



FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA

Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

Traballo de Fin de Grao

**Unraveling the Mystery of *The Moonstone*:
The Victorian Era and its Anxieties**

Autora: Raquel Oliveira Chenlo

Supervisado por: Jorge Sacido Romero

Curso 2023/2024



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Título: Unraveling the Mystery of *The Moonstone*: The Victorian Era and Its Anxieties

Summary:

The Victorian Era has been one of the most important periods in the history of Britain. It changed the country almost radically by speeding up -economic, technological, industrial and, even, socio-cultural progress. The literature of the time reflected these epochal changes. One of the literary works that best represented this was *The Moonstone*, a novel written by Wilkie Collins and published in 1868. This novel is not only a repository of the Victorian values, but also a reflection of the main anxieties of the period. The proposed BA Thesis will consist of two main parts, progressing from a general contextualizing to the particular analysis of Collins' novel: I.1. An introduction to the Victorian Era; I.2. An account of relevant facts of Wilkie Collins' biography; I.3. An overview of the literary context- that pays special attention to the genre of the so-called Sensation Novel and to the reception of *The Moonstone*; II.1. An explanation of the issues of race and degeneration; II.2. An analysis of how femininity, masculinity and sexuality are portrayed in the novel; and II.3. An analysis of how progress and moral insecurities are reflected in the novel.

Santiago de Compostela, 4 de Abril de 2024.

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SRA. PRESIDENTA DA COMISIÓN DO TRABALLO DE FIN DE GRAO

Título: Desentrañando o Misterio de *The Moonstone*: a Era Victoriana e as súas Inquietudes

Resumo: A Era Victoriana foi un dos períodos máis importantes da historia de Gran Bretaña. O país sufriu cambios case radicais debido á aceleración do progreso económico, tecnolóxico, industrial e, incluso, sociocultural. A literatura do momento reflectiu esos cambios de época. Unha das obras literarias que mellor representa estos cambios é *The Moonstone*, unha novela escrita por Wilkie Collins e publicada en 1868. Esta novela non só é un repositorio dos valores Victorianos, senon tamén un reflexo das inquietudes máis relevantes do período. A tese proposta neste traballo estará dividida en dúas partes que avanza dende unha contextualización xeral á análise da novela de Collins: I.1. unha breve introdución á Era Victoriana; I.2. un resumo conciso da biografía de Wilkie Collins; I.3. unha pequena descrición xeral da industria literaria do período, que presta especial atención ao xénero da novela sensacionalista e á recepción de *The Moonstone*; II.1. unha explicación das cuestións de ‘dexeneración’ e ‘raza’ e a súa relación coa novela; II.2. unha breve análise de como a femineidade, a masculinidade e a sexualidade está representada na novela; II.3. unha interpretación de como as nocións de ‘progreso’ e ‘inseguridade moral’ son retratadas no marco da novela.

Palabras chave: Moonstone, Collins, británicos, indios, dexeneración, raza, hibridación, discapacidade, anormal, masculino, feminino, progreso, hipocrisía, mimetismo, colonización, dobre, identidade.

Título: Desentrañando el Misterio de *The Moonstone*: la Era Victoriana y sus Inquietudes

Resumen: La Era Victoriana fue uno de los períodos más importantes de la historia de Gran Bretaña. El país sufrió cambios casi radicales debido a la aceleración del progreso

económico, tecnológico, industrial e, incluso, sociocultural. La literatura del momento reflejó esos cambios de época. Una de las obras literarias que mejor representa estos cambios es *The Moonstone*, una novela escrita por Wilkie Collins y publicada en 1868. Esta novela no solo es un repositorio de valores Victorianos, sino también un reflejo de las inquietudes más relevantes del período. La tesis propuesta en este trabajo estará dividida en dos partes que avanzan desde una contextualización general hasta el análisis de la novela de Collins: I.1. una breve introducción a la Era Victoriana; I.2. un resumen conciso de la biografía de Wilkie Collins; I.3. una pequeña descripción general de la industria literaria del período, que presta especial atención al género de la novela sensacionalista y a la recepción de *The Moonstone*; II.1. una explicación de las cuestiones de ‘degeneración’ y ‘raza’ y su relación con la novela; II.2. un breve análisis de cómo la feminidad, la masculinidad y la sexualidad están representadas en la novela; II.3. una interpretación de cómo las nociones de ‘progreso’ e ‘inseguridad moral’ son retratadas en el marco de la novela.

Palabras clave: Moonstone, Collins, británicos, indios, degeneración, raza, hibridación, discapacidad, anormal, masculino, femenino, progreso, hipocresía, mimetismo, colonización, doble, identidad.

Title: Unraveling the Mystery of *The Moonstone*: the Victorian Era and its Anxieties

Summary: The Victorian Era has been one of the most important periods in the history of Britain. It changed the country almost radically by speeding up -economic, technological, industrial and, even, socio-cultural progress. The literature of the time reflected these epochal changes. One of the literary works that best represented this was *The Moonstone*, a novel written by Wilkie Collins and published in 1868. This novel is not only a repository of the Victorian values, but also a reflection of the main anxieties of the period. The proposed BA Thesis will consist of two main parts, progressing from a general contextualizing to the

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Key words: Moonstone, Collins, British, Indian, degeneration, race, hybridity, disability, abnormal, masculine, feminine, progress, hypocrisy, mimicry, colonisation, double, identity.

Declaración de orixinalidade do traballo:

Eu, Dona Raquel Oliveira Chenlo, con DNI 35642443X e estudante do Grao de Lingua e Literatura Inglesas na Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, declaro que os contidos e as ideas expostas neste Traballo de Fin de Grao titulado “Unraveling the Mystery of *The Moonstone*: the Victorian Era and its Anxieties” son orixinais, non plaxiadas e están debidamente identificadas na lista final de referencias bibliográficas.

En Santiago de Compostela, a 27 de xuño de 2024.

Raquel Oliveira Chenlo

*To my mother, who was a lover and a
fighter. This is my way of thanking her for
everything she did for me. For always
pushing on through.*

*To my boy and my friends, for being my
guardian angels.*

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Introduction

Apart from being regarded as the first detective novel in England, Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) is a portrayal of the main anxieties of the Victorian Era (1837-1901). The growth of the middle-class and the scientific advances, among other factors, brought about the modernisation of Britain. Besides, the success of the colonial project strengthened the feeling of national pride and confidence among Victorians. However, this apparently sunny side of progress had its darker counterpart in—the exploitation of workers in factories and of the colonised across the British Empire. The upper-class wanted to maintain its position of power and avoid mixing with other classes. Thus, the period saw the spread of hegemonic discourses that relied on evolutionary theories and the principles of Darwinian 'natural selection'. These discourses understood physical and mental disabilities as a sign of savagery and primitivism. As a result, part of the population felt the need to be separated from spheres that held no power and showed some deviation. Among this last group, those belonging to the colonised people were, of course, to be counted. Being the most powerful country in the world, Victorians felt potentially superior to other cultures. Everything that was not British or did not follow the strict Victorian moral code was immediately displaced to the margins. Therefore, social norms were based on binary oppositions such as coloniser/colonised, white/black, modern/primitive, etc.

Only a few Victorians acknowledged the ambivalence of those practices. Among them, Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins stood out for denouncing the hypocrisy of the Victorian moral code. Collins, in particular, attacked directly some of his own community values in his novel *The Moonstone: A Romance* (1868). The story follows the disappearance of an Indian diamond during the eighteenth birthday of the female protagonist, Rachel Verinder. The diamond had been a present from an uncle, John

Herncastle, who participated in the British rule of India. By killing the three Brahmin priests that were watching it, John stole the jewel from a sacred figure of a Hindu deity for material purposes only. Even so, the stone carried a curse for whoever managed to steal it and its lineage. Therefore, when John Herncastle decided to give the diamond to his niece, a sequence of evil disasters began to appear at the Verinder household, starting with the disappearance of the gem itself.

The missing stone is just an excuse for Wilkie Collins to expose the Victorian colonial project. The entrance of an alien object in a Victorian country house is a synecdoche of a British entrance in the East, especially, in India. The main purpose is to find both the stone and the thief, but during the process the reader can deconstruct the façade of all the characters as well. This dissertation analyses only some layers of Collins' novel. The aim is to prove that Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* makes a social commentary on the hypocrisy of Victorian morals, arguing that British national pride rested on the exploitation of the land of the Indians and on the conviction that coloniser and colonised mirrors each other. Distributed into three thematic blocks, issues of degeneration, gender and moral decay as articulated in *The Moonstone* will be put under the magnifying glass. The common thread that unifies the approach to these three issues is the motif of the double.

Wilkie Collins lived a double life and he himself was obsessed with this concept. In *The Moonstone* some characters have two identities in themselves or embodied in a doppelgänger. Normally, one identity represents the British side, and the other represents the Indian side. Wilkie Collins attributed his characters this double identity to fulfil his intention of tracing "the influence of character on circumstances" (Preface, xliii) and to demonstrate the hybrid space between coloniser and colonised. Collins uses a Moonstone to illustrate this duality. As the diamond is described as a very shining treasure that

reflects the light, it also projects shadow. Accordingly, the side that reflects light would correspond to the British, enlightened side, whereas the projected would represent the Indian side. Wilkie Collins uses this metaphor to question the way India was seen from the perspective of Victorians. As it is a mere shadow that appears when the diamond is shining, India is seen as the inseparable dark side of the glorious British Empire. Still this orientalist vision is deconstructed in the form of a family scandal to expose the ambiguity of those practices.

The dissertation is divided into two main parts. The first part establishes the theoretical and historical framework for the approach to the novel. To provide an overview of the Victorian period and its literary marketplace, this part is divided into three chapters. In the first one, some events such as the impact of the Industrial Revolution or the development of evolutionary theories are briefly introduced as origin and articulation of the main anxieties of the time. In the second chapter, some biographical facts about Wilkie Collins are provided with the sole purpose of clarifying certain elements of the novel—for instance, the character of Rosanna Spearman. The third chapter is devoted to the sensation novel and to detective fiction in the context of the contemporary literary marketplace. In relation with this, the reception of *The Moonstone* will be briefly explained.

A literary analysis of the novel follows, divided into three chapters concerning three different issues: physical/mental degeneration, sexuality and moral decay. The motif of the double appears in each one, especially in connection with the character of Franklin Blake. In the first chapter, Blake stands for normalcy in contrast with Rosanna's and Lucy's 'physical deformation', but he also suffers a process of degeneration due to his opium consumption and his ambiguous status as a thief. In the second chapter, Collins articulates a subversion of gender roles in characters like Rachel and Franklin. Once

again, Blake's sexuality is also ambiguous, as his friendship with Jennings has homoerotic overtones. Finally, the third chapter studies how the Victorian characters are contrasted with the Indian characters to prove that they mimic the practices they claim to reject.

