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Analyzing Cultural Erasure and Colonized Voices in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*

Wilkie Collins'in *Aytaşı* Eserindeki Kültürel Silinme ve Sömürgeleştirilmiş Seslerin Analizi

Duygu KORONCU ÖZBİLEN
Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Okulu, Temel İngilizce Bölümü, İstanbul, Türkiye

Yıldız Technical University, School of Foreign Languages, Basic English Department, İstanbul, Türkiye
dozbilen@yildiz.edu.tr

Abstract

The Moonstone, published in 1868, is a work of Victorian literature that has received little attention but is profoundly important. It sheds a definitive light on colonialism and the theme of othering set in the backdrop of a detective story. This paper discusses and attempts to unravel how the novel engages with the theme of British imperialism and the associated cultural considerations in its simplest form: a diamond is stolen from an Indian temple and brought to England. The Moonstone is a physical item, but its meaning expands to the symbol of the cultural and spiritual plundering requisite for colonial conquest. It prompts thinking around the notions of loss and belonging and the consequences of having imperial power. The novel's multi-narrative approach has been cited as a way of understanding how differing views on the same topic, in this case, colonialism and othering, can be affected by class and race. This argument is significant for understanding the different responses by British people to the curse of the diamond and the muted responses from Indian priests who wanted the diamond back. The article covers the erasure of the voices of the British-colonized Indian subjects and the moral dilemmas posed by the treasure mentioned above. It pursues the very goals Collins was critiquing by restating the divide between the rational West and the mystical East and how they embellish colonial rule. With a postcolonial view, this article explores the themes of guilt, cultural restoration, and displacement embedded in the text.

Keywords: Colonialism, otherness, cultural restitution, Victorian imperialism, colonial critique

Özet

1868 yılında yayımlanan *Aytaşı*, Viktorya dönemi edebiyatının çok fazla dikkat çekmemiş ancak son derece önemli bir eseridir. Dedektiflik hikâyesi arka planında geçen bu roman, sömürgecilik ve ötekileştirme temalarına dair belirleyici bir bakış sunar. Bu makale, romanın Britanya emperyalizmi ve ona bağlı kültürel meselelerle nasıl ilişkilendiğini çözümlemeye çalışmaktadır. Hikâyenin en basit haliyle anlatımı, bir elmasın Hindistan'daki bir tapınaktan çalınarak İngiltere'ye getirilmesi üzerine kuruludur. The Moonstone sadece fiziksel bir nesne değildir; anlamı, sömürgeci fetih için gerekli olan kültürel ve ruhsal yağmanın bir sembolüne dönüşmektedir. Roman, kayıp ve aidiyet kavramları ile emperyal güce sahip olmanın doğurduğu sonuçlar üzerine düşünmeyi teşvik eder. Romanın çoklu anlatıcı yapısı, aynı konuya sömürgecilik ve ötekileştirmeye ilişkin farklı bakış açılarını, sınıf ve ırk gibi etkenlerle nasıl şekillenebileceğini anlamada önemli bir yöntem olarak görülmektedir. Bu bağlamda, Britanyalı karakterlerin elmasın lanetine verdikleri çeşitli tepkiler ile elması geri almak isteyen Hintli rahiplerin daha sessiz tepkileri arasındaki farkı anlamak özellikle önemlidir. Makale, Britanya tarafından sömürgeleştirilen Hintli bireylerin seslerinin bastırılmasını ve söz konusu hazine üzerinden ortaya çıkan ahlaki ikilemleri ele almaktadır. Collins'in eleştirdiği yapıyı yeniden üreten bu anlatı, akılcı Batı ile mistik Doğu arasındaki ayrımı tekrar ederek sömürgeci iktidarı süslemektedir. Bu çalışma, kolonyal bir bakış açısıyla romandaki suçluluk duygusu, kültürel iade ve yerinden edilme temalarını incelemektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Sömürgecilik, ötekilik, kültürel restorasyon, Viktorya dönemi emperyalizmi, sömürgecilik eleştirisi

