, can only grow towards heaven by taking root in earth. (*Basil* xxxvi)

The link between root and flower illustrates the connection between data and art.⁹ When Collins observes a “specimen” in the society, he seeks ways of recording (without words getting in the way) the “plain” truth of what he has perceived. But, as a root is reliant on earth, so the artist’s words require the exercise of fancy and imagination to be productive. Here, metaphorically, Collins is recognising counterpoise between the imaginative and the factual elements of fiction.

Though a reviewer complained of *Hide and Seek* that “Thorpe senior, the bad man of the tale,... is treated more indulgently than he deserves” (“Unsigned review, *Bentley’s* 59), Collins refused to oversimplify. Thorpe is shown to be weak but not villainous and even prudish and unforgiving. Joanna Grice is to be pitied for the fear that generates her cruelty. And Collins is able to contrast Zack’s essentially moral nature with his improprieties of conduct to show that judgments must be tempered: moral worth is specific to the individual and is to be measured more in the motivating forces than by the action taken. In a spirit of love Blyth, strained by Lavvie’s illness, compromises his vocation to paint money-earners to meet economic necessities. Lavvie accepts his decision conditionally: he must paint at least one picture of “High Art” every year. Their family compromises are in marked contrast to Thorpe’s

⁸ Compare *Hard Times*(49-50) where Dickens also opposes mere factual classification, that ignores light and shade.

⁹ Spencer used a similar analogy to describe human development.

authoritarian dictatorship and display of conventional piety. Furthermore, Thorpe's physical breakdown is the *result* of his mental/moral conduct, not *vice versa*.

An example of Collins' shift of emphasis in characterisation away from a standardised morality and into a psychological complexity early in his career is Sarah Leeson in *The Dead Secret* (1857). Collins explains to readers that here is a study of "the influence of a heavy responsibility on a naturally timid woman" (5). The whole plot hinges on Sarah's character. Description of her fear of the dark figures her insecurity, guilt and the burden of the secret she carries (e.g. 31,34). Furthermore, as Collins explains, Sarah's collapse occurs because her "mind was neither strong enough to bear [the secret], nor bold enough to drop it altogether (5). Here Collins refers to "mind," not "will" or "soul," and counters some Victorians' belief that "will" operates separately to exercise a moral control over an impressible mind in a mature person (Kearns 66, 98). Rather, Collins' novel shows moral control is specific to individuals and their circumstances and experiences in life.

Collins' method of characterisation is consistent with psychological investigations of the time. In the 1850s "physiological psychology" was beginning to investigate the doctrine of volition and links between physical and mental action, a point Nadel makes clear in his study of *The Moonstone*. "The Development of Psychology" (1874) looks back to report on the growth of the science and reports on the earlier work of Mr Bain:

he was the first among psychologists to attempt systematically to elucidate the spontaneous movements, as no less a part of the phenomena of mind than those of consciousness... he introduced the first organic modification into ___¹⁰ association psychology by his theory of the brain as a fountain of force and not merely the passive instrument of impressions. This theory led him, not only to take into account the secondary mental states generated by the bodily organs but to trace ___ tically the origin and growth of voluntary power, and thus to constitute a separate department of Psychology by the analysis of volition, which had previously been the victim of introspection.

¹⁰ A damaged copy -- some parts of words were obliterated.

It has also led him to devote a section to “constructive association” which could have no place so long as there was recognised in the mind no power of original construction. (399)

In *Hide and Seek* the heroine’s frequent blushing may, these days, seem naive as a device of romantic fiction, but in the 1850s such an involuntary physical response commanded scientific attention. Collins’ examples show Madonna’s mind, even unconsciously registering desire (or concealing it) and controlling her body, not her body determining her conduct.

The description of Blyth’s person and his studio provides an example where observable facts are linked with the unseen inner person so that mental understanding can occur. Much like Pickwick, Blyth begins as a joke but comes to be admired (e.g. 53). His person and studio are marked by an absence of uniformity but his disorderliness is no mere target for fun. It represents his unorthodoxy which is liberal and free and makes Blyth the moral hero of the story. His pursuit of his vocation, despite the impertinent calumnies of friends and relatives in the City, is made the standard of success that Collins recommends. The description does not exist for its own sake but to inscribe what Simon Cooke (describing Mat) calls a “mindscape” (22). A striking example is analysed at length when Cooke considers the forlorn scene of Mary’s grave (*Hide and Seek* 364). His analysis concludes:

The weeds in *Hide and Seek* are developed, then, as a means of presenting a concise emotional profile. Placed at a crucial moment in the text, they greatly enrich the understanding of Mat’s mind by revealing far more than has otherwise been exposed. Described as “cool” and “collected” (181), Mat gives little away, and it is only through careful scrutiny of the emblematic plants that we gain a primary clue to his feelings. (Cooke, S. 22)

Here Collins finds expression for a character of few words. He goes further. He writes the novel around a woman without the means to hear or speak. In this way he tests the very definition of language.

Collins’ experiment with *Hide and Seek* is to choose as his heroine a

most unlikely character, a circus exhibit, a speechless, deaf foundling. The choice, he claims, is original: "I do not know that any attempt has yet been made in English fiction to draw the character of a 'Deaf Mute', simply and exactly after nature" (431n). A comparison will help show how accurate Collins' portrait is.

When Harriet Martineau published "The Deaf Playmate's Story" in 1852 she dealt with problems associated with deafness. She concentrated on pointing out learning difficulties for the deaf and misunderstandings that occur in social exchange. Her story shows how stupid and sulky a boy may seem to others when he is unable to hear their conversation. She shows how withdrawn, in consequence, a deaf person becomes--a serious situation indeed when solitude was considered to be a source of grave psychological danger by denying isolates what was considered their natural bent towards sociability. But Martineau's short story does not touch on the added affliction of dumbness with its doubled risk of isolation.

Martineau's story, a first person narrative with a strong moral tone, ending in reconciliation, falls into sentimentality. On the other hand, *Hide and Seek*, in Geraldine Jewsbury's perception, "is almost free from exaggeration and false sentiment" ("Unsigned review, *Athenaeum*" 48). The difference about *Hide and Seek* is the extent of Madonna's handicap and the absence of sentimentality and moralising. Consciously, Collins uses restraint:

The moral purpose to be answered by the introduction of such a personage as this, and of the kindred character of the Painter's Wife, lies, I would fain hope, so plainly on the surface, that it can be hardly necessary for me to indicate it even to the most careless reader. (431)

There are other differences. Readers might expect a happy ending to *Hide and Seek*: a family reunited, perhaps discovery of high birth, or restoration of lost hearing and speech. Such expectations are only

minimally satisfied. In the original edition, realistically, Mat doesn't go home because so many irreversible changes have occurred. But in the preface to the revised edition of 1861 Collins concedes, "I have, in one important respect, so altered the termination of the story as to make it, I hope, more satisfactory and more complete than it was in its original form" (6). Instead of Mat and Zack parting for ever in America, Mat finally accedes to Zack's pleading and "the Man of many Wanderings rested at last among the friends who loved him, to wander no more" (430). This is Collins' concession to readers, made so that the change will reaffirm bonds of kinship, consistent with *their* moral expectations. It is offered by way of epilogue. But the slightness of Collins' concession highlights just how unsatisfactory Collins himself found "closed" endings. The closure to Mary's story is even more simply managed when Mat tidies her grave. Even so, that sequence serves a double purpose. As stated earlier, the description gives an insight into Mat's mind. Collins will not choose feelings of repose at the cost of convincing characterisation and intellectual toughness. He is unwilling to compromise realities: there is no miraculous cure and no happy marriage to conclude *Hide and Seek*. Collins will not follow idealists into delusory representations of perfect heroines and tidy, happy resolutions that ignore the sorts of outcomes observable in daily experience. ¹¹

At the very least readers might expect the distinguishing fact of Madonna's deafness to influence the plot. It does not. Wilkie Collins uses

¹¹ By contrast, Dickens "tidied" his endings. Both novelists represent illegitimate heroines who suffer physical damage. For Collins' heroine there is no discovery of noble connection and no happy marriage to round off the story and re-establish the moral status quo --as there is for Esther Summerson in *Bleak House*.

