# The Narrative Contingencies of Wilkie Collins' the Moonstone

**Švegar, Monika**

UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Monika Švegar

# THE NARRATIVE CONTINGENCIES OF WILKIE COLLINS' *THE MOONSTONE*

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Supervisor:
Sintija Čuljat, PhD

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**Abstract**

The paper focuses on the analysis of the narrative contingencies of Wilkie Collins' novel *The Moonstone*, as the landmark of detective fiction. Even though Edgar Allan Poe is considered as the father of detective novels, Collins was the first one to introduce a mystery novel with a detective, which was inspired by the "Road Murder" case of 1860. The Newgate novel and the sensation novel, which was inspired by real-life crime and closely related to the newspress, could be subsumed under the period detective fiction. In order to solve the mystery of the missing diamond in *The Moonstone*, Collins uses multiple narrators to highlight the fact that a single agent of detection is not enough for solving the crime and a joint investigation is needed. It is important to analyze some of the characters from the novel, such as Gabriel Betteredge, Franklin Blake and Rosanna Spearman, who either play significant parts in the story or whose behavior and thoughts reflect the current state of Victorian domesticity and English imperialism. One of the most important motives of the novel is the Moonstone, which stands for the Orient and Collins explored that theme by using the diamond as a symbol for "otherness" and a critique of imperialism. The aim of this paper was to prove that through the narrative attributes of the novel, Collins managed to highlight the importance of the Moonstone as a symbol, as well as give an equal opportunity of solving the mystery to both the "misjudged characters" of the novel and the readers.

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## Introduction

In this thesis I would like to discuss the narrative contingencies of Wilkie Collins' novel *The Moonstone* (1868). It is by far one of the most important detective novels of the Victorian era and is considered to be one of the finest works of Wilkie Collins. Collins was one of the most popular authors during his days, with his works reaching international audience and being translated in numerous languages. The unique storyline features a number of gripping elements, which are to be discussed in the next chapters.

*The Moonstone* begins with "- the storming of Seringapatam, under General Baird, on the 4th of May, 1799" (Collins, 1868: 33) and the murder of the men who protected the sacred diamond, which leads to the curse of the diamond and ultimately the troubles of the Verinder family. The diamond is a gift for Rachel Verinder on her eighteenth birthday from her uncle Colonel John Herncastle, who stole the diamond and brought it to England. On the same day three Indian priests disguised as jugglers appear near the Verinder house, looking for the diamond and everyone becomes suspicious of them. During the night the diamond is stolen and the police are called to investigate. Sergeant Cuff, a famous detective from London begins investigating with the occasional help of Gabriel Betteredge, the house steward of Lady Verinder. Rosanna Spearman, a housemaid to Lady Verinder, reveals the identity of the thief in her final letter and proclaims her love for Franklin Blake, Lady Verinder's nephew. Franklin Blake is the thief and it is discovered that he did it while being under the influence of opium and therefore cannot remember stealing it. With the help of Ezra Jennings, Mr. Candy's assistant, Blake manages to remember what he did. In the meantime, Rachel Verinder, who is actually in love with Franklin, agrees to marry Godfrey Ablewhite, her cousin, but then breaks the engagement off, because she finds out that Godfrey only intended

to marry her because of her wealth. In order to clear his name Franklin decides to continue investigating the mystery of the missing diamond and finds out that while being under the influence of opium, he had given the diamond to Godfrey to keep it safe in his father's bank, but Godfrey was planning on taking it to Europe to be cut up and sold off. In the end, the diamond is safely returned to India after the three priest find and kill Godfrey. Franklin and Rachel are to be married.

The main arguments include detective fiction of the Victorian era; including the theoretical and literary-historical tenets as well as the typology and discourse features of detective fiction; the narrative modes, such as the multiple narrators, metaliterary references and the characterization in connection with Collins' irony and his criticism of imperialism. It is safe to say that Wilkie Collins is the father of modern English mystery fiction and was the first one to include scientific research and intricate descriptions in his novels, which changed the genre of detective fiction and made it to what it is in the present day. The aim of this paper is to explore the narrative properties of the novel.

## 1. Theoretical and Literary-Historical Tenets

Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* is considered to be one of the best Victorian mysteries or sensation fiction novels, although "Edgar Allan Poe is regarded as the father of the detective story" (Davies, "Wilkie Collins' 'The Moonstone': the Cornerstone in the Development of Crime Fiction, n.d., 1-9), but still Collins was the first one to transform it into a mystery novel with a detective. He created the perfect detective novel format for other writers of the genre. Collins emphasizes the investigation of the crime rather than the crime itself and is the first one to do so. Even though the novel is a detective story, it was originally "subtitled as 'A Romance', not 'A Mystery' " (Davies, 1-9).