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Introduction

The novel by Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*, published in 1868, is often recognized as one of the first detective novels in English literature. However, under its exciting surface, the book strongly criticizes British colonialism in the Victorian era. By examining the narrative structure, the themes of cultural looting, and the loss and erasure of colonized voices, Collins highlights the darkest aspects of British imperialism. The novel's narrative structure is fundamental in the way it presents multiple perspectives. The story is told through various narrators who each offer their point of view on events surrounding the theft of a precious diamond. This technique reflects the colonial experience, where several voices are often reduced to silence or neglected in favor of a dominant story. The British characters dominate the narration, while the Indian characters remain largely speechless. According to Duncan (1994, p. 300), this structure allows Collins to present the complexities of its characters while illuminating the cultural erasure that colonized people face. The Indian origins of moonstone, a sacred diamond, symbolize the looting of native cultures by the British. The journey of the diamond from India to England represents the theft of cultural artifacts, reflecting the broader historical context of colonial exploitation.

Collins puts a significant emphasis on the consequences of cultural looting through the symbolism of moonstone. The diamond itself is not simply a precious object but represents the British Empire's greed and the lack of respect for other cultures. The theft of the moonstone is, in essence, a metaphor for how the British colonizers have taken the resources and treasures of the colonized nations without regard to their cultural meaning. Moore (2006, p. 262) claims that the new criticism of this exploitation relationship demonstrates how colonialism leads to a loss not only of material wealth but also of cultural identity. It is shown that the British characters, particularly Franklin Blake, clashed with the moral implications of possessing the diamond, suggesting a deeper awareness of the injustices linked to their colonial actions. The theme of loss permeates the novel, particularly compared to the Indian characters connected to the diamond. The novel opens with a prologue that describes the history of diamonds in India, stressing their importance as a religious object. Subsequent flight and its repercussions lead to a deep feeling of loss, not only for the individuals directly involved but also for the culture that the diamond represents. Collins incorporates elements of tragedy into the story, stressing how colonialism causes irreparable damage to colonizers and the colonized. Pushpa and Sundarsingh (2021) observe that portraying Indian characters in postcolonial literature often underscores their victimization and estrangement from their cultural heritage, contributing to a broader narrative of loss. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, characters such as Jemubhai Patel reflect the psychological consequences of cultural appropriation, as he internalizes colonial values and distances himself from his native identity (p. 112). This depiction underscores the erasure of Indian voices and traditions under the dominance of British colonial ideology.

In addition, the erasure of colonized voices is obvious throughout the novel because it often gets away from the experiences and perspectives of the Indian characters. Instead, the emphasis remains on the British characters and their reactions to the crisis surrounding the moonstone. This exclusion is important because it shows how colonial stories are rarely representative of the people they represent. The Indian characters, including those directly affected by the flight, are reduced to simple substantive figures in the mystery that takes place. This echoes a broader scheme in imperial literature, where colonized individuals are often described as "others" and their stories are subjected. Duncan (1994, p. 305) strengthens the idea that this negligence reveals the inherent biases of colonial discourse, stressing the need for a more inclusive story that honors the voices of the colonized.

The Moonstone by Wilkie Collins criticizes British colonialism through its complex narrative structure and the themes of cultural looting, loss, and erasure of colonized voices. By using several perspectives, Collins illustrates the complexity of colonial interactions while highlighting the silence of colonized stories. The diamond serves as a powerful symbol of exploitation and loss, embodying the harmful effects of imperialism on cultures and identities. In addition, the accent put by novel on the exclusion of Indian voices underlines the historical and literary meaning of these themes. Through the novel, Collins not only develops a convincing story of a detective but also invites readers to think about the deep impacts of British colonialism, a relevant question that continues to resonate today. The work encourages a critical examination of the past and recognizes the importance of recognizing and assessing various perspectives in literature and history (Moore, 2006, p. 253).