Essentially, as expressed in the Preface to the first Edition, *The Moonstone* is a "physiological experiment" (Preface, xliii). The story turns around the idea of a conflict between bodies that are individual, but also collective. On the one hand, the Indians work together dynamically to recover what was rightfully theirs. On the other hand, the British work individually despite being presented as a collective body too. Among them, there is an internal struggle to gain the merit of solving the mystery and to hide this scandal from the rest of the society. Yet, Wilkie Collins leaves room for the reader to decide who are the real criminals.

Part I: Theoretical and Historical Framework

1. Historical Overview of the Victorian Period

The nineteenth century, a period of great transformation for Britain, was completely marked by the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901). The fate of a whole country was in her young hands, and she managed successfully to turn it into the largest and most powerful force in the world at a time when the Industrial Revolution was shaping a new society. Along with great technological expansion, the colonial project led by the government also contributed substantially to the accelerated modernisation of Britain. This chain of events made Victoria an icon for nineteenth-century Britain and an important figure in contemporary history.

On the one hand, the British economy was arguably the most prosperous in the world in spite of a period of relative crisis towards the end of the Victorian Era. On the other hand, though the faith in progress was at its strongest, other international competitors would appear at the end of the century (Matthew, 566). Therefore, the population developed a sense of national pride that would spread through the Victorian mind (Field, 21).

Outside Great Britain, other events concerning the government of Queen Victoria were also a motive for the flourishing of national pride. In particular, the colonial project was a complete success also in terms of the Britain's reputation. Specifically, the colonisation of India was a decisive moment in the Victorian period. What began as negotiations between the two countries regarding the spice trade evolved into the colonisation of the Indian territory (Markovitz, 271). The cause for that change had its origin in a conflict that took place in the middle of the century, the so-called Indian Mutiny of 1857 (Matthew, 560). This bloody massacre meant the reshaping of Indian

social structure because the government of the country passed into the direct hands of the British (Matthew, 562). This process was known as the British Raj and it was established by the *Government of India Act* passed on August 2, 1858. Hence, the economic, political and societal system was completely reorganised by the British, who began to implement new programs for the modernization of the territory (Adas, 479). The Indian Mutiny had an impact on both the British and Indian population. From the former's perspective, the success of the colonial project reinforced their national pride (Field, 34-35). Conversely, the hope of the Indians of recovering the traditional Indian social system was seriously undermined and replaced by the acceptance of the Western values. However, the general discontent among the Indian population also meant the emergence of a sense of national pride of their own (Embree et al., 85).

Nevertheless, Britain's power not only depended on the imperial project *per se*, but also on the parallel development of the Industrial Revolution. This transformation had already started in the Georgian Era, but it had been progressing slowly in comparative terms until the Victorian Era, when it reached its peak of splendour (Harvie, 475). Generally, the Industrial Revolution meant the change from an agrarian and handicraft economy to one based on factory production and a capitalist market for commodities (Matthew, 520).

Overall, this technological expansion brought with it the introduction of new materials that helped in the invention of new products and machines. Consequently, the efficiency of industrial manufacturing increased and developed a system of mass production of goods (Matthew, 528-529). Besides, along with the upgrading of science, the period allowed the professionalisation of people in different work spheres (Matthew, 544). This also contributed to the growth of the middle-class, which made up the majority of the British population of the time (Houghton, 5-6). Furthermore, this system enabled

Britain to establish new trade routes and ensured British financial dominance over the rest of the world (Matthew, 559).

In terms of ideology, men became acquainted with the idea that they could shape the world as it fitted them (Matthew, 537). As a result, the Victorian mind became coloured by Liberalism. An inheritance of the Enlightenment, liberal ideology not only considered reason the principal vehicle to understand the human being, but also claimed its emancipation from the community (Houghton, 77). In fact, the working-class became extremely faithful to its values, which were oriented to ensure economic stability for oneself and for the family (Matthew, 543). On that account, their values were closely related to the traditional idea of gender roles. One gender was constantly defined as the contrary to the other and it was determined biologically. Nevertheless, though the working-class represented most of the population, there were other classes that also constituted a step in the social ladder. In particular, the lower class, broadly speaking, which held no power and was confined to marginality. The causes for social exclusion in Victorian society could be varied: race, income, unemployment, or even physical disability. However, the social system was not rigid, and individuals could move up and down the social ladder based on factors like marriage, wealth or social connections (Arata, 16-17).

Reconsidering the liberal ideology, the idea of reason was reinforced by the developments in science. In particular, the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) helped in shaping modern Western society and opened the door to the professionalisation of scientists (Matthew, 522-523). Essentially, what Darwin was trying to suggest was that humans and animals were genetically connected and that only the fittest in each species had survived through the years (Darwin, 120). At first, its reception was negative because it challenged the main religious belief: that is, that life had been

created by God. But, with time, his theory influenced other scientists like Thomas Henry Huxley or Herbert Spencer and met with some enthusiasm among Victorians since

the idea of evolution suggested a way in which traditional ideas about the privileged splendour of human destiny could be salvaged: if man had not been put on top to begin with, it was patent that he had already come a long way up the chain of evolutionary being; and there was no limit to what he might later achieve if he worked hard and kept moving. (Watt, 156)

At the end of the nineteenth century, another evolutionary theory appeared in the scientific stage, the so-called Eugenics developed by Francis Galton. Taking some inspiration from Darwin's idea of 'natural selection', Eugenics postulated that certain races were susceptible to prevail over others, and that intelligence and deviant behaviours could be inherited (Bowler, 308-310).

In general terms, scientific theories penetrated the minds of the Victorians to an extent in which they became quite concerned with the purity of the blood (Spencer, 203). Besides, "the same mode of evolutionary argument also supported the ideology of colonial expansion" explained Ian Watt. "The European nations", went on Watt, "had demonstrated that they were the fittest to survive; and the exportation of their various economic, political and religious institutions was therefore a necessary step towards a higher form of human organisation in the rest of the world" (156).

Eventually, the Victorian faith in progress and conviction about the power of Britain was seriously undermined in the late-Victorian period (Watt, 161). A general mood of disillusionment and anxiety was progressively staining the literature of the nineteenth century, especially, that of the *fin-de-siècle*. Raymond Chapman held that this doubt ravaged the Victorian mind: he talked about a "sense of the past," which "is a recurrent feature of Victorian literature, ranging from a general assertion that things are

not as they used to be in the old days, to attempts to enter deeply into a lost world and recover its treasures” (4). As this “sense of past” subsisted, Victorians were also concerned with the other side of the same coin: the future (Chapman, 7).

Victorians developed a substantial interest in history which was alert to both its positive and negative aspects. They wanted to learn more about it, and one of the ways to achieve this was through literature (Chapman, 26). As the print culture was affordable because of industrialization, Victorians became voracious readers. The historical novel and the sensation novel came to be the favourite genres of the people. This increase in readership also entailed the professionalisation of writers and the proliferation of publishing houses. Authors could make a living just by writing and enjoyed a degree of social prestige (Stevenson, 3). Along with Charles Dickens or Thomas Hardy, Wilkie Collins was one of the most famous authors of the period. He is considered to have been the father of the detective novel and crime fiction in England with his two most famous works, *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868) (Klimaszewski, 67).

2. Wilkie Collins' Biography

Wilkie Collins was born into a family of artists. His father, also called William, was an important painter during the early nineteenth century (Clarke, 10). He got in touch with prestigious artistic and literary circles to which important people such as Wordsworth or Walter Scott belonged (Clarke, 13). In 1821, William fell in love with Harriet Geddes, a girl born and raised in Salisbury, who worked as a governess before their union (Law & Maunder, 2). They got married in Edinburgh in 1822 and, two years later, they had their first child, William ‘Wilkie’ Collins, on January 9th, 1824 (Clarke, 10). ‘Wilkie’ was indeed his second name, but he did not use it until he became a published writer (Peters, 21). According to Catherine Peters,

his birth may have been a difficult one, for he was marked by a permanent deformation of his head with a noticeable bulge on the right side of his forehead. He was a small child, with light hair and rather prominent grey eyes. He was extremely short-sighted, and as an adult always wore glasses. [...] However as an adult he was oddly disproportioned, with a bulging forehead, head too large for his body, short arms and legs. (20)

Although he ended up accepting his body, Wilkie Collins was sensitive to his physical disability.

Four years later, on January 25th, 1828, Harriet would give birth to their second son: Charles Allston Collins. At that time, the entire family lived in the village of Hampstead. But because of William's prestige as a painter, his income allowed him to have two houses and to raise his sons in a well-established environment (Peters, 23). As a father, William wanted them to follow "a strict moral code" (Clarke, 13). Wilkie's relation with him was good, despite his severity. They went on travelling together, and he had observed him draw multiple times. In fact, William Collins was very attached to the sea, and maybe Wilkie took some inspiration from it too when it came to writing *The Moonstone*. Thus, for instance, Rosanna Spearman's friend, Lucy Yolland, lived with her family near the seashore. However, it was Harriet who spent more time taking care of the children and the household (Clarke, 13). Therefore, it is possible that Harriet was Wilkie's closer confidant.

As they were a happy family, and because of William's work, they moved together to Italy in 1836 when Wilkie was twelve, where they stayed for two years (Peters, 37). Once there, Wilkie started to receive Italian lessons and that made him fall in love with the country. Moreover, it was full of British artists, so Wilkie's experience there influenced his interest in literature favourably (Peters, 41). Eventually, they returned to

England on August 15th, 1838 (Peters, 49). This Franco-Italian experience could have awakened a multicultural sensitivity in him, which could have contributed to the creation of the character of Franklin Blake, a man who had received an education abroad.

In 1841, he abandoned school and began working at Edmund Antrobus' tea office in the Strand (Law & Maunder, 2). By this time, Wilkie started to show some interest in literature, especially, he felt a passion for romantic fiction (Law & Maunder, 10). Also, his critical thinking began to develop, and he became acquainted with the major anxieties of the period. As his mind was starting to evolve, so did his sexuality. Wilkie Collins felt attracted to 'fallen women', which were

strong women who privately challenge bourgeois social and sexual boundaries, but resists any movement to allow them full legal equality or access to the public sphere. [...] In his private life, *Wilkie Collins* [emphasis added] steadfastly refuses marriage within his own social class, but ends up in simultaneous marriage-like partnerships with two vulnerable women from the lower classes. (Law & Maunder, 4).

It was his particular taste for women that led him to meet Caroline Graves around 1854. There are not many known facts about her life before meeting the writer, but "she was apparently christened Elizabeth Compton, and was probably born in 1830" (Clarke, 91). She was raised in a poor family and soon started working on a marine store. It is probable that she adopted the name with the intention of falsifying official documents (Peters 192).

