

The Nexus of Unreliable Narration, Reader, Cognition and Truth in *The Moonstone*

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Abstract

Positioned early in the list of modern English detective novels by T.S. Eliot, Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* (1868) is a page-turner consisting of several narratives on the theft of a diamond. Collins declares in the Preface that the incidents told within the course of the novel grow out of the narrators' motives in recounting what really happened. Then, the multiple narrative style renders the accounts unreliable, precluding access to an essential version of truth and causing an interrogation of the novel's epistemological basis. While acknowledging the structural merit Collins' multiple narration adds to the detective fiction genre, this paper investigates the conflicting epistemology in the novel from the standpoint of cognitive narratology. Works by theorists such as David Herman, Alan Palmer and James Phelan are referenced in the examination of the reader's viewpoint in the reading experience. It does not do the text justice to seek unreliability in the novel's narrative structure only-when tracking Collins' assertion on the truthfulness of the narratives, adopting the concept of unreliability in cognitive narratology, and reading into the text with an awareness of the conceptual premises of the reader enable a "true" approach to the multiple narrative style. The reader is obliged to hold a central position in the process of knowledge-making; that is, the reader's cognitive framework is in collaboration with the unreliable narratives during the resolution of the mystery.

Keywords: Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*, truth, unreliable narration, cognition

The Moonstone Romanında Güvenilmez Anlatı, Okuyucu, Biliş ve Hakikatin Bağlantı Noktası Öz

T.S. Eliot tarafından modern İngiliz dedektif romanlarında liste başı olarak gösterilen Wilkie Collins'in *The Moonstone* (1868) romanı, bir elmasın kaçırılma hikayesini anlatan sürükleyici bir metindir. Collins, romanın önsözünde, anlatılan olayların, anlatıcıların gerçekte ne olduğunu aktarma güdülerinden doğduğunu duyurur. Ardından ise çoklu anlatıcı stili, anlatıları güvenilmez kılarak temel bir hakikat versiyonuna erişimi engeller, ve romanın epistemolojik temelinde bir sorgulamaya yol açar. Bu çalışma, Collins'in çoklu anlatıcı tekniğinin dedektif kurgu yazın türüne kattığı yapısal değeri tanımakta, ve romanın problematik epistemolojisini bilişsel görüş noktasından araştırmaktadır. Güvenilmezlik meselesini yalnızca romanın yapısında aramak metne gereken yaklaşımı sunmamaktadır- Collins'in anlatıların hakikati üzerine ifadelerini incelerken bilişsel anlatıbilimin perspektifini benimsemek ve metni okuyucunun kavramsal ön kabullerinin farkındalığıyla okumak, güvenilmez anlatı meselesine "hakiki" bir yaklaşımı mümkün kılar.

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Okuyucu bilginin inşası sürecinde merkezi bir pozisyona sahip olmak durumundadır; diğer bir deyişle, okuyucunun bilişsel çerçevesi, esrarın çözülmesi sırasında güvenilmez anlatılarla işbirliği halindedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*, hakikat, güvenilmez anlatı, biliş

INTRODUCTION

In literary texts, long before Wayne C. Booth's introduction of the concept, unreliable narrator had been widely employed, and it had been attributed a great deal of significance. For Booth (1961), narrators are reliable as much as their harmony with the norms of the text, which also refers to the author's norms; on the contrary, the narrators are unreliable if they deviate from those norms. Later critics brought a new dimension to this definition, stating that the author of a text is not primarily required as the component of an unreliable narrative. Indeed, claiming the existence of unreliability equals to the recognition of reliability as an exclusive point of reference. Ansgar Nünning (1999) suggests at this point that a reader-centered approach be followed. For Nünning, reading is an interpretative and interactive process rather than a passive reception of textual data. The reader does not just decode texts: they actively construct storyworlds using their prior knowledge and cognitive schemas. For instance, as they read a detective novel, they rely on their mental frame of mystery, expecting clues, suspects, and a final revelation. In an unreliable narration are the reader's reflections that settle the uncertainties of the text. In this case, the unreliability of the narration turns into "an interpretive strategy or cognitive process" within an activity by the reader referred to as "naturalization", meaning the process by which the reader makes a narrative intelligible by fitting it into familiar cognitive frames, scripts, and experiential knowledge—even when the text is strange, fragmented, or formally experimental. This act of naturalizing is important as to understand where, when and how the reader tends to bond with the text and derive meanings out of it. Nünning (1997, p. 115) asserts at this point that the way the reader sees textual structures is not naturally given by the text itself; they access the knowledge of these elements through their cognitive frames. The readerly cognitive frame refers to the schematic knowledge structure built from past experience, culture learning and social norms, enabling the reader to recognize the situation being narrated, interpret characters' motives and actions, complete ungiven details within the story, and anticipate likely developments. A narrative's emergence as unreliable, in this sense, is very much dependent on "the mind of the beholder" rather than on "textual data". Indeed, starting from queries related to the unreliable elements provided by the narrative, such as data from the context(s), and the extent to which the author interferes with the narrator and constructs an unreliable narration, Nünning (2005) tends towards questioning the various ways in which the reader may interpret the story told while the context is stable: in other words, various cognitive features of the readers, backed up with social and cultural backgrounds, generate various textual interpretations.

