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Representations of physical as well as of mental deviance in popular Victorian novels shed an intriguing light on widespread, repeatedly discussed nineteenth-century conceptualisations of race and class and also on the supposed marginality of the pseudo-scientific preoccupation with physical, mental, and moral "abnormalities." Influenced by "pseudo-sciences" such as phrenology, racial theories, and also by nineteenth-century ethnocentrism, the reading of the "other" – foreign, criminal, lower- and upper-class – body becomes a popular spectacle that takes up considerable space in Victorian fiction. Taking a close look at the bodies of both the villains and the heroes – and in particular the anti-heroes – in Wilkie Collins' fiction, I shall map the ways in which popular deployments of marginal sciences appear to render moral capacities traceable on fictional bodies. Situating the somatic indicators of villainy in Collins' novels within Victorian discourses on physiognomy, I shall also draw on examples of "scientifically" justified characterisations from diverse other Victorian novels – specifically from Charlotte Brontë's works – taking a close look at their ambiguous uses of phrenology.

Before analysing literary representations of popular science in detail, I shall briefly take a look at the problematics of discussing the marginality of these "scientific" theories and methods. Undoubtedly, many of them are pseudo-sciences, invested with a sense of the occult as well as meshed up with the exploitative intrigues of quacks and also the agenda of racial ideologies of progress and imperialism. In particular telepathy – or mesmerism as it was most frequently called before F.W.H. Myers introduced the term telepathy, alongside telesthesia, at a meeting of the Society for Psychical Research, founded in 1882 –

has traditionally been located at the fringes of society. The recurrence and perspicacity of the pseudo-sciences in fiction, however, indicate a certain centrality or at the very least a significant popularity in Victorian culture. In Mesmerised: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain, Alison Winter argues that definitions of science were malleable in the nineteenth century, thereby retrieving the so-called pseudo-sciences from an "anachronistic and question-begging" historiography (4) that places them at the fringes of society. Analysing the Victorian racial doctrines that were based on comparative anatomy, Robert Young writes in his perceptive study of Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race that "racial theory was in fact always fundamentally populist in presentation and tone" (92). It is racialism's status as both populist and popular in Victorian culture that pinpoints the ambiguous question of its centrality or marginality. What I intend to dissect in this essay is the fictional dissemination of the populist conceptualisations of racial theories and phrenology in some of Wilkie Collins' sensation novels in particular as well as in Victorian fiction in general.

The Two Destinies (1876), Wilkie Collins' novel about mesmerism, denounces "those grossly material ideas of modern growth, which associate the presence of spiritual beings with clumsy conjuring tricks and monkey-antics performed on tables and chairs" (12). Instead, the story recuperates the mystic cosmology of Emanuel Swedenborg, which is called a "nobler superstition" (12), and focuses in particular on the conception of the mystical predestination of spiritual marriages. Thus forgoing involvement in the fashionable pseudo-scientific discourse of the time, the novel poises romantic love and a form of love-metaphysic both against fashionable medical discourses on neurasthenia and insanity and against popular crazes for the occult. The spiritual link of the novel's hero and heroine, who have been separated since early youth, is sarcastically shown to be diagnosed as a delusion caused by a disease of the nerves or the brain. The hero's infatuation with supernatural experiences, his visionary trances, and his communications with "phantoms" are perceived as a transgression of normality, which seems not only connected to, but caused by, prolonged depression. His neurasthenic symptoms

seem to invite an identification of romantic infatuation and nostalgia with nervous depression and brain disease. A renowned physician diagnoses his mind as "unhinged" and his nervous system as "seriously deranged" (153), establishing a causal connection between romantic love and disturbed nerves: "It is in his temperament to take the romantic view of love. […] The effect is plain – his nerves have broken down; and his brain is necessarily affected by whatever affects his nerves" (153). Threatened with medical surveillance and even restraint, the hero is forced to escape "like a criminal escaping from prison" (156). Collins' fascination with constructions of "normality" engenders a recuperation of a secular spirituality of romance and lovesickness that provides insight into prevailing medical discourses and health-crazes. His diatribe against fashionable ideals of the body and definitions of sanity is informed by an assertion of love – which is frequently a transgressive desire. This spiritual, predestined, love acts as a "counter-influence" to the confining conventionalities of Victorian society and in particular its medical definitions. Wilkie Collins' novel about phrenology, The Legacy of Cain (1889), on the other hand, is more ambiguous, even while it eventually also endorses the "counter-influence" of love. I shall focus on the representations of abnormal bodies in his fiction rather than on his treatment of more occult pseudo-sciences, which Collins skilfully relocates in an older, albeit partly secularised, spirituality.