Caroline was already married before meeting Wilkie to a clerk named George Graves. She was twenty-one when their first daughter, Elizabeth Harriet, was born on February 3rd, 1851. Almost one year later, George Robert Graves died of tuberculosis, and Caroline became a widow (Clarke, 92). In 1858, Caroline and Harriet moved to 124

Albany Street and lived on their own, Caroline being the taxpayer (Clarke, 98). Wilkie Collins met her this same year. From that point onwards, they started to hang out regularly, and they began to live together towards the end of the same year. (Clarke, 90-91). Although they were not married, they seemed to be as Caroline was not only Wilkie's sexual partner, but also his housekeeper (Peters, 197). It was not until sometime later that Caroline asked Wilkie to marry her. She wanted to ensure her daughter a better future, but that was not possible since Wilkie refused her proposition and she ended up moving out (Clarke, 114). At that point, Wilkie had already been living a double life for a while (Peters, 196)¹. When he was working on his novel *Armadale*, around 1863, he travelled to the Isle of Man to take some inspiration from the north coast. There he met Martha Rudd, when she was nineteen and worked as a servant (Clarke, 111).

Martha had not been a threat to Caroline until 1868, when the former moved to London (Clarke, 113). Wilkie went to live with her in the same year under the name of 'William Dawson'. As a matter of fact, she adopted this name as well (Peters, 297). Towards the end of the year, Martha was already pregnant with her first child by Wilkie Collins, but everything went down when Caroline reappeared in Wilkie's life in 1871 (Clarke 117-129). In any case, Clarke argues that "Caroline was to become simply his housekeeper, [...] and no longer a mistress" (130). Therefore, Wilkie Collins kept living that double life until the day of his death in 1889. In fact, Martha and Wilkie had two more sons in the following years (Clarke 135).

At the time, Wilkie Collins had already become a great author. Because of being born into a family of artists, Wilkie Collins had multiple contacts in artistic circles. He became friends with painters such as Edward Ward, Augustus Egg, and William Frith (Law & Maunder, 21). But it was the literary circle that propelled him towards stardom.

¹Because of this, Wilkie Collins became obsessed with the concept of the 'Doppelgänger' and he used it in novels such as *The Moonstone*, especially in the character of Franklin Blake.

In particular, a major influence in Wilkie's career as a novelist was Charles Dickens. Around the 1850s, Wilkie Collins began to show some interest in the theatre, and he was cast for a play directed by him (Clarke 58). Their relationship was hierarchical since Dickens represented for Wilkie an authoritative figure from whom to learn (Law & Maunder, 26-27). Wilkie Collins' connection with Charles Dickens allowed him to work in the latter's weekly magazine *Household Words* in 1852 (Law & Maunder, 27-31). As a result, their friendship became so close that they travelled together and spent many nights walking while chatting.

Although the years working in Edmund Antrobus's tea office were productive in a literary sense for Wilkie Collins, he became a very celebrated author when his literary production matured. Graham Law and Andrew Maunder explain that "Collins retained the taste for dramatic plots, but his interests focused increasingly on the liminal territory between romance and realism that indeed characterises the sensation fiction in which he makes his name, where fearful and outlandish events take place in modern urban settings of the utmost respectability" (11). During that time, there were diverse ways to publish a book: fascicles, miscellaneous pieces in newspapers or magazines and reprinted books. The literary hegemony was held by the circulating libraries, but the improvements in production and the appearance of copyright changed the literary landscape. Hence, the 'three-decker' became the most common format among publishing houses. (Law & Maunder, 34-36). Wilkie Collins's first novels were published according to this format (Law & Maunder, 38). However, Wilkie Collins' work reached a wide audience when his fiction produced between 1857 and 1868 was serialised in Dickens's *All the Year Round*.

The serialisation of novels made the audience read more, which meant an increase in literacy (Law & Maunder 39-40). For that reason, Wilkie Collins's novels were well-received among the public (Clarke, 101). Nonetheless, Wilkie struggled to manage his

fame and began to consume laudanum to appease the pain (Clarke, 102-103). Besides, he suffered from rheumatic gout², and that was another reason for consuming this substance (Clarke 113). By 1868, he was completely addicted to opium, which made him have some hallucinations in him, especially, when writing during the night. Interestingly, the pain did not let him write *The Moonstone*, and time after its publication, he confessed to Mary Anderson, an actress, that part of the novel was written by other hand (Clarke, 114).

In the words of Graham Law and Andrew Maunder: “Wilkie Collins’s career as an author spans more than four decades, covering all but the opening and closing stages of the reign of Queen Victoria” (183). Apart from the fact that his mother’s death affected him mentally (Clarke, 113), *The Moonstone* is considered his last great novel because the subsequent works were not so well received by the public (Robinson, 277). It helped in “shaping the modern popular genres of mystery and romance” (Law & Maunder, 183), and soon became considered the first detective novel by many scholars (Clarke, 116). However, emergent authors like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle or Rider Haggard took over Wilkie in the fin-de-siècle literary landscape (Law & Maunder, 183). Wilkie Collins tried again with the theatre, but it was an unsuccessful attempt since it was not the most suitable way of portraying the complexities and the multiple points of view offered in the novel.

Because of the rheumatic gout and the opium, he suffered a paralytic stroke and died on September 23rd, 1889, at the age of sixty-five. In his will, Wilkie Collins divided his income in two halves, approximately of \$100,000 each one. The first one was given to his sons and daughters, and the second one to the housekeeper that had once been his lover, Caroline Graves (Law & Maunder, 181).

² Wilkie Collins suffered from rheumatic gout, a disease affecting the joints and muscles. According to Catherine Peters: “He had rheumatic pains in his back and chest, his left knee and ankle, and terrible inflammation in the eyes. The English doctor was called in, and tried one remedy after another. [...] After a month of these desperate measures he was no better. [...] He was now so ill that he had to be carried on the boat.” (46).

In short, Wilkie Collins's life was multilayered. His unconventional love relationships, his close friendship with Charles Dickens and his addiction to opium influenced directly his career as a novelist. Definitely, he is considered the pioneer of the literary genre of mystery, and his legacy continues to be studied today. Wilkie Collins came to be regarded as a very relevant figure of Victorian literature.

3. The Sensation Novel, Detective Fiction, and the Reception of *The Moonstone*

Mid-nineteenth century England was the period in which the Sensation novel reached its peak in the literary market. The term defines a group of novels, mainly published in the decade of 1860s, that reflected the major anxieties of the time: criminality, science, and sexuality among others (Bernstein, 216). "The term [sensation fiction] attempts to define, locate, and contain", Susan David Bernstein writes, "within one genre or class any oppositional tendencies of contemporary culture. The critical discourse on sensation fiction is also a debate about cultural power at a historical moment of expanding literacy" (229).

The most representative characteristic of sensation novels was their effect on the readership because, through their suspense plots, the readers' nerves were stimulated (Palmer, 87). According to Nicholas Daly, this stimulation of the nerves goes hand in hand with what he calls "modernization of the senses" produced by the improvements in technology developed during the century. Through the introduction of melodramatic plots, intrigue, and suspense, the middle-class perspective was covered by new possibilities about reality that were not thought possible and that provoked a sense of unprotection in the readership (Bernstein, 229; Peak, 838).

Scholars agree in locating the historical birth of the Sensation Novel in 1859 with the serialisation of Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* in Charles Dickens's *All the*

Year Round (Sutherland, 243). These two authors—maybe Dickens a bit more— were two of the most influential voices of the Victorian Era, who used their literature as a channel to denounce social injustices (Sanders, 411). Therefore, literature began to be closely associated with law, and those injustices began to be thought of as problems ‘to solve’ instead of problems ‘to punish’ (Sutherland, 243). From this relationship between both disciplines, a new branch addressing these injustices was born from Sensation fiction: the detective fiction. A fact that marked the birth of this new literary subgenre was the establishment and professionalisation of police and detective forces. Writers such as Dickens and Collins became fascinated with them, hence, their narratives entered the slums of London in order to solve the mysteries concerning crime. Accordingly, new character types were created, being the detective the most prolific in figures within the genre of Sensation fiction (Brantlinger, 16-17).

Yet, mysterious plots were not a complete innovation in literature. The previous Gothic novel had already introduced them in its plots. However, the difference between both genres lies in the setting of the stories. In the Gothic tradition, the story was developed in spaces located far from the city centre, but detective and sensational fiction moved the plot—hence the potential threats—to the city (Talairach-Vielmas, “Sensation fiction and the Gothic”). Besides, other movements that drove the development of the sensation novel and the detective fiction were the Newgate novels, historical narratives and, especially, the professionalisation of journalism. Because of its concern with reporting the actuality of London, journalism worked together with the law, and became a very useful tool for novelists. It not only helped in providing information that could be inspiring for fictional plots, but also its writing style and format were of great use in detective fiction (Sanders, 420). For example, in Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone*, the plot

is divided into eleven narratives that copy the style of journalists in reporting the events, but also that are collected in the form of an archive.

The boom of the Sensation Novel happened in the transition from a literary marketplace only restricted to the elite to the mass-manufacturing of literature. Thus, the contribution of journalism and the printing press helped in the popularisation of the Sensation novel. Because of the serial publication of weekly instalments in newspapers and magazines, especially those directed by Charles Dickens, the genre reached a wider and more varied audience (Law, "Sensation Fiction and the Publishing Industry").

Women became the target audience for novelists. Actually, the figure of the voracious female reader was born from the idea of controlling its "rampant" sexual desire and from the massive consumerism of novels by women. However, female readers also came to be seen as the most primitive hypersexualized expression of women (Bernstein, 215). This primitivist discourse meant a throwback in the period because it fed the stratification of society by grouping together those collectives that were considered "degenerated". In the words of Susan Bernstein, the aim was to distinguish "the intellectually inferior and sexually promiscuous 'other' from virtuous, culturally refined Victorians" (228). Yet, as lower classes gained access to literature read by upper classes, the boundaries between both spheres were blended and tastes were mutually replicated. Sensation novels came to be read by ladies in their drawing-rooms, but also by maids in the kitchen (Bernstein, 221-225).

In terms of themes, the sensation novel combines modern elements like science, and those typical from Gothic fiction with the melodramatic plot. Mysteries are fundamental features of Gothic fiction and, as sensation novelists brought them to the city centre, those mysteries came to be mixed with modern, especially scientific, principles. Consequently, both of them entered the Victorian houses.

Focusing on detective fiction, gothic and scientific elements not only were domesticated, but were also fundamental to the resolution of the plot. Further, novelists used their text to denounce the urban decay of London. In particular, this was a frequent strategy in Charles Dickens's fiction (Sanders, 414). As Wilkie Collins had a close relationship with him, he tended to do the same in his novels. Outstandingly, Collins took Dickens's idea of the "divided self" (Sanders, 415) and used it to criticise the dirty side of Victorian morality. As previously stated, Wilkie Collins's work as an actor in the theatre meddled with his love life to an extent in which he was living two lives. His hyper fixation with the double, masks, and the embodiment of characters made the real and fictional line to blur. He portrayed that issue in his novels by creating characters with two opposing identities, both within themselves and in other bodies.