If cognitive frames manage the reader's perception of the narrative, any fixation or shift in the reader's parameters of knowledge requires detailed investigation. While the classical concepts of the unreliable narrator and the tacit author draw attention to the text, now this narrative ambiguity

should be re-structuralized and examined under the light of cognitive theories which direct the focus to the reader. Due to the readers' diverse cognitive levels and stereotypical social norms, the narrative unreliability is entangled with their backgrounds and sets of beliefs. Therefore, the interaction between the readers' presumptions and the textual properties is inevitable. As James Phelan and Mary P. Martin put forth, the phenomenon of unreliable narration deserves theoretical reexamination. Drawing on three basic parameters (facts-events, values-judgements, knowledge-perception) of unreliability, they refer to six kinds of unreliable narration; these are "misreporting", "misevaluating", "misreading", "underreading", "underreporting" and "underregarding" (1999). These can concur as various sets in the literary text. Drawing on Booth's interpretation of the unreliable narrator, Phelan (2005) declares that a narrator may fulfill his missions of telling, interpreting and analyzing the events all at the same time on some occasions. Also, a sort of unreliable narration within one of the three parameters may, for Phelan, get in touch with the ones belonging to the other parameters. For example, underreporting, one of the focal matters in the narratives of *The Moonstone*, is also connected to underregarding, resulting in the narrative's misguidance in reaching truth.

Putting aside the conventional approach to unreliable narration given above, where should multiple narration as an indicator of unreliability stand considering the interaction between the text and the reader? Multiple narrative structure, as argued in this paper through the examination of Wilkie Collins's novel, serves as an indicator of what the author likes to achieve, highlighting the uncanny bond between the textual features and the readerly concepts. However, the parameters of unreliability mainly lie in the readerly experience.

Several reader-focused approaches taking the act of reading and interpretation to the fore (which also assert the validity of cognitive parameters) flourished at the turn of the century (Fludernik, 1993; Fludernik, 1996). These approaches are fed by psychological and linguistic scrutinization of information and knowledge. Cognitive narratology, having a portion of its origins in Marvin Minsky's research on artificial intelligence, echoes the claim that the process of reading could be defined as a structuration of assumptions and concepts through which the reader can figure the text out in his own potentiality. It is an interdisciplinary approach to the narrative studies that explores how readers mentally process stories. It brings together narratology, cognitive sciences, linguistics, and psychology to investigate how they understand and engage with narratives. Unlike classical narratology where the focus is on textual structures, cognitive narratology suggests that "readers actively construct meanings and impose frames on their interpretations of texts just as people have to interpret real-life experience in terms of available schemata" (Fludernik, 1996, p. 9). This paper herein aims to reveal how Collins' narrative strategy in *The Moonstone* should be examined by taking the reader's process of knowledge construction as the point of departure. It seeks the answer to the question of how Collins' holding multiple narratives and the narrators responsible for the narrative contradictions and unconformities, and keeping his promise to the reader only by leaving them engaged in their own interpretive realms result in the reader's processing the narrative knowledge. Gravitating towards the readers' storyworld construction, and their employment of cognitive frames and scripts, the paper claims that the novel's unreliable

narratives, and the inconsistencies in the narrators' traits and comments on the events, although appearing to be structural aspect of the text, mirror a much deeper facet of meaning making: they succeed to settle the ground for the reader to naturalize the story, cultivate their versions of truth depending on their own contextual premises, and evaporate the interrogation of the multiplicity of the textual voices. Collins presents the novel as a collection of eyewitness records and reports, which bears the necessity of the reader to mentally reconstruct the storyworld from these fragmented perspectives. They need to deal with the segmentation of events, breaking down various accounts and getting them together to form a coherent story. For instance, Betteredge's narrative opening the novel is detailed but distorted, and it contradicts the following narrative accounts, which gets the readers to reevaluate their mental model of events. Thus, there arises the need to recomprehend the concept of truth Collins nominally declares as a new, multifaceted set of paradigms.

David Herman defines cognitive narratology as the field where the ways through which narratives are linked to mental frames are investigated. These are examined via several elements regarding how a story is designed, elucidated, how the narrators generate their stories, how the reader perceives and finds a meaning in the narratives, and the cognitive tendencies of the characters in the narrative process. By means of this cognitive investigation, there have been efforts to go beyond the established approaches raised by structuralist perspectives concerning mental aspects effectuated in the understanding of a narrative, which help to find a new basis to analyze the connection between the narrative and the reader's cognition (Herman, 2009b). Studying mental associations with narratives requires the inclusion of several disciplines, some of them being philosophy, psychology, linguistics, and computer sciences. Some issues cognitive narratology investigates are the mental processes that enable the reader to mentally create the setting provided by the narratives, how they connect the hints in the narrative to the discourse and/or story to construct their knowledge of the narrative, and a breakdown of the characters with their foreground and background actions (Herman, 2009a). Hence, whether a narrative is a platform for fictional knowledge or not is a topic of debate.

Due to the rise of the reader-response theory and multiplicity in interpretation in the field of literary theory during the 1970s, the reader's use of prior knowledge, cognitive data and emotions in the decoding of meaning during their reading practices became a focal research domain. Following that, Sternberg and Perry (as cited in Herman, 2014) specified that an action can take place earlier than the occurrence of discourse, or discourse could appear earlier than an event, both of which are very likely to separate the reader's act of reading from a usual one - in which the story is narrated at a time closer to its discourse. Later, as a psychologist, Jean M. Mandler (1984) assumed that textual stories comprise of certain structures based on a cognitive ground. These structures, Mandler stated, serve to decode narratives into elements such as episodes, and rules through which these elements operate. In addition, theorists interested in artificial intelligence investigated the construction of narratives by scrutinizing the cognitive aspects to it. The existence of "script", in other words, the set of knowledge providing the basis for a set of occurrences to be kept in the memory, helped to demonstrate that a person can construe a composite version of a narrative in the memory despite having little number of prompts, textually or discursively (Herman, 2014). Scripts

