Problems of Knowing: Sensation Fiction, Form, and Disability

JUDE FOGARTY
University at Buffalo, USA
Email: hrfogart@buffalo.edu

Criticism on Wilkie Collins's *Poor Miss Finch* (1872) has noted the strong contrasts Collins sets up between binaries such as sight and touch and able-bodiedness and disability. This article proposes that these structuring binaries cohere around three interdependent "problems of knowing": the near-incommunicability of subjective, embodied experience; the ways in which sensory hierarchies transform normative forms of knowledge into totalizing forms of knowing; and, lastly, the problems of knowing inherent in narrative depictions of lived experience. While sensation fiction has been increasingly reexamined and revalued, much of the radical potential of its embodied reading techniques remains to be explored. This article argues that *Poor Miss Finch* seeks to bridge the gap created by the three problems of knowing, drawing on sensation fiction's formal features of melodrama and sudden disruptions of domesticity to create moments of sensory disorientation and heightened affect, enabling imaginative immersion in nonnormative embodied and perceptual experiences.

> "Do you know one thing?" he went on. "Do you know what is meant by an objects which is square? Do you know what is meant by an objects which is round?"
>
> Wilkie Collins, *Poor Miss Finch*

THE passage quoted in my epigraph comes from a pivotal moment in Wilkie Collins's *Poor Miss Finch* (1872) in which the titular Lucilla Finch removes the bandages from her eyes for the first time after undergoing eye surgery to restore her sight. When her bandage is removed, her surgeon, Doctor Grosse, immediately demands that Lucilla walk to the other end of the room where her companion, Madame Pratolungo, is standing. She is then subjected to several similar tests requiring that she immediately adapt to sight, such as identifying different colors and, in the moment quoted above, distinguishing between square and round objects.

Jude Fogarty is a postdoctoral researcher in the University at Buffalo's department of AI and Society investigating how normative constructions of humanness and intelligence shape embodied experience, personhood, and technology design. Previous work has appeared in *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* and *Technical Communication Quarterly*.

Victorian Literature and Culture, pp. 1–25.
© The Author(s), 2026. Published by Cambridge University Press. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives licence (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided that no alterations are made and the original article is properly cited. The written permission of Cambridge University Press or the rights holder(s) must be obtained prior to any commercial use and/or adaptation of the article.
doi:10.1017/S1060150326100308

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Rather than a stereotypically celebratory or sentimental scene in which a disabled person is "cured" of their disability and miraculously rehabilitated to the world, Lucilla's first experiences of sight are punctuated by repeated "failures": she "fails" to immediately adapt to sight, "fails" to respond with the appropriate enthusiasm to the visual world, and "fails" to submit properly to the instruction of her doctor. Lucilla moves from confusion and fear to anger as she is subjected to Grosse's "cruelly humiliating" gamut of tests.[1] The doctor goads her on, even as he mockingly maintains that she will be unable to immediately succeed at the tasks he sets for her. As Lucilla repeatedly opts to close her eyes and use touch to pass the tests that confound her when using sight, Grosse mocks her, chides her, and threatens to make her stand in the corner "like a naughty girls" (299).

Within the context of a scene in which Lucilla is mocked and infantilized and her intelligence and capabilities are repeatedly called into question, it is difficult not to read Grosse's "one thing" as a more totalizing judgment. Grosse's question reframes what ought to be a question of perception into a question of knowledge that positions sight as the single arbiter of meaning. "What is meant" when Grosse says "square" is only ever the appearance of a square. The knowledge of her physical surroundings Lucilla accesses through her sense of touch is delegitimized, and the measure of her knowledge is reduced to her capacity for visual perception. If Lucilla does not "know" what squares and circles look like, it is not simply that she does not know one particular thing, but that she does not know even one thing—she knows nothing. She is, as Pratolungo remarks when Lucilla fails to cross the room, "perfectly incompetent" (298).

As this example suggests, *Poor Miss Finch* holds in tension binaries between sight and touch and able-bodiedness and disability, with criticism on the novel particularly highlighting Collins's focus on vision[2] and disability.[3] In this essay, I propose that the multiple binaries which structure the novel all cohere around one central question: how differing embodied experiences might be communicated. This question emerges out of a set of three interdependent "problems of knowing" related to nonnormative embodied experience. Rather than focusing on problems of *knowledge*, I borrow the phrase "problems of knowing" from disability scholar Rod Michalko to highlight both the near-impossibility of communicating subjective embodied experiences and the ways in which nonnormative embodied ways of being become categorized as fundamental "incompetence."[4] While "knowledge" is a noun, "knowing" can be

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

a noun, verb, or adjective. Knowledge is stable, contained: it is an object that is acquirable or the state, fact, or condition of having acquired it.[5] Knowing, too, can be a fact or condition, but it is also processual, experiential, descriptive. It can refer to basic cognition, ongoing engagement with and use of information, sense perception, personal experience and acquaintance, a person who knows—or one who simply seems to.[6] Knowledge, therefore, does not always equal knowing: the knowledge a person possesses and the experiential, personal, embodied ways in which they know can differ drastically. When power and privilege are involved, this divide becomes particularly fraught. Knowledge of the etiology and symptoms of a disability will never equate to the experience of having it, a distinction that eases the way for discrimination and mistreatment. Furthermore, as Lucilla's example shows, ableist culture frequently collapses prized forms of knowledge into knowing: when a person does not perceive the world or communicate in ways deemed legible and acceptable, it is not just their knowledge that is called into question but also their perception, character, and cognition.

This article is organized around three problems of knowing and the ways in which they validate or invalidate particular forms of embodied experience. First and foremost, I consider the problems of knowing that arise from the near-incommunicability of subjective, embodied experience, particularly when that experience is nonnormative. Second, I examine Collins's emphasis on the hierarchy of sight over touch to demonstrate how particular, normative forms of knowledge can become totalizing forms of knowing. Lastly, I consider the problems of knowing inherent in narrative communication of lived experience, contrasting the visual and cognitive exercises of realism with the embodied and affective experiences of sensation fiction. Ultimately, I argue that the novel presents a critical evaluation of these problems of knowing and seeks to bridge the gap between subjective embodied experiences, drawing upon the formal strategies of sensation fiction to create ruptured moments of heightened feeling, encouraging the reader to feel with the novel's protagonist.