"Doctor Mariglold's Prescriptions" appeared in 1865, well after release of the revised edition of *Hide and Seek* in 1861. Dickens' story, like Collins' novel, shows respect for the deaf and for their combination of gesture and sign. But, in a sentimental concession to popular doctrine, resolution comes with the appearance of a pretty child with perfect speech. That is, the story's ending reinstates conformity to old values.

his heroine's handicap quite differently. *Hide and Seek* is not a "feel good" story, to blind readers to the realities of deafness and dumbness. It is not a story about benevolence, least of all that self-interested benevolence that seeks to make a handicapped person employable and less of a burden on the parish. Nor is it a coldly impersonal observation designed to enable readers to "learn to understand the fully endowed human being by the study of the imperfect one" (Martineau, "Deaf Mutes" 134). Martineau's statement seems to imply that (just as scientists saw animals in an hierarchical structure) "lower" forms of human life could be exploited for study. At least, it suggests that handicap detracts from a person's worth -- a surprising suggestion given the fact that Martineau herself suffered from increasing deafness. Hers are not views Collins shares. Madonna's story is one of human interest in which Collins claims to seek "to exhibit the peculiar effects produced by the loss of the senses of hearing and speaking on the disposition of the person so afflicted" (431n). Collins values Madonna as a person in her own right and when he chooses the words "exhibit" and "peculiar" he intends no pejorative meaning. As I have pointed out, Collins' interest is in variability, and his method is inductive, concentrating on difference, not generality. He is concerned to show detail, not freakishness, and his interest is not in spectacle but in the interconnectedness of body and psyche and is focussed on socialisation without the aid of speech.

Again, this is not the impression to be had from Martineau's journalism:

inferior as the minds of deaf mutes must inevitably be, they are peculiar; and they can never be in full sympathy with the thoughts and feelings of better endowed people...

The truth of such cases is, that the imitative faculties of the child... have enabled him to go through the external acts of life like other people, and to learn some art, probably, some mechanical business, by which he may get his bread. But there is no mind underneath in such a case. There is no *thought* properly so called; nothing but perception of what is visible, and

imitation of it. ("Deaf Mutes" 135)

Her view is shared by a journalist who (1847) writes that a deaf person:

looks not 'through nature up to nature's God', nor does he participate in that high communion which, through the sublimity of her visible language she holds with the soul of an enlightened being

and comments

the darkness of the deaf mute is a mental and moral darkness; and though he can gaze abroad upon creation, yet it is little more than mere animal gratification that he feels. ("Lost Senses," *Living Age* 13. 152: 50)

The curious thing is that the journalist's words refer to John Kitto's *The Lost Senses*, the very same source Collins used for his portrait of Madonna.

While the reviewer appreciates Kitto's achievements as a deafened person, he does not accept that *The Lost Senses* has relevance for cases of congenital deafness. The whole basis of his argument is that it is not the want of hearing but the want of language that leaves "the uneducated deaf-mute -- a being destitute of that which forms the most striking distinction between man and brute separated from the rest of his species" (49).

Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna in 1850 had published *The Memoir of John Britt: The Happy Mute*. Deaf herself since she was ten, Mrs Tonna declared a child an atheist until it had acquired speech (Ree 225). For Tonna, Martineau and the unnamed reviewer, language is the instrument of thought and language is inextricably connected to speech.

... gesticulation, as every teacher knows, is of extremely limited scope, barely sufficient to make known his mere physical wants and animal emotions....

Experience furnishes no instance in which a deaf- mute, having nothing but the language of signs at his command, had ever attained to any distinct notion of a future world, of his own moral accountability, of man's ultimate destiny, or even of a Supreme Being. ("Lost Senses," *Living Age* 13. 152: 50)

Two fundamental positions distance Collins from their view. First, Collins accepts that variety is normal and that a deaf person is not

necessarily inferior. And, daringly against popular opinion, he accepts the idea that language, spoken, written or signed, is a symbolic representation of thought. Brougham had argued that language had its origins in abstraction and that words were arbitrary signs connected with the thing signified (Beer, "Darwin and Growth" 160). Madonna's visible "language" appears to test out this theory.¹²

Epistemologists, from circa 1690 and following Locke's teaching, had accepted that data was assimilated directly from the object perceived and was impressed on the brain (e.g. "Development of Psychology" 399, Crary 41-42). That is, the object stimulated the nerves. But following the work of Charles Bell (c. 1811) and Johannes Muller (c. 1826) the principle of "specific energies" established that sensations depended on which nerves were stimulated. Gradually it became apparent that the potential of nerve fibres to trigger sensations was similar and that what was "specific" was the brain area to which they connected (Gregory, *Mind* 206). Collins' story demonstrates that though Madonna's auditory nerve function was damaged the region of her brain responsible for language was intact and functioning. Moreover, Young's work (c. 1801) on sensations of colour indicated that signals could be complex, suggesting the possibility that the brain might be stimulated in atypical ways (Gregory, *Mind* 207). Collins' story makes an atypical connection between sight and the language centre in the brain.

Regularly, by dealing with exceptions to rule--Collins' gallery includes the deaf, blind, mad, legless, nervous, guilt-ridden--he breaks with the view of the world that values only fixed and uniform patterns. Collins' depictions accept that standardisation is not the norm; rather, non-

¹² I use the term "visible" rather than "visual" to include more than pictorial representation. The Abbe de l'Epee, for instance, had demonstrated that sign could accommodate grammatical complexities.

standard varieties, even oddities, are part of *nature's* pattern of divergence and not to be confused with the monstrosities of teratological experiment. And Collins observes that, in the human animal, outward features can be deceptive in identifying a person's essential humanity. So, in what is arguably Collins' most extreme example (in *The Law and the Lady*), despite his half-formed body, his frog-like motion and mental collapse, Miserrimus Dexter is recognisably one of us, incomplete in form, but identifiably human and one who gives expression to his humanity in his aspirations and passions and in the ways he tries to reshape his life, reliving through his imagination the lives of past heroes, and aiming, albeit tempestuously, to give expression to his personality. Art and music are chiefly the forms of expression Miserrimus uses to identify the fully human impulses within his reduced body. Thus through "inner" features, expressed artistically, Collins makes his identifications. In *Hide and Seek* this is true for speechless "Madonna", bedridden Mrs Blyth and the scalped "Marksman." At the same time Collins demonstrates how the person, physically afflicted, adapts to her/his condition by calling on a potential to recreate her/himself. Their self-construction suggests that an individual can adapt to change and not be reduced by it. The potential to adapt is evidence of final cause so that there is no conflict between teleology and physiology.

In his note to chapter seven (431) Collins acknowledges his authority for Madonna's portrayal. John Kitto's *The Lost Senses* had been published by Charles Knight in 1845. Dickens had had correspondence with Kitto and possibly had met him so that it is fair to expect that Dickens may have recommended this source to Collins--as Catherine Peters suggests in her introduction (xviii). Then, too, *The Lost Senses* was widely reviewed

including in the *Athenaeum*, which Collins took (*Letters* 286).¹³ Collins found Kitto's narrative "interesting and touching" (*Hide and Seek* 432 n) but he also found in it the authority he needed to describe "most of those traits in Madonna's character which are especially and immediately connected with the deprivation from which she is represented as suffering" (431). Although fictional Madonna represents personal heroism in a touching story of human interest, at the same time she becomes a "case study" in the scientific sense, for Kitto's recorded experiences are faithfully transposed to the storybook character.