are existent knowledge structures that help the reader predict what will happen next based on the common sequence of events. While reading a detective novel, they typically activate the crime-solving script, as they anticipate the occurrence of a crime, the investigation of a detective, the revelation of clues, and the resolution of the mystery. Apart from scripts, there are also “frames”, explained by Goffman (as cited in Herman, 2014) as how experiences are assumed to situate at a point in time. Frames are mental schemas that help the reader understand and categorize information based on prior experiences. They operate like blueprints that guide interpretation when the reader encounters new sets of information. For instance, in *The Moonstone*, when Betteredge alludes to *Robinson Crusoe*, he invokes a colonial frame that shapes his worldview and narratives. Frames are crucial for the reader in the act of reading since they develop certain expectations regarding the plot by looking at the items, events, or characters given through that frame. While scripts work to complement the empty spaces in the reader’s mind regarding the flow of events, and help them infer the next step the characters would take, frames are linked to the contexts, which help them sustain characters’ actions in their minds until another set of contextual knowledge is provided by the narrative. In this case, the reader’s perception and existing knowledge is the most effective device in interpreting not only the characters but also the knowledge they present in the works of fiction. Alan Palmer (2004) states that the reader also builds their knowledge of characters by benefiting from cues such as enouncements regarding the characters’ mental aspects and their behavior patterns in the texts. In other words, how the reader makes sense of a narration depends quite likely on their own matrix of cognition, scripts and frames. Therefore, a cognitive approach to narrative structures queries the impact of characters on the shaping of the fictional realm they are in, while at the same time asking whether the reader’s perception interferes with this shaping process. With the subjectivity it is grounded in- more due to the links it has with the reader’s cognitive frame than due to its structural ontology-, multiple narration should invite the review of cognitive perspective. In a detective novel, it helps to carry trial components like evidences, witness accounts and the eventual verdict to a literary visibility. While conventional theories of narratology approach the unreliability of narration as a rhetorical aspect of the text which awaits unravelling by the reader, this recent notion emphasizes the role of the reader’s cognitive aspects and preengages unreliability with the reader’s perceptive strategies.

Tamar Yacobi is another critic attributing a readerly aspect to the unreliability of the narrator while explaining the discrepancies within the narrative. Legitimizing narrative unreliability amounts to recognizing the existence of a medium “with humanlike cognitive and sensory capabilities” that constitute the reason of inconsistencies in the narrative (as cited in Margolin, 2009, p. 360). A scrutiny of the cognitive aspects of the narrator may set the basis for a psychological-mental understanding of the narrative unreliability. Narrators’ “defects” from a traditional standpoint, that is, insufficient knowledge of events, delusive circumstances they experience (like the aftermath of taking drugs), and personality deficiencies (like the habit of deceiving others) could be some examples. Such narratives take the reader’s focus away from the story and locate it on who tells it and how, inviting the reader’s own cognitive frame and norms to participate in the naturalization of textual knowledge. Hence, as Uri Margolin suggests, “[the readers’] corresponding

judgment of [the narrator] as intelligent and perceptive or not will have a decisive influence on [their] assessment of his credibility and ultimately on how much of what he claims about the narrated domain [they] are ready to accept" (2009, p. 361).

While investigating the readerly approaches to the unreliable elements in the narration, Yacobi (2005) finds out five means for the reader to deal with the unreliability. Among them, the "perspectival" aspect is significant since it attributes the discrepancies in the text to the unreliability of the narrator's inspection and remarks. When considered from this point of view, a narrative does not go beyond a proposition prone to change by a next assertion; so, the reader's presumption on the truth of knowledge given in a narrative can prove itself untrue in another context.

Another recent scholar, Lisa Zunshine (2006; 2008) draws on cognitive narratology to provide a mentalistic explanation for unreliable narration by locating it in the reader's theory-of-mind activity. This activity is the reader's continuous cognitive practice of attributing, tracking, and revising mental states (beliefs, desires, intentions, knowledge) of characters and narrators in order to make sense of a narrative. Unreliable narrators prompt the reader to construct and revise multiple layers of metarepresentation, where the narrator's beliefs are evaluated against alternative models of other characters' minds and the storyworld itself. The pleasure of unreliability, so to speak, derives from the reader's successful detection of inconsistencies and their ability to override the narrator's perspective with a more coherent cognitive model. Therefore, unreliable narration can be understood like a rhetorical deviation from implied authorial norms, like the cognitive activation of a readerly frame based on textual and cultural cues, and like the attribution of a psychologically flawed or limited mental-state model to the narrator through theory-of-mind processes.

TRUTH AS A COGNITIVE IDEAL IN *THE MOONSTONE*

Collins is famous for his introduction of well-crafted stories reflecting Victorian sensationalism. Suspense is always kept high in his works. The plot moves gradually on a line, employing several flashbacks or chronological deviations to locate some evidence the story previously lacked. How many characters are to be narrators is really unpredictable; one narrator could continue until the end of the story, or turn over the duty to another after a single-page narration. While the Prologue is told by one narrator, the Epilogue of *The Moonstone* is narrated by three, for instance. There are eight characters that tell the whole story; among them, Franklin Blake takes turns twice. Most of the narratives Collins constructs in his novels are based on the accounts of eyewitnesses and are given in the form of letters, journals, written documents, or diaries. So, he avoids exposing the characters and events directly. The more the characters utter their impressions on the events they see and hear, the more they reveal knowledge about themselves, too. In addition to their actions, their personality traits shape and manage the overall narration. Meanwhile, the plot is not disrupted at all, consolidated with the comprehensible language the characters use while presenting mysteries.