Both the medicalisation of crime and the moralisation of physical attributes are central to Victorian phrenology. Cerebral physiology as conceived by the eighteenth-century Viennese neuroanatomist Franz Joseph Gall had nothing to do with morals. His theory that the functions of the brain are represented in specific structures posits the brain as a "place of rendezvous of all the single organs, each innate disposition having an organ of its own, which is increased in proportion to the power residing in the disposition" (Blöde 15). The organs are "expressed on the surface of the brain in the form of protuberances" (Blöde 47). The theory of cerebral physiology seems to suggest traceable physical evidence from which the individual character can be ascertained; and this is what Gall's disciples emphasised in the propagation of his discoveries, thereby engendering a moral

concept. In an article on "From Bumps to Morals", T.R. Wright speaks of the "moralisation" of Gall (35). Moral capacity is mapped onto the surface of the skull; to feel or even only to gaze at its contours is a way to "read" social attributes, values, and also the "future" of the studied individual, thus couching occult predictions in pseudo-scientific terminology. It is this notion of a "scientifically" traceable predestination that lends itself greatly for sensation and/or detective novels – casting readers in the role of the detective by enabling them to recognise criminal "types". What is more, as inner organs are made responsible for behaviour, criminals are perceived as victims of their bodies, while this concept also allocates moral capacities to physiognomies. Yet the fictional deployment of scientific theories can also be fruitfully ambiguous, when it treats both the reliability of the method and the dual significance of the moralisation of phrenology critically and creatively.

As theories on cerebral anatomy form a pivotal influence on forensic techniques, the detective novel as a popular genre strategically deploys and fosters interest in the atavistic physiology of a criminal "type". As recent studies such as Julian Symons' Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel or Ronald Thomas' Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science have revealed, the literary detective is conceived as a "mastery diagnostician, an expert capable of reading the symptoms of criminal pathology in the individual body and the social body" (Thomas 3). Current conceptualisations of race and interpretations of physical indicators of morality are moved into the foreground as the forensic techniques invoked in sensation fiction require a new literacy. The criminal type is "read" by Inspector Bucket in Dickens' Bleak House (1852-53), by the police officer in Our Mutual Friend (1864-65), and by the prison governor in Wilkie Collins'The Legacy of Cain (1889). Their reading of criminal bodies evokes a panoptical machine of surveillance, which invests the exposure, imprisonment, and dissection – and sensation plots frequently include literal autopsies as ways of truth-finding – with a sense of horror at the surveillance itself rather than at the revealed crimes.

Both Bleak House and Our Mutual Friend conjure up an entire panorama of

spying, pursuit, and speculation on piled up documents and resurfacing dead bodies. The murderess in Bleak House is a working-class foreigner with a suspicious physiognomy – "with that tigerish expansion of the mouth" (794) among other "indicators" – whose French nationality furthermore links her to the Terror. The novel teems with inadvertent, self-conscious, clumsy, and professional spies, including Inspector Bucket, one of the first stereotypical detective-figures. Mrs Snagsby's "seeing it all" when she suspects Jo of being her husband's son brilliantly parodies the novel's detective plot. In Our Mutual Friend, the obsessed stalker and murderer Headstone is an ominously respectable schoolmaster of working-class origins, whose struggles to conceal what his physiognomy reveals are frighteningly and comically portrayed. There

> was enough of what was animal, and of what was fiery (though smouldering), still visible in him to suggest that if young Bradley Headstone, when a pauper lad, had chanced to be told off for the sea, he would not have been the last man in a ship's crew. (218)