This representation of the double in *The Moonstone* adds an interesting dimension to the conventional pattern of detective novels, which rely on a limited point of view, so the reader can discover the solving of the mystery at the same time as the characters (Jones, 45). Yet, Collins' novels offer multiple points of view, still different between each other. The discovery of the truth keeps being hidden for the reader, but multiple perspectives concede the text a development of subplots and avoids the special focalization—and an emotional attachment by the reader—of a specific character. Because of these innovations in narrative, Wilkie Collins came to be regarded as the father of the sensation novel in Britain, and pioneer in the detective fiction tradition that was already started by Edgar Allan Poe in the United States (Ashley, 60).

Some scholars consider *The Moonstone* his last great work because its "oriental background and its play with the effects of opium on the consciousness contribute an element of the exotic to an otherwise severely disciplined and steadily plotted pursuit of the science of detection" (Sanders, 445). The way Wilkie Collins came to the idea of it is

uncertain for many scholars. Among all the theories, the most agreed one has to do with the author's inspiration taken from a real case named Road Murder: a woman named Constance Kent killed her brother and it took her four years to confess her guilt. Included in the evidence, there was a blood-stained shift and a washing-book. In addition, another salient feature that demonstrates Collins mastery is the protraction of the plot. Even when the reader discovers that Franklin Blake stole the diamond, the question of who possesses it still unanswered. After discovering the criminal's identity, the following pages delve into an explanation of how the crime was committed until reaching the present state of things (Ashley, 52). It is possible that one of the reasons for Collins to do that could have been the need for money, as writing was his only source of income. However, the fact that *The Moonstone* was prolonged did not make it less interesting. The gothic component kept the reader trapped in a story full of cliff-hangers (Talairach-Vielmas, "Sensation fiction and the Gothic").

Collins's novel was so well received that "the queues outside the *All the Year Round* office in Wellington Street, which was publishing the instalments, soon indicated the success of all his efforts." (Clarke, William 114). Wilkie Collins received criticism from the press. An unsigned review published in *Athenaeum*, a literary magazine, in the same year as the serialisation of the novel claims that "the admirable manner in which every circumstance and incident is fitted together, and the skill with which the secret is kept to the last; so that even when all seems to have been discovered there is a final light thrown upon people and things which give them a significance they had not before" (Page, 170). Conversely, the author was subject to bad reviews too. An anonymous review published in *Spectator* in 1868 stated that "we have no person who can in any way be described as a character, no one who interests us, no one who is human enough to excite even a faint emotion of dull curiosity as to his or her fate" (Page, 172). Despite the

disapproval by part of the press, Wilkie Collins became a successful author among his contemporaries, and his novels would come to be regarded as exemplary pieces of sensation novel.

Collins's contribution with *The Moonstone* and, in more general terms, the sensation fiction as a whole genre left an enormous legacy for future generations of writers. Without going any further, the literature produced in the last stages of the Victorian period was predominantly detective fiction. Crimes like those committed by Jack the Ripper inspired authors like Conan Doyle or Stevenson in the creation of characters like Sherlock Holmes or Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Sensation fiction became extremely popularised, but also it morphed into a less optimistic literature that dealt with more decadent topics. Andrew Sanders explains that

it was not simply that certain opinions had gone out of fashion, or had been discredited, but that late Victorian readers tended to condition the idea of human progress with a prominent Darwinian question mark. Society itself was assumed to be developing according to certain laws, but they were laws which threatened old, orderly assumptions by introducing notions of flux, chance, and adaptation (465-466).

In contrast to realists like George Eliot, the sensationalist authors were taking the audience to the remotest corners of the human mind, areas covered by mysteries that thrilled the reader to the point of electrifying his nerves (Brantlinger, 27). The need for innovation took authors to create new forms of threats. The most outstanding example is Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), which was so well-received by the audience that the vampire became a popular creature not only in literature, but also in cinema.

Unquestionably, Collins' novels had been paramount in attaining this 'electrifying' effect. As the following chapters will show, the use of 'abnormal' characters

and the displacement of the story to India are key elements in the popularity of the novel. *The Moonstone* places the Victorian family as a potential 'victim' of outsiders, something that was unusual before. However, it deconstructs the opposition insider/outsider to comment on the moral façade of Victorians.

Part II: Literary Analysis of Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868)

1. Degeneration and Race

The relocation of mystery in the urban centre brought with it some consequences like the marginalisation of certain sectors of the population. The term degeneration came to be regarded as a theoretical explanation to define people that were socially rejected (Arata, 11). As Arata asserts,

degeneration theory was one of many forms that bourgeois common sense took in Britain in the last half of the nineteenth century. Like other forms of common sense, it readily betrays its class allegiances. As all historians of the subject point out, the study of degeneration was invariably put in the service of an empowered middle class. It was an effective means of “othering” large groups of people by marking them as deviant, criminal, psychotic, defective, simple, hysterical, diseased, primitive, regressive, or just dangerous. (16-17)

In Foucauldian terms, knowledge is intrinsically related to the question of power. Therefore, those citizens that could not access education held no power and were left in charge of the worst tasks. As they held no privileges, they lived in the poor areas with the poorest of the conditions and were eventually classified as ‘degenerated’ people (Arata, 17). Degeneration comprehended not only “abnormalities of the body’s interior—tissues, organs, nerves, skeleton—but also breakdowns in one’s emotional or intellectual or moral being. Such ‘mental stigmata’ were by definition inaccessible to outside observers, locked away in the body’s interior or in the even more remote processes of the psyche.” (Arata, 21).

The concept of “degeneration” intersects with that of “race”. According to the dictionary of key concepts of Postcolonial Studies, the notion of race stands for

the classification of human beings into physically, biologically and genetically distinct groups. The notion of race assumes, firstly, that humanity is divided into unchanging natural types, recognizable by physical features that are transmitted ‘through the blood’ and permit distinctions to be made between ‘pure’ and ‘mixed’ races. Furthermore, the term implies that the mental and moral behaviour of human beings, as well as individual personality, ideas and capacities, can be related to racial origin, and that knowledge of that origin provides a satisfactory account of the behaviour (Ashcroft et al., 180).

As stated in the previous citation, humanity is classified in terms of race. Inevitably these groups clash with each other for power, and that produces the hierarchization of society. Because of Britain’s assertion of its imperial power over the world during the Victorian Era, the British values also came to be regarded as the exemplary model of conduct. Therefore, those groups of people that do not fulfil the criteria were socially marginalised. Although it also happened inside the country, the groups that were mostly rejected were people from the colonies. Besides, the publication of Darwin’s evolutionary theory and the emergence of phrenology reinforced the British fear of being related to less advanced populations. Moreover, with the developments in science and technology, the British mind was plagued by rational thinking. Everything that could not be explained in scientific terms was considered a threat. Particularly, everything that could be related to superstition, the supernatural, and magic raised suspicion among the British. The colonised communities, especially the Indians, relied profoundly on these elements. This clash between the British and the Indians is portrayed in Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone*.

As novels came to be regarded as one of the channels that reached people mostly, they were used as tools to the spreading of dominant discourses. Contemporary disability studies have identified detective and sensation novels as the genres that addressed issues of degeneration and disability (Mossman, 483). The terms “degeneration” and

“disability” name those bodies that were socially constructed as different just because of the variation of a physical trait or the lack of common sense. Therefore, disability and degeneration are social constructions rather than natural elements (Mossman, 484). The rise of urban centres and the innovations in technology and science led to the construction of a society based on a binary system of opposites. Bodies were classified in terms of social functions and efficiency so those that could not fulfil these requirements were displaced to the margins (Foucault, 25-26). Mark Mossman argues that

the category of disability begins to emerge within these conflicting modernized discourses on the function and significance of the normal and the abnormal body, within the constant constructions and reconstructions of what is normal and what is abnormal through nineteenth-century mathematics, science, and medicine, and within the constant pleasure derived from the cultural play within this same dichotomy (the pleasure of articulation and categorization, the pleasure of embodiment and resistance) (485)

Hence, abnormal bodies are those which were discarded from the centres of power and placed in the margins, or slums. As writers of detective novels relied on these areas of the city in their search for mystery, they ended up by including these abnormal bodies in their narratives. Paradoxically, this representation helped in the visibility of those marginal collectives (Mossman, 486). Wilkie Collins made use of that binary system too. He usually attributed feminine qualities to the bodies that were abnormal, for example, Rosanna Spearman’s, and masculine qualities to the bodies that were normal, for example, Godfrey Ablewhite’s (Mossman, 483-484). However, Collins made a social commentary on the classification of society by giving voice to disabled characters as well as by creating characters with normal bodies that degenerate³. This is possible through

³ Apart from a Victorian anxiety, the portrayal of abnormal bodies in *The Moonstone* seems to reflect Wilkie Collins’s inner sensitivity about his own physical “deformation”. His concern with these questions may have motivated him to represent disabilities in this story about the missing diamond.

the power of the gaze and the figure of the double. It is in the moment in which the eye perceives a certain deformation that the body comes to be regarded as inferior, subordinated, uncivilised and discarded (Mossman, 488).

In *The Moonstone*, disability is represented through the characters of Rosanna Spearman and her friend Lucy Yolland. Their descriptions rendered to the reader through the male gaze of Gabriel Betteredge and Franklin Blake. The first feature that they mention about the girls is always in relation to their bodies. Betteredge introduces Rosanna with the following words: “I hardly know what the girl did to offend them. There was certainly no beauty about her to make the other envious; she was the plainest woman in the house, with the additional misfortune of having one shoulder bigger than the other” (21). Moreover, when he meets her in the Shivering Sands, he also says: “there she was, in her little straw bonnet, and her plain grey cloak that she always wore to hide her deformed shoulder as much as might be—there she was, all alone, looking out on the quicksand and the sea” (23). Even from a distance, the most salient feature of Rosanna is her “deformed shoulder”. It should be covered because she is supposed to be ashamed of it. Besides, Betteredge’s mention of her loneliness instantly produces in the reader a feeling of pity for her pathetic status. Therefore, Rosanna embodies the abnormal side of the binary system through her feminine but impoverished aspect.

Still, physical deformation is not the only feature that makes Rosanna a round character. She confesses to Betteredge that she has a turbulent past that “still comes back to me sometimes” (23) and that marks her as a criminal. In fact, Rosanna was taken from a reformatory by Julia Verinder when she entered the household:

Lady Verinder took me out of a reformatory. I had gone to the reformatory from the prison. I was put in the prison, because I was a thief. I was a thief, because my mother went on the streets when I was quite a little girl. My mother went on the streets, because the gentleman who was my father

deserted her. There is no need to tell such a common story as this, at any length. It is told quite often enough in the newspapers. (303-304)

Apart from being a character with a disabled body, Rosanna also went through a process of degeneration. She used to have a house and a family; therefore, she held certain privileges, but as soon as her father decided to desert her mother, both women turned into criminals. It is implied that her mother became a prostitute, but it is made clear that Rosanna was a thief. According to Victorian values, theft was considered a crime, that is, something that only 'irrational' and 'poor' people would do. Therefore, Rosanna is not only 'deformed' on the outside, but on the inside as well (Mossman, 489).