Having gained a late popularity, *The Moonstone* was published in *All the Year Round*, Charles Dickens' reputable journal, in 1868. Its contribution to detective novel genre is extensively praised. The novel is open to epistemological questions in that it displays a complex web of how a piece of

knowledge earns its name, and explores the meticulous ways narrators, Franklin Blake being in the first place, analyze the details of the events. According to Lewis Roberts (1997), the quicksand in the novel, named as *The Shivering Sand*, stands as the blend of an ambiguous epistemological system into the fictional realism of the novel. The Sand should stand as a metaphor for the novel's construction of truth: being a beautiful and natural landscape, and at the same time giving a metaphysical sense of terror, it looks like both hiding and exposing the mysteries. It gives the reader the feeling that Collins deliberately locked in some evidence regarding the theft there. A mingle of innocence and criminality, *The Shivering Sand* echoes at some critical scenes where characters exchange knowledge with all their ambiguities, and in this way, symbolizes the plain of pores where the reader's construction of knowledge is invited.

Initiated by Collins in the Preface, *The Moonstone* often refers to the construct of truth throughout the novel. The word "truth" is used 250 times throughout the text- including the Preface; "The Discovery of the Truth" is the title of the novel's second half. The pressure of establishing a story based on truth is relieved by the multiple narration afterwards, resulting in a compulsory subjectivity in the readers' judgement of the accounts. Joshua Gooch claims that the story of the diamond's discovery is not separable from the main story, which is about its theft. The former is produced by the latter's "unproductive narrative labor" (2010, p. 120). So, the point of departure and the arrival point are interwoven, which moves away the essentiality of the theft story even further.

What is implied by "truth"? Some hints to answer this question are found in the preface of *Basil*, one of Collins' previous works. As a Victorian, he might have been called into explaining his reasons for using romantic elements embroidered with realistic motifs, and predicating his employment of criminal, violent and lustful scenes on measurable grounds. In the novel's Letter of Dedication, he says: "I have founded the main event out of which this story springs, on a fact within my own knowledge. In afterwards shaping the course of the narrative thus suggested, I have guided it. . . by my own experience, or by experience related to me by others, that it would touch on something real and true in its progress" (Collins, 1852, p. 3). He adds, however, that he does not stick to the daily facts only; rather, to incite the readers, he would benefit from other sources "beyond [their] own experience" (1852, p. 5). According to Collins, when the reader sees criminal and violent scenes, that is because these exist in life. He believes these events carry a purpose related to morality, stating this claim to be a universally acknowledged truth. Because he is guided by this notion throughout, he says, he is righteous in referring to that truth. Indeed, in all such statements, Collins' emphasis is on the issue of writer searching for truth, not on whether a paramount truth exists or not, despite the Victorian obstinacy concerning the questioning of truth.

Collins announces in the Preface that he deterred himself from "the novelist's privilege of supposing something which might have happened, and have so shaped the story as to make it grow out of what actually would have happened . . ." (1868, p. 3). He states that his loyalty to following the facts and the multiple narration technique he employed are supportive of each other. He was inspired by a real crime, Road Murder Case of 1860, in the creation of the story. Having a number of narrators speaking of the events one after another, however, provides the reader with an option to read all the different accounts, and naturalize the story shared by one or more of those, and

conclude the way they find correct, which is an extension of their own cognition. Hence, what Collins alleges he is after in the form of truth cannot go beyond the sum of the narrators' knowledge absorbed by the reader's cognitive frame, though it contextually appears to be the resolution process of a crime.

The novel issues the recount of the moonstone's history while shedding light on the mystery behind its theft. The moonstone, as described by Betteredge when he first sees it, is a gem with dual aspect: "This jewel, that you could hold between your finger and thumb, seemed unfathomable as the heavens themselves" (1868, p. 74). He mentions that they kept the diamond under the sunlight for a while, and then moved it to the dark; still, it maintained its "moony gleam". Mysterious as it is, the diamond both hides and shows its essence.

Echoing Collins' statement that one aim of the novel is investigating the characters' impact on the circumstances, the narration manifests as a realm where characters follow the desires and motives of their own preferences. It almost feels like the characters' perspectives are totally superstitious— the novel bases an event on the mystery around which the readers should interpret the theft. Narrators are the generators of knowledge, and the narration relies on more than one character, which makes their position even more critical when they are not only the narrators but also do observe the novel's multiple narrative structure. Most of the characters give their accounts of the story and fabricate them in a way which subordinates the importance of those same narrations. They hide their knowledge of the event during the time of its narration by any other character, preferring to ignore the degree of significance that narration carries. Hence, all narrators in tandem add a bit more to the reader's distance to an epistemological singularity. For instance, Rachel's eccentric behaviors increase upon the theft of the moonstone. The unreliable narrators bring to mind that any potential incidents now unknown could have happened to the diamond, which strengthens the multiplicity of the readerly frames that could interpret what is happening at the moment of narration, or what will happen in the future.

Collins puzzlingly says in his references to truth that there is a non-negotiable truth, and the author's role is to earn the reader the "knowledge" that truth exists. If, as cognitive narratology argues, multiple narratives provide the ground for the narrators to perform inasmuch as their cognitive frames allow, can they strengthen the already existing, unchanging truth of the story? Walter Houghton states at this point that "it is this faith in the existence of ultimate truths. . . and in the capacity of the human mind to discover them . . . which unites the partisans of every school. That, one is tempted to say, is the one intellectual certitude in Victorian England" (1963, p. 14). Houghton also informs that especially after 1870, rising emphasis in the intellectual faculties, and the flourishing of psychology, sociology and anthropology resulted in the re-conceptualization of truth as a relative matter. Truth eventually opens itself to disproof. Also, for Collins, unlikely incidents could happen anytime. He creates a systematic delivery of information out of the "labyrinths" and "puzzles", just as when Ezra Jennings attempts to interpret the unclear words Mr. Candy utters while sick by following the path of making a puzzle. On a broader level, the puzzle here may symbolize the novel itself.

