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Main content

Abstract :

Wilkie Collins mid-19th century novel entitled 'The Moonstone' is a well-written work that revolves around the relationship between the British empire and India. In narrating the theft of an Indian diamond that has been stolen by an English officer to be given to his niece in England, Collins depicts the loss of integrity of many of the colonizers during the last days of the empire. The novel, however, neither adopts a staunchly anti-imperialist attitude nor a condescending view of Indian society.

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The Moonstone is at least three times the length of the average detective novel, and yet it sustains interest and maintains credibility throughout its many twists, turns, and asides. Its plot reminds me of the melody line of Bellini's "Casta Diva," which strikes the ear as a thing of incomparable elegance, but never calls to mind—except upon later reflection—either its own extraordinary length or the expert craftsmanship such seamless length requires. This proto-detective novel does get a little slow at times - Victorian authors typically weren't in a hurry to tell their stories, especially when they were serialized in magazines, like this one was. But once the storyline really started moving along in the second half I thought it was a great read. In most Victorian novels, servants exist as background characters, and nothing more. Contrarily, several of the main characters of The Moonstone are servants who not only play significant roles in the story, but also discuss their social positions. Rosanna Spearman and Gabriel Betteredge are two examples of servants who frequently speak up and make various comments about social class. "The Moonstone, the Victorian Novel, and Imperialist Panic." *Modern Language Quarterly* 93 (1994): 297-319 Free, Melissa. " 'Dirty Linen': Legacies of Empire in Wilkie Collins's The Moonstone." *Platinum Periodicals* 48.4 (2006): 340-371 Grinstein, M.D., Alexander. *Wilkie Collins Man of Mystery and Imagination*. First of all in the Victorian Age the dominating literary form was the novel. It was in fact easier to be read and understood by simple people, its plot was more interesting than any other literary forms, the main protagonists of the novel were the same people who read it so that they felt deeply...

This happened because, if not satisfied, the readers could stop buying the magazine determining the failure of the novel and of its writer. The novelists represented society as they saw it but, being aware of the problems created by industrialization, (exploitation of women and children, terrible living conditions etc) they used their novels in order to put in evidence these evils and to stimulate people to find remedies to them.