In The Legacy of Cain, as in various of Wilkie Collins' novels, the issues of inherited capacities for murder become central, focusing the intricate use of phrenological "evidence" in Victorian fiction. In a different way, The Moonstone (1868) turns on the ambiguity of the supernatural influence of the stolen Indian diamond, leaving it open whether it is the moonstone's curse that wrecks havoc, or whether it is the effect of superstition. The intriguingly rather mundane villain of the novel, the hypocritically pious philanthropist Godfrey Ablewhite, also exemplifies Collins' repeated exposure of big rosy Englishmen: "He stood over six feet high; he had a beautiful red and white colour; a smooth round face, shaved as bare as your hand; and a head of lovely long flaxen hair" (57). He is introduced through his picture – a strategy that recurs in Victorian novels that build upon mysteries, from Oliver Twist (1837-39) to, as we shall see, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (1848), and, ultimately, to The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890). In The Moonstone, "[Rachel] had a photograph of Mr Godfrey in her bed-room; represented speaking at a public meeting, with all his hair blown out by

the breath of his own eloquence, and his eyes, most lovely, charming the money out of your pockets!" (59). Miss Clack's eulogy on his "magnificent head", "his charming voice and his irresistible smile" (232-33) forms an (on Miss Clack's side) inadvertent parody of the "Christian Hero" (183); and I shall come back to Collins' parodic arraignment of "muscular Christianity."

What distinguishes The Legacy of Cain from Collins' earlier fictional explorations of hereditary murderous propensities is the emphasis on physiognomy and the moral reading it invites. A minister is induced by a murderess sentenced to death to take charge of her infant daughter. He adopts the child, bringing her up together with his own daughter, anxiously concealing the secret of the girls' ages. The Governor of the prison decides not to tell the hypersensitive minister that his wife tried to get rid of the adopted daughter after the birth of her own child; and after the wife's death, Helena and Eunice grow up as sisters. As their identity is never directly revealed to the reader and only discovered by the Governor – the detective-figure of the novel – way into the second half of the book, suspicion keeps shifting as first one girl, then the other, is depicted in a possibly revealing rage. What is significant is that both the question of hereditary taints and of the validity of phrenological evidence is repeatedly addressed: "There would be two forces in a state of conflict in the child's nature as she grew up – inherited evil against inculcated good" (29). Contemplating the possibility of "the growth of that poisonous hereditary taint" (20), the Governor eventually comes to the conclusion that he "absolutely refuse[s] to believe that [destiny] is a fatality with no higher origin than can be found in our accidental obligation to our fathers and mothers" (202). It is, however, notable that his assessment of physiognomies is otherwise always right. His phrenological analysis of the minister's wife early in the novel, in fact, introduces a fruitful complication. Her physiologically mapped viciousness and falseness serve to confuse the search for the inherently "tainted" child:

> Two peculiarities struck me in her personal appearance. I never remembered having seen any other person with such a singularly narrow

> and slanting forehead as this lady presented; and I was impressed, not at all agreeably, by the flashing shifting expression in her eyes. (29-30)

Even though he eventually admits in the postscript that "it was weak" to compare the "mean vices" of the minister's wife with the "diabolical depravity of her daughter" (326), the Governor also recognises Helena instantly to be the biological daughter. As a denunciation of phrenology as an evaluative tool, the redefinition of such moral doctrines is half-hearted at best. Furthermore, his estimation of the obnoxious Miss Chance with her "heavy forehead, her piercing eyes" and her "obstinate nature [revealed] in the lengthy firmness of her chin" (15), who later turns up as the Masseuse or "Medical Rubber" Mrs Tenbruggen, practising mesmerism as well as medical rubbing, proves correct. So does his assessment of the minister's nervous susceptibility, of his wife's meanness, Miss Jillgall's naïve goodness, and of the weak, but inherently good, character of Philip Dunboyne, the young man with whom both sisters fall in love. Eunice's physiognomy moreover does not seem to take after that of her mother either: "The one thing certain was, that not the faintest trace, in feature or expression, of Eunice's mother was to be seen in Eunice herself" (195).