Two narratives, one being the criminal story and the other, the investigation process, flow analogously in the novel. After the moonstone is lost, the characters set off to find out what happened to it. While the investigation story reaches a resolution, the crime story flares up. This is another implication of the problem: rather than providing the reader with a gradual story development, multiple narration only makes the narrators disclose the events at their own pace and with their own knowledge. Accordingly, upon each narration comes a truth-altering intervention to the flow of events, and therefore, a challenge to the reader's cognitive frame. Rachel tells her account of Franklin Blake's thievery in the third Narrative in Chapter 7, and declares Godfrey Ablewhite's position in it in the sixth Narrative. In this Narrative, Ablewhite's personal life is also told, starting with his death and turning back to the time he was involved in the crime. Or the fact that Mr. Candy gives Franklin Blake drugs is revealed in the third Narrative of Chapter 10. However, in all these narratives, there are several missing parts which prevent the flow of events from connecting with the ongoing story. This is not the only point activating the reader's frame in Collins' narrative construct. Whenever a narrator reveals a piece of knowledge, though tardily, both the narrator and the reader are compelled to swiftly modify their perceptions. It is rather difficult, if not possible, for the reader to resist associating the accounts with their own sets of norms, beliefs and values. Meanwhile, it is this modification that generates the "sensations", the focus of many Victorian novels, as the Victorian literary critics put it (Kendrick, 1977, p. 20).

Another implication of how the novel's unreliable multiple narration appeals to the cognitive epistemology is that the selection of narrators is made randomly rather than according to what and who would help to reveal the mystery behind the theft. For instance, Godfrey and Rachel are two very suitable eyewitnesses to give accounts since they were at the crime setting, but they are not entitled to be narrators because if they were, they would shed light on all the unknown elements of the story. Collins obviously does not aim to get his narrators to solve a mystery as a typical detective story does; instead, he continues feeding the well-crafted mystery of the crime. Establishing their unique voices, the narrators step forward only in terms of their functionality rather than their genuineness, which, again, proves that the multiple narrative style is a reflection of the readerly frame applied in the interpretation of the events. One significant character at this point is Betteredge. There is a contradiction between the passion he introduces his personality with, and his speeches and writings that are not typical of a head servant. Apparently, Betteredge is a servant whom the world has not seen before (Page, 1974, p. 137). His talkativeness and humor meet the Victorian expectations, which still does not suffice to earn essentiality to his accounts. The narrators are open to dispute because the facts expected to back their accounts up are never uncovered, and they are subordinate to the readerly attribution of truthfulness. The resolution of events at the end of the novel can be considered valid to the point of the parallelism it shows with the ending of a typical detective novel, but this does not refer to a truthfulness as Collins hinted at the beginning of the novel.

Collins' employment of multiple narration calls for a re-evaluation of the concept of truth by the epistemological norms of the reader. For a detective story to sound realistic, it is commonly expected to draw on rational knowledge which takes the reader to absolute truth; however, in *The*

Moonstone, the unknown and the blurred are cherished not only on a structural level but through the space it makes for the readerly conceptualization; the unresolved mysteriousness turns out to be the ultimate story. Indeed, in the Letter of Dedication in *Basil*, he reveals that mystery is inseparable to telling a story in that it not only attracts the reader's attention but also prolongs the impact of the story. He states:

"I have not stooped so low as to assure myself of the reader's belief in the probability of my story, by never once calling on him for the exercise of his faith. . . . It would be only by appealing to other sources. . . beyond his own experience, that I could hope to fix his interest and excite his suspense, to occupy his deeper feelings, or to stir his noble thoughts" (1852, p. 5).

However, while the events in *The Moonstone* proceed, it is understood that such situations depicted to be beyond the reader's experience merely comprise the unreliable narrations of several speakers that end up accessing meaning in the reader's cognitive frames. As previously stated, Collins writes in the Preface that the incidents, being more than assumptions, emerge from the characters' true accounts which gave the plot its shape in order to make it emerge from what really happened. The novel, carried out by the "true" stories of the eyewitnesses, reflects the concern of accuracy not only in its narrative mode and the repetition of the word "truth" but also with the scientific experiment that sheds light on the events surrounding the theft. Such a keenness to reveal the truth and the effort to reminisce what actually happened is a venture anticipated in the detective genre; however, the unusual thing is that Collins portrays a concept of truth which entangles the implicit and the explicit, the hidden and the exposed, so that those two edges simultaneously exist on a ground of equity. This, in turn, reinforces the symbolic contextualization of multiple narration as to provide the perfect sphere for the reader's conceptualization of truth through their own premises.

The narrators are in various occupations; for instance, Mr. Bruff is a lawyer, Betteredge is a servant, or Sergeant Cuff is a detective. There is, however, no hint given to gain insight into the narrators' psyche and mental constructs. They exhibit behaviors that seem too contradictory to have at a time. For instance, Betteredge introduces Franklin Blake as a philosophical German, a witty Frenchman, a lazy Italian, and an empirical Englishman (1868, p. 56). Franklin keeps himself at a certain distance from Betteredge's descriptions; meanwhile, Betteredge tells Franklin returned from abroad with several changes in his character traits. Laziness, being hardworking, having both sharp and blurred mind, impotency and ambition- all describe Franklin quite well in Betteredge's observation. On the other hand, Franklin is ready to refute what Betteredge has been insisting on:

"He has, in his own quaint way, interpreted seriously one of his young mistress's many satirical references to my foreign education; and has persuaded himself that he actually saw those French, German, and Italian sides to my character, . . . which never had any real existence, except in our good Betteredge's own brain" (1868, pp. 296-297).