So little was known about how hearing operated. In *Sound*, Tyndall, discussing sympathetic vibration and hearing, having extolled "the stupendous wonder" of Corti's discovery, was compelled to add, "This view of the use of Corti's fibres [that they act like strings in a musical instrument] is theoretical; but it comes to us commended by every appearance of truth" (370). Harriet Martineau in "Deaf Mutes" confirms, "There is no part of the human body about which we are so helpless as the ear" (135). Collins draws on Kitto's first hand experience as the most reliable authority round which Madonna's story is to be shaped.

According to *Blackwood's*, Mill had argued that it was legitimate to make inference based on the observation of individual cases ("Mill's Logic" 415). This is how Collins works. Moreover, he complements Madonna's experience with the account of Mrs Blyth's invalidism to demonstrate that happiness is not dependent on physical wholeness. In her characterisation gentle goodness coexists with pain, countering the connection made between happy well-being and moral standard that was a corollary to the idea that perfection and harmony were part of God's

¹³ *The Lost Senses* is unavailable. However, many reviews quoted lengthy passages and even serialised their reviews. I have pieced these together. Quotations I use are taken from review extracts, mainly Littell's.

design.¹⁴ Collins does not oversimplify the mind-body relationship with any moral linkage. Spirited and happy women are shown to inhabit damaged frames. Childless, Mrs Blyth is still motherly, and, without articulate speech, Madonna “converses.” Their situations are evidence of self-renewal and indicate that Collins sees worthiness and strength of character as constructed more by emotional empathy and cultural influence than by physical experiences.

Increasingly, there was a growing skepticism about “authority.” For instance, the established church saw liberal theism within its ranks as more dangerous than outright dissent and reacted with dogmatic assertion of infallible authority. Woodward, discussing the Oxford Movement, comments:

It is difficult to read Newman’s *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) without noticing that his tests of truth rested upon nothing more than the power of a theory, dogma, or belief to survive. (494)

The move in the scientific community was towards experiment and proof. Tyndall warned against the “injurious influence still exercised by authority in science” which he described as “deadly, when it cows the intellect into fear of questioning it” (Tyndall, *Sound* xxii). However, the scientific study of humankind is less open to experiment than other fields of study. While G.H. Lewes might keep alive, for study and experiment, a frog whose spinal cord he had severed, there is no suggestion that a person might be subject to experiment--deafened, say, for the purpose of observing the effects.

It was difficult to define scientific method for, even among scientists, methodology was diverse. For instance, how different were the ideas of empiricism of John Herschel, Whewell and Mill (Basalla et al. 412-14)and Lewes’ term “Reasoned Realism” was yet another variation on the

¹⁴ Paley argued “teeth are contrived to eat, not to ache”(quoted de Beer 19).

empirical theory of knowledge (“Contemporary Literature” 239). Carpenter points out the inevitable risk of subjectivity in personal testimony and points to the need for “trained and organised common sense which we call ‘scientific method’ “ even in subjects of religious enquiry (Carpenter, “Fallacies of Testimony” 570). Collins must resort, for his study of deafness, to a method that is open to him. He calls on the most reliable evidence available, personal testimony, and claims Kitto’s experience as his authority.

“Authority” is a fundamental issue within Collins’ story. Even in this early novel--and before his experiments with multiple narratives--Collins’ narration carries conviction by using the letter testimonies of Zack, Joanna Grice, “Arthur Carr” and Mr Thorpe. Whether their accounts are unreliable for reasons of immaturity, prejudice, fear or embarrassment is immaterial, for consistency among accounts will determine the view the reader will take. As Mill recorded, “truth depends on the noisy conflict of half-truths” (quoted Donovan 187). Judgment is being passed from writer to reader who finds “proof” no longer simple but dependent on the variable “truths” perceived by separate individuals. An account may be true so long as it does not conflict with other evidence. It is up to the reader to apply the test of discrepancy.

A symbolic attack on authority is made in chapter sixteen. In a heavily ironic confrontation Mat faces Thorpe across the glossy Address and silver inkstand that are the tributes of Thorpe’s associates and a testimonial¹⁵ to his character. Mat adds Mary’s name to their signatures to turn their praise to shameful disgrace. A testimonial (like a testimony) can be wrong as the “evidence” of Mary’s fate attests. So, in different parts of the story Collins consolidates the argument that some authorities may be doubted, and

¹⁵ Compare the scathing reference in the epilogue of *Armada* (810) to a testimonial, equally undeserved, for Dr Downward.

supports his demonstration, in the case of the deaf, that reliance on the wisdom of ancient authorities can be misplaced: the speechless are not without language and are not incapable of learning. Moreover, he is able to rely on Kitto's testimony without losing credibility when he departs from it. Realistically "authorities" are not always "right" for Collins is not describing a perfect world. Errors do occur.

Nevertheless, properly documented records can be depended upon: parish records are consulted to re-establish Mat's identity. When the novel first appeared it was still less than two decades since the Public Records Office had been set up and the registration of births, deaths and marriages was still a matter of controversy. Here Collins demonstrates the usefulness of documentation in law. In *The Woman in White* a second secure copy of the marriage register foils Glyde's attempt at counterfeiting an entry. In *No Name*, although the story exposes the bias of the law towards property and money and away from justice, the problem for the Vanstone daughters rests on the fact of inadequate documentation in face of their parents' late marriage. In *Poor Miss Finch* the plot twists when Madam Pratolungo chooses to speak to Oscar instead of writing to him as he asks. Such details within the stories point to the importance of the written word and justify the "documentary" manner of their telling.

Another "trademark" of Collins' narrative technique is the way his plots play with time in a non-sequential revelation. He weaves past into present and his mysteries are concerned with recovering knowledge from the past. This was the case with Mary's box of letters. Gradually readers piece together the histories of the Grice and Thorpe family members with time to think over what has gone before. And although Mat and Madonna (re) discover their origins, they still face an uncertain future. While some

critics may point to Collins' authorial manipulation of sequence to mystify¹⁶ readers, nevertheless the order follows the precedent of research, where gaps are filled, not smoothly in sequence, but as new evidence is found. The method employed by the historian or the geologist to trace ancient records is also the method of Collins' narrative pattern. In *The Moonstone* it is the method of Ezra Jennings to recover his colleague's lost memory, reconnecting the fragments from Dr Candy's damaged recollection by his own understanding of the patient's unconscious mind. In *Hide and Seek* though mystery surrounds the identity of the foundling and her transition from circus to suburbia has the element of fairytale, yet nothing in this fiction compromises the factual reporting of a deaf person's experience. Collins adheres most strictly to Kitto's testimony in informing his readers about the physical and emotional affliction deafness brings. But he is flexible in story telling and *Hide and Seek* is not Kitto's biography, modified. Furthermore, on the contentious point of the education of the deaf, Collins takes a position opposed to that of his authority.

Both the mason's boy (John Kitto) and little Mary (Madonna) are deafened by falls. The falls are accidental but Kitto takes care not to rule out the role of Providence. Having explained that his accident may have been the result of lapsed concentration, Kitto records the thoughts that occupied his mind at the time. The twelve-year-old's especial preoccupations were with a borrowed book, new clothes and an autopsy being conducted nearby.

my attention was drawn to a stream of blood, or rather, I suppose, bloody water, flowing through the gutter ... The idea that this was the blood of the dead youth, whom I had so lately seen alive, and that the doctors were then at work cutting him up and groping at his insides, made me shudder ... I cannot but think it was owing to this that I lost much of the presence of mind and collectedness so important to me at that moment. ("Lost Senses," *Living Age* 8.67 : 57)

¹⁶ Unsigned reviews of *Armada* and *The Law and the Lady* in the *Saturday Review* suggest that "unravelling puzzles" is all that Collins achieves (Reprinted in Page 151,203).