After witnessing an actual trial in London, Collins was intrigued and inspired to write such a story:

> "It came to me then that a series of events in a novel would lend themselves well to an exposition like this. Certainly by the same means employed here, I thought, one could impart to the reader that acceptance, that sense of belief, which I saw produced here by a succession of testimonies, so varied in form and nevertheless so strictly unified by their march toward the same goal. The more I thought about it, the more an effort of this kind struck me as bound to succeed. Consequently, when the case was over, I went home determined to make the attempt." (Davies, 11)

The case that inspired Collins was the *"Road Murder"* case of 1860, which was never solved. The victim was the four-year-old Francis Savile Kent, from the middle-class family Kent. The two main suspects were Constance, Francis' sixteen-year-old half-sister and his twenty-one-year-old nursery governess, Elizabeth Gough. The detective working on the case was Scotland Yard detective Jonathan Whicher, who was the inspiration for the character of Sergeant Cuff in Collins' novel *The Moonstone*. Due to lack of evidence, the police had a hard time investigating the murder, but Whicher found one missing piece of evidence, a stained night-gown and arrested Constance Kent. (Gruner, 1993: 128-129). Her motive was, "jealousy of her stepmother and her father's second family", but "local opinion was against

Whicher, and soon after Constance was released on the grounds of insufficient evidence, Whicher resigned from the force in disgrace" (Gruner, 1993: 129). In 1865, Constance confessed and "a weeping judge condemned her to death in a melodramatic courtroom scene" (Gruner, 1993: 130). Just like Rachel Verinder in *The Moonstone*, Constance kept silent during the investigation. Elizabeth Gough was uncooperative during the investigation, which is very much like Rachel's mother, Lady Verinder, who also kept silent, as if she knew more about the case, but decided to stay hostile in order to keep the secret. According to Bridges' (1955: 237-239) contemporary accounts of the trial, as quoted in Gruner (1993: 130, 142), Constance's "confession and subsequent silence failed to convince many of her guilt, including, it seems, the judge", who "was forced to pause twice while pronouncing the sentence to choke back sobs." Gruner (1993: 130) argues that, the worst part of this case is the fact none of the family members seemed to be of assistance during the investigation, which suggests that "the family was not all it seemed" and that their "silence seems to imply that no one is innocent", especially the young women, whose innocence would have otherwise tried to be protected. Gruner (1993: 130) concludes that: "Family secrets, the Kent case seems to say, are both disturbing and dangerous, and murder may not even be the worst of them".

A number of characters keep secrets in Collins' novel. The first narrator of the novel keeps a secret in order to protect John Herncastle, who stole the diamond (the moonstone) from the temple; Godfrey Ablewhite keeps a number of secrets (most regarding his frauds and wealth); Franklin Blake even managed to keep the secret (the fact that he was, unconsciously, part of the heist) himself and both Rachel Verinder and Rosanna Spearman keep secrets in order to protect Franklin Blake. Sissela Bok (1984: 39), as quoted in Gruner (1993: 131), summarizes the part about secrecy of the plot and the silence of women perfectly: It "becomes both a mystery and a courtship novel, a story of both theft and passion," and Gruner adds that,

"the secrecy which creates this mystery is deeply implicated with the family's privacy" (1993: 131).

### 1.1 Typology and Discourse Features of Detective Literature

Tzvetan Todorov distinguishes between three types of detective fiction: *whodunit, thrillers,* and *suspense novels*. He argues that every great book defies the already existing genre and creates a new genre. Certain norms are applied to detective fiction and to improve them, they become "literature" and not detective fiction anymore (1977: 42). Todorov says that "the best novel will be the one about which there is nothing to say" (1977: 43). Classic detective fiction reached its high point between the two world wars and was called *whodunit*.