Neither Betteredge's introduction of Franklin nor Franklin himself targets an essential truth. From this point on, Franklin handles the dynamics of narration. In the following lines, he may even be thought of as the main narrator of the plot, prevailing Betteredge's initial narration. This shift is, again, a clue for understanding what type of a mystery the reader faces, and draws attention to the

readerly intervention to the construction of the truth underlying the narratives. Even the knowledge the reader receives about a narrator is open to questioning.

Franklin is purposeful in his narration – and cautious against any “untrue” accounts that might possibly be given. He insists that “this strange family story of [theirs]” must be told because the memories of “innocent” people are humiliated if people in the later times cannot learn the true account of the events (1868, p. 21). He continues:

We have certain events to relate . . . and we have certain persons concerned in those events who are capable of relating them. Starting from these plain facts, the idea is that we should all write the story of the Moonstone in turn - as far as our own personal experience extends, and no farther. . . This prefatory narrative I have already got by me in the form of an old family paper, which relates the necessary particulars on the authority of an eye-witness. (1868, p. 21).

Even though he refers to the events as “plain facts”, the scopes of the narratives will be restricted to what the owner of each is able to narrate for maintaining the truth. An old family paper substitutes for an eye-witness record, so there is not an eye-witness around that will contribute to the narrative. These make Franklin a quaint ruler in the narration. Exceeding the boundaries of a typical explorer in detective novels, he narrates, appears like both the thief and the detective, and edits the overall story throughout the plot. He provokes other narrators at times, steps in and reconstructs their narration, gives references to the narratives prior to theirs by getting into dialogues, and even limits the narrators when he finds it necessary.

If Franklin intends only to provide a truthful account of the theft while getting all these narratives together like a patchwork, the reader rightfully wonders why Rachel Verinder and Godfrey Ablewhite are not placed among the narrators. Since these two are closely connected with the theft scene, they deserve to be given voice to. Yet they are constantly left out and positioned as the other, deprived of their narrative authority. Collins disqualifies Godfrey’s narrative power because if he does not, the secret becomes clear earlier than Collins wishes it to, and renders Godfrey dishonest about his position in the story. In other words, Collins consolidates the function of the unreliable narrative technique. Rachel would be another challenge to the narrative. At the time when Franklin comes to Betteredge with the offer to write down the diamond’s story, Franklin is married to Rachel. The moonstone was stolen approximately two years prior to the plan of writing its story. Although Collins refers to Rachel at the Preface as the girl who, with her conduct, provides the foundation on which he has established the book, it would be challenging to introduce her as a narrator due to the risk of demystification of the theft (Roberts, 1997, p. 171). There emerges a price of restraining Rachel, though. With the secrecy she owns, her characterization feels significant but strange at the same time. She may still be perceived to be at a central point in the novel. By the time her secret comes to light, however, she loses her attractiveness, and Franklin fills in her position. She is not that critical character within the narrative anymore. Now, Franklin has dialogues with Ezra Jennings, taking the reader to the resolution of the secrecy. Rachel affects the demystification of the secret not by revealing her knowledge, but by maintaining silence and not laying it bare, which is, again, indicative of the symbolic position of unreliable narration that set the reader’s place in the act of interpretation. Her position as an invisible control mechanism on the truth reinforces the

unreliable narrative style in ways where the construction of truth starts with the narrative perceptions and expands across the reader's cognitive frame.

From a gender perspective, Rachel's exclusion from narrative authority illustrates a bias in narration; further, it exposes a fundamental asymmetry between knowledge possession and legitimacy. Rachel knows the truth of the diamond's disappearance in advance, but her knowledge remains narratively idle because the novel's evident-based regime recognizes truth only when it assumes a masculine form—that is, rational explanation, public confession, and procedural narration. So, the novel's unreliability is not merely a failure to know correctly, but a failure to grant epistemic status to forms of knowing socially coded as feminine—intuition, ethical restraint, or relational loyalty. Where male narrators gain authority by narrating their errors and revising their judgments, Rachel is denied the corrective mechanism of confession. Her silence is therefore misread as emotional excess rather than ethical deliberation, revealing how gender determines not only who speaks, but which motivations are legible as rational. This asymmetry produces a specifically gendered form of unreliable narration: the novel's male narrators reliably record events yet misinterpret female agency. Their accounts are factually earnest but interpretively flawed, and reduce Rachel's silence to irrationality or romantic petulance. Unreliability thus emerges not from deception but from structural misrecognition, in which male narrators lack the cognitive and cultural schemas to interpret female silence as a meaningful epistemic act. The result is a narrative in which truth exists but is persistently displaced from the centers of narration that claim epistemic authority. Taken together, Rachel's exclusion from narration demonstrates that unreliable narration in the novel is an effect of a narrative system structured by gendered assumptions about who may speak truth, how truth must be voiced, and which forms of knowledge can count as rational.