There is no hint of sensationalism in Collins' account of Mary's accident. At just seven years, female and a foundling, Mary suffers another cruel blow. Though the circus act was risky, all precautions had been taken and Mary was entrusted "to the steadiest, soberest man, and the best rider of the whole lot" (91). Yet "The strap--no, ...the handle; the handle in the strap gave way all of a sudden--just at the last too! just at the worst time, when he couldn't catch her!-- (92). Collins makes no attempt to account for the accident beyond the fact that the strap broke. The repetition within Mrs Peckover's broken account and her efforts to be exact underscore the point: it was accidental. The cause is attributed to neither human error nor fate. There is no embellishment. Collins' account of a chance accident could not be plainer, or more shockingly sad.

Cleverly Collins concentrates attention on the sounds of confusion following the accident. The cheerful, regular sound of the band is suddenly replaced by a high pitched "screech" and irregular percussions in the disorder produce only a general, discordant "noise" (92) where, in the words of Tyndall,¹⁷ "voices mix with their echoes into a chaos of noise, out of which no intelligible utterance can emerge" (Tyndall, *Sound* 17-18). Such effect is magnified in empty spaces. Twice Collins points out that the circus was unusually empty that night.

Frequently Collins adjusts his descriptions to give attention to sounds. It is as if he is subtly and sympathetically reminding readers of what the deaf miss. Initially (10) there is the audible dripping of rain, the clop of thickly booted feet, a stern voice growling. The quality of these sounds is distorted by wet, foggy weather as Collins attributes anomalies in the penetration and direction of sound to atmospheric causes. Later (41) in

¹⁷ Tyndall was attempting to increase public knowledge of the physics of sound transmission and especially of problems of understanding the operation of aerial echoes e.g. on solid or liquid surfaces or in large unfurnished spaces. (The matter had practical relevance for shipping and the development of a functional fog siren.)

clear, cold weather, without interference to transmission, "every sound out of doors fell on the ear with a hearty and jocund ring."¹⁸ After Jubber beats Mary (68) the sounds of pain and sympathy mingle but are quite distinct from the laughter of the easily diverted audience. That separation -- not the strangeness of Mary's voice -- is "unnatural" in Collins' value system.

Sound sensation connects hearing persons to "the old primeval language of the leaves" (27). But Madonna's pleasure must come from watching wave motion among leaves (120) as Kitto's did :

'even the stillness of a tree has been pleasant to me: and the life of a tree -- the waving of its body in the wind, or the vibration of its leaves and branchlets in the breeze -- has been a positive enjoyment.' ("Lost Senses," *Living Age* 8.87 : 59)

Like Kitto, after the accident Mary is bed-ridden for some time. The details of her care are given from the perspective of Mrs Peckover who, looking back, relives her foreboding of the calamity to come:

'She was always wonderful quiet and silent for a child, poor lamb, in little illnesses that she'd had before; and somehow, I didn't wonder--at least at first--why she never said a word, and never answered me when I spoke to her.'(93)

The important point is that the reader has long since known that Mary is deaf and dumb. Clearly, then, Collins' purpose is not to exploit the surprising or sensational elements of the accident. Readers' curiosity is to be about effects, not events.

Mary's treatment follows Kitto's and is restricted to syringe, blistering and leeches. The doctor is not able to explain exactly what damage has occurred; nor is he confident in distinguishing Mary's deafness from the fever Mary has suffered. A second doctor's examination with "a sort of

¹⁸ To a modern reader Collins' weather references may seem over-plentiful but to the Victorians they would have been intrinsically interesting for there was wide public interest in the new science of meteorology--evidenced by the number of journal articles appearing on the subject (especially about London fogs). "Glass Points to Stormy" is one example. It looks at coincidences of storm and crime, disaster, revolt and war and concludes with an optimistic view of how meteorology will bring practical benefits in the future.

queer spy-glass thing" (96) and a ticking watch in the mouth confirms her total loss of hearing. A determining factor in that diagnosis is visual--the doctor recognises on Mary's face the same expression he remembers in the case of a mason's boy whom he has treated ("Deafness": 153). The mason's boy is Kitto and this reference is one way in which Collins acknowledges his source. Later, when Blyth adopts "Madonna" he consults "the most eminent aural surgeon of the day" who, though "deeply interested in the case," can only concur that the child's hearing is "entirely gone" (117). The fall has paralysed the auditory nerve and the case is beyond medical treatment.

Similarly, Mrs Blyth's illness baffles medical science:

[E]verything that science and incessant attention could do, was done; but the terrible disease still baffled remedy after remedy, advancing surely and irresistibly, until at last the doctors themselves lost all hope. (37)

Mary's story in this part of the novel occurs in the period 1835-38 when medicine was in a time of transition and when doctors were becoming jealous of their newly professional expertise. In the 1830s in the Royal Society there was concern that doctors, in growing numbers, were coming to dominate the business and committee of the Society which, in the eyes of traditionalists, was seen to be becoming "a medical advertising office, a very puff shop for the chaff of medical scribblers" (quoted Hall 47). There was rivalry between the gentlemen scientists and the doctors for it was presumed that a medical professional (one who earned his living) could not be a disinterested and true scientist.

Collins respects doctors as professionals but he also recognises different levels of expertise and the uncertainties that limit medical knowledge. In *The Woman in White* Fosco and Dawson clash over diagnosis in the difficult matter of distinguishing typhus and typhoid in the early stages of illness. In *Armadale* there is the dispute over dreams, and in *Man and*

Wife and Poor Miss Finch again doctors' opinions clash. By these means Collins reflects the changing expertise and status of medical science. Nor is Collins reticent about rogues. Mr Pedgift Senior is Collins' sardonic mouthpiece in the epilogue to *Armadale* (810) to point out how easily honest people are misled by appearance to put their confidence in medical frauds. In *Hide and Seek* there is censure for the "moral surgeon," Mr Yollop. As I have stated earlier, Collins integrates morality with mind, not with religious training and his mocking description of Yollop's experimental operations with the "clerical knife" conjures up an image of sadistic abuse (38) and consolidates the argument against sabbatarianism.¹⁹

"Hearing for the Deaf" indicates the growing respect for medicine and its discoveries when it reports (no doubt with as much exaggeration as excitement), "the progress of surgical science has of late years been such that all ordinary cases of deafness are proved to be curable"(4).²⁰ That article reports on the published work of Joseph Toynbee who used a silver plate as artificial membrane to restore the resonating capacity of the damaged "drum." The article also refers to misunderstandings in aural medicine and specifically to the function of the small bones of the ear. The stapes, it explains, when its piston-like movement becomes fixed, establishes a case of incurable deafness. Like Mrs Peckover and the doctor in Collins' novel, the article notes the "anxious, inquiring, stare peculiar to the deaf" (5). Although Mary's loss of hearing is first revealed in this very manner, fixity does not remain a regular feature of Collins'

¹⁹ Collins' early journalism included "A Plea for Sunday Reform" that appeared in *The Leader*. That polemic is retold in the fiction of *Hide and Seek* in more accessible form to reach a wider audience. Collins' ideas have not changed but his approach has altered so that the argument is no longer a "signboard"--like the plain picture of the squire's hack. His attack against sabbatarianism is now personalised. It is given a child's face and in Zack the outcome of its restrictive practice is shown to be counter-productive.

