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“TOO ABSURDLY REPULSIVE”:
GENERIC INDETERMINACY AND THE FAILURE
OF *THE FALLEN LEAVES*

ANNE-MARIE BELLER

The Fallen Leaves (1879) is viewed by the majority of Collins scholars as aesthetically inferior to his other works, and is considered expressively to summarise the deterioration of the later novels. A. C. Swinburne summed up its contemporary lack of success, in both critical and commercial terms, when he described it as “ludicrously loathsome” (Page 1974, 27) and “too absurdly repulsive for comment or endurance” (Winniffrith 1996, 140), and in the *Critical Heritage* (1974) Norman Page appears to endorse this opinion, claiming that “by general consent then and now” *The Fallen Leaves* is “a dismal failure” (Page 1974, 2).

The aim of this essay is to examine the reasons for the almost universal disparagement and neglect of Collins’s 1879 novel, and to consider the implications of Swinburne’s choice of the epithets “ludicrous” and “absurd”. I want to suggest that these terms are prompted by the structural and formal elements of *The Fallen Leaves*, rather than simply its thematic content, and to focus particularly on Collins’s flouting of accepted notions of generic classifications. Jenny Bourne Taylor has argued of Collins’s later work that it

continually shifts between genres though on the whole the novels are clearly recognizable within definite categories, as purpose novels, high melodrama, domestic realism. They adapt a shared stock of conventions from the earlier sensation fiction, yet it is impossible to draw precise generic boundaries around them. (Taylor 1988, 211)

While agreeing broadly with this statement, I would argue that *The Fallen Leaves* constitutes an exception, in that it is not clearly recognisable within one definite category, and that its extreme generic indeterminacy is a key factor in the difficulty that readers and critics alike have experienced in approaching this novel. Before considering the specific problems raised by *The Fallen Leaves*, I want to offer a brief context for my discussion by highlighting some of the contradictions inherent in Victorian (and later) negotiations of genre.

In some senses, the Victorians’ relationship to genre was characterised by contradiction and paradox. On the one hand, the entire concept of genre was at a critical juncture: traditional Aristotelian and neo-classicist ideas about genre had been challenged and undermined by the Romantics, so that, in the nineteenth century the stability and hierarchical nature of the established literary categories became questionable for the first time. In addition, the novel’s appearance as a distinct literary type in the eighteenth century posed other problems. Not only did the novel resist traditional categories by refusing to conform to their criterion, but the nature of its form undermined the very concept of “literariness” upon which theories of genre were based.

On the other hand, however, Victorian culture was characterised by a zeal for taxonomy, by a drive toward classification in all areas of the social and natural world. If species, races, classes, and the disciplines of science, anthropology, and the law were subject to this movement toward codification, then so too was the area of literature. Thus, the Victorians were arguably faced with a conflict between their innate desire for classification and the specific problems attaching to questions of genre.

The often arbitrary distinction between “sensational” and “realistic”, which held sway in the nineteenth century, has remained largely unquestioned until relatively recent times. Similarly, Victorian sub-categories of fiction have influenced modern scholars in their perception of various “minor” writers and the genres in which they worked. In 1870, *Temple Bar* ran a series of articles on contemporary fiction in which the critic and future Poet Laureate, Alfred Austin, discussed the major trends in novel writing. He separated contemporary fiction into three categories or schools: “fast”, “sensational”, and “simple”. Austin’s definition of the last category, which he saw as deriving from Samuel Richardson, accords with that of the “sentimental novel” and is represented by writers such as Charlotte Yonge and Florence Marryat. Collins, Braddon, and Wood head the “sensation” school and,

for Austin at least, the “fast” school is typified by the novels of female writers like Ouida (Austin 1870).¹

Given that these three categories purport to contain the sum of contemporary fiction, the question arises as to where Austin accommodates the novels of such writers as Thackeray, Trollope, or Gaskell. The implicit suggestion is that writers working within the framework of social realism or the “novel of character” somehow transcend genre. By omitting “realism” as a category Austin invests it with a “natural” status, a given, against which other forms must define themselves in negative opposition. This naturalisation of genre, and the notion that genuine artists are above generic conventions, remains current as demonstrated by the modern label “genre fiction”, typically applied to popular or “lower” forms, often mass-produced and formulaic, and which implies that superior authors work outside genre. A recent critic, neatly illustrating these assumptions, has made the comment that: “[Dickens] is of far too great a stature to be bounded by genres” (Punter 1996, 188).