The moment the narrative silences Rachel and empowers Franklin is when Rachel confesses Franklin that she witnessed him stealing the diamond. Now Collins aims to prove Franklin naive and unaware of his deed. Franklin, however, continues exposing himself as distrustful on individual and social level. This is evident when other narrators mention Franklin in their talks; the reader does not simply hear about Franklin but what the other narrators think of him. Collins gives several implications of Franklin's improper traits proving him to be an unreliable narrator. However, this does not mean that the others talking about him are truthful, as seen in Miss Clack's reference to him as too materialist, while she herself is a hypocrite because she allows payment from him in return for her written record of events. Franklin is also an unpleasurable narrator with his treatment of Limping Lucy and Rosanna Spearman. He answers Lucy's question concerning whether he feels remorse when he sees a poor girl in service, in a surprised tone: "Certainly not. Why should I?", stating that he finds Lucy's words pointless, identifying a flaw in her and nothing about himself. He continues: "I could only suppose that she was mad. . . . Having reached that inevitable conclusion, I turned to the more interesting object of investigation which was presented to me by Rosanna Spearman's letter" (1868, p. 309). He finds the letters equally impossible to understand, and reveals his self-centeredness. Ironically, Franklin has been the novel's focal narrator so far. His unreliability is not determined by the multiple narrative structure of the text- he, like the other unreliable

narrators in the novel, is practically a phenomenon that could be considered under the light of the conceptual meanings the reader adds to the text in their reading experience.

Collins declares his sympathy for a true and objective narration in the Preface, and he favors plots woven in a realistic context, as seen in his integration of details from the legal or medical contexts in his works (Lonoff, 1982, pp. 146-149). Apart from Franklin, who emphasizes the requirement of recording the facts and says all narrators are supposed to tell only what they saw because only in this manner might the true background of the theft be told, Ezra Jennings takes the stage as another narrator emphasizing the pursuit of truth. As a doctor, he cites from scientific materials and experimental data to increase the plausibility of his defense for Franklin's innocence. He is fully conscious of this intention as he states: "I think myself bound to prove, in justice to both of us, that I am not asking you to try this experiment in deference to any theory of my own devising. . . . Give me five minutes of your attention; and I will undertake to show you that Science sanctions my proposal, fanciful as it may seem" (1868, p. 390). Collins refers to Jennings' prospective contribution to the story with his science-based narration in the Preface by underlining the significance of accuracy in the novel and how the story will be narrated based on scientific evidence. He informs that he finds out the results of Jennings' experiment not only from books, but also from living authorities.

Jennings is a narrator whose past is speculative. He mentions that he has been accused of a cause of which he cannot vindicate himself for years. As an outcast, he states, his only hope has been obscurity. He is also an opium addict, and alleges the possibility that Franklin, too, was under the influence of opium while taking the diamond away. Starting his argument with a scientific undertone, he continues by showing resources to support the legitimacy of his "objective" narration: "Observe, Mr. Blake, before you begin, that I am now referring you to one of the greatest of English physiologists. The book in your hand is Doctor Elliotson's *Human Physiology*. Are you satisfied that I have not spoken without good authority supporting me?" (1868, p. 390). He refers to Dr. Elliotson and Dr. Carpenter while explaining the possible outcomes of his experiment on Franklin, the former being renowned as a practitioner of mesmerism. His scientific ground is shaken even more as he talks about the experiment: "I treated the result thus obtained, on something like the principle which one adopts in putting together a child's 'puzzle'. It is all confusion to begin with; but it may be all brought into order and shape, if you can only find the right way" (1868, p. 374). His analysis of the crime, hence, can be no further than bringing together the pieces of a puzzle in the "right way", to which the reader should respond in their individual naturalization of the text. His medical profession is more dependent on esoteric knowledge than on experimental science. His appearance is also unusual as his career as a physician; he looks both aged and young with some gypsy features and a nose with Eastern features, which is a contrast to his Western identity, and eyes with a potential to hypnotize. Indeed, he reflects the mystical elements that surround his way of making science. The knowledge he provides the reader with is the Eastern elements of mystery. Far from a doctor of positive sciences, he appears to be more a character of occult practices. Showing Dr. Carpenter, known with his studies on the unconscious mind, and Dr. Elliotson, famous for his attention to mesmerism and esoterism as his references in the experiment, Jennings underlines

Collins' definition of truth that correlates with the readerly cognitive frame once again. Collins does not finalize the pursuit of truth by any of the narrators- seemingly for keeping the suspense high, but on a deeper level, for providing the reader with the space to construct their own.

Following the experiment, Franklin is freed from his convict, turns back to his social position in the novel, and gets engaged to Rachel. It is Betteredge at this stage who claims to "shut up the story" by saying "when this is said, all is said" with reference to the happily ending story (1868, p. 463). However, the main story has not ended yet. Now Murthwaite takes his turn and narrates the story of the three Indians taking the diamond back to India. The diamond has belonged to the forehead of a sacred Indian icon, but it was unlawfully taken by John Herncastle and presented to Rachel as a gift. The priests, restoring the diamond to where it belongs, bring the true end of the novel. It is not any of the narrators and the narratives ending the mystery in this case. While Collins does not treat unreliable narration as an occasional distortion originating in individual moral failure or deception but builds it into the novel as a governing epistemology—a way of knowing the world that is necessarily partial, the circulation of the diamond itself provides the material logic for this epistemology. Just as the diamond moves across geographical, cultural, and legal boundaries that resist permanent containment, narrative truth in the novel circulates across multiple narrators without fully stabilizing in a single authoritative account.