Preaching to the Nerves: Sensation Fiction and Identification

As its name implies, sensation fiction is defined through the sensationalism of its often-outrageous plots—which focused on shocking subjects such as murder, bigamy, and adultery—and its combination of melodrama, the gothic, and domestic realism. Through its form and

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

content, sensation fiction became notorious for its ability to create physical sensations within a reader's body. H. L. Mansel's 1863 essay on sensation fiction includes a host of colorful descriptions for what this looks like. Sensation novels are "of the galvanic-battery type," "carry the whole nervous system by steam," "aspire to set [the reader's] hair on end or his teeth on edge," and even "are strongly provocative of that sensation in the palate and throat which is a premonitory symptom of nausea."[7]

Mansel's essay is frequently cited as an exemplar of nineteenth-century anxieties about sensation fiction's physically and morally deleterious effects, with critics highlighting how Mansel viewed the genre's embodied reading experiences and sensational subject matter as evidence of modern moral decline and commodification.[8] What is most interesting to me, however, is how Mansel imagines the shocks of sensation fiction operating. It is not simply that sensation fiction might act on the body of its reader in dramatic and even unpleasant ways. Instead, the real danger lies in how these embodied experiences produce identification. Mansel argues that sensation novelists use an embodied "sort of special pleading" to create sympathy for immoral characters that cancels out any potential moral deterrents the novelists might lay claim to.[9] Over the remainder of his essay, Mansel outlines some of the more hazardous ideas that sensation fiction can instill in its readers through "preaching to the nerves."[10] A writer might use the strategies of sensation fiction to express their opposition "against the government of his country, against the administration of the law, [. . .] against the social position of women who have lapsed from virtue, against capital punishments," and in fact, "against any institution, custom, or fact of the day."[11]

Mansel's list of possible topics sensation fiction might intervene in now reads less as dangerous and irresponsible and more like a list of potentially radical points of critique. If anything about the list is still shocking, it is that Mansel imagines these deeply socially engaged topics as the purview of sensation fiction, which occupied a second-class status to the realist novel, both within the nineteenth century and within most subsequent criticism until the 1970s and '80s.[12] Recent critics such as Anne-Marie Beller and Helena Ifill document the way that authors of sensation fiction engaged with social issues—primarily through the notorious bigamy plot—and it is well known that authors such as Wilkie Collins flaunted social mores within their personal lives.[13] Nevertheless, the genre's engagement with social issues continues to be understood primarily as one of its many strategies for shocking its readers, leaving serious social critique to realism.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Thus, while sensation fiction has been increasingly reexamined and revalued, much of the radical potential to which Mansel's essay points (albeit as cautionary examples) remains to be explored, particularly concerning the relationship between the embodied experiences sensation fiction was said to produce and the social projects embraced by many of its authors. When critics do address this relationship, they tend to focus on the ways in which shock value and shocking subject matter operate together. Esther Reilly's examination of Miserrimus Dexter in *The Law and the Lady* (1875) is most relevant here. Reilly argues that "[i]n drawing attention to readers' own bodies and the ways in which they might be physically affected by the act of reading, sensation fiction has always been rooted in the corporeal and the physical."[14] Through the combination of this embodied reading experience and Miserrimus Dexter's "extreme and bizarre characterization," Collins works to "destabilise Victorian ideas and images of normative personhood."[15] Reilly usefully highlights how sensation fiction's emphasis on the corporeal—both in its characterizations and in its effects on its readers—calls into question ideas of normative personhood.

Yet, as critics as early as Margaret Oliphant have argued, sensation fiction's most effective moments of acting on the body occur not just through extreme content or at the heights of narrative tension but in ruptures of quiet and domesticity.[16] What happens, then, when the "shocks" of reading are independent of shock value? How might sensation fiction enable alternative modes of identification to those of the cultivated sympathy of realism? *Poor Miss Finch* serves as an ideal case study for these questions, as its moments of heightened sensation are both clearly tied to its social project and unfold separately from the most dramatic elements of its plot.

Poor Miss Finch: Sensation and Sensationalism

Poor Miss Finch is a sensation novel in more than one sense of the word: it both exemplifies major features of the genre, and it is profoundly invested in exploring sensory experience in its depiction of its blind main character, Lucilla Finch. While Collins subtitles *Poor Miss Finch* "A Domestic Story," its dramatic plot and subject matter—strange bodily transformations, trickery, kidnapping, melodramatic death—place it squarely within the sensation genre. Additionally, the novel features extensive exploration of the senses and disabled experience, systematically examining the psychology and phenomenology of touch to reveal

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the possibilities for knowledge, communication, and embodied experience it offers. In fact, as Suzy Anger puts it, Collins's focus on the senses is so thoroughgoing that he "offers the beginnings of a phenomenology of sense perception."[17]

Narrated by Lucilla's hired companion, Madame Pratolungo, *Poor Miss Finch* follows Lucilla as she undergoes eye surgery, experiences a brief period of being able to see, and becomes blind again. Soon after Madame Pratolungo arrives on the scene, Lucilla meets and falls in love with Oscar Dubourg. They become engaged, but as a result of a head injury sustained defending his home from thieves, Oscar develops epilepsy. The only available treatment involves silver nitrate, a therapy that turns the skin of those who take it dark blue. Oscar decides to take the treatment, not knowing that, despite (or, rather, because of) her blindness, Lucilla has a fear of dark colors. After learning of Lucilla's fear, Oscar lies and tells her that it is his twin brother, Nugent, who has blue skin, a lie he fails to correct even when Lucilla is able to see. He makes Nugent stand in for him in his meetings with Lucilla, not knowing that Nugent, too, has fallen in love with his fiancée. Eventually despairing of his situation, Oscar runs away to the continent rather than admit that he deceived Lucilla. Nugent seizes the opportunity to impersonate Oscar and persuade Lucilla to elope. Alone with Nugent, Lucilla feels as though she has lost her sense of touch because she no longer feels the connection to "Oscar" she did while blind; this problem troubles her so deeply and places such a physical strain on her that she becomes blind again. Intervening at the eleventh hour, Madame Pratolungo and Oscar rescue Lucilla from her impending sham marriage to Nugent. Nugent, filled with remorse, sails to the Arctic and freezes to death, where he is later found clutching a lock of Lucilla's hair in his frozen hand. Oscar and Lucilla are happily married.