Austin’s articles also highlight the subjective and fluid nature of genre, in that many of the authors detailed above are perceived to belong in different categories by various critics. Rhoda Broughton, for example, is often associated with sensation fiction and was also identified by Margaret Oliphant, on the basis of her candid depictions of female passion, as decidedly “fast”. Sally Mitchell’s article “Sentiment and Suffering” (1977), however, locates Broughton as a writer of the sentimental novel.² In the same way, Ouida is alternately seen as “fast”, “sensational”, and “sentimental”, just as all three categories can be, and are, applied to Florence Marryat. All this would suggest not only a confusion on the part of mid-Victorian reviewers as to the agreed criteria for genre allocation, but also a continued sense among modern critics of the inadequacy of traditional concepts of genre.

To return to Collins, it is reasonable to say that he showed a marked disregard for the authoritarian aspects of genre throughout his career, repeatedly playing with and deliberately subverting the conventions of different genres (such as stage melodrama, gothic, penny fiction, and contemporary newspaper journalism) in novels from *Antonina, or The Fall of Rome* (1850) onwards. It might also be argued that Collins’s critical reception has suffered because of this disrespectful attitude towards generic rules, and through early critics’ inability to comprehend Collins’s unorthodox approach to genre. Philip O’Neill has employed the useful term “critical straitjacketing”, arguing that the determination to view *The Moonstone* (1868) as the prototypical detective novel “misses much of the substance of the novel as a whole” (O’Neill 1988, 3).

Without doubt this tendency toward generic indeterminacy increased in the latter stages of Collins’s career, which arguably relates to the negative critical opinion of the later work. Robert Ashley, for example, noted in his 1952 biography that “[d]uring [the 1870s and 80s] Collins seems to have been unable to make up his mind just what kind of novelist he wanted to be, sensationalist, or social critic, romanticist or realist, with the result that his fiction follows no consistent line of development” (Ashley 1952, 113). Ashley sees this “indecisiveness” as occurring mainly from book to book, yet in many of the later novels the movement between different genres that he identifies is present in the same work. In *The Fallen Leaves* Collins’s hybridisation of genre is at its most extreme, and results in an apparent disunity, which I believe accounts to a considerable degree for the extensive judgments of aesthetic failure.

Recent critics have drawn attention to the fact that, from the beginning of his career, Collins was interested in a wide range of different literary types. Lillian Nayder, for example, discusses his “early experimentation with various genres” and points out that “Collins produced melodramas, short stories, travel narratives, and journalism”, as well as a novella and a memoir (Nayder 1997, 13, 15). Though he decided to focus on novel writing, this initial experimentation with a variety of literary forms continued to inform Collins’s fiction, and he repeatedly subverted the conventions of a host of genres within his novels, producing new directions and innovations, with the result that his oeuvre as a whole defies easy classification in traditional generic terms. Nayder has also suggested that a tension existed between Collins’s desire to be seen as a serious author and his conflicting desire to explore subjects and themes that were associated with “lower” forms, such as the penny dreadfuls, female melodrama, and the gothic. This conflict, she argues, was evident early in Collins’s career and affected his working relationship with Dickens:

Hoping to succeed as a middle-class professional yet troubled by his perception of working-class injuries, gender inequities, and imperial wrongdoing, Collins not only complies with but works against Dickens from nearly the start of their collaborations. (Nayder 2002, 8)

Tamar Heller is another scholar who has examined Collins’s ambiguous position in the Victorian literary marketplace. Heller’s study of the influence of Radcliffean gothic in Collins’s work illustrates the way in which his interest in the themes of female subordination, victimisation, and rebellion led to his appropriation of genres perceived as feminine, and consequently his marginalisation in a literary

arena that was witnessing the professionalisation, and therefore masculinisation, of novel writing. As Heller also notes, this marginalisation continued into the twentieth century, “a period of aggressive canonisation” (Heller 1992, 5), largely because “Collins’ association with ‘subliterary’ genres caused him to be considered a minor writer not worthy of serious critical study” (ibid., 5). Both Nayder and Heller question the ideological basis of aesthetic judgments, pointing out the “shifting beliefs in what constitutes literary value” (ibid., 6), and suggesting the “need to reexamine our ideas of literary value and to broaden our conceptions of a novel’s worth” (Nayder 1997, 139). Nevertheless, the principal focus of both studies remains on the celebrated novels of the 1860s, with neither critic engaging with Collins’s later neglected fiction in any real depth, and Heller unconsciously replicates earlier judgments when she refers to “the aesthetic awkwardness of a novel like *The Fallen Leaves*” (Heller 1992, 166).