George Burton, the author of *Passing Time (L'Emploi du temps)*, argues that in detective fiction, "all detective fiction is based on two murders of which the first, committed by the murderer, is merely the occasion for the second, in which he is the victim of the pure and unpunishable murderer, the detective" and that there are two timelines, the days beginning with the crime and the days that lead up to it. *Whodunits* consist of two stories: "the story of the crime and the story of the investigation" (Todorov, 1977: 44). The first story ends before the second one begins and there is no actual plot in the second one, which makes it quite passive. The second story serves as a learning experience for the characters and the rule of detective immunity is applied, which means that nothing can happen to the characters. In between the crime and the revelation of the mystery, the reader encounters a slow plot and examines clues and leads. The *whodunit* form tends to use a symmetric structure. Todorov provides the example of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, because there are twelve suspects and twelve chapters, including a prologue and epilogue or the discovery of the truth. Todorov further explains that the second story often includes a second narrator, who

is usually a friend of the detective. The second narrator often writes a book and the plotline of the book is in connection with the crime or about the crime itself: *"We might further characterize these two stories by saying that the first – the story of the crime - tells "what really happened," whereas the second – the story of the investigation explains "how the reader (or the narrator) has come to know about it."* (Todorov, 1977: 45)

Rushing and Irwin argue, that the central narrative mechanism of detective fiction prevents the reader from rereading the work over and over again, which can be linked with "serious writing" and could suggest that fiction "is largely treated as disposable". Rushing further distinguished between two subgenres of detective fiction; the police procedural and "chick-lit" detective fiction, and suggests that the moment of revelation is what is missing in the police procedural and therefor the readers usually know right away who the culprit is, while being able to focus on the police investigation. Poe calls the genre, "a genre of misdirection, or misrecognition" (Rushing, 2007: 2, 4-5).

According to the Russian Formalists, Todorov also compares *the fable* (story) and *the subject* (plot), concluding that the story consists of real life events and the plot is the author's viewpoint and the literary devices he uses. In the story, time flows naturally and in the plot, the author has the freedom to present parts of the plot in any way he imagines. It is important to mention that these two notions are actually just two different viewpoints of the same story. They are not two separate stories, but describe the same matter. The first story of the crime is unique, because it lacks in information. This information cannot be given right at the beginning; therefore, the narrator must introduce a second narrator, who will give an account of what was said or seen: *"The status of the second story is, as we have seen, just an excessive; it is a story which has no importance in itself, which serves only as a mediator between the reader and the story of crime"* (Todorov, 1977: 46). Todorov argues that the second story should actually be as short as possible, with simple and clear observations. The

first story is real, but lacks information and the second story is current, but isn't of great importance. The author cannot be the all-knowing, all-seeing as in classical novels, but must either use two types of devices: "temporal inversion or individual "points of view"" (Todorov, 1977: 46). All these devices are then neutralized in the second story. After all, the author must mention that he is creating a literary work and cannot overshadow the first story or the main plot of the book (Todorov, 1977: 47).

It is important to mention the twenty rules of detective fiction, which were composed by S. S. Van Dine in 1928. Todorov summarized them in eight points:

1. "The novel must have at most one detective and one criminal, and at least one victim (a corpse).
2. The culprit must not be a professional criminal, must not be the detective, must kill for personal reasons.
3. Love has no place in detective fiction.
4. The culprit must have a certain importance:
   (a) In life: not be a butler or a chambermaid.
   (b) In the book: must be one of the main characters.
5. Everything must be explained rationally; the fantastic is not admitted.
6. There is no place for descriptions nor for psychological analyses.
7. With regard to information about the story, the following homology must be observed: "author: reader = criminal: detective."
8. Banal situations and solutions must be avoided (Van Dine lists ten)" (1977: 48-49).

Todorov also explains that the important distinction between the *thriller* and the *whodunit*, as genres, is the fact that in the *whodunit*, the author waits until the end to reveal the surprise or the culprit (1977: 50). Knežević suggests that *The Moonstone* is a mix of interrelated

metonymies, that are influenced by "a dynamic field of otherness created by cultural, social and sexual domination" and its discourse, "which looks like a historicized psychoanalysis" (1990: 19). This is also what makes the novel so great. The themes of gender, society, imperialism, psyche, desire and otherness are all connected, but "every identity is unstable and variable", always coming up with more ways how to hide the truth (Knežević, 1990: 20-21).