British Colonialism in the Victorian Era

Politically, British colonialism during the Victorian era shaped new forms of government in the colonies, while highlighting important imbalances of power. The British established several types of governance, such as direct government and protectorates, which often centralized power in the hands of colonial officials. These systems generally ignored local traditions and imposed British authority, creating an authoritarian framework that suppressed local governance. Darwin (1997, p. 620) explains how the expansion of the British territory was closely linked to these political structures. The colonial administration aimed to maintain order in the vast regions while allowing the economic exploitation of resources and work. This approach allowed Great Britain to benefit from the colonies while limiting the political rights of local populations.

In the colonies, imposing British government systems often suppressed indigenous political structures and traditions. This can be seen in India, where British officials imposed their laws and regulations, leaving aside the existing local governance. As a result, indigenous leaders often found limited power and influence. The political relations established during this time created lasting consequences for colonized societies, leaving them with challenges in governance long after independence. Meanwhile, the colonial project in Great Britain stirred national pride and a sense of purpose among many Victorians. The notion of a civilizing mission became prominent, where many British believed they were bringing progress and light to the so-called "less developed" parts of the world. However, academics such as Parsons (2019, p. 79) argue that this belief often concealed the harsh realities of control, exploitation, and violence that characterized the colonial domain. The moral justification for the Empire became a powerful narrative that both legitimized and perpetuated colonial policies, despite the growing awareness of their negative impacts.

At home, these political changes had domain effects on British society. The experiences derived from the administration of the colonies challenged and changed the discourse on democracy and citizenship in Great Britain. Interactions with colonized populations and responses to their resistance often influenced national debates regarding rights, representation, and governance. As British citizens reflected on political dynamics in the colonies, they became increasingly aware of discrepancies in citizenship and rights, which led to discussions about social justice within Great Britain itself (Harris, 1999, pp. 918-920).

In addition, the imperial governance model established during the Victorian era began to remodel the political panorama of Great Britain, promoting movements and ideas that questioned the existing power hierarchies. Victorian emphasis on governance as a moral and civilizational duty influenced those who advocated for reform in Britain, linking colonial experiences with the call to change in British society. This interaction created a complex relationship where political developments in the colonies returned to debates at home, which shows that British colonialism was not only a unilateral imposition but a dynamic influence on both sides. British colonialism during the Victorian era had deep impacts both on the societies it controlled and on British society itself. Understanding these effects requires observing economic, cultural, and political aspects (Darwin, 2009, p. 250).

Economically, British colonialism was promoted by the need for resources and markets. The colonized regions were largely considered sources of raw materials and places for British products. This system led to the extraction of wealth from the colonies, often at the expense of local economies. While some colonies saw infrastructure improvements such as railroads and ports, these developments were mainly destined to serve British interests instead of benefiting local populations (Louis et al., 1999, pp. 230-231). In Britain, colonial wealth helped feed industrial growth, making the country richer and more powerful. However, this unequal economic benefit created significant disparities between British and colonial societies.

Culturally, the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized was marked by a complex interaction. On the one hand, colonial powers imposed their language, educational systems, and cultural practices, believing that British culture was superior (Thompson, 1988, p. 107). This cultural domain often found resistance from local populations, which led to a struggle for identity and values (Hyam, 2002, p. 45). For example, in India, British education aimed to create a class of English-speaking elites supporting the colonial domain. However, this same process also caused movements for their own identity and resistance against British cultural hegemony. Therefore, colonization resulted in a cultural exchange where British ideas and local traditions collided, which led to hybrid cultures that persist even today.