In one of the rare modern discussions of the work, Jenny Bourne Taylor has pointed out that *The Fallen Leaves* is “Collins’s most politically explicit novel” (Taylor 1988, 232), and it may be argued that this overt political content is connected to the spectacular lack of success in popular and critical terms, though not in any straightforward way. It is not merely the obtrusive polemical style of portions of the novel which is responsible for its failure but, more subtly, the fact that Collins’s political views had direct implications on his ideas about literature and the content of his fiction. The enthusiastic democracy that floods the pages of *The Fallen Leaves*, signalled most clearly by the hero’s Christian Socialist beliefs, was also evident in Collins’s deliberate embracing of the widening reading public, a stance that was not widely shared by the literary elite in the mid to late Victorian period. Indeed, as Peter McDonald has recently shown, many influential figures of the late nineteenth-century literary scene viewed the enlarged reading public – produced by both the electoral reforms and the post 1870 Education acts – as a pernicious threat to literary standards (McDonald 1997, 6-7). Writing of the attitudes of a growing literary and critical elite, McDonald claims that “far from being intrinsic [...] the value of literary forms was [...] dependent on the limited size and specific gender of their readership” (ibid., 6). Collins, as a writer whose greatest successes were inextricably connected with the popular and female-associated genre of sensation fiction, represented the antithesis of such views. His belief in the desirability of a democratised and ever-widening readership, first articulated in the 1858 essay “The Unknown Public” (Collins 1858), continued to inform his ideology, leading increasingly to a stance, by the end of his career, which was decidedly at odds with that of the literary elite. Inevitably, this endorsement of the popular impacted on the writer’s critical reception. Collins’s optimistic statement that *The Fallen Leaves* would achieve its due recognition from “the great audience of the English people” (Collins 1887, iii) is echoed in a letter dated the 22 June 1880. He writes:

The Second Series [of *The Fallen Leaves*] will be written [...] when our English system of publication sanctions the issue of the first cheap Edition which really appeals to the people. I know “the General reader”, by experience, as my best friend and ally when I have certain cliques and classes in this country arrayed against me. (Baker and Clarke 1999, 429)

Yet Collins’s reliance on the popular vote as a reliable indication of his novel’s worth was a view that was becoming distinctly outmoded, with many commentators believing the obverse to be in fact true. As one reviewer phrased it: “books and poems are not to be esteemed, like loaves of bread or pots of ale, by the number of their purchasers; [...] popularity [...] is the most fallible of tests; [...] literature exists of itself and for itself” (Anon. 1892, 265).

Collins believed that the failure of *The Fallen Leaves* to secure widespread popularity upon first issue was largely explained by the prudish, middle-class distaste for his choice of subject matter. In the preface to his following novel, *Jezebel’s Daughter* (1880), Collins complained with reference to *The Fallen Leaves* that

there are certain important social topics which are held to be forbidden to the English novelist (no matter how seriously and how delicately he may treat them), by a narrow minded minority of readers, and by the critics who flatter their prejudices. (Collins 1887, iii)

He goes on to acknowledge the similar complaints levelled against *Basil*, *Armada* (1866) and *The New Magdalen* (1873). Yet, what Collins fails to consider is that, despite objections about the perceived immorality of these works, all of them achieved some measure of critical approval and significant popularity in terms of sales. Dickens greatly admired *Basil*, while, as S. M. Ellis claims, *The New Magdalen* “was a favourite tale of Matthew Arnold’s, though he as a rule was not addicted to the reading of sensational fiction” (Ellis 1951, 47). Thus, while Collins is undoubtedly correct in citing distaste for the content of *The Fallen Leaves* as one element in its celebrated lack of success, it cannot wholly account for the continued neglect and critical disdain.