But these are superficial traits; and the ambiguity of the novel's engagement with the validity of moralised phrenology is much more intricate. After taking her father's sleeping draft despite the doctor's explicit prohibition, Eunice induces a "condition which offered its opportunity to the lurking hereditary taint" (221). In one of the minutely evoked descriptions of accidental and deliberate overdoses that abound in Victorian sensation novels, she is haunted by "horrid visions of vengeance and death" (145) – by her dead mother's voice hinting at murder. Eunice speaks of "this horrid transformation of me out of myself" (199). This resurfacing of inherited memories and the emergence of hereditary murderous proclivities climax first in a pivotal nightmare that ends in sleepwalking and then in a truly sensational "transformation." The delineation of the horrifying change in Eunice's facial expression testifies to Collins' mastery of the genre. For crucial moments, the narrator of the scene – Miss Jillgall – can only see Eunice's back;

and the sudden glimpse of her face is superbly shocking: It was "a horrid transformation of her. I saw a fearful creature, with glittering eyes that threatened some unimaginable vengeance. Her lips were drawn back; they showed her clenched teeth. A burning red flush dyed her face. The hair of her head rose, little by little, slowly" (296). Love and nostalgia for her happy days with Philip, before Helena seduced him, constitute an "all-powerful counter-influence" (221), as it is put in the book, which thus ends with a triumph of love. Philip, whose physiognomy *and* behaviour define him as a wretchedly weak character, is left to the good influence of the woman who has defeated inherited rage with an indulgence in nostalgic love.

What is significant is that in Victorian fiction current theories of physiology are conceived as evaluative tools that focus on moral differentiation, even though their validity may be drawn into question or subject to the writer's own personally preferred redefinition. There is of course a long tradition of the exposure of the impasses and embarrassments of physiologically predicted character in fiction. In Henry Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling (1771), for instance, Harley prides himself on his skill in physiognomy in revering the apparent goodness of a seemingly benevolent old gentleman, who turns out to be a scheming rascal (81), drawing the whole concept of physically displayed virtue – a central idea in late eighteenth-century sentimentalism – into question. Harley's parodied tracing of virtue in people's faces is based on eighteenth-century theories of physiognomy. Their focus on the general contours of the face is more evidently superficial perhaps than the similar use of the later developments of phrenology. What is new in Victorian concepts of the physical determination of character is their emphasis on the professional "reading" skills required for the deciphering of indicators that are subtle rather than obvious.

Minute detail, obscure and even elusive signs and symptoms consequently acquire significance in physical characterisation in fiction. Huntingdon's "too voluptuously full" (45) lips in Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall externalise his predilection for debauchery and weak selfishness. The portrait of the "graceful head" (225) of James Helstone in Charlotte

Brontë's Shirley (1849) is similarly read as an indicator of his end as a debauched drunkard. A comparison with his cold, but principled, brother highlights the lack of moral capacity in his soft features. The difference of character is "traced in the different mould of the brow and mouth:" Although James Helstone is "generally considered the best-looking of the two" (224), his brother "is a man of principle: his forehead and his lips are firm" (225). The physiognomies of the debauched and the dispassionate English brothers are juxtaposed with the novel's heroes, two "other" brothers, who are diagnosed as foreign, hybrid, and "other." One of the reasons for Mr Yorke's partiality for Robert Moore

> was that Moore spoke English with a foreign, and French with a perfectly pure accent; and that his dark, thin face, with its fine though rather wasted lines, had a most anti-British and anti-Yorkshire look. (49)

Characterisation in Charlotte Brontë's novels depends on a widespread familiarity with phrenological theories. The readers are persistently encouraged to employ their skills in reading fictional physiognomies. In the unfinished novel Emma, the narrator Mrs Chalfont invites the reader to "scan" her: "Come into my parlour and judge for yourself […]. First, you may scan me, if you please" (98). There are unfortunately only two chapters of what has the promise of a fruitfully ambiguous story about racism and the questionable definition of "repellent" physiognomies. An apparently rich heiress is enrolled in a small boarding school and recommended to the teachers' particular care. Thus installed as a spoilt favourite, Matilda Fitzgibbon is visibly unhappy. There is, moreover, a mysterious ambiguity about the delineated reactions to the curiously faceless wearer of the expensive silks, keeping the reader in ignorance and suspense as to what it is that makes her so "repellent": "Had she been a poor child, Miss Wilcox herself would not have liked her physiognomy at all: rather, indeed, would it have repelled than attracted her" (101). It is only when the girl is exposed as a "pseudo-heiress" (110) that her blackness and foreign physiognomy are revealed. In "the good old times", Miss Wilcox "might just send Miss Matilda out to the plantations in Virginia, sell her for what she is worth" (111). It has, in fact, been pointed out that Matilda is