## 1.2 *The Moonstone* as a Detective Novel

> "The criminal along with the supernatural is one of the two main agencies of moral terror in literature." (Edward Bulwer Lytton, 'A Word to the Public'; in *Lucretia*; 1846: 305; as quoted in Pykett, 2003: 37)

It is known that detective fiction has always been quite popular among the readers. It is a beloved genre due to the notions of mystery, murder and often involves a romance. Due to the increase in real life crime and cheap newspaper press, the sensation novel began developing in the 1860s and authors were inspired by the murder stories, stories of prostitution and wrongful asylum imprisonments (Pykett, 2003: 32). According to Pykett, crime literature can be divided into two sub-genres, the Newgate novel and the sensation novel. Crime literature was most popular between the 1830s and the 1840s and the 1860s. Newgate novel authors were exclusively male, whereas sensation novelists "included a number of best-selling female authors" (Pykett, 2003:19). Sensation novels were often closely related to the newspaper press, since the middle-class papers started to report more crime stories in 1860s and the newspapers got cheaper. Real-life crime is what inspired sensation novelists. Hence they were often referred to as *'newspaper novels'* (Pykett, 2003: 32 - 35). Sensation novels often dealt with subjects such as adultery, different kinds of shock, fraud, seduction, blackmail,

kidnapping and murder, but one of the main differences between the Newgate novel and the sensation novel is the fact that sensation novels dealt with upper- and middle-class modern crime, instead of historical settings. Sensation novels shined a light on the dark side of the "respectable society" and in most plots the crime investigation is done almost completely within and by the family. Pykett also adds that, "sensation novels do not end in the courtroom or the prison" (2003: 33 - 34). For example, in the case of *The Moonstone*, even though a famous professional investigator, Sergeant Cuff, is appointed to solving the case of the missing diamond, the case is not solved by him and he is actually nowhere near to solving it.

It is important to mention another difference between Newgate and sensation novel: "It is the shift from crime to detection" and one of the reasons for this change, could be "the formation of Detective Police in 1842". In the world of the sensation novel everyone can be a potential suspect or even detective and that is one of the reasons why crime fiction became so popular (Pykett, 2003: 34, 35). The critics Braddon and Wood (1868: 15), as quoted in Pykett (2003: 36), argue that sensation novels claim to be "'more' "real" than realism", not just because it is often based or connected to real- life events, but "also because it could 'undercut realist fiction's claim to superior truthfulness by exposing the very artificiality of its conventions'", which brings us to Pykett's conclusion, that both the Newgate and sensation novel draw attention to "the changing relations between classes and legal and … social structures", pointing out that further change is needed (2003: 37).

Ronald R. Thomas argues that *The Moonstone* cannot be categorized just as a crime fiction novel, but can be regarded as "an orientalist romance, a critique of imperialism, an inheritance plot, an allegory of seduction" (2006: 65), due to the numerous meanings of the diamond. Thomas mentions that one of the reasons why The Moonstone is such an important novel, is the fact that it uses "nineteenth-century science of forensic criminology" to untangle

past events regarding the heist (2006: 66), even before *Sherlock Holmes* popularized the "scientific detective".

Collins "successfully moved the setting for criminal investigation from the teeming streets of the crime scene to…the scientific laboratory" (Thomas, 2006: 77). Henry James (1865: 123-4), as quoted in Thomas (2006: 67), suggests in his review that complex plots, such as from *The Moonstone* and other sensation novels, qualify the novels as "not so much works of art as works of science." Scientists "become an increasingly powerful force" (Thomas, 2006: 68), instead of the detectives and their knowledge is used in both a good and bad way in the plots, but this does not apply to *The Moonstone*.

Ezra Jennings puts his knowledge to good use, filling in where the police manage to fail, because he is a man of science and is aware of the facts that the only real evidence, that could help the investigation, is Franklin's body; therefore uncovering the truth is only possible by using a scientific approach (Thomas, 2006: 68). "Jennings states explicitly here what the novel asserts over and over: science is the sanctioning authority in *The Moonstone*, superseding and eventually collaborating with that of the law to reveal the truth" (Thomas, 2006: 71).

## 2. Collins' Narrative Modes in *The Moonstone*

### 2.1 Multiple Narrators

Multiple narrator stories were quite popular during the Victorian era and *The Moonstone* is one of the best examples of it. Collins choice of using multiple narrators, instead of just one, is perfectly understandable and makes more sense, because it is closely connected to the narrative itself. During the investigation of the missing diamond, Sergeant

Cuff is not able to uncover the truth behind the heist. It is only after the collaboration of the other characters, that the thief is discovered:

> "…there seems to be no single agent of detection – neither Sergeant Cuff, nor Franklin Blake or Ezra Jennings, can or do solve the mystery by themselves. The solution is rather a joint effort, since it requires the collaboration of several people to decipher the riddle. Yet this collaboration is not always intentional, and coincidences contribute to a large extent both to the theft and the solution." (Knežević, 1990: 5)