Comparisons with *The New Magdalen* are illuminating because, thematically, *The Fallen Leaves* closely resembles Collins’s earlier novel about a reformed prostitute, with both works positing the

fallen woman as victim and attacking social hypocrisy through the framework of Christian Socialism. Yet despite the common concern with identity, perceptions of innocence and purity, and the paradox underlying social respectability, and Collins's notion of true morality, the two novels are in fact very different. A significant departure in *The Fallen Leaves* is the shift in focus from female identity to male. In common with most of Collins's earlier novels, and indeed sensation fiction more generally, the central character of *The New Magdalen* is its heroine, Mercy Merrick. Jenny Bourne Taylor justifiably states that "the moral centre of the story is the Christian Socialist priest, Julian Gray" (Taylor 1988, 218), but it is Mercy's story, her quest for identity and acceptance with which Collins is primarily concerned. By contrast, in *The Fallen Leaves* it is the hero, Amelius Goldenheart, whose emotional and moral journey provides the trajectory of the novel. Several separate narratives converge and are resolved through the figure of Goldenheart who operates, as his name indicates, on an almost mythical level throughout.

Temporarily exiled from the Eden, which the novel casts in general terms as America, and specifically as the Christian Socialist Community at Tadmoor, Amelius emerges as a Christ-like figure, drawing to himself a collection of troubled people, the "fallen leaves" of the title. The Christ motif is emphasised throughout the novel, notably in Amelius's evangelical preaching at the "fatal lecture" and in his redemption of the Mary Magdalen figure, Simple Sally. Collins sets up an opposition between the prostitute Sally and the cold Madonna, Regina. Yet, perhaps the most interesting woman with whom Amelius becomes involved is Mrs Farnaby, in whom the roles of suffering Madonna and fallen Magdalen are combined. The different stories that each of these women represent are tenuously held together by Amelius until the end, when all three women are found to be related to one another. The mythical quality embodied by the idealistic figure of Amelius is extended to Collins's treatment of Simple Sally. Here again is evidence of the difference between *The New Magdalen* and *The Fallen Leaves*, for although the ideological perspective in both novels casts the prostitute firmly in the role of victim, Sally lacks the independence, resourcefulness, and intelligence of her predecessor Mercy. On first meeting Sally, Amelius is struck by the girl's fragility and innocence:

His heart ached as he looked at her, she was so poor and so young. The lost creature had [...] barely passed the boundary between childhood and girlhood. [...] Her eyes of the purest and loveliest blue rested on Amelius with a vacantly patient look, like the eyes of a suffering child. (Collins 1879, 185)

What are most apparent in the scenes describing Sally and the sordid environs she inhabits are the apparently unconscious contradictions of Collins's approach. The writing is characterised by both a brutal realism and an implausible sentimentality, which sit oddly together and are, in some ways, reminiscent of early Dickens novels such as *Oliver Twist* (1837-9). Collins vividly describes a London that would have been shocking and alien to the majority of his readers, and he does so with a persuasive knowledge and compassion that is compelling. The effect is intensified by being filtered through the youthful idealism of Amelius, to whom such unfamiliar scenes are tantamount to a vision of hell:

On the floor of a kitchen, men, women, and children lay all huddled together in closely packed rows. Ghastly faces rose terrified out of the seething obscurity when the light of the lantern fell on them. The stench drove Amelius back, sickened and shuddering (Collins 1879, 190).

The realism evinced here and in comparable scenes is, however, undermined by a persistent sentimentality in the characterisation of Sally and the other prostitutes, of whom Collins writes: "All that is most unselfish, all that is most divinely compassionate and self-sacrificing in a woman's nature, was as beautiful and as undefiled as ever in these women" (ibid., 187). The insistent idealisation of the street women, whom Collins presents as wholly untouched by the corruption and misery surrounding them, creates a romantic note which, paradoxically, weakens his argument against the injustice suffered by this underclass. Sally's relatively untroubled transformation from half-starved, abused street urchin to ideal Victorian lady is similarly unconvincing, jarring with the implicit premise of the novel regarding the inexorable and inescapable plight of the London poor.

Such contradictions stem largely from Collins's apparent inability (or unwillingness) to locate *The Fallen Leaves* within a specific genre of fiction. The narrative moves between realism and romanticism, between social critique and high melodrama, in a way that often appears disjointed. It is interesting to view the various women who hold claim to Amelius's attention as symbolic of the different genres with which the novel flirts. Just as Collins the author cannot decide ultimately upon one generic mode for *The Fallen Leaves*, so too does his main character oscillate indecisively between the various women in his life and what they represent.