Part sensation novel, part domestic tale, and part thinly veiled phenomenological treatise, *Poor Miss Finch* has remained relatively unknown, likely due in part to the tension between these different aims of the text. The novel was poorly received during its serialization and, outside of Victorian disability studies, has been largely overlooked in criticism on Collins's work ever since. During its serialization it was criticized "from all sides": it was either too sensational, too realistic, too unbelievable, too dull, or too lacking in morals, depending on the critic.[18] Similarly, while the novel clearly points to social issues around disability, marriage, gender, race, family, and class, it does not immediately seem to carry the same force of critique that many of Collins's other works do. As

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Jessica Durgan notes, by contrast to Collins's better-known works, *Poor Miss Finch* "is often (and inaccurately) regarded as apolitical in theme, despite Collins's subversive reputation."[19]

Criticism on *Poor Miss Finch* has covered issues of race and empire,[20] disability,[21] medical narrative,[22] queerness,[23] and sympathy,[24] yet, on the whole, the novel has remained understudied in comparison to Collins's better-known work, often only glancingly referenced within more comprehensive articles on Collins's work or on sensation fiction.[25] Unsurprisingly for a work that focalizes blindness, much of the critical attention around *Poor Miss Finch* has highlighted the way that vision functions in the novel. Samuel Lyndon Gladden, for instance, writes that othered individuals in Collins's works "come to depend almost entirely on the mechanisms of spectacularity and perception, on ways of seeing and being seen. *Poor Miss Finch* manifests these mechanisms in and around negotiations of blindness, sight, and knowledge."[26] Durgan argues that Collins "draws on his significant knowledge of the visual arts to reconsider the nature of color and its relationship to race and empire through the creation of a hero who is uniquely placed to question ideas of identity, belonging, and otherness through his color change."[27] And Helen Williams highlights how, in asserting, "I want everyone to see me," Lucilla reverses the power of the medical gaze, "mak[ing] her body a spectacle on her own terms, controlling who sees her and when."[28]

Collins himself states explicitly in his dedication to the novel that his intention was to combat disability stigma: "I subscribe to the article of belief which declares, that the conditions of human happiness are independent of bodily affliction, and that it is even possible for bodily affliction itself to take its place among the ingredients of happiness" (xl). Crucially, the happiness Collins gives his heroine is *not* the nineteenth-century trope of the innocent woman or child who finds solace in the fact that their suffering serves as an edifying or salvific influence on those who witness it. As Martha Stoddard Holmes notes, *Poor Miss Finch* thwarts any expectations its readers might have for a "stereotypical, morally uplifting story of a woman who has developed a positive attitude toward her disability."[29] While Lucilla's attitude toward her blindness is certainly a positive one, neither Lucilla herself nor her story is of the "stereotypical, morally uplifting" sort. She is certainly not, as Tabitha Sparks describes her, "part middle-class Victorian domestic angel."[30] Lucilla refuses to be coddled or infantilized, insisting on her own independence and frequently calling into question the social values of those around her. Furthermore, at a time when anxieties about genetics were reaching their

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

peak through the ongoing development of evolutionary theories and early eugenicist thinking, Collins ends the novel with Lucilla marrying and having children, a happy ending that does not hinge on Lucilla being "cured" of her disability.[31]

Making Sense: Personhood and Subjective Experience

While Collins insists upon the fact that Lucilla does not need to be cured because there is nothing wrong with her to begin with, the novel is not naïve about how disability is understood and how disabled people tend to be treated. Thus, the first and most important problem of knowing in *Poor Miss Finch* is one central to disability itself: the problem of how subjective experiences—and experiences of disability in particular—can be communicated to those who do not share them. As I will discuss in greater detail later in this essay, sense perception is both a subjective, embodied experience and a set of pervasive cultural constructs. These frameworks are difficult to unsettle because they are reinforced both by cultural norms and by subjective experience. One's sensing of the world is so formative to one's sense of the world that the supporting characters in *Poor Miss Finch* can only filter Lucilla's experience through their own by using visual metaphors such as "eyes in the tips of her fingers" (142).

In a world where able-bodiedness is considered the default, this inaccessibility of embodied experience is one that disabled people are constantly charged with surmounting, even while their descriptions of their own experiences are just as constantly called into question. As disability advocate Mel Baggs puts it in their short film "In My Language":

> The way I naturally think and respond to things looks and feels so different from standard concepts or even visualization that some people do not call it thought at all. [. . .] It is not enough to look and listen and taste and smell and feel, I have to do those things to the right things [. . .] and fail to do them to the wrong things or else people doubt that I am a thinking being and since their definition of thought defines their definition of personhood [. . .] they doubt that I am a real person as well.[32]

While Baggs is speaking about their experiences as an autistic person, they make it clear that this experience is far more universal. Anyone who processes information, communicates, or physically interacts with the world in ways outside the norm risks losing their validity and value.

Thus, the inaccessibility of subjective experience takes on ethical dimensions when intertwined with power. It is not simply a problem of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

trying and failing to understand another's subjectivity but a denial of that subjectivity altogether. This is what Margaret Price refers to as rhetoricity: "the ability to be received as a human subject."[33] As "rhetoricity" implies, this ability to be received as human hinges on a person's success at persuading others that they should be. The forms of rhetoric needed for this kind of persuasion are imbued in every aspect of daily life—communication, appearance, action, and interaction all constitute arguments for personhood that need to "make sense," in Price's phrasing.[34]

The callousness with which many characters of the novel treat Lucilla in the name of caring for her shows how devastating this lack of rhetoricity can be. Lucilla's surgery and her relationship with Oscar are two primary examples. After Lucilla's surgery, she is kept isolated and under strict observation to ensure she heals correctly. Lucilla places little importance in being able to see, stating that her only reason for having the surgery is to see Oscar, and that, otherwise, she didn't "feel as if it would give me any particular pleasure to use my eyes" (220). Yet during her "imprisonment," as Lucilla, Pratolungo, and Oscar all describe her period of convalescence, it is as if Lucilla is simply an incubator for the developing sense of sight, rather than the one who will be using the sense (209, 233, 235, 330). Even after her recovery, Pratolungo describes how "the restored sense of sight struggles to assert itself," while Lucilla is only a recipient of "the new life of beauty which the new sense had bestowed on her" (297). Similarly, Lucilla's descriptions of her experience, and particularly her fear of dark colors, are treated as irrational fantasies. This supposed irrationality shapes everyone else's idea of Lucilla's personhood so much that they do not hesitate to trick her in ways that would be entirely unacceptable otherwise. Oscar has Nugent impersonate him in meetings with Lucilla and even tries to pressure her into marrying him before she has her surgery, hoping that if she is already legally and religiously tied to him, she won't abandon him when she sees his blue skin. Nugent takes this a step further, essentially kidnapping Lucilla and almost succeeding in duping her into marriage.

Feeling Right: Perceptual Hierarchies of Sight and Touch

As Baggs suggests in the quote from "In My Language" above, the ways in which individuals perceive and interact with the world are value-laden: people are expected to direct their senses "to the right things" and avoid "the wrong things." Baggs connects these expectations around sense

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

perception directly to questions of consciousness and personhood. The ways a person makes use of their senses must make sense for them to be considered a "thinking being" and, by extension, a "real person." This reveals a second problem of knowing—one created by the cultural privileging of sight over touch, which positions vision as the sensory mode through which thought and personhood are most legibly demonstrated.