Therefore, it was only logical for Collins to introduce multiple narrators. Collins was most dedicated to creating his stories and making them as realistic as they could be. His stories were often inspired by real life events or crimes and "series of testimonies given by various witness as they presented their views from the witness box" (Davies, "Wilkie Collins' 'The Moonstone: A Cornerstone in the Development of Crime Fiction', n.d. 10), which is another reason why he decided to use the multiple narrators approach for his novels. Collins saw it as an "essential format" in presenting a mystery novel: "In this novel he was experimenting with form in order to create a multi-layered vision of the events leading up to the theft of the diamond and then to the discovery of the culprit and solution of the mystery" (Davies, "Wilkie Collins' 'The Moonstone: A Cornerstone in the Development of Crime Fiction", n.d. 9)

D. A. Miller states that the whole community has to act as a detective, but so that "what integrates and consolidates the efforts of characters is a master plan that no one governs or even anticipates" (as quoted in Knežević /1990: 5/). The community serves such a master plan but is not its master". Miller further uses his "monologism thesis" to explain the use of multiple narrators as a device of combining different characters and the function of a detective only to express one logic, which is "that of an automatic self-regulation of things" (1990: 6), which happens in this novel after it is proven that Franklin Blake unconsciously took the diamond while he was under the influence of laudanum, which he did not take deliberately,

but then Godfrey Ablewhite actually stole the diamond from Blake. Justice is served in the end when he is killed by the Indian priests and the diamond returns to its rightful place. Miller describes that this can be viewed as "the principle of poetic justice or happy-end" (1990: 6).

Knežević further suggests that it is very typical for the mid-Victorian novel to call for a justified ending, as a way of reassuring the readers and showing them that all is good in the end. Due to the social state of affairs during that period, it was something the audience was searching for: "Narratives of crime and punishment, virtue and reward often seemed to provide it, or else to question the very function of such providing." (Knežević, 1990: 6)

### 2.2 Metaliterary References

T. S. Eliot was one of the most devoted fans of detective fiction. In the 3rd volume of "The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot", there are a number of reviews about detective fiction to be found. Eliot's passion for the detective genre helps us understand the properties of the genre during its peak (Grimstad, "What Makes Great Detective Fiction", 2016: 2-3). Eliot was particularly fond of Collins' detective fiction and called his novel *The Moonstone*, "the first, the longest and the best of modern English detective novels" (as quoted in Grimstad, 2016: 4), which can still be found on Oxford's paperback editions. In a review written in the January, 1927, issue of *The Criterion*, he claimed that all good detective fiction *"tends to return and approximate to the practice of Wilkie Collins""* (2016: 4). Eliot wrote about Wilkie Collins and Dickens in an essay, as quoted in Grimstad (2016: 8): "Those who have lived before such terms as 'high-brow fiction,' 'thrillers' and 'detective fiction' were invented, realize that melodrama is perennial and that the craving for it is perennial."

During the Golden Age of detective fiction it was common the "fair play" rule, in the sense that the reader must be able to solve the crime as the story's detective. Eliot further explained that "the character and motives of the criminal should be normal" and that "elaborate and incredible disguises" should not be used (as quoted in Grimstad, 2016: 5). Eliot believed that it does not take much to write a good detective story, using phenomena and unusual devices as unnecessary. Grimstad includes an example, Doyle's *The Adventures of the Speckled Band*, where the murder is executed by a trained snake, but Eliot mentioned that for most great works, one of his rules cannot be applied in fact he was a big supporter of Doyle's fiction (Grimstad, 2016: 5).

Later on, other authors also came up with their own rules for writing detective fiction, such as Van Dine, who published "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories" in the American Magazine and Ronald A. Knox, who wrote his "Ten Commandments of Detective Fiction" (Grimstad, 2016: 7). By comparing their rules to those of Eliot's, we can tell how peculiar Eliot's perception could be. Van Dine was of the opinion, that long passages and detailed descriptions should not be part of a crime novel, whereas this was exactly what Eliot loved about *The Moonstone*.

Eliot saw Collins' *The Moonstone* as a subgenre of the melodrama. He wrote about Collins and Dickens in an essay (as quoted in Grimstad, 2016: 8): "Those who have lived before such terms as 'high-brow fiction', 'thrillers' and 'detective fiction' were invented, realize that melodrama is perennial and that the craving for its perennial."