The genre of sensation fiction, and to a lesser extent the gothic, are personified by Mrs Farnaby, who draws Amelius into her tragic story and persuades him to search for her lost daughter. In Emma

Farnaby, Collins revisits many of the typical sensation tropes from his fiction of the sixties, including seduction, illegitimacy, the “stolen” child, and a melodramatic death from strychnine poisoning. The other central modes in the novel are the conventional love story, represented by Regina, and the propaganda or social reform novel embodied by the prostitute Simple Sally.³ Chiefly divided between these different literary genres, Amelius is also drawn briefly into other forms by minor characters, such as the servant, Phoebe, from whose overly-dramatic and excessive style Amelius anxiously retreats. “‘She shall rue the day’, cried Phoebe, relapsing into melodrama again [...] ‘Come! Come!’ said Amelius, sharply, ‘You mustn’t speak in that way!’” (ibid., 144). Her constant declamations in the style of a Mrs Siddons, her victimisation and deception by the would-be-villainous Jervy, and her lower-class status all serve to align Phoebe with Victorian stage melodrama.

As Amelius becomes more involved with Regina he rejects both “sensation” and “melodrama”, to the disapproval of Mrs Farnaby, who tells him that “Keeping company with Regina has made you a milksop already” (ibid., 146). Constant references are made to Regina’s placidity and, above all, her conventionality. These are linked overtly, by the narrator, to her lack of depth and inability to feel passion. When Amelius suggests that they should defy convention and marry out of hand, Regina is appalled: “Without my uncle to give me away! [...] Without my Aunt! With no bridesmaids, and no friends, and no wedding breakfast! Oh Amelius, what can you be thinking of?” (ibid., 133). At a later point, Amelius beseeches Regina: “Oh, my dear girl, do have some *feeling* for me! Do for once have a will of your own’ (ibid., 216, italics added).

Ultimately, Amelius resists the conventional love story that Regina embodies, and concurs with the narrator in condemning both her coldness and conventional restraint. In effect, Regina is criticised for not being a sensation heroine. She loses Amelius because she is unable to feel deeply or expressively enough, in contrast to the 1860s sensation heroine who was continually castigated for feeling too much and too vividly (see, for example, Oliphant 1867). Regina, in fact, has more in common with the heroine of domestic fiction: “You are so nice, dear [...] when you are not violent and unreasonable. It is such a pity you were brought up in America. Won’t you stay to lunch?” (Collins 1879, 217). Regina represents the antithesis of characters such as Lydia Gwilt and Magdalen Vanstone, and her lack of “sensation” causes her finally to lose the prize.

Metaphorically, Amelius’s futile attempts to resist being drawn into the stories of Mrs Farnaby and Simple Sally echo Collins’s own failure to shun the lures of sensationalism and the Propaganda novel. Mrs Farnaby’s confidence that Amelius will not fail to help her, despite his misgivings, might be viewed as Collins’s acknowledgement of his own inability as a writer to resist the tendency toward dramatic incident and sensational device. “Do you think I don’t know you better than you know yourself”, Mrs Farnaby tells Amelius (ibid., 147).

Appropriately, the different generic choices symbolised by the various women in the novel are dominantly genres associated with the female. Because the Victorian ideological construction of genre was both classed and gendered, Collins could be seen to be disrupting not only aesthetic categories, but also, by moving between male genres (realism, bildungsroman, the thesis novel) and female genres (sensation, melodrama, gothic, sentimentalism) to be potentially destabilising gender boundaries in an unsettling way. Such ambivalence inevitably affected the critical perception of Collins’s writing, especially during the later years of his career when the boundaries between “high” and “low” were being aggressively asserted. As Heller points out:

Collins’[s] position in this changing Victorian literary marketplace was in many ways a double one, both feminine and masculine. Collins was associated with the “low” and heavily feminine genres of the Gothic and sensation fiction, yet he was an active participant in the process of professionalisation. (Heller 1992, 7)

In *The Fallen Leaves*, Collins’s dilemma is metaphorically played out by Amelius who must choose between respectability, through an alliance with Regina, and the approval of figures representing compliance with social orthodoxy, such as Farnaby, or a career in the margins of society through an alliance with Sally and Mrs Farnaby, who represent feminine excess and emotionality.

Amelius’s ultimate marriage with Sally would suggest Collins’s final choice of genre as the novel of social reform; the rejection of Regina is symbolic of his dissatisfaction with the conventional romance and the restrictions imposed by it. However, Collins’s desire to produce something more than a simple love story, and his consequent experimentation with one generic form after another finally leads to a lack of coherence and unity that, in terms of dominant theories of fiction, seriously flaws the novel.