As Grosse's "one thing" shows, the sensory hierarchy that values sight over touch collapses one form of knowledge—information gained through sight—into a totalizing form of knowing: sight as the most accurate and acceptable way of perceiving and understanding the world. There is a long tradition within Western culture of valuing sight over proximate senses such as touch.[35] This hierarchy of the senses is often closely associated with the rise of modernity and empiricism, and particularly with Cartesian mind-body dualism. Experienced through contact and proximity, touch is insistently embodied. Touch serves as a perpetual reminder of the body's physical shape and presence in the world—and thus of its base, animal existence—rendering it a "crude and uncivilized mode of perception."[36] By contrast, sight is the most "disembodied" of the senses, allowing for perceptual extension beyond the body outward into the world. As such, sight became increasingly associated with thought and reason, allowing access to knowledge through reading, and enabling the rationalization and regulation of the environment through the discerning gaze of the scientist.[37] Beyond knowledge in general, sight is frequently conceived as "an authenticator of truth, courier of reason, and custodian of intellect."[38] By inversion, these associations also posit a lack of sight as a lack of knowledge. As Rod Michalko argues, "Blindness is often understood as a problem of knowing insofar as knowledge is understood as springing from sense perception. [. . .] This conception of knowledge and knowing sets up an obvious connection: the less we see, the less we know."[39]

Both Pratolungo's narrative and the way that Lucilla is treated by others in the text reflect Michalko's point: that blindness is understood not just as something that restricts an individual's access to specific types of sensory knowledge but as something that impinges on their cognition and rationality. As the "proxy" for stereotypical understandings of disability in the text, Madame Pratolungo routinely collapses sight with knowledge and capability.[40] She infantilizes Lucilla, describing her more than once as having "the simplicity of a child" and laments her blindness long after she has been shown not only Lucilla's ability to manage in daily life without sight, but also the richness of experience she can gain

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

through her sense of touch (95, 303). In declaring that Lucilla is "perfectly incompetent" when she fails Grosse's tests, Pratolungo draws together the various ways that blindness as a problem of knowing manifest. Lucilla's incompetence, it is suggested, is not merely task-based but mental. This is perhaps nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the short section of the novel told by Lucilla herself in the form of a series of diary entries. The entries are intrusively annotated by Pratolungo in the process of transcribing them for inclusion in her own narrative. Even when Lucilla is directly stating her own thoughts—and using visual means to communicate them—her rationality and authority over her own experiences are denied.

Yet even as the novel grapples with Lucilla's ableist mistreatment, it also works to grant her the rhetoricity denied her by the other characters of the novel through emphasizing the value of Lucilla's experience of the world via touch. When pushed, Lucilla returns Pratolungo's disparaging remarks in kind, reminding Pratolungo of sight's fallibility. "Just tell me which knows best in the dark—my touch or your eyes?" she declares, before going even further, reminding Pratolungo of an instance in "broad daylight" when, "in spite of your wonderful eyes," Pratolungo, Mr. and Mrs. Finch, Oscar, and Nugent all failed to correctly identify what they thought to be a man or a calf as an old tree stump (220, 221). By contrast, Lucilla emphasizes the value, and even superiority, of her experience of the world through touch: "I set my touch, my dear, against your eyes, as much the most trustworthy, and much the most intelligent sense of the two" (220). The language here seems to enact the very claim she is making, as she "sets" her "touch" "against" Pratolungo's eyes, translating an abstract assertion into the language of a physical action, one that, if literalized, would close Pratolungo's eyes, removing her sight by Lucilla's touch.

Seeing Is Believing: The Normative Functions of Narrative

The first problem—the forms of subjectivity granted personhood—and the second—the forms of experience granted validity—converge in the final problem of knowing: how fiction represents lived experience. The senses are not straightforwardly and simply modes of taking in information about the world; they are "historically and culturally generated ways of knowing and understanding."[41] These cultural investments are clear in the literary boundaries Victorians worked to establish, prizing the visual and cognitive exercises of realism over the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

embodied and affective experiences of sensation fiction. As Richard Nemesvari argues, sensation fiction served as a foil for realism: the boundary between the two had to be drawn in order to define realism and delineate between high and low art.[42] That critics have long felt the need to draw clear lines between sensation's low art and realism's high art indicates deep-seated cultural investments in aligning with the world as represented in realist fiction.

As Nancy Armstrong argues, there is a long-standing critical association between realism and the visual: "fiction equated seeing with knowing and made visual information the basis for the intelligibility of verbal narrative."[43] Thus realism's "problem of knowing" and that of blindness end up being one and the same: "the less we see, the less we know."[44] Lauren Hoffer and Samuel Lyndon Gladden both note the ways that Pratolungo's narrative supports similar beliefs about sight.[45] As Hoffer argues, Pratolungo's attention to Lucilla's appearance and the visual registers of her blindness "stress the necessary visuality of narration itself."[46]

Furthermore, what can be known through these techniques, what is rendered—and recognized—as realistic, is that which supports a dominant, normative understanding of reality.[47] And as the first two problems of knowing show, this is not something that happens merely in defining genres: lives that are not, or cannot, be lived in accordance with dominant norms are also perceived as unintelligible, unreal, and dismissible. This is one reason why *Poor Miss Finch* was so roundly panned by critics, and why Lucilla in particular received so much vitriol. As a disgruntled reviewer for *The Spectator* put it in 1872, "a more unspiritual character than Lucilla's, disciplined as it should have been by a lifelong trial of the gravest kind, it would be difficult to conceive."[48] One possible interpretation of this critique is about the moral value of literature—that a character such as Lucilla ought to be providing a good example of how to act under adverse circumstances. In that line, it is "difficult to conceive" a character "more unspiritual" in the sense that it is difficult to imagine how anyone could top Collins's heroine in her worldly lack of suffering-induced piety. Yet this critique can also be read not simply as a point about how Lucilla has reached the epitome of unspiritualness or has failed as a pedagogical tool, but as an indication of the author's belief that being properly chastened by suffering is not just the responsibility of exemplary literary characters: it is how disabled people ought to exist in the real world. It is difficult to "conceive"—to conceptualize or bring to life—someone who exceeds Lucilla's

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

unspiritual character because, in a world where disability "should" chasten a person, Lucilla's failure to be disciplined is unrealistic.

Contemporary critics similarly take issue with the novel's representation of disabled experience. Likening Lucilla to a "Romantic seer," Tabitha Sparks argues that "Collins idealizes her blindness as a hyper-imaginative perceptual faculty that lends Lucilla a mystical allure."[49] And Suzy Anger argues that the text's melodrama interrupts the text's "narrative realism," replacing it "with an implausible representation of Lucilla's super-sensory powers when sightless."[50] Both critics get at a crucial element of the text's generic hybridity yet take the Romantic and melodramatic dimensions of the text as hyperbolic failures.