Because of this physical and mental deviations, she is subordinated. Being feminine had already put her on the margins of society, and consequently, on the margins of the story. Her physical disability displaces her even more from the norm when she shows a diversion in her sexuality. Although Rosanna is portrayed as a romantic, but virginal girl, she is forbidden of any type of matrimonial compromise because of her abnormal body. No matter how hard she tries to gain Franklin Blake's attention, her lack of privileges condemns her to being forever alone, even at her deathbed. Despite her visible physical deformation, she was never noticed by Franklin Blake. She claims: "I tried—oh, dear, how I tried—to get you to look at me" (304), but he confesses that "I never noticed her" (316). With those cries, Rosanna is not only stating that she tried Franklin to notice her, but to merge with the upper-class. Yet, she is also forbidden to do that because her past and her body had already shaped her as an outcast (Glendening, 290). However, her lonely suicide represents her last act of feminine agency because she prefers to take her own life instead of being killed by the norm itself (Mossman, 491).

As with Rosanna, Lucy Yolland—or Limping Lucy— is primarily described in physical terms as well. In her case, a detailed portrayal is given from Franklin’s perspective:

a wan, wild, haggard girl, with remarkably beautiful hair, and with a fierce keenness in her eyes, came limping up on a crutch to the table at which I was sitting, and looked at me as if I was an object of mingled interest and horror, which it quite fascinated her to see. [...] My attention was absorbed in following the sound of the girl’s crutch. Thump-thump, up the wooden stairs; thump-thump across the room above our heads; thump-thump down the stairs again—and there stood the apparition at the open door, with a letter in its hand, beckoning me out! (294)

This description also conveys a certain degeneration in Franklin’s perspective on Lucy because he began to praise her “beautiful hair” and her “fierce keenness” until he saw her legs. After that, Lucy comes to be regarded as a “deformed” person that causes both fascination and “horror” in him. In fact, the sound her steps make seems to hypnotise Franklin, as if they were something extraordinary. Besides, in this scene, Lucy comes out of the attic to talk to him, but goes back as soon as he leaves. At the end of their encounter Franklin concludes the scene with the following words: “the one interpretation that I could put on her conduct has, no doubt, been anticipated by everybody. I could only suppose that she was mad.” (295). Again, the woman reaches the reader through the eyes of a man that stands for normalcy. Moreover, Franklin not only states that she has an abnormal body, but also, he assumes that she is mad. As with Rosanna, Lucy’s disability transcends the physical level and reaches the mental one too (Mossman, 490). Her character is reminiscent of the theory developed by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar about the concept of ‘the Madwoman in the attic’. Named after Charlotte Brontë’s Bertha Mason, the Madwoman in the attic represents those women that were “maddened doubles” (Gilbert and Gubar, Preface, 17) of female writers’ anxieties. This monstrous version of

a woman was created to destroy the patriarchal structure, but the authors claim that this figure should not be romanticised. As Bertha, Lucy also hides herself in the attic, and her supposed “madness” may stand for her desire for freedom.

Both Rosanna and Lucy wanted to be free. The former showed some independence by walking the path to Cobb’s Hole and the Shivering Sands. The latter used to picture herself living with her “sister” Rosanna in London: “I meant to take her away from the mortifications she was suffering here. We should have had a little lodging in London, and lived together as sisters” (179). Both girls reject the social norms imposed on her bodies, both as disabled people and as women. In particular, Lucy seems to be the representative voice of the lower classes, especially when she says to Betteredge: “Ha, Mr Betteredge, the day is not far off when the poor will rise against the rich. I pray Heaven they may begin with him [Franklin]” (179). With this severe tone, Lucy is manifesting her disapproval of the marginalisation of the poor. Her actions may depict her as a rebel, but also heroic, force against the norm. This interpretation arises when revisiting the text through a less conservative lens. However, the Victorian readers of *The Moonstone* may have acknowledged Franklin’s conclusive thoughts about Lucy’s madness as the final effect of her discourse. John Glendening argues that they “represent the social handicaps of being poor and female. Yet they claim the right, however tenuously, to confront their superiors on the basis of equality while adumbrating aspects of the racial and cultural hybridism that later in the novel become associated with Ezra Jennings” (291-292).

While Rosanna and Lucy represent disability and degeneration on the British side, there is another character that embodies disability from a hybrid point of view. Ezra Jennings, the scientist who ends up being one of the fundamental pieces of the story, is primarily described in bodily terms as well. Through the eyes of Franklin Blake, Ezra is

the most remarkable-looking man that I had ever seen. Judging him by his figure and his movements, he was still young. Judging him by his face, and comparing him with Betteredge, he looked the elder of the two. His complexion was of a gipsy darkness; his fleshless cheeks had fallen into deep hollows, over which the bone projected like a pent-house. His nose presented the fine shape and modelling so often found among the ancient people of the East, so seldom visible among the newer people of the West. His forehead rose high and straight from the brow. His marks and wrinkles were innumerable. From this strange face, eyes, stranger still, of the softest brown—eyes dreamy and mournful, and deeply sunk in their orbits—looked out at you, and (in my case, at least) took your attention captive at their will. Add to this a quantity of thick closely-curling hair, which, by some freak of Nature, had lost its colour in the most startlingly partial and capricious manner. Over the top of his head it was still of the deep black which was its natural colour. Round the sides of his head—without the slightest gradation of grey to break the force of the extraordinary contrast—it had turned completely white. The line between the two colours preserved no sort of regularity (312)

By looking at this description, the reader acknowledges that Ezra Jennings is an ambivalent character in himself. His body is constructed based on binary oppositions such as old/young, black/white, etc that combine with “no sort of regularity”. Although his “gipsy darkness” is not very pleasant for Betteredge, Franklin Blake confesses that Ezra’s “stranger face” makes him a “remarkable-looking man” that awakes an interest in him. Franklin should feel repudiated as he did with Rosanna and Lucy, but Ezra’s degeneration is not quite concerned with physical deformation, but with a question of race. Despite his contrastive facial traits, such as the hair, he does not have an abnormal body, but a mixed heritage beauty. From the very beginning, his features “so often found among the ancient people of the East, so seldom visible among the newer people of the West” mark him as an exotic character with no sense of belonging. In other words, Ezra embodies the hybrid space between the British identity and the Indian identity.

The term 'hybridity' was coined by Homi K. Bhabha to define "a creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization. [...] Bhabha contends that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space that he calls 'Third Space of enunciation'" (Ashcroft et al., 108). Ezra Jennings is portrayed as an insider and as an outsider living in this "Third Space", and that makes the rest of the characters distrust him. In fact, John Glendenning points out that "Jenning's appearance is calculated to be especially distasteful to anybody fearful that 'pure' English blood might become polluted by foreign racial elements" (296). Even his inner oppositions extend to his social function because he is a scientist with a mysterious past. These two elements are the main ingredients of the detective novel because mysteries, which are irrational, are solved through scientific means (Roberts, 176). Therefore, these two spheres merge even when they look opposite, as is the case with Ezra's body. That is why he is eventually portrayed as the hero of the story. During the solving of the mystery, not only his scientific knowledge is needed, but his "Oriental" one too. His knowledge about the effects of opium, and practices like mesmerism and clairvoyance help in the mock representation of the theft. What is more, he applies them through an objective and rational explanation, bringing both spheres together (Roy, 673-674). At the end, Wilkie Collins gave the power of authority to a character that is half alien, meaning that his hybrid heritage allows him to have double knowledge in comparison with the rest of the characters.

Apart from his amount of knowledge, Ezra Jennings is depicted as a hero because of the impression created in Franklin:

[Ezra's features] were all more or less calculated to produce an unfavourable impression of him on a stranger's mind. And yet—feeling this as I certainly did—it is not to be denied that Ezra Jennings made some inscrutable appeal to my sympathies, which I found it impossible to resist. (356).

In the passage, Franklin is conscious of the other's ugly traits, but he cannot deny that he "found it impossible to resist". This sympathy may be justified because of their common consumption of opium. Ezra is not only an addict due to his illness, but also a personification of the drug. His Oriental appearance, that is, his "gipsy darkness", recalls the drug itself. Consequently, Franklin shows sympathy for him because he is reminiscent of opium, something "impossible to resist" as well. Because of his irrepressible fascination, Collins constructed Franklin as the double of Ezra or Ezra as the degenerated version of Franklin. In fact, their relationship goes beyond their common addiction and is seen by most scholars as a homoerotic relationship. It is Franklin who eventually allows Ezra to be the hero because he needs him to acquire both knowledge for the solving of the mystery and knowledge about the effects of opium (Mossman, 493). As a matter of fact, Franklin needs Ezra to solve the mystery of the diamond because it is only by proving that he is innocent that he will not be seen as an outcast to his family.

As Ezra represents the unclean side of Franklin, the latter could be regarded as a criminal for the Victorian eye. To maintain his reputation as a respectable British gentleman, Franklin needs to prove that he is not a thief nor an opium consumer. Because of that, Ezra's knowledge is as important as his death. Ezra's demise allows Franklin's eventual redemption as a respectable gentleman.