²⁰ "A Curious Mode of Treating Deafness" appeared in the same volume. It also refers to treating a perforated ear drum: the work of a London surgeon, Mr Yearsly, reported in the *Lancet* (1848).

description of her. This may be taken as simply another concession to readers' expectation for a beautiful heroine. But it is to be remembered that Mary is seen through Blyth's eyes and he is a representation of the "artist-life which circumstances have afforded [Collins] peculiar opportunity of studying" (*After Dark*, preface 5). Blyth, like Collins, is comfortable with visible communication and is used to thinking through the eye. When Blyth first sees Mary he sees beauty--"Enough to bring divine Raphael down from heaven to paint her" (60). To folk nearby this outburst seems demented for they lack the artist's "vision." Responding to the beauty he perceives, Blyth renames Mary "Madonna" to give her artistic definition and particularity. By this means her difference is made worthy of respect. Most importantly, the name aligns artistic vision with religious faith. "Madonna" challenges the Christian values of anyone who might demean illegitimate "Mary"²¹ for, simultaneously, the religious associations of both "Mary" and "Madonna" demand a charitable and Christian rethinking of attitudes to illegitimacy.

Taken in detail, her features might be easily found fault with. Her eyes might be pronounced too large, her mouth too small, her nose not Grecian enough for some people's tastes. (50)

While a physiognomist might register that Madonna's eyes, the most expressive feature, are given prominence at the expense of the mouth that is abridged, shrunken perhaps by non-use, Collins' repeated use of "might," and "some" cast uncertainty about such an interpretation. The artist's view dominates. Repeatedly Blyth emphasises her Raphael-like beauty that is hard to define or locate, a mobility of facial expression and grace of movement. But he does not gloss over the isolating effects of

²¹ In 1851 there were 42000 illegitimate births in Britain, indicating that one in twelve unmarried females of child-bearing age gave birth (Houghton 366).

I am uncertain whether the name connects to the Roman doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, enunciated a year later. Collins appears to distance himself from such speculation by denying any "imputation of irreverence" (51) but his argument that "madonna" is not essentially different from "woman" can be taken two ways.

deafness.

For some little time the girl had been sitting thoughtfully, with her head bent down, her cheek resting on her hand, and a bright smile just parting her lips very prettily. The affliction which separated her from the worlds of hearing and speech--which set her apart among her fellow-creatures, a solitary living being in a sphere of death-silence that others might approach, but might never enter--gave a touching significance to the deep, meditative stillness that often passed over her suddenly, even in the society of her adopted parents, and of friends who were all talking around her. Sometimes, the thoughts by which she was thus absorbed--thoughts only indicated to others by the shadow of their mysterious presence, moving in the expression that passed over her face--held her long under their influence: sometimes they seemed to die away in her mind almost as suddenly as they had arisen to life in it. It was one of Valentine's many eccentric fancies that she was not meditating only, at such times as these, but that, deaf and dumb as she was with the creatures of this world, she could talk with the angels, and could hear what the heavenly voices said to her in return. (143-134)

His description reminds readers of the appearance of hearing persons in their quiet moments of reflection and meditation. Similarly and more importantly, Madonna's reverie is not tied to speech. There is an inner spirituality, equally accessible to those hearing and deaf persons that operates outside conventional language. Madonna's ecstasy is like that of a mystic and Blyth can only capture it through the imagination, metaphorically. The silent empathy Madonna establishes with Mrs Blyth is similarly and unfathomably religious:

There was something secret and superstitious in the girl's fondness for Mrs Blyth. She appeared unwilling to let others know what this affection really was in all its depth and fullness: it seemed to be intuitively preserved by her in the most sacred privacy of her own heart, as if the feeling had been part of her religion, or rather as if it had been a religion in itself. (118)

It is noticeable that Madonna's religion is a private matter, without Sabbatarian display of piety.²² Both passages quoted above introduce also the notion that there is more in nature than can be observed or heard with

²² Interestingly the publication of *Hide and Seek* in 1854 coincides with the launch of Maurice and Kingsley's "Tracts for Priests and People". Collins' representation similarly shows a leaning towards Christian socialism as the way of life in the Blyth household, far removed from intellectualism or doctrine. Throughout Collins' novels *Broad Church* sentiments, though not expressed directly, seem to apply. Unlike George Eliot, Collins does not attempt to replace religion with moral law.

the physical ear. Collins is ready to admit the unknowable; he accepts that empirical knowledge is restricted and that what is fancied may be, in fact, what is. So Collins attributes to his deaf heroine an intuitive knowledge of metaphysics.

Although Kitto does not regard heightened visual perceptions to be a compensation for deafness, he does note how sharp was his observation once he became deaf. "A leaf [of a book] could not flutter in any [shop] window without my cognizance" ("Lost Senses," *Living Age* 8.87: 59). In *Madonna*, attributes dependent on vision have been highly developed. A good memory and skill in mimicry attest to the acuity of her vision (231) and she delights in drawing which, to her, seems almost an extra sense (120). Seriously deprived, *Madonna* is only marginally handicapped for it would seem that reduced sensibility results in heightened sensitivity. For instance, like Kitto, she is susceptible to concussion and accesses music through vibrations (425). Collins adopts the familiar image of an Aeolian harp, so favoured by the Romantics, to make the point.

But:

In one exceptional case...did her misfortune appear to have the power of affecting her tranquillity seriously. Whenever, by any accident, she happened to be left in the dark, she was overcome by the most violent terror. (121)

Kitto deals with such a situation humorously. He describes "a rain of potters' vessels" that descended on him in the Armenian quarter of Orta Khoi, when, deaf to verbal warnings, he walked without a lantern on the very night when citizens were expurgating evil spirits from their homes by throwing pots from their windows into the streets. Collins treats the difficulty with more seriousness:

It was found, even when others were with her, that she still lost her self-possession at such times. Her own explanation... 'Remember that I am deaf *and blind too* in the darkness. You, who can hear, have a sense to serve you instead of sight, in the dark --your ears are of use to you then, as your eyes are in the light. I hear nothing, and see nothing--I lose all my senses

together in the dark.'(121)

Here readers are reminded of the way hearing persons interchange sensory dependence according to circumstances. Madonna is denied that flexibility. And because vision and hearing make only indirect connection (with light and sound) and not with physical things, in the dark she is indeed in solitary confinement, imprisoned, as Dickens wrote of deaf and blind Laura Bridgman (whom he met during his American visit in 1842) "in a marble cell" (Ree 219). However, it is generally Thorpe, the middle-class businessman, not Madonna, whom Collins sees confined--in suburban conformity, without distinction and dull "as if it had been a cell in Newgate"(12).

Fortunately Madonna is admitted to "the little chatty nothings of everyday talk" by the kind, interpreting fingers of Mrs Blyth who rescues her adopted daughter from "the social deprivation" which "exiles" sympathies when the deaf are excluded from their share in "the familiar social interests of life around them" (144). Dr. Kitto, reporting his efforts to regain speech, writes, "The conventional talk, that stands in the place of intercourse with those to whom one has nothing real to say, I never could manage" ("Lost Senses," *Living Age* 8.87 : 58). He goes on to explain how, as a result, his vocabulary is restricted. He finds himself incapable of colloquial idioms and contractions, "void of all expletives and adjuncts, of all complimentary phrases, and even of terms of endearment." Linguists, by contrast, emphasised the loss of *abstract* terms among the deaf. This basic confusion accounts for the misconception that the deaf are morose, bad-tempered, irritable, arrogant and selfish--characteristics all listed in Martineau's "Deaf Mutes." Collins shows Madonna to be gentle, considerate, generous and self-deprecating. However, when one recalls the six year old, "mad to be carried up in the air on horseback, always

begging and praying to be made a little rider" (91), readers may recognise a change in her nature since the accident. So Collins questions whether a person's "character" is innate or shaped by circumstances and the point is brought under further scrutiny in the story of Zack's upbringing. Despite her quietness (of voice and personality) Collins invites admiration for Madonna's self-possession and self-reliance and for her social competence, humorously described in the encounter with Lady Brambledown (249) and, with masculine respect, in her encounter with the awkward Mat (330-33). The physical courage she had shown as a child riding in the circus with "the heart of a lion" (91) is duplicated in the "heart" she displays here in face of Mat's confusion. Both examples are dwarfed by her daily courage in coping with affliction. So, while Madonna may not be an exciting heroine, she is an interesting one, to be respected. She is no object for pity. Certainly she is no "nasty deaf idiot" (112), merely a commodity (108) to be exploited and exhibited in a circus. Through Blyth, Collins distances himself from "that dastard insensibility to all decent respect for human suffering that could feast itself on the spectacle of calamity paraded for hire" (57-58). And while Harriet Martineau's report suggests that the deaf are more likely to find happiness in the company of their own kind, segregated into institutions, the whole thrust of Collins' story is that the deaf achieve happiness, as others do, by integration and social exchange.