As Anger's contrast between melodrama and realism suggests, these objections reinforce long-standing critical hierarchies—between realism and sensation fiction, between high and low art, and, by extension, between "reality" and "fantasy." Yet, as I argue, the melodramatic and sensational dimensions of the novel are precisely what render it most valuable—not despite their departures from realism, but because of them. The passages I examine in the following section show how these ruptures of domesticity and realism operate at multiple levels: they disrupt conventions of representation, unsettle normative assumptions, and challenge hierarchies of sensation and knowledge. While it is important not to overinvest in Lucilla's representation as a universal account of blindness, it is equally important not to dismiss alternative models for embodied experience as inherently implausible.

Purple Pins and Blue Men: Feeling Differently

While, as Collins asserts, disability does not equate simply and exclusively to suffering, Elaine Scarry's explanation of the incommunicability of pain provides a useful framework for considering the limits and possibilities of communicating subjective embodied experience. In her work, Scarry argues that pain is so difficult to communicate that "to have great pain is to have certainty; to hear that another person has pain is to have doubt."[51] In fact, pain is "so nearly impossible to express, so flatly invisible [. . .] that almost any other phenomenon occupying the same environment will distract attention from it."[52] I would argue that the same can be said for disabled experience more generally, even when it does not involve immediate or continual physical suffering. Because of the barriers to understanding embodied (or, while not the subject of this essay, mental) experience that differs from one's own, disability is a precarious and

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

contingent status, one that must constantly be reaffirmed to resist being erased—taking with it crucial accommodations, access, or support. As Martha Stoddard Holmes has argued, sometimes even visible evidence does not suffice: "even visible disabilities seem liable to provoke a sense of uncertainty and suspicion as often as they do a sense of too much reality."[53] What this indicates at a deeper level is that, as with Scarry's argument about pain, telling someone that one has a disability is less likely to inspire belief than it is doubt.

Yet, as I have been arguing, simple knowledge of another's embodied experience may not be sufficient to elicit a response. Rachel Ablow complicates Scarry's epistemological model, writing: "Knowledge here is less the reason for acknowledgement than one possible motivating factor among many—one whose outcome is especially unpredictable. Specifically, once one doubts the other's veracity, or even whether she speaks as a human being, it becomes very difficult to say where that doubt may end."[54] As with Baggs's "thinking being" and Price's "ability to be received as a human subject," the humanity of the other plays a key role here. When the other's right to speak and be received as human is dismissed, their pain can be too.

At the same time, Scarry's model might be characterized as less about having or not having knowledge, about certitude or doubt, but rather about *how* knowledge is accessed: the cognitive fact of pain fails, yet the feeling of pain—even imagined—prevails (albeit often faintly and fleetingly). Just as the characters in Collins's novel translate Lucilla's touch into visual metaphors in an attempt to analogize her sensory experience with their own, Scarry argues that the closest an individual can come to understanding someone else's pain is through metaphors of weapons or wounds that conjure painful experience in ways that make it at least faintly perceptible.[55] Weapons have "shape, length, and color," allowing them to "externalize, objectify, and make sharable what is originally an interior and unsharable experience."[56] Similarly, the visceral language of wounding—particularly when expressed through analogy ("It feels like . . . ")—invites the listener or reader to imagine the pain within their own body or to call up a memory of a similar painful experience of their own. In less intense ways, language often draws upon presumed shared sensations to convey subjective states: one can feel crushed, suffocated, floating, feverish, starved, sickened. Thus, embodied forms of knowing, when grounded in shared experience, may elicit a more visceral and subjective understanding than knowledge based in cognition.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Sensation fiction's "preaching to the nerves" and Scarry's model converge in *Poor Miss Finch* in the form of a tiny weapon: a pin stuck in a dress.[57] Offering to show Pratolungo around the house when they are first introduced, Lucilla "put her arm round my waist—then instantly drew it away again, and shook her fingers impatiently, as if something had hurt them. 'A pin?' I asked" (14). Thus far, Lucilla has been amiable and cheerful, excited to meet her new companion and playing the role of gracious host. This is the first time that her composure slips, injured in the moment of a gesture of affection. The domestic elements of Collins's novel in the quiet bonding between the two women are punctured by the threat of a domestic and ordinary object that transforms the moment into one of pain instead.

Responding to the question, Lucilla exclaims, "'No! no! What coloured dress have you got on?' 'Purple.' 'Ah! I knew it! Pray don't wear dark colors. I have my own blind horror of anything that is dark'" (14). Pratolungo's practical guess of the pin is rebuffed and exchanged with a seemingly unconnected question of color, further fracturing the moment and pulling it out of the realm of the comfortable and predictable. The question, too, delays the revelation of the true cause of Lucilla's discomfort, heightening the strangeness of the moment by briefly leaving the reader to connect two seemingly disparate pieces of information—what does color have to do with touch? What does color have to do with the pain of someone who cannot see it? The logical conclusion denied to Pratolungo and the reader is one that is quite clear to Lucilla. Her "No! no!" betrays impatience at Pratolungo's assumption as well as the need to reject the cause of the unpleasant sensation.

Presented with a mysterious pain, the reader is also offered a potential cause that conjures up sensation, tied either to personal experience of being pricked by pins and poked by needles, or perhaps simply evoking physical revulsion at the idea of being met with metallic sharpness instead of soft warmth. What is presented is a concealed source of pain that falls outside of Pratolungo's—and thus, by extension, the reader's—expectations of how the world feels, yet still becomes imaginable through the image of the pin. When pin and purple collide, the narrative invites the reader to envision color as sharp in a literal rather than metaphorical sense. This color pokes, shocks, and causes pain. It extends outward into space and potentially even inward into the body if one touches it, making it necessary to shake off the remnants of its feeling.

While she marvels momentarily at Lucilla's ability to discern the dark color of her dress, Pratolungo quickly shifts back to her understanding of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Lucilla as "poor Miss Finch," describing Lucilla's delight in "the trivial amusement of unpacking my clothes" as if she were speaking about a child and immediately presenting the reader with a failure of Lucilla's sense of touch to counteract the previous example (15). She notes how, in distinguishing between two dresses of the same texture "her wonderful delicacy of touch proved to be at fault," choosing the lighter of the dresses as the dark one. A moment later, "the next guess she made, however, restored the tips of her fingers to their place in her estimation: she discovered the stripes in a smart pair of stockings of mine, and brightened up directly" (16). Lucilla's failure is described squarely as such: her touch is "proved to be at fault." Her next success, at arguably a much more difficult task of identifying stripes, on the other hand, "restore[s]" her touch only "in her estimation." Not only is Lucilla's single failure presented in such a way as to discount the idea that Lucilla might be able to detect perceptible differences in the cloth, it also becomes clear that Pratolungo held doubts to begin with, as only Lucilla's own faith in her abilities is restored. Even while Pratolungo hits upon a crucial clue in Lucilla's failure—texture—she is content to keep to her opinion that "the blind can live in their imaginations, and have their favorite fancies and illusions" rather than take seriously Lucilla's description of her own experience (15).