Politically, the governance structures established by the British were significant. The colonial government often implied direct control, but many regions also saw the introduction of local leaders within a colonial framework (Darwin, 1997, p. 86). This system created a new political hierarchy that restructured local governance and altered the dynamics of power within colonized societies. At the same time, the experience of managing vast empires encouraged discussions about governance and democracy within Great Britain. The ideas about rights and representation were influenced by the realities of the colonial government, which affected British political discourse (Parsons, 2019, p. 12). The issues of the empire caused debates about British control and the moral implications of colonization, which have echoed throughout British political history.

In summary, the impacts of British colonialism during the Victorian era are significant and have several layers. Economic exploitation produced both growth and difficulty, while cultural exchanges led to conflicts about identity. The political changes introduced by colonial governance transformed not only colonial societies but also the political landscape of Great Britain. These dimensions together highlight the complex relations between the colonizers and the colonized, illustrating the consequences of the great reach of this period. The additional study of these issues is essential to understand their lasting effects on current global dynamics. As Findlay and O'Rourke (2007, p. 326) assert, the additional study of these issues is essential to understand their lasting effects on current global dynamics.

Race, Ownership, and Cultural Encounter in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*

The Moonstone, authored by Wilkie Collins in 1868, is frequently regarded as one of the first detective novels in the English language. The narrative centers on a valuable diamond, the moonstone, which is stolen from a young English woman, Rachel Verinder, on the eve of her birthday. The jewel was once part of a Hindu temple and was appropriated by a British officer during the colonial era, carrying a heritage of misery and an enigmatic curse. The narrative, conveyed through various narrators including the renowned investigator Sergeant Cuff, unveils layers of suspense, intrigue, and colonial critique. The story examines themes of imperialism, identity, and justice, rendering it a compelling mystery and a nuanced social critique. In *The Moonstone*, race plays an important role in reflecting British attitudes in Victorian times, in particular through the objective of colonialism. The novel presents a clear vision of the way British society has perceived and interacted with different cultures. Collins depicts the Indian characters, in particular the “Hindu” priest, in a way that aligns with many common stereotypes of the time. Characters like the priest often embody the exotic and sometimes barbaric features that were frequently attributed to oriental cultures by Western writers.

Al-Yeadi (2015, p. 45) stresses that these representations are not only occasional observations but rather serve a deeper objective. They reinforce the feeling of superiority that many British felt towards the colonized peoples. This superiority complex was essential to justify British colonial domination and the exploitation of cultures considered to be inferior. In this context, the characters of India are often represented as malicious or non-civilized, which aligns with the colonial narrative that painted the British as the saviors and civilians of the Empire.

The element of property within the novel relates closely to the representations of race. The moonstone itself turns into a mark of enjoyed legacy and a clash of heritage. Once the gem, which was snatched from a Hindu temple, reaches England, it initiates a cascade of incidents that reveal the underlying conflict between British characters and their Indian counterparts. As Collins reminds us, "The yellow diamond—you have lost sight of it in England, and (if I know anything of these people) you have lost sight of it forever” (Collins, 1868, p. 4). British characters constantly claim the gem to be a symbol of royalty and social status to be added atop their emblem, neglecting its valuable significance. This answer greatly impacts who controls aspects of culture and the heritage associated and what degree of rights they hold to claims, especially when elements are extracted from their context through colonial endeavours. Collins captures this notion: “In my opinion, what we have to do is to clear our mind of the prejudices of our education” (Collins, 1868, p. 180). In addition, the novel demonstrates an encounter between two cultures that are filled with conflicts and misunderstandings. As Collins narrates, “We had all lost our heads; we were all, to a man, in the same state of confusion, suspicion, and distrust” (Collins, 1868, p. 329). The British characters are quick to blame their Indian servants or associates as dishonest when the diamond is stolen, revealing their martyr complex in the face of the dying Indian character’s warning: “The Moonstone will have its vengeance yet on you and yours!” (Collins, 1868, p. 615). This reinforces the British illusion of self-victimization that fuels the colonial narrative where the British view themselves as victims of a hostile foreign power, demonstrating the impact of colonialism on interpersonal

trust and attitudes.