The novelist relies heavily on Kitto's account as he outlines the stages by which Mary's voice is lost. It becomes "hoarse and low, deep and faint, all at the same time"(93) and strange in its halting gruffness (94). Mrs Peckover reports how "the shocking husky moaning voice" (99) does not change or modulate for, as the doctor explains, "she has nothing but her memory left to tell her she has [a voice]" (97). As the identifying characteristics are lost, the voice comes to sound "somehow as if it didn't

belong to her”(99) and this is the critical point. From his experience, the doctor doubts that she will retain the will to speak. The child’s changed state, physical and social, demands a re-shaping of self.

Speech is the external part of the hearing-speech duality by which people make contact. Giving voice when she cannot hear is like baring Mary’s private self in public; it seems immodest. Because she cannot *own* her own voice she will feel self-conscious, even defenceless for, without control over the sound she projects, Mary has no control over her *self* projection. The fear of losing control, of projecting a distorted image is a source of pain to her, part of the “mental misery” the doctor foresees (97). She finds it better to rely on the brightly ornamented slate, worn always attached and close by her side (e.g. 99).²³

Like Kitto, Madonna’s preference is for writing. It is a private activity but not isolating. Though it is slower than her fluent signing, writing overcomes sensory limitation and gives her another means to express herself. Just as Joanna Grice and Thorpe use letters to justify their conduct, so Madonna uses writing, not just as a skill, but to constitute her personality. Her skill as a writer gives her status and pride and this is clear from the first--for example, in her meeting with the Joyce children (77). Moreover, it allies her with people across time and distance. It is a tool of learning and a mark of sophistication. In writing she can give the lie to an opinion that the deaf are unintelligent and incapable of refined thought. And, because it is more standardised and less subject to change than spoken language, its fixity gives her more sense of control. Interestingly, though, writing which reduces hearing persons’ reliance on memory, does

²³ Compare Miserrimus Dexter’s, “My chair is me!”

An SBS programme in the late 1990s showed the resistance of members of the deaf community to cochlear implants in young children before they had learned acceptance of themselves as deaf people. They warned that early emphasis on speech training would delay the children’s emotional development. (The same matter of self-acceptance and identity Collins pursues in *Poor Miss Finch*.)

not have this effect in Madonna's case. Her visual memory is exceptional.

Reading and writing reshaped Kitto's life. His accident may have necessitated change but it was literature that transformed his life and made him a man of consequence. From Kirby's *Wonderful Magazine* on week days, and the Bible on Sundays, he went on to read more widely, poems, novels, histories, magazines, metaphysical books and works of theology. A Doctor of Divinity, he was a successful writer, well before *The Lost Senses* was published. He wrote travel articles for *The Penny Magazine*, edited *The Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature* and *The Pictorial Bible* and wrote *The Pictorial History of Palestine*. In 1853 (while Collins was finishing *Hide and Seek*) Kitto's *The Pictorial Sunday Book* was published.²⁴ According to the advertisement, this was intended to appeal "especially to the young, in an attractive form." While *The Sunday Book* was not in the amusing category of *Jack and the Beanstalk* (Zack's preferred reading) at least its publication acknowledged the need for books catering specifically for children--as the sequence that concludes "A Child's Sunday," the opening chapter of *Hide and Seek*, also demonstrates.

Even from this list of titles it is evident what importance Kitto placed on pictures. In *The Lost Senses* he explains his need for visual gratification. He explains, for instance, his pleasure from colour, his regret that coloured engravings have gone out of fashion and his preference for the cheerful colours of oriental dress.²⁵ Such details Collins includes, making Lavvie's father a poor engraver who finds times difficult since his profession has fallen into decline. Blyth, not Madonna, is colourful and eccentric in dress. Chiefly, however, Collins responds to Kitto's love of

²⁴ "The New Art of Printing" complained that people were too busy to spend time reading and saw the pictorial printing press as a novelty, derisively reporting, "Views of the Holy Land are superseding even the Holy Scriptures" (47).

²⁵ To have Madonna both deaf and startlingly dressed would stretch readers' credulity. Collins' task is to blend his mute heroine into society, not exaggerate her difference from it.

beauty. Kitto explains, how, without formal training, he came to appreciate beauty--“imbibed insensibly, in the course of years, from the admiring observations of friends in the presence of beautiful objects” (“Lost Senses,” *Living Age* 8. 87 : 58). Kitto’s words suggest that while the capacity to appreciate beauty is instinctive, appreciation may be developed by exposure to beautiful objects.

Even Collins’ decision to make Blyth an artist, may have come from Kitto. Catherine Peters in her introductory notes has shown the details of Blyth’s characterisation to be autobiographical, modelled on Collins’ father (xv-xvi). But Kitto’s preoccupation with visual beauty is another potential source for Collins’ decision to make his central character an artist. Kitto’s absorption with beauty is worked out in *Hide and Seek* through Blyth’s Drawing Academy and even the concept of Lavvie’s room has its precedent in *The Lost Senses* where Kitto writes:

I have understood better than Aelian, the class of associations which may have induced the Persian king to present the glorious plane near Sardis with costly gifts, and to deck it with the ornaments of a bride. (“Lost Senses,” *Living Age* 8. 87: 59)

Kitto is referring to his “almost idolatrous” love of trees but the comparison with Blyth’s furnishing of Lavvie’s drawing room is close. Her room is made a sign of her content, despite illness and pain, while the destruction of natural beauty in Baregrove Square implies sickly discontent. (Here Collins shifts malaise from the individual to the wider society as if to question why people en masse are so careless in their dealings with Nature.) The consolation Kitto and Blyth share is equally open to direct comparison: art is the “abiding spirit, ever present” to preserve the vital warmth of all Blyth’s good characteristics “against the outer and earthly cold” (40). Collins emphasises the protective power of art

to harmonise and integrate features in a personality.²⁶

But Harriet Martineau reports:

In large educational establishments for the deaf and dumb, it is found that a vast majority of the pupils who must have a vocation, wish to be artists. It is found that this will not do at all. Most of them can draw to a certain extent, and some with considerable skill; but as artists they fail utterly (though they themselves do not think so!) All the really artistic qualities of mind are wanting in them. Where the power to represent is greatest, they still have nothing to represent but what is lowest and most obvious. ("Deaf Mutes" 136-37)

Collins shares neither Martineau's condescending attitude nor her presumption that, because wanting the power to hear and speak, the mute are necessarily also wanting "qualities of mind." Neither is her view the experience of examiners who specifically set out to determine whether the deaf and dumb could communicate abstract ideas. In 1835 they reported:

it is one most interesting circumstance of the state to which civilization has brought us, that no man is, or need be, left utterly desolate by any physical deprivation to which our nature is exposed. The blind can read, and the deaf and dumb can acquire and express ideas the most abstract and the most complex. (Answers of the Deaf and Dumb" 21)

As evidence the examiners supplied examples of students' written answers, including:

'What is Memory ?--I came from Dawlish: I can draw in my mind its houses, the sea-shore, my mother's house. I can see the town of Dawlish in my mind: this is memory.--Memory is the portrait-gallery of the past. I can look upon my school-fellows and my home; I can remember when I was a little boy; but I cannot see these things with the eyes of my body: they are in my memory. --Memory is a mental cabinet, that receives my ideas and holds my thoughts.--Memory is like a drawing -master: it shows me the form of my parents; memory paints in my mind what I wish to keep long.--Memory is the consciousness of what is gone, or was done yesterday, or some time ago.'
(22)

This teaching relied on students sharing their *written* thoughts. It impresses by using narrative and image to reach definition.