allocated to the race which suggests her liability to enslavement "only at the moment in the novel at which she loses her social standing, thus externalising the figurative role of race relations in the novel. Much has of course been made of Bertha Mason's ambiguous origins in Jane Eyre (1847) – is she black, of mixed origins, or an embodiment of a colonial project tainted by the madness of a society profiting from slavery? Emma, however, seems to promise a rewriting of racially inflected stereotypes. Not only is Matilda an outcast-figure very much like Jane Eyre or Lucy Snowe in Villette (1853), but the fragment also ends with Mr Ellin, who has by the way, "something of the amateur detective in him" (110), taking pity on and presumably also care of the girl, who has just collapsed in a fit reminiscent of Jane Eyre's ordeal in the red-room.

In The Professor, an early version of Villette, knowledge of phrenological claims is similarly taken for granted. The narrator, William Crimsworth, English teacher to foreign students, reveals his opinion of his pupils by dwelling on sketches of their physiognomy. The miscellaneous assortment includes French, English, Belgians, Austrians, Prussians, and hybrids. The first "picture" is "a full length" of "a half-breed between German and Russian" with a "very low forehead, very diminutive and vindictive eyes, somewhat Tartar features, rather flat nose, rather high cheek-bones, yet the ensemble not positively ugly" (127). A "Gorgon-like" Belgian is distinguished by a "sullen ill-temper [on] her forehead, vicious propensities in her eye, envy and panther-like deceit about her mouth," "her large head so broad at the base, so narrow towards the top" (129). The description of a girl of Flemish and Catalan descent eerily echoes Spurzheim's characterisation of Pope Alexander VI in his seminal study of Phrenology: In Connexion with the Study of Physiognomy (1828), while her temperament is – in the codes of a more ancient form of characterisation – described as "fibrous and bilious" (129):

> She had precisely the same shape of skull as Pope Alexander the Sixth; her organs of benevolence, veneration, conscientiousness, adhesiveness, were singularly small, those of self-esteem, firmness, destructiveness,

> combativeness, preposterously large; her head sloped up in the penthouse shape, was contracted about the forehead, and prominent behind. (129)

Rewriting some of the stereotypes as well as the overall plot-line of The Professor, Villette negotiates a more ambiguous and ultimately less racist, though nonetheless racially determined, understanding of "otherness". While the "hybrid" Frances, the girl with whom the professor falls in love, is reassuringly English, Villette subverts mere racial affinity, even while deploying racial stereotypes. It is, expectedly, Frances's cranial capacities that attract the clinical gaze of the professor: "The shape of her head too was different, the superior part more developed, the base considerably less. I felt assured, at first sight, that she was not a Belgian" (51). M. Paul, the French teacher in Villette, appears to embody all that is "other" to the English Protestant imagination – a "small, dark, and spare man" (90), "pungent and austere" (179), irritating and easily irritated, French and Catholic. The critical gaze of the first person narrator cannot turn a blind eye on his distinctive physiognomy: "Nor could I be blind to certain vigorous characteristics of his physiognomy […]: the deep intent keenness of his eye, the power of his forehead – pale, broad and full" (313). The characterisation in the novel is based on a "clinical gaze" (Dames 368), ranging from the description of the low-browed servant Rosine to the "strong hieroglyphics graven as with iron stylet on [the] brow [of the foreign King of Labassecour]" (303). The "other" lover, nervously irritable M. Paul, is juxtaposed with stout and solid Dr John, home version of an ideal lover. This "true young English gentleman" (85) with his "firm and equal stride" (133) seems almost lordly to the precipitate expatriate: "He might be a lord, for anything I knew: nature had made him good enough for a prince, I thought." (84) He is ideally matched with the doll-like Pauline, while the affinity of physiognomy between Lucy and M. Paul transcends other differences:

> Do you see it, mademoiselle, when you look in the glass? Do you observe that your forehead is shaped like mine – that your eyes are cut like mine? Do you hear that you have some of my tones of voice? Do you know that

> you have many of my looks? I perceive all this, and believe that you were born under my star. (532)