Another critic, Albert G. Hutter, took interest in the dreaming side of the novel in connection with psychic conflict. He argued that, as quoted in Knežević (1990: 4), "latent structure, not latent content /as/ the critical interpretive issue", because he wanted to establish a connection between detective fiction and the process of dreaming, so *The Moonstone* was

more of a pretext for Hutter. Both Dickens and Bourne-Taylor suggest that the novel is "wild yet domestic" due to its ambiguity, but Knežević argues the opposite. According to him the novel is "domestic yet wild", because of the domesticity, which the novel supports (Knežević, 1990: 4-5).

## 2.3 Characterization

In this intriguing story we encounter a number of complex characters, who on the surface seem to be the opposite but there is more to them than meets the eye. Some might argue that when it comes to detective fiction, usually the detective is the protagonist, which makes sense because he or she is the narrator, but in the case of this particular novel, it is not for sure who the protagonist or protagonists are since we are dealing with multiple narrators and they all seem to bring forth valuable layers of the story. It is probably best to start off by analyzing Gabriel Betteredge, whose narration is by far the largest in content. Betteredge is one of the employees of the Verinder household. He is a steward and manages the Verinder's property and some might even argue a part of their life as well. He could be perceived as part of the Verinder family, as Sergeant Cuff's words suggest: "I have kept the family secret within the family circle" (Collins, 1868: 209). As we follow his part of the narrative it is clear that he perceives himself as "the man of the household" since Mr. Verinder is not mentioned. Betteredge is very fond of one particular book, *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe:

> *"I express my opinion that such a book as Robinson Crusoe never was written, and never will be written again."; "...and I have found it my friend in need in all the necessities of this mortal life. When my spirits are bad — Robinson Crusoe. When I want advice — Robinson Crusoe. In past times, when my wife plagued me; in present times, when I have had a drop too much — Robinson Crusoe. I have worn out six stout Robinson Crusoes with hard work in my service."* (Collins, 1868: 41)

Matar Al-Neyadi (2015: 185) suggests, as quoted in Wilson (2014: 90), that "Betteredge reflects the whole Anglo-Saxon spirit … the manly independence; the unconscious cruelty; the persistence; the slow yet efficient intelligence; the sexual apathy; the practical, well-balanced religiousness; the calculating taciturnity" through idolizing Robinson Crusoe as a representative of the English colonialism and imperialism. He is engrossed on preserving the ideal English home (a repeated and very popular motive in Victorian literature), which is tainted by the appearance of the "devilish Indian Diamond" (Collins, 1868: 67). He deems the diamond as an intruder of the household, after all the diamond is cursed and will bring forlorn. If a gem can spoil a perfect English household, could it also bring down an Empire such as England? Betteredge is certain that the diamond is a bad omen. The diamond is also followed by three Indian priests to England. He describes them as: "three mahogany-coloured Indians, in white linen frocks and trousers" and "the three Indian jugglers" (Collins, 1868: 48-49), which shows that he does not think that their visit is of any importance and thinks lowly of them. He judges everyone around him, and Franklin Blake in particular.

Franklin Blake is Lady Verinder's nephew and as it is later found out, Rachel Verinder's love interest. He is a man of various artistic skills, as Betteredge explains: "They made him among them a sort of universal genius, as well as I could understand it. He wrote a little; he painted a little; he sang and played and composed a little — borrowing, as I suspect, in all these cases, just as he had borrowed from me" (Collins, 1868: 47-48) According to Matar Al-Neyadi (2015: 186), Franklin does not think of the Orient as "Other". Due to his diverse education and knowledge of several languages such as German, French and Italian, he is able to acknowledge the presence of the three priests without passing a judgement. His narration tells us that he is open-minded and the complete opposite of Betteredge, because he believes that Betteredge's way of thinking makes him ignorant towards the truth and that is all because of the "English narrowness and prejudice" (Collins, 1868: 215).

Even though Franklin Blake is one of the more decent characters in this story, he is most certainly flawed and does hold a grudge towards certain people, such as Rosanna Spearman. Rosanna used to be a thief before Rachel Verinder hired her and brought her to their household. Even though she changed her way of living, Blake is one of the first ones to suspect Rosanna of stealing the gem, which shows his judgment towards former criminals and people from lower classes.

Rosanna Spearman's character is of great importance to this novel. Her letter helps Sergeant Cuff continue with the investigation, even though the lack of evidence is present. Rosanna resolves the mystery and explains how the smudge on the door comes from Franklin's nightgown, which proves that he was in Rachel's room on the night of the heist and brings their relationship to question. (Gruner, 1993: 132).