Aside from that, Wilkie Collins also depicted the Indian priests as the other heroes of the story. Like true detectives, the three Brahmins disguise as jugglers and they are almost unnoticed by the reader. They realise their detection on their own by applying their own methods, which are very distant to scientific ones. In their first apparition in the Verinder's household, Betteredge writes down:

upon that, the Indian took a bottle from his bosom, and poured out of it some black stuff, like ink, into the palm of the boy's hand. The Indian—first touching the boy's head, and making signs over

it in the air—then said, “Look.” The boy became quite stiff, and stood like a statue, looking into the ink in the hollow of his hand. [...] the chief Indian said these words to the boy; “See the English gentleman from foreign parts.” [...] The Indian put a second question—after waiting a little first. He said: “Has the English gentleman got It about him?” The boy answered—also, after waiting a little first— “Yes.” (17-18)

In this passage, the Indian priests are practising clairvoyance in the boy’s mind. Their method is based on the use of ink and signs in the air. There is no rational explanation of the effects of clairvoyance since it relies on superstition and a sixth sense. In fact, Betteredge downplays the scene and believes that is a mere juggler spectacle: “it seemed to me to be juggling, accompanied by a foolish waste of ink” (17). Indeed, Betteredge could be right since multiple Indian immigrants that wandered the London streets worked as jugglers⁴. Victorians were impressed by their spectacles, however, “in the English public mind, the fascination for the exotic tricks of the inscrutable Oriental competed with the racist bias against the same Oriental, which was bred by the doctrine of imperialism that shaped that mind” (Banerjee, 63). In *The Moonstone*, the British characters did not consider the three “jugglers” a threat until the diamond entered the house. Before Franklin Blake’s arrival, Betteredge claims that “now I am not a sour old man. I am generally all for amusement, and the last person in the world to distrust another person because he happens to be a few shades darker than myself.” (16). But once the moonstone is inside the home, Betteredge writes that

towards midnight, I went round the house to lock up [...] I saw the shadow of a person in the moonlight thrown forward from behind the corner of the house [...] remembering what Penelope had told me about the jugglers, and the pouring of the little pool of ink into the palm of the boy’s

⁴ Sumanta Banerjee argues that among the occupations that Indian immigrants could fulfil, most of them became jugglers. The majority were street performers, but some of them had the opportunity to perform in respectable playhouses (59).

hand, I instantly suspected that I had disturbed the three Indians, lurking about the house, and bent, in their heathenish way, on discovering the whereabouts of the Diamond that night (46-47)

Betteredge's opinion on the Indians suffered a process of degeneration because they went from being fascinating to being object of suspicion. The question of race plays an important role in this process because, for the British, Indians are unpredictable as animals. The adventurer Mr Murthwaite says to Franklin on the night of the theft: "those men will wait their opportunity with the patience of cats, and will use it with the ferocity of tigers" (70). These animal-like terms indicate how the East is perceived through the Western gaze. This question was discussed in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), the founding work of Postcolonial studies. Said argues that the Orient only exists in the Occidental's mind, and, in fact, it is an "European invention" (1) that was socially constructed and distributed through discourses of power. The Orient has no agency for self-definition, it's described through the Occidental gaze. Therefore, hegemonic discourses depict the Orient in terms of exoticism, sensualism, and backwardness, creating this false illusion that it needs to be saved by European rationalism. The Indian's "patience of cats" and "ferocity of tigers" as well as their juggler spectacle are simple stereotypes that reinforce the idea of the Orient being uncivilised.

However, Wilkie Collins reverses this structure at the end of the novel. He places the Indians as a collective body that is faithful to their principles. The three priests put their lives at risk by travelling to London with the intention of restoring the chaos that took place in India after the stealing of the moonstone. Conversely, the British end up being portrayed as individual characters that create a competitive environment during their "detective fever" (118). Because of hidden secrets and distrust between them, some characters suffer a process of degeneration, as was the case of Franklin Blake, and

Godfrey Ablewhite at the end of the novel. Collins turns them into the real criminals and closes the novel with the restoration of the moonstone into its sacred place.

2. Femininity, Masculinity, and Sexuality

Discussing themes as big as femininity, masculinity and sexuality requires a solid body of theory that feminist studies provide. Authors like Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, and Judith Butler developed theories about gender to deconstruct the patriarchal norms that rule society. They questioned and redefined the structures that comprehend the hegemonic discourse. In particular, Judith Butler revisited the concepts of “sex”, “gender”, “performativity” and “queer” to create her own feminist theory. For her, sex is no longer seen as “a bodily given on which the construct of gender is artificially imposed, but as a cultural norm which governs the materialization of bodies” (Butler, Introduction, xii). Therefore, if sex is a cultural norm that has been imposed, it is intrinsically related to the question of gender. The reiteration of hetero-patriarchal discourses over gender and its expectations of what is to be a woman and what is to be a man, produced in individual bodies the need to fit in these societal norms. This is possible through what Butler calls performativity: “performativity is thus not a singular ‘act,’ for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition.” (Butler, Introduction, xxi). Bodies must perform according to patriarchal principles and every individual that steps out of this rule would be considered a queer person. Queerness stands for a third space that challenges the binary structure of society, which considers homosexuality as a threat to heteronormative values. Butler argues that

this prohibition that secures the impenetrability of the masculine as a kind of panic, a panic over becoming “like” her, effeminized, or a panic over what might happen if a masculine penetration

of the masculine were authorized, or a feminine penetration of the feminine, or a feminine penetration of the masculine or a reversibility of those positions—not to mention a full-scale confusion over what qualifies as “penetration” anyway (Butler, 23).

On that account, it is possible to make a reading of *The Moonstone* under the light of this theory. Although in the text there is no explicit social commentary on these questions, Wilkie Collins subverts the traditional gender roles of some characters and attributes certain sexual implications to the mystery of the diamond.

Although the Sensation novel is mainly a feminine literary genre, detection novel is often transmitted through a masculine gaze. Consequently, the reader is forced to receive the given story by a masculine identity, as is the case of Franklin Blake (Karpenko, 139). However, in *The Moonstone*, women also participate in the solving of the mystery, for example, when Rosanna hides the nightgown or Miss Clack offers to write one of the narratives. Wilkie Collins managed to subvert traditional gender roles to make the story more innovative.

One of the most important characters in *The Moonstone* is Rachel Verinder, whose place, in connection to the “doctrine of separate spheres”, was inside the house. During the Victorian period, it was common to represent women according to the “Angel in the House” stereotype (Vaid, 65). This term described the ideal model of conduct for women of the time: perfect housewives that had to fulfil the requirements of what was traditionally associated with them. As Judith Butler indicates, this hetero-patriarchal binary system is a cultural norm that was constructed socially. Wilkie Collins managed to alter it by putting Rachel as a character with an independent and ambiguous sexual identity (Narayan, 792).

Rachel Verinder is the female protagonist of *The Moonstone*. Her father, old John Verinder, died so she lives with her mother, Julia Verinder, who is the head of the

household. Rachel is physically described by Betteredge as: “if you happen to like dark women [...] I answer for Miss Rachel as one of the prettiest girls your eyes ever looked on. She was small and slim, but all in fine proportion from top to toe. [...] Her hair was the blackest I ever saw. Her eyes matched her hair.” (51). Although she is considered “one of the prettiest girls”, her darkness diverts from the beauty standards of the period. Despite pointing out that “her hair was the blackest I ever saw” as well as her eyes, Betteredge describes her as an entire “dark woman”. This description may imply several interpretations, but Betteredge is not only depicting her physical aspect, but her attitude too. He says:

my dear pretty Miss Rachel, possessing a host of graces and attractions, had one defect, which strict impartiality compels me to acknowledge. She was unlike most other girls of her age, in this—that she had ideas of her own, and was stiff-necked enough to set the fashions themselves at defiance, if the fashions didn't suit her views. In trifles, this independence of hers was all well enough; but in matters of importance, it carried her (as my lady thought, and as I thought) too far. She judged for herself, as few women of twice her age judge in general; never asked your advice; never told you beforehand what she was going to do; never came with secrets and confidences to anybody, from her mother downwards. In little things and great, with people she loved, and people she hated (and she did both with equal heartiness), Miss Rachel always went on a way of her own, sufficient for herself in the joys and sorrows of her life (51).

In this passage, Rachel’s personality challenges the traditional gender roles. Unlike other girls, she “judged for herself” and “never told you beforehand what she was going to do”. Betteredge’s description is very accurate because Rachel demonstrates several times that she has agency throughout the novel. For example, when she refuses to give her account on the detection process or when she decides to leave the Verinder’s house and heads towards her aunt’s. However, Rachel’s independence is seen as a “defect” through the male gaze of Betteredge. Because she alters the female stereotypes,

the novel places her as a masculine character. As a gentleman, Rachel is faithful to her honour. In fact, Melissa Schaub argues that

her steadfast refusal to tell what she knows about Franklin Blake's involvement in the theft of her diamond is similar to the behavior expected of honorable schoolboys. [...] Courage under suffering, integrity, and truth-telling were core aspects of the definition of honor for gentlemen of the Victorian era, but they are depicted in the novel as being uncommon in a woman (16).

Later in the novel, the masculinisation of Rachel is also perceived through the female gaze, especially, through Miss Clack's. She describes Rachel's interaction with Godfrey as "in the off-hand manner of one young man talking to another" (197). Miss Clack stands as the preserver of traditional values, whether in terms of gender or in terms of religion. Besides, she sees Rachel as a potential threat because of Godfrey's interest in her. In defining her with the manners of a boy, Miss Clack is portraying Rachel as androgynous character whose identity fluctuates between femininity and masculinity. Her gentleman-like honour is contrasted to her inability to restrain emotions. Although it is not seen as a defect in the Victorian eye, hot tempered behaviour has been traditionally associated with women. In fact, it is an empowering trait since it is her strong affection for Franklin that leads her to ask for loneliness and to actively protect him.

It is indeed Franklin who is also affected by the subversion of traditional gender roles. Apparently, his international identity turned him into a man, but his real process of growing up happens during the detection of the diamond, because the "adoption of the role of the detective is the first step in this narrative of masculine progression. Playing detective, then offers these characters tools that are vital to personal and professional fulfilment" (McDonald, "Sensation Fiction, Gender and Identity"). But he is also the character that brings chaos to the Verinder household, and because he is not able to restore the social order, his portrayal as a hero is just a mere illusion. Conversely, Wilkie Collins

uses the character of Godfrey Ablewhite to represent a masculine hero. He is portrayed as the perfect British gentleman, who is generous and a “ladie’s man by temperament” (53). Moreover, his Christianity and his charities make him very honourable. In contrast, Franklin Blake has nothing to be proud of. His inability to stay permanently in one place brings him closer to a primitive nomad in Victorian eyes (Karpenko, 139). In fact, even Betteredge noticed their opposition: “what chance had Mr. Franklin—what chance had anybody of average reputation and capacities—against such a man as this [Godfrey]?” (54).

However, Wilkie Collins ends up reversing this opposition by disclosing Godfrey’s heroism as a false appearance and by rewarding Franklin with a happy ending. In fact, Godfrey’s hypocrisy can be seen as a critique on the standards of masculinity when he is discovered as having a “swarthy face, black hair and beard” (434), meaning that he has lost all his exemplary beauty when he became a thief. (Karpenko, 140). Still, it is only at the end when Godfrey’s real identity is disclosed that Franklin is seen as a hero. Therefore, if Godfrey has been the hero during most part of the story, Franklin has been portrayed as the villain during the same amount of time. Both of them have been holding double identities throughout the story.

Regarding gender, Godfrey is depicted as a masculine character and Franklin can be seen as a feminine one. On the one hand, the former’s attitude towards women is not seen as effeminate, instead, he resembles a sort of womaniser. However, under Victorian eyes, Godfrey represents the ideal masculinity (Karpenko, 139). On the other hand, the latter’s inability to solve the case on his own and his eventual discovery as a thief mark him as a victim. To be more precise, Franklin Blake is essentially feminine because his actions remind readers of a damsel in distress who needs to be constantly protected by others. As already advanced in the previous section, Franklin must prove that he is

innocent, but he is not able to do it alone. Other characters suffer to protect him, in particular, Rachel and Rosanna. The former accepts Cuff's suspicion of her to not confess that Franklin is the thief, in fact she says: "I have kept your infamy a secret" (332). The same happens with the latter, who hides the stained nightgown in the Shivering Sands to avoid Cuff's discovery of the truth. These two women take more active roles in the solving of the mystery than Franklin alone.