The most interesting redeployments of populist conceptualisations of physiognomies play with such ambiguities. Particularly intriguing is the denunciation of stereotyped rosy big Englishmen that accompanies the reaction against the ideologies and aesthetics of "muscular Christianity". As cultural historians have pointed out, in the late nineteenth century, the "manly ideology that the healthy body will foster a healthy mind and a healthy morality seems increasingly wide of the mark" (5). In his controversial novel Man and Wife of 1870, Wilkie Collins takes up the "social question [of] the present rage for muscular exercises on the health and morals of the rising generation of Englishmen" (5). The "model young Briton of the present time" (68) is "a magnificent animal" (61): "His features were as perfectly regular and as perfectly unintelligent as human features can be" (60-61). Yet Collins' redefinition of the hero's body permeates his work. Zack in Collins' early novel Hide and Seek (1854) is both "the perfection of healthy muscular condition" and "the most thoughtless of human beings": "In short, Zack was a manly, handsome fellow, a thorough Saxon, every inch of him; and (physically speaking at least) a credit to the parents and the country that had given him birth" (126-127). When he decides to become an artist, he starts by practising leap-frogs in the studio. In Collins' Armadale (1866), Allan Armadale's naïve stupidity is in stark contrast to the hypersensitivity of intellectual "Midwinter," his secret namesake and double, who is partly black – "a slim, dark, undersized man" (781). The delineation of Allan's "brutish stupidity" (666) and of the way he "trample[s] on his great elephant's feet" (672) is hilarious, although his good-natured friendliness clearly distinguishes him from the strong brutes in Man and Wife. In The Woman in White (1860), Collins' most famous sensation novel, Walter Hartright is sensitive and nervous, a foil to the monstrously big villain Fosco. Janet Oppenheim sees Hartright as an "important fictional figure from [this] transitional period of Victorian manliness" (149). Yet when he returns strengthened from his

experiences abroad, his protectiveness of weak (or weakened) women undermines both the arraignment of muscular heroes and the ideal of strong women such as Marian Halcombe.

Elizabeth Gaskell offers a similar proposition of a hero of equal moral, intellectual, and physical strength in her unfinished last novel,Wives and Daughters (1866). Roger Hamley is "clumsy and heavily built" (40) and a successful naturalist who needs physical advantages for intellectual pursuits in the exploration of Africa. Set within the larger contexts of colonialist appropriation and conceptualisations of race and the relationship between the (social) body and climatic zones, however, the novel invokes the darker implications of the pseudo-science of racism. Roger's body is altered by his exploration of "otherness", negotiating cultural anxieties about racial "infection" and miscegenation: "He is as brown as a berry for one thing; caught a little of the negro tinge, and a beard as fine and sweeping as my bay-mare's tail." (166)

The atavistic physiognomy of the criminal, thought to resemble that of "primitive" man, the physical monstrosity of the villain – Wilkie Collins's monstrously fat Fosco in The Woman in White and monstrously skeletal Dr Benjulia in Heart and Science (1883) spring to mind – recur in fictional representations of nineteenth-century science. Mary E. Bradley Lane's racist "evolutionary" Utopia Mizora (1890) depicts a "wonderful civilisation" (8), populated exclusively by blond women of robust health. Men and "dark" races have been systematically eliminated: "We believe that the highest excellence of moral and mental character is alone attainable by a fair race." (193) In the sensation novel – other than in the evolutionary Utopian blueprint – racial stereotypes are rearranged and redefined, transcending stereotyping. In addition, The Woman in White can also boast of a morally and intellectually admirable ugly woman – admired by the delightfully monstrous villain – and Heart and Science of a half-Italian heroine and her ugly, but good, Italian nurse. The racially ambiguous Ezra Jennings in The Moonstone and Midwinter in Armadale, though stereotypes, are not the villains. Deploying phrenological indicators to mark eccentric and therefore individualised, sympathetic, heroes and

heroines, Victorian novels appropriate scientific and pseudo-scientific conceptualisations to cater for the new literacy in the reading of bodies – at once in tribute to and contributing to their popularity.

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First Response

A good paper: confidently written; informed and informative; not breaking new ground (of course) but certainly developing independent perspectives and points. Clearly of the standard specified by the journal.