Modern genre theory has moved away from the more prescriptive and static formulations of genre, recognizing the evolutionary and morphological aspects of generic development. Some theorists have rejected the notion of genre entirely, seeing generic classification as counter-productive to artistic

creation, and misrepresentative of the way in which true works of art tend to violate such rules.⁴ Jacques Derrida takes this anti-generic stance, interpreting the “law” of genre as a demarcation and thus, the imposition of a limit. Genres are implicitly separate from one another, since the definition of a generic mode depends on its difference from other modes. Therefore, the “law” dictates that a genre possesses its own unity and should not be mixed with other genres. However, as Derrida suggests, that which defines a genre is actually outside of, and thus absent from, the genre, and yet at the same time present, because properties within the genre are “marked” by it (Derrida 1992, 230). The “law of genre” is therefore one of impurity and “genre always potentially exceeds the boundaries that bring it into being” (ibid., 221).

Derrida claims that it is impossible *not* to mix genres since, by their very nature, genres inevitably cross boundaries: “Every text *participates* in one or several genres, there is no genreless text, there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging” (ibid., 230, italics in original). Victorian critics, of course, were uncomfortable with this wilful confusion of categories and, indeed, many modern scholars would subscribe to the view that there must be a limit, an extent to which genres may be mixed within the same work before they lose coherency. Thus, in aesthetic terms, *The Fallen Leaves* might be viewed by many as generic hybridity taken to an absurd extreme, which consequently fails to emerge as a unified whole.

However, developments in twentieth-century literary theory, such as deconstruction and post-structuralism, have inevitably meant that traditional “organicist” theories of fiction have been challenged. Terry Eagleton has argued that the dogmatic presumption of critics “that literary works form organic wholes” is an “arbitrary prejudice”. He writes:

It is true that this prejudice runs so deep in modern critics that it is difficult to see it as just that – a doctrinal predilection, which is no less arguable and contentious than any other. There is absolutely no need to suppose that works of literature either do or should constitute harmonious wholes, and many suggestive frictions and collisions of meaning must be blandly “processed” by literary criticism to induce them to do so. (Eagleton 2001, 70)

Thus, it may be possible to view the incoherency of *The Fallen Leaves*, not as a failure of organic unity, but rather as a challenging example of form successfully dramatising the contradictions and ambiguities that Collins’s novel seeks to articulate.

An important section of the novel is “the fatal lecture”, where Amelius gives a public talk about his unusual life and his ideology, much to the anger of Mr Farnaby and his sense of respectability. Taylor identifies this episode as the chief vehicle for the expounding of Amelius’s / Collins’s socio-political views, but she also notes that a vital function of the lecture lies in its provision of a setting where the various classes can be brought together and, at the level of plot, enable Mr Farnaby to be recognised. As Taylor suggests: “It loosens the fixed separatedness of the different classes of London” (Taylor 1988, 235). It is possible to extend this observation and suggest a parallel between the way in which the “fatal lecture” operates and the function of Collins’s novel itself. For, just like the lecture, nineteenth-century popular fiction also provided a shared space in which different classes came together, often provoking a response of hostility or resistance. Amelius’s “fatal lecture” might be seen as the central metaphor of the novel, echoing not only the controversial breaking down of class boundaries that popular novels were accused of fostering, but also Collins’s blending of disparate styles and literary methods which culminates, like the “fatal lecture”, in a disastrous critical reception. The ridicule that Amelius endures as a result is shared by Collins, through such judgments as Swinburne’s “absurd” and “ludicrous”. In the same way that Amelius is unable to unite people with his idealistic Christian Socialism, so too does his author, in the opinion of the Victorian literary establishment, fail to derive coherence or structure from his experimental approach to genre.

Notes

¹ Austin does not name authors explicitly in his essays, but his descriptions of the novels he cites point to the identifications I have made. Eileen Bigland notes that Ouida and Austin met at Lord Lytton’s country house, and that they argued tremendously. See Bigland 1951, 190.

² Mitchell also identifies Ouida, Caroline Norton, and Ellen Wood as writers of the sentimental novel, all of whom have also been considered sensation authors.

³ The bildungsroman is another literary type on which *The Fallen Leaves* draws, chiefly apparent in the development of Amelius, his journey towards maturity, and in the relationship with Rufus, his older mentor.

⁴ See, for example, Croce 2000, 25-8.

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