Also, Franklin's sexual identity is completely altered with the apparition of Ezra Jennings. Wilkie Collins makes Ezra one of the heroes of the story, and because of this, Franklin is eventually positioned as a feminised character. Contrary to Rosanna and Rachel, Franklin consciously accepts being saved by Ezra and his scientific and oriental knowledge. During the process, both of them develop a friendship that gets closer with every interaction they share to the extent of being subtly read as a homosexual relationship. Apart from his legal identity, Franklin's sexual identity is also double because he oscillates between heterosexuality and homosexuality. Apparently, he is in love with Rachel along the plotline. In fact, the moonstone may stand as Rachel's virginity under this lens of analysis. Franklin enters her boudoir⁵ and steals her diamond. After that, Rachel's attitude turns haughtier, as if she just got rid of her childness and turned into an adult (Lawson, 66).

Nevertheless, he also seems to despise heterosexual relationships when it comes to his metaphorical penetration of Rosanna Spearman. Her attachment to the Shivering Sands made her relate to it in a personal way. In other words, the given description of the quicksand resembles Rosanna's body, in particular, her genitalia: "the sand-hills here run down to the sea, and end in *two spits of rock jutting out opposite each other*, [...]"

⁵ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word 'boudoir' as: "a small elegantly-furnished room, where a lady may retire to be alone, or to receive her intimate friends. Formerly sometimes applied to a man's private apartment". The fact that it is a private room where only intimate friends are allowed to enter reinforces the idea of Franklin deflowering Rachel.

something goes on in the *unknown deeps below*, which sets the whole face of the quicksand *shivering and trembling* in a manner most remarkable to see” (22, emphases added). When Franklin Blakes goes there to find the tin box with the nightgown inside, his detection process is sexualised:

a horrible fancy that the dead woman might appear on the scene of her suicide, to assist my search—an unutterable dread of seeing her rise through the heaving surface of the sand, and point to the place—forced itself into my mind, and turned me cold in the warm sunlight. I own I closed my eyes at the moment when the point of the stick first entered the quicksand. (299).

Andrew Mangham suggests that “Franklin avoids looking into the sand as his stick begins to penetrate it, reading like an anticipation of Freud’s ‘vagina dentata’ idea—where the male is neurotically afraid of the gratification of his own desires” (84). His fear of introducing the stick into the quicksand is not just a fear of penetrating a female’s body, but a fear for discovering his criminal identity. The use of a woman’s body as a place to hide secrets and clues is a feature that Collins recovers from the Gothic tradition (Talairach-Vielmas, “Sensation Fiction and the Gothic”). However, instead of entering a castle, Franklin Blake is penetrating the “unknown deeps” –a boudoir and the deathbed—of two women.

Franklin’s sexual relationships with women are purely emotionless in contrast to his relationship with Ezra Jennings. On the one hand, Rosanna was supposedly not noticed by Franklin during her stay in the household. On the other hand, Rachel and Franklin spend much of the novel mad at each other and, consequently, he never expresses any sort of compliment to her. Ezra Jennings is the only character that awakes romantic feelings in him. What is more, this sentiment is mutual because when they first met in the novel, both of them are already represented as queer characters: Ezra challenges racial and heterosexual expectations because of his mixed heritage, and Franklin Blake is

already accused of being a criminal. It seems that, somehow, both of them empathise with each other, as they see themselves mirrored in the other.

In Franklin's description of Ezra, the former highlights the latter's "soft brown eyes", which could "took you attention captive at their will" (312). Similarly, Ezra writes in his diary:

what is the secret of the attraction that there is for me in this man? Does it only mean that I feel the contrast between the frankly kind manner in which he has allowed me to become acquainted with him, and the merciless dislike and distrust with which I am met by other people? Or is there really something in him which answers to the yearning that I have for a little human sympathy—the yearning, which has survived the solitude and persecution of many years; which seems to grow keener and keener, as the time comes nearer and nearer when I shall endure and feel no more? How useless to ask these questions! Mr. Blake has given me a new interest in life. Let that be enough, without seeking to know what the new interest is. (385)

Ezra's existential reflection on his attraction to Franklin is quite explicit. As he says, he has been lacking "human sympathy" for a while. That may have produced in him a sort of desire that was eventually fulfilled with Franklin. However, he also questions whether his interest has grown eager because of the "contrast" between him and the rest of the society. Certainly, Franklin Blake's interest in Ezra flourishes because of their common addiction to opium, an orientalised element. Therefore, their relationship⁶ is based on colonial desire for illicit sex. As with the boudoir or the Shivering Sands, Franklin's entrance in Ezra's heart is another sexualised lecture on his double identity. This homoerotic bond is the one that helps in the final resolution of the case because his heterosexual relations only depicted him as a criminal. Franklin's entrance in Rachel's

⁶ The authors of the Dictionary of Key Concepts of Postcolonial Studies argue that: "the discourse of colonialism is pervaded by images of transgressive sexuality, of an obsession with the idea of the hybrid and miscegenated, and with persistent fantasies of inter-racial sex." (36). The sexual desire between Franklin and Ezra is a synecdoche of the colonial exploitation by Britain of India.

boudoir and his searching for the nightgown in the quicksand condemn his “own name” (300) as a thief. Instead, his love for Ezra helps him in cleaning his criminal identity that the sand had painted brown. That is why Ezra’s eventual death is needed to restore his initial sexual identity as a masculine gentleman.

Although of this final assertion of traditional values regarding gender roles and sexuality, Wilkie Collins portrays its subversion throughout the novel. The key to achieve it lies in the question of performativity. Both Rachel and Rosanna reject their role as ‘angel in the house’ and exercise their own detection. Conversely, Franklin’s need for protection diverts from the established masculine model of conduct because he is not as honourable as Rachel is, for instance. These fluctuating sexual identities meant an innovation in the creation of characters, but they also contribute significantly to Collins’s intention of tracing “the influence of character on circumstances” (Preface, xliii).

3. Progress and Moral Decay

As with its contemporaries, for example, Mary Elizabeth Braddon (author of *Lady Audley’s Secret* [1862]), Wilkie Collins also portrayed the Victorian sense of progress in *The Moonstone*. Back when the novel was being published in instalments, the country was experiencing its most splendid moment. The technological advances and the success of the colonial project helped in modernisation of cities and the flourishing of national pride. However, all this progress was only the bright side of an empire which lived off the exploitation of others. In fact, the idea of the Victorian man was always constructed in opposition to the idea of ‘other’. Especially because of colonisation, Victorians tried so hard to be separated from communities that showed some difference from them. However, to exercise some control in those colonies it was necessary to make colonisers

abandon their traditional customs and look more alike to Victorianism. The relationship between coloniser and colonised became one of mimicry.

In *The Moonstone*, Wilkie Collins reverses this concept to criticise the imperial practices in India. Related to the notion of hybridity, 'mimicry' was a concept also coined by Homi K. Bhabha. It defines the moment "when colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to 'mimic' the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer's cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits" (Ashcroft et al., 124-125). However, in the novel, the British are the characters who end up adopting the supposedly inherited savagery of the Indians. Both cultures merged in a hybrid third space and that enabled the influence on each other and the mirroring of their practices. In his study of "influence of characters on circumstance" (Preface, xliii), he uses the brilliance of a diamond to reflect both the bright side, and the dark side of the colonial project. The Indian community is positioned against the British community in the search for the diamond as if it were a battle between collective bodies. Still, the story is told through the British gaze, so the diamond is also a metaphor to represent the darkness within this same community. In general, this race for the finding of the diamond is another binary opposition alongside coloniser/colonised, science/superstition, reason/imagination and progress/moral decay. The aim is to prove that this final opposition occurs within the British community in their attempt to escape from being related to the Indian community.

On the British side, the process of detection is taken scientifically because "through hypothesis, experimentation, observation, and conclusion, science proves the truth." (Nadel, 257). In contrast, the Indians use less scientific techniques like hypnosis or mesmerism. Besides, the British are not only concerned with the finding of the diamond, but also with their individual privacy and reputation. That is why the members

of the Verinder household, especially Franklin Blake, reject the intervention of Seegrave or Cuff, because they are outsiders despite being English too. However, the purpose of the Indians is to restore an entire religious community, hence, their goal is collective rather than individual. Franklin's concern makes him organise a method for the resolution of the process and he poses these questions to Betteredge and to the reader in the first pages of *The Moonstone*:

question the first: Was the Colonel's Diamond the object of a conspiracy in India? Question the second: Has the conspiracy followed the Colonel's Diamond to England? Question the third: Did the Colonel know the conspiracy followed the Diamond; and has he purposely left a legacy of trouble and danger to his sister, through the innocent medium of his sister's child? (32-33)

Regarding the first one, "was the Colonel's Diamond the object of a conspiracy in India?" Franklin Blake is questioning the veracity of the diamond's curse. According to the narrator of the prologue, the answer is positive, the diamond was attached to a "superstition" that said that "the deity predicted certain disaster to the presumptuous mortal who laid hands on the sacred gem, and to all of his house and name who received it after him" (2). But the real question is: is it a simple religious superstition? Or the real curse is its theft? After stealing the diamond, Colonel Herncastle suffered a process of degeneration in terms of moral decay, thus the real curse is the theft in itself. He asked for his separation from the unknown narrator of the prologue, and lived a life full of pain and loneliness. So, the answer to the second question, "has the conspiracy followed the Colonel's Diamond to England?" is positive too. Seeing the curse as theft instead of a religious superstition, the Colonel was marginalised because of the general disapproval among its official comrades and the family members. Therefore, the conspiracy of the diamond was transported to England because it was the Colonel the one who was cursed, not the stone.

Regarding the third question, “did the Colonel know the conspiracy followed the Diamond; and has he purposely left a legacy of trouble and danger to his sister, through the innocent medium of his sister’s child?”, the unnamed narrator states that nobody among the officials believed in the conspiracy except for the Colonel, who set out to steal it to prove its veracity. Nevertheless, the second part of the question remains ambiguous. Although Franklin asserts that there is no way of knowing the Colonel’s reason to give the diamond to Rachel, when the Colonel presents himself at the Verinder’s household to hand the diamond, he is rejected by his own community. Moreover, the stone was not the reason for rejection, but a medium to achieve his reinsertion in society, in particular, in the family. As he is rejected by Julia Verinder, he “laughed, not *out* of himself, like other people, but *into* himself, in a soft, chuckling, horridly mischievous way. ‘Thank you, Betteredge,’ he said. ‘I shall remember my niece’s birthday.’ With that, he turned on his heel, and walked out of the house” (31-32). His reaction depicts him as a villain, and his final words are full of thirst for vengeance. Therefore, considering these last words, it is possible to suggest that, in the end, he purposely left the diamond to Rachel even knowing that its curse could operate against the whole family. Moreover, his need for revenge mimics the Indian’s “ferocity of tigers” (70) to recover the stone.