Lucilla's mistake is important, but not for the reasons Pratolungo suggests. Instead, this example suggests that Lucilla senses something that, particularly for cloth, often correlates with differences in color—texture. Here, Collins is directly engaging with John Kitto's work *The Lost Senses*. Kitto is less frequently referred to in criticism on the novel, which, when it refers to Collins's source material, more often focuses on his engagement with the philosophical treatment of blindness in the work of John Locke, William Molyneux, and Denis Diderot.[58] John Kitto began collecting sketches of the lives of deaf and blind individuals in 1834, which he published as *The Lost Senses* in 1845.[59] Kitto himself spent the majority of his life deaf after injuries sustained falling off a ladder and refers to his own life experiences as his motivation for the work.[60] *The Lost Senses* is organized into two parts, the first on deafness and the second on blindness, and is made up of a pastiche of Kitto's own observations and those of others, such as doctors, caregivers, and teachers, who worked with the individuals Kitto focuses on.

In *The Lost Senses*, Kitto describes how Julia Brace, who lost her sight and hearing at a young age and was sent to live in an asylum, developed such "exquisitely sensitive" touch that "she would discover the different

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

colors of silks and flannels."[61] Her friends put this ability to the test more than once, having her identify not only the colors of individual fabrics but asking her to identify the different colors of thread in a piece of embroidery. Kitto quotes Joseph Spence's 1754 explanation for how it might be possible to "feel color." Spence writes that a blind person "may make a new sort of vocabulary to himself, in relation to things which give us the ideas of more or less pleasing colors by the eye, and which give him the idea of greater smoothness or roughness by the touch."[62]

Georgina Kleege offers two further examples—one literary and one historical—that add to Kitto's and Spence's speculations. Of Tracy Chevalier's depiction of a blind character who states she can feel the colors of different cloth in *The Lady and the Unicorn* (2003), Kleege notes that rather than supporting the idea that "blind people are supposed to have some sort of sixth sense that would allow them to feel purely visual phenomena such as color [. . .] what Aliénor is really feeling are the different chemical residues of the different dyes."[63] Describing the eighteenth-century scientist Henry Moyes's comparison of colors to haptics, Kleege writes that "Dr. Moyes processed his residual perception of color through his mind's hand to create a meaningful system of analogous sensations, a sort of spectrum of textures. For him, mental images might involve color, but the colors registered as tactile rather than visual."[64]

Lucilla's experience of color through touch does not simply reproduce, via a different sense, how a sighted person might perceive color. While she often associates tactile sensations with visual colors, this correlation is not consistent or direct. Instead, the distinction may lie in varying degrees of tactile pleasure: the experience is less "black has this texture and white has that texture," and more "certain textures are pleasing and others are not." For Lucilla, these tactile sensations tend to align with lighter or more vibrant colors as opposed to darker ones to make up "a meaningful system of analogous sensations."

As the defamiliarization of the purple pin begins to show, Collins draws on sensation fiction's formal affordances to create moments of rupture—of the narrative, of domesticity, and of ocularcentric modes of experience. In doing so, he also works through touch's latent capacities for sensing the seemingly imperceptible—either through seeming to feel color through discriminating between minute textural differences or, as I will discuss next, in feeling *feeling*, experiencing affect as material and palpable.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

After Oscar lies to Lucilla and tells her it is Nugent she hears people referring to as the "blue man," he is forced to admit to Nugent what he has done. When Oscar and Nugent encounter Lucilla and Madame Pratolungo directly after this revelation, the ensuing scene is charged with emotion on all sides. To borrow a term from affect theorists Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, the ensuing scene becomes a site of "shuttling intensities," as both Oscar and Nugent go through a series of strong emotions—humiliation, despair, reproach, shame—that they try to suppress to keep Lucilla from noticing that anything is wrong.[65] In writing about the connection between melodrama and depictions of disability, Martha Stoddard Holmes writes that melodrama's "emotional excess is simply intensity, a feeling so concentrated that [. . .] it immerses characters and audience in its flood."[66] While such intensity is antimimetic, it nevertheless functions as a "token of the real," which "concentrates and ritualizes that aspect of real life that is uncontrollable, subject to enormous changes at the last minute, and physically and emotionally intense."[67] Collins uses the melodramatic excess of this scene to materialize the shuttling intensities between the two brothers and to give form to Lucilla's anxieties.

After Oscar and Nugent leave, Pratolungo prepares to walk back with Lucilla to the house.

> After advancing with me a few steps, she suddenly stopped—with a blind apprehension, as it seemed, of something in front of her. She lifted her little walking-cane, and moved it slowly backwards and forwards in the empty air, with the action of some one who is clearing away an encumbrance to a free advance—say the action of a person walking in a thick wood, and pushing aside the lower twigs and branches that intercept the way.
>
> "What are you about?" I asked.
>
> "Clearing the air," she answered. "The air is full of him. I am in a forest of hovering figures, with faces of black-blue. Give me your arm. Come through! (159–60)

On one hand, Lucilla's description sounds like she is imagining a nightmarish scene, brought on by her own anxiety and discomfort. As critics such as Patrick Brantlinger, Jessica Durgan, and Lillian Nayder have argued, Lucilla's fear of dark colors, including darker skin tones, plays a significant role in the critique of racism Collins presents through the work. By depicting a white man whose skin becomes blue, Collins is able to expose the irrationality of racism without explicitly engaging with

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

it in the text.[68] While these readings tap into a crucial aspect of the novel, they also tend to collapse Lucilla's response to her sense perception with sense perception itself, so that in pointing out the wrongness of her response, they also suggest that her sensory experience itself is wrong.

It is important not to collapse these categories because doing so ignores the other object of Collins's critique: the idea that racism is somehow a problem of perception—and specifically visual perception. This is evident today in claims of "color blindness," where the inability to perceive difference is celebrated as an innocent state that exempts individuals from participation in white supremacy. Through having a character whose blindness ought to keep her from perceiving difference in color who nonetheless responds viscerally to darkness, Collins exposes racism's deep-seated social and cultural roots, not allowing Lucilla to be exempted through positioning her blindness as a form of innocence.

Rather than reading "apprehension" solely as fear, Lucilla's "blind apprehension" can also be understood in the sense of comprehension or understanding. In taking Pratolungo's arm and commanding her to "Come through!" Lucilla asserts her knowledge and reverses the assumed order of the sighted person leading the blind, something she did on their first walk together as well, asserting: "I know my way better than you do" (18). Even more than simply knowing the landscape better than Pratolungo, however, this decisive action and command on Lucilla's part indicates that she can now sense what Pratolungo cannot and must lead her. It seems as though Lucilla is picking up on a disturbance in the air, on residual intensities left behind. Coming directly after the charged scene between Oscar and Nugent, the "forest of hovering figures" Lucilla apprehends seem like ghostly impressions of the intense, silent exchange between the two brothers, mapping their movements, their shame and despair, and even the deceptive "transfer" of blueness from Oscar to Nugent. While Lucilla misinterprets the threat—it is not darkness that endangers her but deception—she nevertheless perceives that "the air is full of" its haunting traces.