Ironically, Collins has Blyth set Madonna to "purify" her taste by copying "the glorious works of Greek sculpture" (128). Her exercise is

²⁶ I have already made this point in relation to Miserrimus Dexter in *The Law and the Lady*, The counter is expressed through Benjulia in *Heart and Science*. In *Hide and Seek* business is to Thorpe as art is to Blyth, the one lifestyle resulting in stress and breakdown, the other in a life of contented fulfillment.

made to accord with general training practice and taste and the reference to the Venus de' Medici has not been casually chosen. Legend records that the work was commissioned to exhibit the perfection of female beauty and that the city assisted the artist by furnishing him with models of most perfect form. When Zack, sincerely appreciative, finds the stereotypical "perfection" of the Venus model a poor second to Madonna's original beauty, Collins uses his preference to approve difference.

In "Magnetic Evenings At Home" the description of "V--," mesmerised, compares closely with the portrait Collins gives in *Hide and Seek* of Madonna:

the natural expression was all gone, and in its stead was something so calm, so solemn, so spiritual in its rapt loveliness,-- something so beautiful, yet not with the beauty of earth, that a great hush stole over us all, while stood before her. ... Never have I seen it before, on any other human face, the indescribable divinity of earthly beauty which Raphael has given to his Madonnas, -- I saw it then on hers. ("Magnetic Evenings" letter 3 para. 6)

Such a description transcends the ordinariness of everyday and gives to the "damaged" subject a beauty that is divinely inspired--a beauty perceived by the artist. The description also challenges readers to use their capacity to develop individual taste and judgment rather than rely on fashion or the classic type. While Martineau concedes that the deaf may be trained by copying, for example, table manners, Collins follows Kitto to show how, by exposure to the beautiful and by observing the shared appreciation of others, artistic values, too, can be developed. He supports the same position in relation to language: that the potential is innate and is developed in community.

In his chapter "Mutism and Mythology," Jonathan Ree traces how ancient authorities intrinsically connected vocal incapacity, deafness and stupidity. As a result "in ancient Greece and Rome, it was permissible to kill deaf children up to the age of three"(94). Jewish tradition treated them

as perpetual children and therefore incompetent to receive the rights and responsibilities of adults. Within the Christian church there was doubt, for instance, whether they could ever be received into communion or whether they could be legally married. Matthew marvelled when Christ cured a dumb man, "It was never so seen in Israel" (Matthew 9: 32-33). Ree also traces how, from the fifteenth century, isolated cases of deaf and dumb persons learning to understand writing or to articulate speech would be regarded skeptically or taken as prodigies, even miracles. But by the seventeenth century the intellectual capacity of the deaf was beyond serious dispute.

Notably in Britain, a Scot, George Dalgano, had believed that teaching articulation was superfluous. The one thing Dalgano required was that the deaf be taught to write. That is, he defied the conviction that writing followed speech or was dependent on speech. He saw writing as a form of visible language and went on to expand his belief in the importance of visible forms of language to include lip reading and the use of a manual alphabet. Dalgano's work had been reprinted at Edinburgh in 1834 and the *Edinburgh Review* reported "The Works of George Dalgano of Aberdeen" the following year. But by this time deaf educational practice was becoming locked into oral training. So, in his advocacy of visible language, Collins' thinking was contrary not only to his source but also to current practice. Given the added fact that Madonna was postlingually deaf, and so might, like Kitto, have been expected to persevere with articulate language, Collins' decision to make her reliant on signs must lend significant support to my argument that the novel is part of Collins' investigation into the nature of language.

Controversy had persisted whether to encourage sign or give the deaf oral training. On the Continent by 1847 the pioneering work of the Abbe

de l'Epee was being discredited. Itard had held sign to be "inherently defective and abbreviated" and his pupil, Seguin, was going further to condemn the Abbe's work with natural signs as sensual and atheistical (Ree 216). In Britain the tradition of Braidwood (who established the Edinburgh Academy for the Deaf and Dumb) had been to discourage signs but to teach writing and eventually to move to lip-reading and speech. The minutes, from the meeting of May 30, 1818 of the Edinburgh Institute for Education of Deaf and Dumb Children, record that fifty pupils

were examined in arithmetic, the principles of composition, the definition of simple and abstract terms, articulation etc. They also underwent a minute examination as to their acquaintance with the leading doctrines of Christianity, and the facts of scripture history. Their proficiency in all these branches of knowledge and of education delighted and astonished the meeting. ("Report of Institution for Educating" 9)

But the high point of the meeting appears to have been when two pupils recited "with perfect correctness and good articulation"⁽¹¹⁾.

By mid-nineteenth century an expectation that science would supply remedies for mankind's troubles was reflected by a columnist for *Once A Week* who (in 1859) appealed to scientists to learn more about the mechanics of helping deaf persons acquire speech ("Dumb Mouths" 136).

On the other side of the speech/sign debate and in a minority supporting the use of signed language, "The Mother of the Mute" records:

For now thy part in the world of thought,
So early lost, is found,
In the blessed love our faith hath taught,
And the hope that knows no bound:
For its pinions cleave the clouds of time,
And its eye looks forth to the tearless clime.

Oh! blessed be the saving power
That won thee back that priceless dower,
And taught thine hand the silent art
That well can speak from heart to heart. (Brown F. 214)

The poet takes the positive view and attributes the hope of salvation to "the silent art" of signing. In doing so, however, she could be seen to be

challenging the literalism of Scripture. She is in a position much like the geologist faced with reconciling long geological eons with the six day creation story of Genesis. How, for instance, as an advocate for sign, will she answer St Paul (Romans 10) where he seems to suggest (taking the narrowly literal meaning of "hear" and "confess") that hearing and speaking are prerequisites for salvation?

Collins emphasises the range and sensitivity of Madonna's "conversations" and the integrity of her "speech" and stresses the instinctiveness of her "homely kindness" and integrity. Intimate messages of confidence are exchanged (146-7); fearful experience is recounted (350) and speculations about the cause of her fright are discussed. The passage quoted earlier where Madonna explains her fear of the dark is specially significant because it shows her ability to think analytically about her own experience and to appreciate objectively the different experience of hearing people as well. These instances suggest further that Madonna's signs are more than simply mimetic.

Kitto was embarrassed to be seen using gestures and signing for the actions made him conspicuous. He avoided notice by eventually forcing himself, with the help of friends, to resume speaking. But his voice was never again his own. Without hearing, speech had become a sequence of actions, of mechanical movements, familiar through memory, and to be retained only through painful and disciplined practice.