Collins employs representations to make comments on the more significant effects of imperialism. He explores the actions and viewpoints of his characters and uncovers the intricacies of cultural interactions that are too often boiled down to simplistic and stark oppositions of colonizer versus colonized. For instance, he observes, “In England, they regard the Diamond as a trophy; in India, it is part of their ancient heritage.” (Collins, 1868, p. 50). The story’s racial dynamics reflect a larger societal worldview that cuts people according to their race, resulting in a British-dominated power imbalance. As one character states, “The curse of the Moonstone is a warning to those who lay hands on the sacred jeweled gem.” (Collins, 1868, p. 567). This is a testament to the British characters’ disrespect for the cultural values placed on the jewel. Thus, the moonstone imports not only the individual relations shaped by race but also the dominant framework of imperialism during the Victorian period. This structure is showcased when a British character states, “We are the victims of a bigger plot than us, orchestrated by those whose values do not resonate with ours” (Collins, 1868, p. 342). It emphasizes the enduring disputes of race, real estate, and the colonial aftermath, which persist into contemporary society.

Collins arranges the historical context for the moonstone's theft with, “We must begin by showing how the diamond first fell into the hands of my uncle Herncastle, when he was serving in India fifty years since” (Collins, 1868, p. 8). This quote outlines the imperialistic backdrop of the moonstone and emphasizes the theft as a major turning point in the story. The Herncastle family’s possession of the diamond during their stay in India epitomizes the exploitation of colonial endeavors. The narrative structure that starts with this history recalls how history has mostly been written from the colonizers’ perspective, neglecting the voices of those who were colonized. It shows the power dynamics that are characteristic of colonial discourse in which acts of stealing are neutralized by the silence that follows the consequences. Further, the phrase, “Let us take it easy, and let us take it short; we shall be in the thick of the mystery soon, I promise you!” (Collins, 1868, p. 25), points out the shaped and plaited narrative structure of the roll as a novel. Betteredge’s dialogue reveals the anecdotally personal nature that is so easily captured in recounting the retold events. This dualistic approach, which lacks a clear order, reveals that the colonial past is multifaceted, dominated by subjective experiences of hubris and distortion known as bias. In this way, it highlights the fighting and disorder that chaos that surrounds the recording of colonial history and its expansive repercussions.

To illustrate, Collins gives the second part of the prophecy on the moonstone: “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” (Collins, 1868, p. 4). This statement exclaims the essence of imperialism by hiding the sharpened aspect of moral reasoning beneath the cultural and religious attack by depicting a dominion negatively. This focus emphasizes the boundless will of colonized nations to withstand the merciless torture of the Inquisition by Colonizers in the West and raises the question guiding for reasons of why defender nations of empires seek to achieve this through such actions.

Lastly, the merry manner in which the soldiers post looting in Seringapatam is described in the quote, “The men… disgraced themselves good-humoredly. All sorts of rough jests and catchwords were bandied about among them, and the story of the Diamond turned up again unexpectedly in the form of a mischievous joke” (Collins, 1868, p. 6). This depiction of soldiers turning the fierce sacking of an empire into a form of satire is a good example of colonial indifference. Viewing the moonstone and other treasures as 'mischievous pranks’ reveals the deep casualness regarding the brutality as well as cultural annihilation that is part of imperial conquest. It shows the attitude with which colonies were dealt with by colonial powers.

While reviewing these quotes, it becomes clear that *The Moonstone* is an important text in understanding the interplay of imperialism, race, and cultural appropriation. Collins exposes the colonial loss through theft as well as through cultural theft, misunderstandings, and the residual metaphysical effects of colonial exploitation. The novel compels the re-imagination of histories that mute the dominated and exposes the enduring cruelty of colonialism’s deep-seated moral ambiguity. In grappling with these issues, Collins critiques the imperialist culture of the time and adds to the dialogue on identity and culture, colonial legacy and dominion, and the decolonial need to shift the focus on alternate lenses in history, on which history is built.

