

The truth of the matter: truth finding in Victorian sensation fiction

Goh, Hillary Anqi

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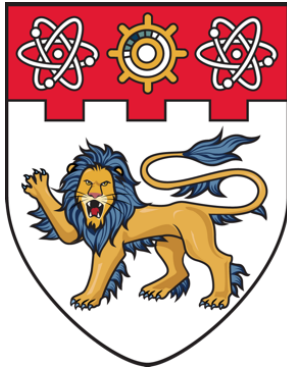
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**The Truth of The Matter:
Truth Finding in Victorian Sensation Fiction**

Hillary Goh Anqi

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

2022

The Truth of The Matter: Truth Finding in Victorian Sensation Fiction

Hillary Goh Anqi


School of Humanities

A thesis submitted to the Nanyang Technological University in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of **Master of Arts**

2022

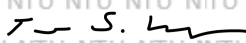
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SUMMARY

This dissertation seeks to evaluate how Victorian sensation fiction engages with means of truth finding and systematic inquiry through aesthetic and scientific discourse of the time. With the introduction of new and influential scientific studies, the authority of religion and prior metaphysical certainties of knowledge were increasingly undermined in the Victorian period, setting the stage for redefining knowing and the knowable in order to address existential questions. This process of re-evaluating past knowledge and the pursuit of truth can be seen in the genre of sensation fiction, which experimented with ideas of suspense and inquiry through mystery arcs based on the sensationalised crimes of the day. Setting up intriguing mystery plots only to conclude with scandalous revelations within the typically safe domestic space articulates the changing Victorian outlook of how things were not as they seem. Nevertheless, the elements of the aesthetic and the scientific within these texts contribute to shedding light and resolving these mysteries. I propose analysing sensation fiction which explicitly engages with current aesthetic or scientific theories as methods of uncovering the truth. These texts include M.E Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* (1868) of the mid-nineteenth century to the later part of the century with Collins' *Heart and Science* (1882). A critical analysis of these texts shows how the evolution of aesthetic and scientific discourse work to reveal not just the truths of mysteries, but ultimately the conceptions and realisations of the nature of Man at the heart of these mysteries.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1. Truth in the Victorian Era

In Victorian popular culture, sensation fiction offered a narrative testing-ground that engaged with matters of truth finding. Several key sensational texts illuminate the shift in Victorian ideas of truth, especially regarding truths of humanity. While truth may refer to the objective, factual reality, the Victorians were characteristically more concerned about the “truthfulness” and morality of an individual, as reflected in their popular narratives. Both aspects of truth, however, were deeply influenced by the Christian religious narrative, which established an objective concept of truth such as how the universe came to be and addressed the moral truthfulness of the Christian God and his followers. However, multiple scientific and philosophical developments in the nineteenth century were seen to conflict with Christian theological claims. Instead, competing truths about human nature surfaced, causing the Victorians much struggle as they attempted to reconcile multiple ideas of truth. This paper thus explores what such conflicting truths encompassed, how such truths surfaced in light of the scientific and aesthetic developments, and how they were addressed in sensation fiction.

The Victorian period has been described to be not so much an “age of democracy or industry or science, nor of earnestness or optimism” (Houghton 1), but, as Victorian critic Henry Holland declares, “an age of transition”(qtd. in Houghton 1). Greatly distinguished from the sensibilities of the preceding Romantics, the Victorian period was a time of great change, influenced by the advancements in various spheres. These changes notably unseated Victorians from their firm understanding of the world through religious foundations and spawned new undertakings to re-establish their perspective of life itself. In

his essay, “The Victorianism of Victorian Literature”, Michael Timko credits the major changes of the Victorian period to the development of Kantian thought and the influence of Charles Darwin’s theories of evolution. The development of Kantian thought, specifically on synthetic a priori knowledge set out in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), complicated the current ways of knowing. In *Critique*, Kant proposes that human beings possess synthetic a priori knowledge, or fixed concepts such as space and time, which in turn help make sense of the sensory, natural and observable world.¹ However, such a priori knowledge filters the perception of the world, such that the noumenal world of metaphysics – namely of “God, freedom (of will) and immortality” (15) – can never be known as they cannot be experienced. As Kant puts it, such investigations of reason occurred “in this transcendental or supersensible sphere, where experience affords us neither instruction nor guidance” (15). With the development of such Kantian thought, “man’s very ability to know was brought in doubt, and this at a time when it was especially urgent for him to learn more about himself and his world” (Timko 610).