In his advocacy of signing Collins advances arguments, compassionate and practical, against "tedious, painful and uncertain" speech tutoring for an imperfect result, occurring in an isolating language situation (98). Quite apart from the psychological pain and loss of identifying voice, the arduous hours spent in intensive oral work restrict opportunities for wider and incidental learning. Mechanical training is gained at the

expense of socialising influences, which Collins regards as more likely to achieve the basic aim of educating the deaf, namely integration. So, "Mr Blyth instinctively followed Mrs Peckover's example, and consulted the little creature's feelings" so that she remained "perfectly happy and content in her own way" (117). And by comparing the education of Madonna and Zack, Collins shows that affection achieves more than the most insistently repetitious training, irrespective of whether the pupil has speech or not. At no point does Collins draw attention to Madonna's visible language in a negative way. As the doctor had advised Mrs Peckover, "people afflicted with such stone deafness as [Madonna's] ...took to making signs, and writing, and such like, quite kindly as a sort of second nature to them" (100). Though he cannot explain why it is so, the doctor is convinced of a deaf person's tendency to develop an alternative form of expression. He shares the view that there is an inexhaustible potential in Nature to adapt to crises.

As early as *Iolani* (1840s), through his depiction of the wild man, Collins shows a person losing speech when isolated from other human contact; here, in *Hide and Seek*, he shows that the innate facility of humans to communicate is developed in community. And Collins uses Madonna's story to develop the idea that communication is not necessarily literally "tongue work." "Language" is the medium by which people come to know their own thoughts and transfer them to others through a common code. Codes vary but, whatever the code, decoding occurs in the brain where the eye is to sign as the ear is to speech.

Advocates of vocal articulation described gesture and signing as ugly, awkward, or at best the language of pantomime. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1824 described the "native language of the Deaf and Dumb" as "the language of pantomime" that remained crude and imprecise. In

1776, Saboureux de Fontenay had rudely alleged that De l'Epee's "gestural communication ... was fit only for vulgar pantomime or the guards of the seraglio of the Grand Turk" (Ree 157). But Ree balances that opinion with a quotation from a translation of Leonardo da Vinci's *Treatise on Painting* (expressing a view with which Collins' representation of the deaf is in sympathy) that painters might learn:

'by copying the motions of the dumb, who speak with movements of their hands and eyes and eyebrows and their whole person, in their desire to express that which is in their minds.' (quoted Ree 120)

Collins makes hearing Zack, not deaf Madonna, uncultivated of speech and the actor in amateurish pantomime (154). At the same time Madonna's "pantomime portrait-sketches"(232) are shown to be the product of sharp observation and real talent in mimicry. Mrs Blyth finds them "funnier than any play that ever was acted" (234). Moreover, Collins stresses the aptness of Madonna's home signs: hand to heart registers affectionate Mrs Blyth (132), hand waved round and round the head denotes the zany Zack (124). Madonna's signs are easy to interpret (333) and her free and ready invention is demonstrated as she identifies guests for bed-ridden Mrs Blyth.

Mrs Blyth always encouraged her to indicate who the different guests were, as they followed each other, by signs of her own choosing, -- these signs being almost invariably suggested by some characteristic peculiarity of the person represented, which her quick observation had detected at a first interview, and which she copied with the quaintest exactness of imitation. The correctness with which her memory preserved these signs, and retained, after long intervals, the recollection of the persons to whom they alluded, was very extraordinary. [I]f the sign by which she herself had once designated that acquaintance -- no matter how long ago -- happened to be repeated by those about her, it was then always found that the forgotten person was recalled to her recollection immediately. (231)

Here Collins does much more than describe Madonna's facility for mimicry. He links signs to memory and thus to mind. Mrs Blyth's memory is linked to the sound of names; Madonna's is linked to an identifying sign. Memory is activated through different "signals" but the

mental activity of remembering and decoding is similar so that the description of Madonna's skill tends to support Brougham's theory that language is an abstract system of arbitrary signals (words or signs) connected to the thing signified.

People as different as Francis Bacon and Descartes had recognised gestural language as a fully human language (Ree 121) and Ree supplies other early examples of people who shared this view. For instance, in the late seventeenth century Wallis had argued there was no need to learn to speak in order to learn to write. Deaf people could acquire language from writing in a way similar to that by which hearing persons acquired language from the sounds of speech (Ree 116-19). I have already referred to the work of Dalgano. So, some teachers of the deaf, from practical experience, had already gone some way towards recognising "language" as a "system" of elements, not necessarily connected to the sounds of speech.

In Collins' day anthropologists were using gestural language to "converse" with newly encountered peoples and discovering that gesture seemed natural, not only to "primitive" tribes but to humans of all ages and cultures who were struggling to acquire a new language. Studies of hieroglyphics contributed to a speculation that gesture might be the origin of speech. Yet, in popular opinion prejudice persisted against signed language in the conviction, contrary to demonstrable evidence, that spiritual development required the use of the common, God-given language of speech, that special gift conferred *only* on God's privileged creature, Man. Collins' story of a mute's communication skills addresses both these central issues.

Oralists were arguing that speech encouraged deliberate, logical, sequential thought; gesturalists that signs allowed consideration of different ideas simultaneously, side by side in space (Ree 86). Collins seems

to have recognised writing as a visible form of language akin to Madonna's signs and, as a professional exponent of the written form of visible language, he draws on the supposed spatial advantage of the medium to allow consideration of different ideas simultaneously so that in his writing it is not the flaw of ambiguity or disharmony when we find different ideas, conflicting explanations, mixed motives and values set down side by side for scrutiny.

In the 1850s Collins' vindication of the visible language of the deaf explores the relationship between language and the senses, the senses and the mind, and goes a long way towards recognising that visible representation is in fact language-like. Such understanding is likely to have had its genesis in the work of the early "biologists" and at a time that Burdon-Sanderson, an experimental physiologist, regarded as revolutionary for the life sciences. In 1893, he described the development of biology in the first part of the century and reported how, within two decades, theory has been abandoned for fact and speculation for experiment (276). That is, he described a change of method and located the beginnings of the new methodology in the investigations of Johannes Muller (c. 1826) into the physiology of vision and hearing (283). He attributed validation of the new methodology to Helmholtz' work (c 1845) to *measure* the time relations of muscular and nervous responses to stimulation (279). In 1846 Carpenter was anticipating locating activities in certain areas of the brain and nervous system and by mid century French neurologists had localised nerve functions in the cerebral cortex (Finkel 394). By the 1870s it was firmly believed that the left hemisphere of the brain performed analytical tasks, especially lexical and grammatical analysis of spoken language, and sequential operations generally. The right, it was understood, was specialised for the perception of wholes, and

therefore was specially adapted for visual and spatial perception. In our time Sacks reports the independent conclusions of Bellugi and Neville that:

at a neurological level,... Sign is a language and is treated as such by the brain, even though it is visual rather than auditory , and spatially rather than sequentially organised. And as a language, it is processed by the left hemisphere of the brain, that is biologically specialised for just this function. (Sacks, *Voices* 95)

Although *Hide and Seek* pre-dates Darwin's *Origin* it follows the work of De Maillet and Lamarck and co-incides with the furore surrounding *Vestiges*. Gillian Beer's "Darwin and Growth of Language Theory" makes it plain how leading scientists were involved with linguistic theory. The possible evolution of language from animal origins was part of their investigation of man's place in nature so that language theory and evolutionary theory were inter-implicated (106). (In this context even Collins' reference to the gestures of the Joyce's Newfoundland has relevance.) For evolutionary studies, Beer explains, "philology was treated as an arm of genetics" (209). Specifically she refers to Brougham's work and Darwin's partial understanding of it: recognising signs as abstract but missing Brougham's point about their arbitrariness--something Collins seems to have grasped.

Collins' portrait of linguistic adaptation fits securely within early biological principles and maintains a commitment to demonstrable realities against popular dogma. And although a *complete* language theory is not traced out in the novel, the representation of Madonna's sign suggests that Collins already, in the 1850s, understood that we respond to the world with our whole selves, not through any discrete sense. The subject continued to fascinate him and is the subject of *Poor Miss Finch*, his novel of the early 1870s.