Additionally, when Collins states, “There were three officers of Tippoo's household, strangers to the rest, who had won their master's confidence by conforming or appearing to conform to the Mussulman faith” (Collins, 1868, p. 5), he adds complexity to the tale by introducing figures who challenge the dominant lens of Western colonialism. These three Brahmins pose as

Muslim gentlemen and demonstrate sophisticated political and religious maneuvering that the British would not expect from their subjugated and passive people. They do not submit; they take the moonstone back and thus subjugate the identity, blurring the boundary between colonizer and colonized.

Not only does *The Moonstone* function as a groundbreaking detective story, but it also functions as a sophisticated critique of British imperialism and the racialized ideology that it promotes. Collins exposes the moral inconsistencies and cultural hypocrisies that were prevalent during the Victorian era using symbolic artifacts such as the moonstone, interactions between colonial powers, and the representation of persons who are of Indian descent. As the narrative progresses, it becomes clear that the act of colonial stealing is not only a physical act; rather, it is an act that causes dislocation on a spiritual, cultural, and historical level. Collins pushes his audience to reflect on the complexity of colonialism by weaving together personal anecdotes and broader political criticism. These complications include the suppression of indigenous voices and the alteration of identities through imperial authority. Collins's work comes from the author's personal experiences. In the end, the novel acts as a literary mirror, reflecting the long-lasting effects of empire and urging a reexamination of how history is written, the people whose voices are heard, and the ideals that are preserved.

Discussion

The Moonstone serves as a complex critique of British colonialism and its implications, particularly evident in the multifaceted portrayal of Indian characters and the associated cultural tensions highlighted throughout the narrative. The Moonstone, a diamond of great significance, becomes a potent symbol of both wealth and the cultural erasure experienced by colonized peoples. Collins' narrative strategy, utilizing multiple perspectives, provides a rich exploration of these themes and illuminates the intersections of power, race, and morality. The very structure of *The Moonstone*—narrated from various viewpoints—enables readers to engage with the complexities and contradictions inherent in colonial representations. Gooch (2010, p. 183) asserts that "Collins' use of multiple narrators serves both to illustrate the complexity of the narrative and to critique the colonial gaze that oversimplifies and distorts the intricacies of colonized cultures." This technique reflects the fragmented realities of characters who are often constrained by their societal roles. For example, the character of Franklin Blake illustrates the privileged British perspective that seeks to regain control of the diamond, yet he is oblivious to the deeper spiritual connections the stone holds for the Indian characters. When he states, "If I made the matter public, I have no evidence but moral evidence to bring forward" (Collins, 2010, p. 16), it underscores his detachment from the cultural ramifications of the diamond's theft.

As noted by Roberts (1997, p. 170), "the theft of the Moonstone represents the unfairness and blatant nationalistic violence of British imperialism." The narrative exhibits a cyclical nature of exploitation, where the acquisition of cultural artifacts such as the Moonstone is intertwined with the experience of violence against indigenous peoples. Nayder (2006, p. 40) contends that "Collins critiques the imperialist mindset and its subsequent impact on identity," illustrating how the British thirst for control and power leads not only to physical theft but also to cultural and spiritual dislocation.

Moreover, the character of Miss Clack serves as a poignant reminder of how societal prejudices can infiltrate personal narratives. Clack's perspective reflects the British inclination to dismiss Indian culture as primitive, creating a stark contrast with the underlying significance of *the Moonstone*. This narrative choice emphasizes the broader critical discourse in Victorian literature surrounding cultural superiority and moral accountability. Mehta (1995, p. 615) states that "the moral undertones of Clack's character expose the hypocrisy of colonial attitudes, as she embodies the very prejudices that undermine authentic understanding of the colonized." The Indian characters, particularly the Brahmins, are depicted through a lens of suspicion and exoticism, echoing the stereotypical views prevalent in Victorian society. Manavalli (2007, p. 70) observes how "these representations reinforce stereotypes and fears associated with colonized individuals." The character of Miss Clack reinforces these stereotypes, illustrating how the British characters' biases overshadow the authenticity of their Indian counterparts. As she ponders the motivations behind Franklin's actions, she muses that he "might as well do it as anybody else" (p. 15), dismissing the deeper cultural implications of the Moonstone's journey.