Assembled from testimonies by socially positioned narrators, the novel's structure does not aim at omniscience but at approximation. Truth is produced retroactively and accidentally. Importantly, this process mirrors the colonial displacement of the diamond: both the object and the narrative are removed from their original contexts and subjected to alien systems of interpretation that can only grasp them incompletely. From the outset, the narrators attempt to render the diamond intelligible within familiar frames that also relate to colonial enterprise: inheritance, property law, criminal investigation, and moral accountability. Yet the diamond constantly resists these frames. Kept by an unbroken lineage of Brahmin custodians, its original status as a sacred object in India cannot be fully translated into English legal or epistemic terms. As a result, the narrators systematically misrecognize the nature of the object they are describing. This misrecognition is not incidental; it produces narrative unreliability. Because the English narrators conceptualize the diamond as stolen property rather than violated sanctity, their accounts remain epistemically abbreviated. They can explain how the diamond moves, who possesses it, or how it disappears, but not why it ultimately refuses English ownership, and this opens up the space for a postcolonial reading of the diamond. Its return to India, too reveals this failure of comprehension, highlighting English narration as structurally limited rather than solely mistaken.

CONCLUSION

It might be argued that the author of a detective story gives promises to not fulfill them, and by nature, elevates suspense. However, Collins' repeated emphasis on the loyalty to truth throughout the text indicates that the narratives, and the text in general, provide the groundwork for the reader's cognitive process of naturalization. Collins' story is not unidirectional, taking the reader from the unresolved crime to the resolution. His promise causes the distortion or orientation

of the reader's mental expectations, and exclusively stresses out the reader's cognitive activities, each of which are idiosyncratic. While mellowly constructing a setting where no narrator can be denounced for their unverifiable accounts of events, Collins himself calls the novel's epistemology in question. Even the novel's last lines by Murthwaite maintain the query of the awaiting events regarding the diamond when he implies the suspenseful process the diamond could undergo in the future. Therefore, the story remains "truly" open-ended. The reader's job has to be not to constantly measure the narrative validity or credibility but to reflect on how different accounts are employed, to what extent they are able to naturalize the text, and what impact these have on their reading activity. The narrative works in two ways: it veils the details of the narrators and then reveals how deceiving they are. While supposedly searching for a way to reach the truth, the text plants seeds of complication on each layer. The narrative viewpoints are totally different from each other, which keeps the reader in the construction of the information they get, and hence, suggests a dynamic reading. While Collins expresses his disapproval of deception and a deep interest for revealing the truth, the reader reads contradictions, is ambiguously led, and is left alone with all the unanswered parts of the story. The author retracts his own authorial power from the narration as he makes up only nominally frank speakers. Within this unreliable plethora, multiple narration takes over the control of what truth is, and underlines interpretation as the knowledge that flourishes only in the reader's cognition.

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27 MAYIS DARBESİ'NİN TÜRK ROMANINA YANSIMASI

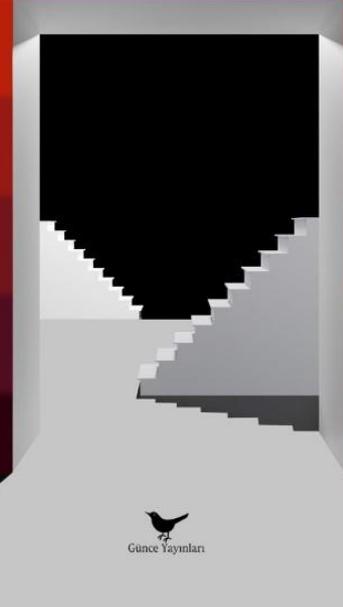
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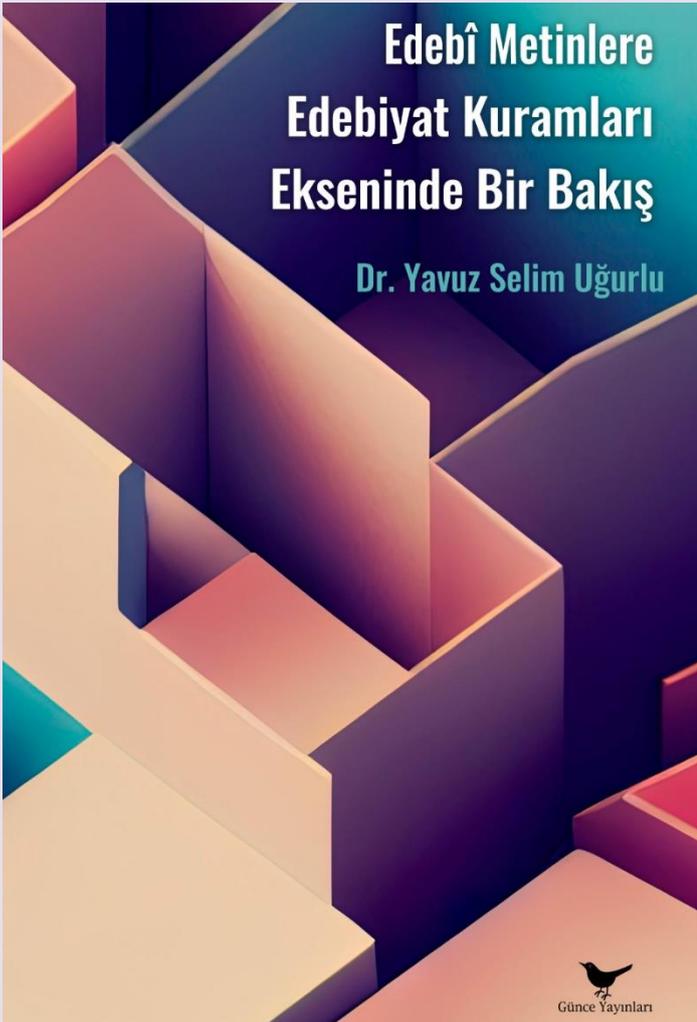
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