As with the pin turned purple, the spectral blue-black figures that crowd the space ahead of Lucilla are difficult to disperse. Lucilla's wish that "you saw him, as I see him, *in the dark*!" is momentarily granted, as the built-up suspense, haunting description, and Lucilla's certainty pull the reader at least briefly into her perception (158, emphasis original). Shifting from the seemingly figurative "the air is full of him" to a description of the air quite literally being full of him in the form of endlessly multiplied figures, renders the once-clear space claustrophobic.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In conclusion, through tracking Lucilla's experiences with touch and sight, Collins pushes against the idea of blindness as fundamental "incompetence," through exploring rich alternative forms of knowing engendered by nonnormative embodied experiences. In *Poor Miss Finch*, sensation fiction's formal features of melodrama and sudden disruptions of domesticity create moments of sensory disorientation and heightened affect that allow for temporary immersion in alternative embodied and perceptual experiences. While Pratolungo's normative narrative voice frequently overrides Lucilla's expressions of her experience, these occasional narrative slippages invite the reader to briefly feel with Lucilla. As Collins's use of these strategies shows, the very features that have long relegated sensation fiction to a second-class status in nineteenth-century literature are also the features that create space for authors to creatively imagine counternormative phenomenological experiences.

Notes

1. Collins, *Poor Miss Finch*, 301. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
2. Durgan, "Wilkie Collins's Blue Period"; Gladden, "Spectacular Deceptions"; Williams, "Much Fact and Little Imagination."
3. Holmes, "'Bolder with Her Lover in the Dark'"; Logan, *Sensational Deviance*; Tilley, "Embodying Blindness"; O'Farrell, "Blindness Envy."
4. Michalko, *The Mystery of the Eye*, 5–6.
5. "Knowledge (n.)."
6. "Know (v.)"; "Knowing (adj.)"; "Knowing (n.)."
7. Mansel, "Sensation Novels," 487.
8. Logan, *Sensational Deviance*, 14; Wynn, "Critical Responses to Sensation," 391; Bernstein, "Sensation and Science," 467; Brantlinger, "What Is 'Sensational'?" 10; MacDonald, "Bodily Sympathy," 212; Fantina and Harrison, "Introduction," ix.
9. Mansel, "Sensation Novels," 496.
10. Mansel, "Sensation Novels," 482.
11. Mansel, "Sensation Novels," 488.
12. Beller, "Brief Encounters"; Ifill, "Sensation and the City"; Fantina and Harrison, "Introduction," x.
13. Beller, "Brief Encounters"; Ifill, "Sensation and the City."
14. Reilly, "'Half Man, Half Chair,'" 310.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

15. Reilly, "'Half Man, Half Chair,'" 311.
16. Oliphant, "Sensation Novels." See also Allan, "Sensationalism Made Real."
17. Anger, "Naturalizing the Mind," 488.
18. Peters, "Introduction," xv; see also Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction*, 90–91.
19. Durgan, "Wilkie Collins's Blue Period," 770.
20. Brantlinger, "Class and Race in Sensation Fiction"; Durgan, "Wilkie Collins's Blue Period"; Nayder, "'Blue Like Me'"; Nayder, "The Empire and Sensation."
21. Holmes, "'Bolder with Her Lover in the Dark'"; Tilley, "Embodying Blindness in the Victorian Novel"; O'Farrell, "Blindness Envy."
22. Sparks, "Surgical Injury and Narrative Cure"; Williams, "Much Fact and Little Imagination."
23. Gladden, "Spectacular Deceptions."
24. Hoffer, "Unmanageable Sympathy."
25. Brantlinger, "Class and Race in Sensation Fiction"; Cohen, *Embodied*; Nayder, "The Empire and Sensation."
26. Gladden, "Spectacular Deceptions," 468–69.
27. Durgan, "Wilkie Collins's Blue Period," 765.
28. Williams, "Much Fact and Little Imagination," 10.
29. Holmes, "'Bolder with Her Lover in the Dark,'" 73.
30. Sparks, "Surgical Injury and Narrative Cure," 8.
31. Holmes, "'Bolder with Her Lover in the Dark,'" 61–62; Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction*, 7.
32. Baggs, *In My Language*, 4:36–6:12.
33. Price, *Mad at School*, 26.
34. Price, *Mad at School*, 26.
35. Classen, *The Deepest Sense*; Cohen, *Embodied*, 27; Gilbert, *Victorian Skin*, 184; Smith, *Sensory History*. For other proximate senses, see, for example, Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility*, 3.
36. Classen, *The Deepest Sense*, xii. See also Gilbert, *Victorian Skin*, 184; Smith, *Sensory History*, 93.
37. Gilbert, *Victorian Skin*, 184; Longo, *Spurious Coin*, 34–36; Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence*, 190–91; Smith, *Sensory History*, 9–10.
38. Smith, *Sensory History*, 9.
39. Michalko, *The Mystery of the Eye*, 5–6. See also Kleege, *More Than Meets the Eye*, 14.
40. Holmes, "'Bolder with Her Lover in the Dark,'" 73.
41. Smith, *Sensory History*, 3.
42. Nemesvari, "'Judged by a Purely Literary Standard,'" 17.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

43. Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography*, 7.
44. Michalko, *The Mystery of the Eye*, 6.
45. Hoffer, "Unmanageable Sympathy," 87; Gladden, "Spectacular Deceptions," 471.
46. Hoffer, "Unmanageable Sympathy," 87.
47. Allan, "Sensationalism Made Real," 108.
48. "Poor Miss Finch," 275–76.
49. Sparks, "Surgical Injury and Narrative Cure," 5.
50. Anger, "Naturalizing the Mind," 494.
51. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 7.
52. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 12.
53. Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction*, 22.
54. Ablow, *Victorian Pain*, 6.
55. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 15–17.
56. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 16.
57. Mansel, "Sensation Novels," 482.
58. Anger, "Naturalizing the Mind," 488–93; Peters, "Introduction," xi.
59. Hamilton and Matthew, "Kitto, John (1804–1854)."
60. Kitto, *The Lost Senses*, 16.
61. Kitto, *The Lost Senses*, 237.
62. Kitto, *The Lost Senses*, 287. Taken from Joseph Spence, *An Account of the Life, Character, and Poems of Mr. Blacklock* (1754).
63. Kleege, *More Than Meets the Eye*, 92.
64. Kleege, *More Than Meets the Eye*, 76. For further examples on color and texture, see Hammer, *Blindness through the Looking Glass*, 122–23.
65. Seigworth and Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," 2.
66. Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction*, 19.
67. Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction*, 19–20.
68. Brantlinger, "Class and Race in Sensation Fiction," 437; Durgan, "Wilkie Collins's Blue Period," 770; Nayder, "'Blue Like Me,'" 267.