From the moment in which this “devilish Indian Diamond—bringing after it a conspiracy of living rogues, set loose on us by the vengeance of a dead man” (33) enters the Verinder’s “quiet English house” (33), a chain of chaotic events starts to happen. Along with the diamond, the three Brahmin priests come to London and exercise their own investigation to return it to India. For Sean C. Grass, the truth is that “Herncastle is never really in danger from the Moonstone; rather, he is in danger from the Brahmin who are pledged to watch and retake it” (105). These three characters are seen as alien from the British point of view, and its arrival triggers a malady over the household (Grass,

105). The entrance of the three priests is seen as an expression of what Stephen D. Arata calls ‘reverse colonization’:

this narrative expresses both fear and guilt. The fear is that what has been represented as the “civilized” world is on the point of being colonized by “primitive” forces. These forces can originate outside the civilized world [...] or they can inhere in the civilized itself. In each case, a terrifying reversal has occurred: the colonizer finds himself in the position of the colonized, the exploiter becomes exploited, the victimizer victimized. Such fears are linked to a perceived decline - racial, moral, spiritual - which makes the nation vulnerable to attack from more vigorous, “primitive” peoples. But fantasies of reverse colonization are more than products of geopolitical fears. They are also responses to cultural guilt. (623).

Because from the British point of view the Indian side is seen as mysterious, atavistic and uncivilised, Victorians react with fear when these traits are transported to England rather than staying outside in the colonies. Rachel, “safe in England, was quite delighted to hear of her danger in India” (64), and she even puts the Indian stone inside her Indian cabinet with the aim of settling “two beautiful native productions to admire each other” (74). Despite the previous existence of an Indian element in the house, Rachel does not feel fear of the atavistic until it reaches the country embodied in three Brahmin priests (Roy, 663). Nonetheless, they do not enter the Verinder’s household, so the disappearance of the diamond is essentially domestic. On this account, the moonstone has been stolen by the British two times: during the Storming of Seringapatam and during the night of Rachel’s eighteenth birthday⁷.

By placing the insiders as thieves, Wilkie Collins is making a social commentary on the hypocrisy of the Victorians. If British was synonymous to progress, reason and

⁷ Notice how the narrator of the prologue is purposeful unnamed to represent how the Storming of Seringapatam was viewed as heroic historical event from the Victorian point of view. Therefore, the narrator of the prologue represents a collective sentiment, rather than an individual character.

science, and Indian to outsider, savage, and uncivilised, Collins is reversing the question of mimicry to criticise the hegemonic discourse that constructed those binary oppositions. The reiteration of the same crime—and discourse—leads the narrative to a general critique of the imperial practices exercised by the British in India. As the trouble does not occur “out there”, but in the surroundings of a Victorian house, its inhabitants must carry with what Melissa Free calls ‘dirty linen’ of their ancestors: “the ‘dirty linen’ of my title is precisely the family secret that family and empire are not distinct. The relationship between India and Britain, the pilfering of India by Britain [...], is the family curse, the great cover-up.” (353).

However, the family members refuse to acknowledge their responsibility, which is indelible. The stain in Franklin’s nightgown cannot be erased, that is why Rosanna hides it in the Shivering Sands. This location in the book represents the East, with its displaced location and its “broad brown face” (119) under which “hundreds of suffocating people” (25) struggle to rise. As with the moonstone and the opium, the quicksand is an Orientalised object. It does not have mystical power, but it is the objectification of sin (Free, 355). The Shivering Sand reflects the consequences of refusing to acknowledge the responsibility in the crime, that is why the “broad brown face” stains Franklin’s body when he is searching for the tin box. Put differently, in this precise moment Franklin mimics the Indians by embodying his double identity both as a respectable gentleman and as brown-skinned person—Indian. By naming Franklin as Blake—very similar to ‘black’, Collins is doing justice to his doubleness. In addition, Franklin’s fear of the quicksand is also a fear of discovering and recognising his own guilt.

Melissa Free points out that Wilkie Collins “subtly mocks the Western gaze” (357) throughout the novel. Franklin’s introduction of the stick in the quicksand represents another British penetration to the East. Collins uses this image to reinforce his

critique about the hypocrisy of the Victorians. They spend the entire detection process worried about the Indian presence in the household, and its potential violation of it, but they are the real criminals at the end of the novel. As in the prologue, they do not see the colonisation of India as a crime, but the stealing of the diamond does. What happened the night of Rachel's birthday is seen as the Indian rape of Britain in the eyes of the British characters. However, they are the ones who execute the crime, particularly Franklin Blake, who enters Rachel's room without permission to steal her "diamond". Therefore, Collins makes his characters mimic the supposedly inherited Eastern stereotypes of savagery to reverse the question and portray the British rape of India (Nayder, *Unequal*, 188).

Apart from the colonisation of the land, the sexualisation of the theft may symbolise the raping of women from the colonies by British men. Notice that Rachel's physical description recalls the physical complexion of an Indian woman. Besides Collins leaves another hint about that in her name because Verinder may be a compound of "Ver" and "Inder", meaning "true Indian" (Glendening, 293). Hence, she is not in danger of being abused by the three priests, but by Franklin Blake, who is the real criminal. Wilkie Collins's attribution of savage qualities to the British supports his aim of exposing Victorian society. In the words of Melissa Free:

the novel's principal work is to disestablish the rigid differentiation of home and away, of colony and imperial seat, through the production of an archive by the attestations of witnesses, whose domestic experience is colored by the "cursed" –because plundered–gem, which they blame, hide, and steal, disavowing their own agency, their part in the chaos in which they are enmeshed–the chaos that is home (346)

Eventually, Collins closes the novel by remarking the success of the Indian's detection plan. Furthermore, he also gives Ezra Jennings, the mixed-heritage scientist, the

power to solve the mystery. The depiction of heroism in Oriental, or partially Oriental, characters reinforce Collins's social commentary on the foreign policies of the British empire. Despite the superficial happy ending of the British characters, they turn out to be depicted as guilty criminals. In fact, Franklin and Rachel's marriage and their subsequent expectancy of a child represents the perpetuation of this ineradicable dirty linen. Both surnames, Verinder and Blake, are going to haunt the future generations of the family.

Conclusion

Through the loss of the diamond and the finding of the same, Wilkie Collins takes the opportunity to dismantle a whole moral code. Victorian society and its strict values that defended the social stratification and the enforcement of hegemonic discourses is exposed. By using the figure of the double, Wilkie Collins is able to speak about bodies, individual and collective, that face each other in a run for detection. These bodies can be analysed in physiological terms, as is the case of Rosanna Spearman and her 'deformed' shoulder. They can also be studied considering its sexuality, where they must perform according to the norms that were socially constructed. Moreover, the same bodies can be analysed as subjects to a system which forces them to maintain appearances.

In general, Wilkie Collins's depicts bodies as a space of change, where different identities can fluctuate. His "physiological experiment" and his intention of "trac[ing] the influence of character on circumstances" (Preface, xliii) is successfully attained. Opium, an oriental and orientalist element, is the cause of the degeneration of Franklin Blake. He stole the moonstone under the effects of the drug, consequently, he embodied in himself two identities: the respectable Victorian man and the criminal. Still, Wilkie Collins does not wait to reveal his hypocrisy until the end of the story, but he leaves some hints that Franklin is constantly contradicting himself because of his double identity. Taking into consideration his disrelish for Lucy Yolland's foot, he surprisingly finds quite attracted to Ezra Jennings, who also presents a physical 'irregularity'. At the same time, their close relationship is read by many scholars as homoerotic. However, Victorian values had a specific ideology concerning hetero-patriarchal relations, hence Franklin's love for Ezra is not compatible with his love for Rachel. As both interactions happen simultaneously, Franklin may be regarded as a half-queer person.

Eventually, the same situation can be found in relation to the questions of progress and moral decay. Apparently, Franklin Blake represents the Victorian gentlemen who has studied a lot and possess knowledge of the world. His rejection of Rosanna and his reason for stealing the diamond—to protect Rachel from the Indian curse—depict him as the hero of the story. By committing a theft, he is not only protecting his beloved, but avoiding the entrance of outsiders in his home. In his mind, these people bring trouble, and they stand for a threat. Nevertheless, the real danger is inside the house and among his own community. In fact, Wilkie Collins positions Blake as the main source of danger. All his knowledge and apparent wit are accountable for nothing more than the exposition of his ambiguous practices. Franklin steals the moonstone as if it belonged to him, not to the Indians. Therefore, the appearance of the three priests in the Verinder household is seen—from his British point of view—as an anxiety. What is more, their presence is seen as a violation of privacy to which the family must be protected. Conversely, while the British do see the Indians' plan of returning the diamond to their native country as a crime, they do not consider the British spoiling of India, particularly the Storming of Seringapatam, a theft.

The embodiment of the double in Franklin Blake helps in the subversion of roles concerning these binary oppositions: abnormal/normal, feminine/masculine and coloniser/colonised. Essentially, Wilkie Collins is inserting an alien object in an English house to trigger a sequence of events that reveal the hypocrite face of respectable Victorian gentry. In their attempt to avoid the public knowledge of their family scandal, they act in specific manners that, eventually, bring to the light their real selves. Collins's "experiment" proves successfully when the British characters demonstrate that they are not that different from the communities they marginalise. As a matter of fact, Wilkie Collins states this from the very beginning of the novel and remarks it at the end of the

same by locating the Prologue in India and closing the novel in the same place. The final effect that this circular structure produces in the reader is one of satisfaction. The restoration of the moonstone to its original place seems to be a mending of peace, that had been initially disturbed by the violent images depicted in the prologue. This sensation allows the reader to re-consider who are the real heroes of the story. Owing to the circular structure, Collins attributes the Indians a quality of tenancy and faithfulness to a collective body that works together in favour of a whole community. In contrast, the British characters end up by restoring its own peace, but an individual peace, since this community was never united in pursuit of a common purpose. Instead, because of their “detective fever”, their collective body is fragmented and hostile.

This battle between British and Indians makes *The Moonstone* one of the most innovative detective novels. Additionally, its structure divided into multiple narratives and its mysterious plot influenced by the Gothic tradition frames it as a very relevant sensation novel. Wilkie Collins was pioneer in this literary genre because of his wit and mastery with the quill. Both elements also allowed him to use his literary production as a channel for social commentaries and to secure a place in the English literary canon. In fact, the question of religion or a deeper analysis of the Indian semiotics in *The Moonstone* are worthy of being pursued. Also, an analysis of other novels by Collins such as *The Woman in White* (1860) could be interesting, paying especial attention to Gothic elements, for instance. Even a comparison between his fiction and that of other authors like Dickens or Eliot could yield interesting results. In any case, there is no denying that Collin’s talent is multilayered, as is his literary production, and that it offers unique perspectives on the Victorian Era.

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