Through Rosanna's letter we find out of her feelings towards Blake as well and why she decided to end her life. Even though Blake completely ignored her, she still tried to keep his secret. Unlike Rachel, who tries to hide the truth and her passion for Blake, Rosanna is willing to sacrifice her life. Besides being the "underdog" of the story, due to her past, Rosanna is disabled (her shoulder is deformed) and an outcast to society. Her only friend is Limping Lucy, who is also a "marked" woman. According to Knežević (1990: 15) "her confession that she put on Blake's stained nightshirt tells us that she is what Rachel is reluctantly trying to repress", as well as the fact that due to "the existing social and cultural contexts…Rosanna's desire becomes a mark of the text's desire for redefinition of social and sexual orders" (Knežević, 1990: 16). Rosanna is expressing and standing up for her feelings, something that Rachel will never able to do, because of her social status. Rosanna has nothing to lose. Her reputation is already "marked" and all she has left is her unrequited love:

> *"A heart-breaking sensation of loneliness kept with me, go where I might, and do what I might, and see what persons I might. … You had come across it like a beam of*

*sunshine at first — and then you too failed me. I was mad enough to love you; and I couldn't even attract your notice. There was great misery — there really was great misery in that "*(Collins, 1868: 363 - 367).

## 3. The Impact of *The Moonstone*

According to Rollyson, Collins argued that in order to evoke interest in the reader, the story had to be packed with details, even the most mundane ones; this way the reader would be interested in *"things beyond personal experience"* (2008: 374-375), which is exactly what Collins did in his work. He writes about unconventional topics, for example disability. Collins deals with disability in a number of his works. The characters of Rosanna Spearman and Limping Lucy from *The Moonstone*, both end up being important characters of the story. Rosanna identifies the thief, Franklin Blake, in her final letter, while also proclaiming her love for him. While Limping Lucy delivers that letter to Sergeant Cuff and helps continue the investigation, Rosanna was always treated as an outsider, but in the end it is her letter that sheds light onto the investigation.

### 3.1 Collins' Irony

Collins' irony underlies the rendition of Gabriel Betteredge's character, who prides himself in being the first and the last one to talk about the incident and therefore believes that he is of greater importance than he actually is. In Knežević's words Collins cunningly "puts him into the position of false authority" (1990: 14-15). Betteredge's way of telling the story is not what makes *The Moonstone* such an incredible work. It is the symbolic meaning that gives its value, rather than the poor Betteredge, whose character stands for everything that is actually wrong in this novel (Victorian domesticity and imperialism). The Indian story is what actually frames the work (Knežević, 1990: 15).

It is important to mention another character, who sticks out in terms of Collins irony. That is the unfortunate character of Ezra Jennings, who is Mr. Candy's assistant. His existence is doomed from the beginning, since he is not fully of Caucasian heritage and therefore is unfortunately judged wherever he goes. Even though he is often underestimated, Ezra is of great importance to the story, since he is the one to introduce the idea of reenacting the night of the theft and putting Blake under the influence of opium in order to recollect his memory. Ezra is a firm believer in the unconscious state of mind and is the exact opposite of Sergeant Cuff, who is convinced that the theft was planned from the beginning (Knežević, 1990: 17).

Jennings has a hard life, due to him being half English and half something else (the reader does not find out where exactly his mother is from). Besides being judged due to his appearance, he is also ill and abuses opium in order to relieve the pain, but in the end he goes through a "hysterical relief", which he explains as: *"I laid the poor fellow's wasted hand back on the bed, and burst out crying. An hysterical relief, Mr. Blake — nothing more! Physiology says, and says truly, that some men are born with female constitutions — and I am one of them!"* (Collins, 1868: 422)

Knežević (1990: 17) believes that "Ezra is obviously the sum of the novel's metonymies: cultural otherness, womanhood, hysterics, the socially low and the unconscious," and it is ironical how in the end Ezra disappears from the story, as if his presence was not needed anymore. Jenny Bourne-Taylor (p. 180), as quoted in Knežević (1990: 17), further explains Ezra's role in connection with Blake: "Jennings operates as Blake's 'unconscious', the site of the painful and intractable memories of which Blake is blissfully ignorant as well as being the possessor of scientific knowledge of how the unconscious works." Knežević also points out the striking resemblance in characters of Ezra

and Collins. Both supported women during their life, never married, suffered from diseases and abused substances because of it (1990: 17).