Works Cited

Ablow, Rachel. *Victorian Pain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017.

Allan, Janice M. "Sensationalism Made Real: The Role of Realism in the Production of Sensational Affect." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 43 (2015): 97–112.

Anger, Suzy. "Naturalizing the Mind in the Victorian Novel: Consciousness in Wilkie Collins's *Poor Miss Finch* and Thomas Hardy's *Woodlanders*: Two Case Studies." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Victorian Novel*, edited by Lisa Rodensky, 484–506. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Armstrong, Nancy. *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Baggs, Mel. *In My Language* (2007), www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnylM1hI2jc.

Beller, Anne-Marie. "Brief Encounters: Sensation Fiction and the Short Story." *Victoriographies* 12, no. 3 (2022): 269–87.

Bernstein, Susan David. "Sensation and Science." In *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, edited by Pamela K. Gilbert, 466–80. Malden: Blackwell, 2011.

Brantlinger, Patrick. "Class and Race in Sensation Fiction." In *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, edited by Pamela K. Gilbert, 430–41. Malden: Blackwell, 2011.

———. "What Is 'Sensational' About the 'Sensation Novel'?" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 37, no. 1 (1982): 1–28, https://doi.org/10.2307/3044667.

Classen, Constance. *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012.

Cohen, William. *Embodied: Victorian Literature and the Senses*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

Collins, Wilkie. *Poor Miss Finch*. 1872. Edited by Catherine Peters. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Durgan, Jessica. "Wilkie Collins's Blue Period: Color, Aesthetics, and Race in *Poor Miss Finch*." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 43, no. 4 (2015): 765–83.

Fantina, Richard, and Kimberly Harrison. "Introduction." In *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre*, edited by Fantina and Harrison, ix–xxiii. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006.

Gilbert, Pamela K. *Victorian Skin: Surface, Self, History*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019.

Gladden, Samuel Lyndon. "Spectacular Deceptions: Closets, Secrets, and Identity in Wilkie Collins's *Poor Miss Finch*." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 33 (2005): 467–86.

Hamilton, Thomas, and H. C. G. Matthew. "Kitto, John (1804–1854), Writer and Missionary." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, September 23, 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15694.

Hammer, Gili. *Blindness through the Looking Glass: The Performance of Blindness, Gender, and the Sensory Body*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019.

Hoffer, Lauren. "Unmanageable Sympathy in Wilkie Collins's *Poor Miss Finch*." *Victorians: A Journal of Culture and Literature* 129 (2016): 80–97.

Holmes, Martha Stoddard. "'Bolder with Her Lover in the Dark': Collins and Disabled Women's Sexuality." In *Reality's Dark Light: The Sensational Wilkie Collins*, edited by Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox, 59–93. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003.

———. *Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004.

Ifill, Helena. "Sensation and the City: Charlotte Riddell's George Geith and the Emergence of the Sensation Genre." *Victoriographies* 12, no. 3 (2022): 221–42.

Kitto, John. *The Lost Senses: Deafness and Blindness*. New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1852.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Kleege, Georgina. *More Than Meets the Eye: What Blindness Brings to Art*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

"Know (v.)." In *Oxford English Dictionary*, June 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2046285452.

"Knowing (adj.)." In *Oxford English Dictionary*, March 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1200862456.

—— (n.)." In *Oxford English Dictionary*, July 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9557055524.

"Knowledge (n.)." In *Oxford English Dictionary*, June 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6648120396.

Logan, Heidi. *Sensational Deviance: Disability in Nineteenth-Century Sensation Fiction*. Milton: Routledge, 2019. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429453694.

Longo, Bernadette. *Spurious Coin: A History of Science, Management, and Technical Writing*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000.

MacDonald, Tara. "Bodily Sympathy, Affect, and Victorian Sensation Fiction." In *Affect Theory and Literary Critical Practice: A Feel for the Text*, edited by Stephen Ahern, 121–37. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. 10.1007/978-3-319-97268-8.

Mansel, H. L. "Sensation Novels." *Quarterly Review* 113 (1863): 481–514.

Maxwell, Catherine. *Scents and Sensibility: Perfume in Victorian Literary Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Michalko, Rod. *The Mystery of the Eye and the Shadow of Blindness*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.

Nayder, Lillian. "'Blue Like Me': Collins, *Poor Miss Finch* and the Construction of Racial Identity." In *Reality's Dark Light: The Sensational Wilkie*, edited by Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox, 266–81. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003.

———. "The Empire and Sensation." In *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, edited by Pamela K. Gilbert, 442–54. Malden: Blackwell, 2011.

Nemesvari, Richard. "'Judged by a Purely Literary Standard': Sensation Fiction, Horizons of Expectation, and the Generic Construction of Victorian Realism." In *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre*, edited by Kimberly Harrison and Richard Fantina, 15–28. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006.

O'Farrell, Mary Ann. "Blindness Envy: Victorians in the Parlors of the Blind." *PMLA* 127, no. 3 (2012): 512–25.

Oliphant, Margaret. "Sensation Novels." *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 91 (1862): 564–84.

Peters, Catherine. "Introduction." *In Poor Miss Finch, vii–xxiii*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Picciotto, Joanna. *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010.

"Poor Miss Finch." *The Spectator* 45 (March 2, 1872): 275–76.

Price, Margaret. *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Reilly, Esther. "'Half Man, Half Chair': Disability and the Posthuman Technological Imaginaries of Miserrimus Dexter's Sensational Body in Wilkie Collins' *The Law and the Lady* (1875)." *Victoriographies* 12, no. 3 (2022): 307–25.

Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Seigworth, Gregory J., and Melissa Gregg. "An Inventory of Shimmers." In *The Affect Theory Reader*, edited by Gregg and Seigworth, 1–25. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Smith, Mark. *Sensory History*. New York: Berg, 2007.

Sparks, Tabitha. "Surgical Injury and Narrative Cure in Wilkie Collins's *Poor Miss Finch* and *Heart and Science*." *Journal of Narrative Theory* 32, no. 1 (2002): 1–31.

Tilley, Heather. "Embodying Blindness in the Victorian Novel: Frances Browne's *My Share of the World* and Wilkie Collins's *Poor Miss Finch*." In *Blindness and Writing: From Wordsworth to Gissing, 182–207*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Williams, Helen. "Much Fact and Little Imagination: Female Authorship, Authority, and Medicine in Wilkie Collins's *Poor Miss Finch*." *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 9, no. 2 (2013): 1–25.

Wynn, Deborah. "Critical Responses to Sensation." In *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, edited by Pamela K. Gilbert, 389–400. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150326100308 Published online by Cambridge University Press