Moreover, the cyclical nature of exploitation surfaces in the narrative through the act of theft itself. As Gilbert (2023, p. 30) highlights, "the act of stealing the Moonstone symbolizes a cycle of imperial violence," illustrating how acts of appropriation lead to an ongoing cycle of cultural dislocation. The tension crescendos when the diamond is revealed as more than a mere

object; it represents a piece of cultural heritage that has been violently extracted. The moment the diamond is taken, its significance shifts, causing a rift between its spiritual origins in India and its commodified status in Britain.

The character of Sergeant Cuff stands in stark contrast to the other British characters, embodying a moral complexity as he navigates the intricacies of the case. His detective work symbolizes an attempt to grapple with the broader ethical implications of colonial actions. In a conversation with Franklin, he states, “If time, pains, and money can do it, I will lay my hand on the thief who took the Moonstone” (Collins, 2010, p. 42), underscoring his resolve but also highlighting the insufficiency of traditional methods of justice within the colonial framework. Cuff's investigation challenges the reader to consider the ramifications of ownership and moral responsibility in a colonial context.

The conclusion of the novel, where the moonstone is ultimately returned to India, serves as a poignant symbol of reclamation. As Collins reflects on the diamond's journey back “over the walls of the sacred city in which its story first began” (p. 567), the narrative culminates in a moment of recognition where the historical injustices of colonialism cannot be ignored. This return, however, is complex; it raises questions about whether true restitution is possible in a world rife with cultural dislocation and historical trauma. In summary, *The Moonstone* offers a multifaceted critique of the British colonial enterprise, engaging with themes of power, identity, and cultural erasure. Collins not only sheds light on the personal stories entwined with colonial narratives but also critiques the broader implications of imperialism that continue to resonate in contemporary discussions. As we confront these realities, it becomes essential to recognize the diverse voices within these narratives, challenging the singular narratives that have historically dominated literary discourse.

Conclusion

The Moonstone was written and published during a significant period of British colonial expansion. The narrative structure of the novel is the key to understanding its critical position on British colonialism. Collins uses an epistolary format with various voices, where different characters narrate their perspectives on events surrounding the mysterious disappearance of a valuable diamond, the moonstone. This technique not only diversifies the voices present in history but also allows a complex exploration of British imperialism and its effects on colonizers and the colonized. The narrative of various layers emphasizes the subjectivity of the experience, inviting readers to find various interpretations and personal stories that reflect the broader cultural dynamics (Free, 2006, pp. 340-371). The choice of employing various narrators serves as a critique of prevalent colonial attitudes during the time of Collins. Each character contributes a distinct point of view shaped by their social status, ethnicity, and relationship with the colonial origin of the diamond. In weaving these narratives, Collins exposes the tangled web of British identity intertwined with the colonial past of the diamond, pointing to the often conflicting interests and morals of different actors in the imperial company. The diamond itself, obtained through colonial exploration, symbolizes the wealth extracted from colonized nations and serves as a central motive that represents not only material greed but also the ethical complexities of imperialism (Gilbert, 2023, pp. 26-48).