### 3.2 The Criticism of Imperialism

During the nineteenth century interest in the Orient increased, due to the British colonialization, which was at its peak at that time. One of the main interests during the Victorian era was India and authors who wrote about India were often called "orientalists". Amna Matar Al-Neyadi proposes that Wilkie Collins, being one of the authors who were interested in the Orient, was not just biased, but had a positive opinion about the Orient, which was reflected in his novel *The Moonstone* (2015: 181). Edward W. Said (1978: 2) further explains, as quoted in Matar Al-Neyadi (2015: 181), that Orientalism was "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and 'the Occident'", and Matar Al-Neyadi adds that the translated writings of Oriental works were used as a form of "authority of the West upon the East", but initially they were translated so the colonizers would have a better understanding of the colonies (2015: 181). Sensation novels are a subgenre of the detective novel. They often deal with the theme of "otherness" and during the Victorian era the idea of the "other" made the typical Victorian household uncomfortable (Matar Al-Neyadi, 2015: 182).

Brantlinger (1982: 5-8), explains that sensational novels also explore the themes of "astonishing coincidences", "virtue and domesticity" and "corrupting influence oh higher culture" (as quoted in Matar Al-Neyadi, 2015: 182). Colonel John Herncastle brought the cursed gem to England and the reader questions his virtue from the very beginning, since he stole the diamond and then decided to gift it to his niece, only as revenge, because his sister,

Lady Verinder, refused to see him. Herncastle's cousin writes in the prologue of the book about the diamond's curse:

> *"It is my conviction, or my delusion, no matter which, that crime brings its own fatality with it. I am not only persuaded of Herncastle's guilt; I am even fanciful enough to believe that he will live to regret it, if he keeps the Diamond; and that others will live to regret taking it from him, if he gives the Diamond away."* (Collins, 1868: 38)

But it is only fair to question the virtue of the Brahmins as well, because they intend to do anything in their power to retrieve the Moonstone, even if they have to kill someone, which happens in the end. This way the readers can judge both sides of the story and decide for themselves. The Moonstone obviously represents the Orient and by entering England, it corrupts the "perfect" Victorian household. (Matar Al-Neyadi, 2015: 182)

As mentioned earlier, the notion of imperialism can be detected in one of the characters. Gabriel Betteredge points to the contrast between the Moonstone and the traditional English household and the effect the diamond has:

> *"…here was our quiet English house suddenly invaded by a devilish Indian Diamond — bringing after it a conspiracy of living rogues, set loose on us by the vengeance of a dead man. There was our situation, as revealed to me in Mr. Franklin's last words! Whoever heard the like of it — in the nineteenth century, mind; in an age of progress, and in a country which rejoices in the blessings of the British constitution?"* (Collins, 1868: 67)

Murthwaite sees a difference in the way the time flows and connects it with the diamond: "So the years pass and repeat each other, so the same events revolve in the cycles of time" (Collins, 1868: 526). After the diamond is returned to its original home, everything is back to the beginning, which means that eventually, the diamond might go missing again and bring its curse to a different family. Knežević argues that "it traces the effects of their contact – as contact between different cultural constructs of historical time". The diamond does not only manifest the difference between India and England, it points to the differences between

the Verinder family members. It especially reflects “the social and sexual hierarchies” within the family. The overall story of the diamond encircles the English story and therefore it seems as if it is only the context or the subtext to the actually narrative (Knežević, 1990: 9).

## Conclusion

One attribute of detective fiction, which makes it such an interesting genre, is the fact that in an immensely chaotic world, where everything seems to fall apart, through order and rituals, we are able to create a much needed balance. Therefore it is no surprise that the public, in between the two World Wars, longed for and loved such fictional work. I found it particularly interesting how Collins successfully manages to remove the importance of the legal expert (the detective) and leaves the revelation of the mystery to the "thief" and a scientist, which gives the readers a chance of solving the mystery. The fact that Collins gives an equal chance to all of his characters is what amazed me the most. No matter how small their role is, he makes sure, everyone plays a somewhat important role and is involved. Collins was famous for his sometimes overly intricate descriptions, but in the end his descriptions are proven to be very useful to the investigation and show how important it is to be thorough when dealing with crime. Also, he proved that there is more than one way of approaching crime investigation. Throughout this paper, the motive of *The Moonstone* is mentioned, as it is a symbol of foreign history and culture, "intruding" the English home and endangering its safety, which reflects the attitude of the English toward foreigners and the idea of "otherness" at the time. Collins manages to illuminate the diamond, representing India, in a special way, giving it back its value and spiritual meaning, which was originally ripped from it at the beginning of the story. This way, Collins accomplishes balancing a fine line between the traditional England and the unexplored New World, not just on a geographical level, but also in literature.

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