In addition, the representation of Indian characters in *The Moonstone* reflects the marginalization of colonized voices. The narrative structure, which shifts perspectives among various characters, often questions the Indian protagonists. For instance, the character of the Indian priest, who comes to England to reclaim the Moonstone, is depicted primarily through the perceptions of British characters, particularly those who regard him with suspicion or prejudice. Manavalli (2007, p. 70) argues that these representations reinforce stereotypes and fears associated with colonized individuals, resulting in narratives that frequently overlook their stories or struggles. While the plot unfolds, the voices of colonized characters become secondary, echoing the real consequences of colonial dominance. As Gilbert (2023, p. 30) notes, the cyclical nature of imperial violence is evident throughout the novel. The act of stealing the Moonstone symbolizes a wider cycle of exploitation that continuously impacts both colonizers and the colonized. For the British, this cycle generates an insatiable desire for control and possession, reflecting a deeper turmoil within their society, based on fragile structures of power. Conversely, for the colonized, the ramifications are dire, leading to significant cultural loss. This is illustrated by how Indian characters strive to reclaim their identity; their attempts to assert themselves and recover the stone are often perceived as threatening by the British, whose interpretations of their actions remain fundamentally flawed.

Therefore, through the complexities of the narrative and the symbolism of *the Moonstone* itself, Collins critiques the devastating ramifications of British colonialism. Identity and heritage are intricately connected, with the erasure of one

leading to the loss of the other, illustrating how colonial efforts to dominate and commodify entire cultures inflict lasting wounds that extend beyond borders and generations. This interplay between cultural erasure and identity loss within *The Moonstone* reveals the profound trauma inflicted by colonial enterprises on both colonizers and the colonized. By examining the novel, it becomes essential to emphasize how narrative structure and symbolism encapsulate the consequences of British colonialism. The multiple narrators, while providing a layered view of events, predominantly rely on a Eurocentric perspective that often neglects the voices and experiences of the colonized. This deliberate choice in structure acts as a formidable demonstration of how dominant cultures can silence marginalized voices through narrative. As Gooch (2010, p. 183) argues, Collins's use of multiple narrators both illustrates the narrative's complexity and critiques the colonial gaze that oversimplifies and distorts the intricacies of colonized cultures.

The symbolism of *the Moonstone*, particularly the gem itself, encapsulates the cultural tensions and theft inherent in colonial practices. The diamond represents not only material value but also signifies the cultural artifacts of India and the broader theme of cultural erasure. The process of acquiring the diamond serves as a salient emblem of British imperialism, illustrating how cultural treasures were extracted from their original contexts for the benefit of British wealth and entertainment. Such actions exemplify a colonial mindset that diminishes the significance of colonized cultures. Additionally, Collins's treatment of Indian characters raises critical questions about representation in colonial narratives. Indian characters in *The Moonstone* are frequently portrayed through reductive stereotypes that fail to acknowledge their complexity and deny their subjectivity. This lack of nuanced representation perpetuates cultural erasure and undermines colonized voices. Scholars like Gould (2011, p. 60) argue that these portrayals reinforce a colonial gaze, limiting the understanding of the rich narratives and cultures overshadowed by imperial accounts. A thematic critique of the novel illuminates the risks inherent in relying solely on conventional colonial narratives that obscure the realities of cultural erasure. The text serves as a reminder that literature reflects its era and acts as a vehicle for the perpetuation of social norms. When analyzing works like *The Moonstone*, it becomes increasingly important to challenge the narratives we encounter. By amplifying the voices of the colonized, we can reshape the narrative landscape toward one that genuinely recognizes and honors the complexities of history and culture.

Future research should emphasize narratives of colonial experiences that prioritize the perspectives of those traditionally marginalized. This includes adaptations that reformulate stories from the viewpoints of colonized individuals, thereby facilitating a more authentic representation of their experiences. Moreover, studies of other literary works from the colonial period can enhance our understanding of the nuances of cultural erasure and the significance of recovering colonized voices. In considering the insights from Collins's work alongside the broader context of British colonialism, it is crucial to recognize that the narratives we convey shape our understanding of history and identity. Acknowledging cultural erasure while elevating colonized voices in literary analysis contributes toward a more equitable and inclusive grasp of our shared past.

Hakem Değerlendirmesi: *Dış bağımsız.*
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