The publication of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) further added to these anxieties in religious Victorian England, as several points of Darwin’s theories appeared to contradict with the Christian narrative of the creation of the world. While the Victorians had held on to the idea that “God...had created everything at one go, in an appropriately perfect and immutable form” with human beings at the centre of God’s grand design, Darwinism posited that the different species were not “made in their final form by God but changed and evolved over time” (Evans). Darwin’s theories of evolution were seen to degrade humanity into a “mere product of mechanical processes”

¹ As Kant writes, “We may content ourselves with having established the fact, that we do possess and exercise a faculty of pure *a priori* cognition” (*Critique* 15).

(Evans) and incited strong reactions from religious Victorians who abhorred “the idea of human relatedness to apes, [were] alarmed by the role that Darwinism accords to chance, and [feared] the moral implications of a materialist science of humankind” (Orr 771).

Darwin’s theories spawned complex reactions, ranging from those who disbelieved science to those who disbelieved religion, though the majority tried to find ways to reconcile both. Among scientific circles, several religious scientists responded by trying to refute Darwin’s theories with their own scientific studies. Among these, Edward J. Larson cites St George Jackson Mivart and the Duke of Argyll in his article, both of whom “separately devised weak but less vulnerable versions of theistic evolution” (17). Other theistic scientists like Harvard botanist and Darwin’s friend, Asa Gray, who had difficulty accepting evolution and natural selection “supplemented their evolutionism with various auxiliary mechanisms, including guided interventions by the Creator” (Ruse 35). While varying models of theistic evolution flourished “among theologians, scientists and the general public, they increasingly disappeared from the formal scientific literature and survived as vehicles that gave meaning to and made sense of the natural world for religious believers” (Larson 17). British physicist and traditionalist, Lord Kelvin, contended against natural selection from another angle, through his expertise in thermodynamics, estimating “the earth’s age at about one hundred million years – or far less than natural selection required” (Larson 13). At the heart of the matter, Larson posits that “many nineteenth century scientists simply could not imagine life without God” (16) and attempted to reconcile these evolutionary theories with their faith. He posits that British astronomer John Herschel spoke for many British scientists when he accepted that “naturalistic processes may serve as the immediate cause of life’s development” but maintained that “an intelligence, guided by a purpose, must be continually in action to bias the directions of the steps of change – to regulate their amount

– to limit their divergence – and to continue them in a definite course” (Herschel qtd. in Larson 16).²

Hence, the “Kantian epistemological dichotomy” (Timko 613) of the innate inability to know the metaphysical, noumenal world and the apparently “irrefutable Darwinian evidence” (613) of natural selection greatly impacted the Victorians’ worldview, so influenced by the religious narrative. With these theories, the nature of humanity was rent asunder from divine Nature or God, leaving most Victorians without “any recognizable guidelines or aids” (Timko 616) that informed his morality or measured his “civility”. Human nature was now shrouded in a pall of secular mystery which demanded “new science, the new philosophies, the new social conditions” to be defined, decoded and ordered so that the Victorian might achieve “an inward integrity” (Pitt 251).

While the Victorians responded to the religious existential crisis and modern cultural anxieties by “turning to the knowable, [seeking] for certainty in the human qualities that would prove both man’s humanity and his humanness” (Timko 613), they simultaneously sought to revise current frameworks of seeing the natural world, humanity and society to accommodate these modern developments across the different fields of knowledge, and so explain the truth of human nature.³ This spirit of re-evaluation and refining previously established ways of thinking can be seen in the case of Darwin’s publications of his theories. As an example, Victorians from religious and scientific groups seized upon the publication of

² Josef Altholz additionally summarises that a traditional, biblically-centred, educated man in the 1870s would have to either “deny the findings of biblical criticism and natural science, supported by an increasing mass of evidence, or else to re-create that faith on a new basis which few were able to construct”. See *Altholz’s The Warfare of Conscience with Theology* (1976).

³ I refer to both definitions of “truth” in its objective and moral sense, as both are observed to become deeply intertwined across the Victorian conversation, especially in the selected sensational fiction texts. I use the term “human nature” here and throughout to refer to what the Britannica Encyclopedia quantifies as the “fundamental dispositions and traits of human”, focusing on ideas of morality, volition, culpability and capacity without delving too deeply and philosophically into the finer points of humanity. See *Encyclopedia Britannica* on “Human nature”.

Darwinism as an opportunity for them to refine both frameworks of knowledge. In the scientific field, Darwinism raised new considerations on the nature of the scientific method. While British scientists largely touted the Inductive methods as the means to validate scientific theories instead of the Continental's Deductive methods of hypothesis (Ellegard 364), Darwin purportedly used both deductive and inductive methods to arrive at his theories. He took care to present his findings to the public in the language of the Baconian and British Inductive methods, working from his observations of various species and ultimately formulating a theory from his analysis without mentions of hypothesis. However, his journals nevertheless showed that he did incorporate hypothesis from the Deductive methods into his studies (Ayala 10033). With Darwinism, several leading British scientists, including John Stuart Mill and William Whewell, ultimately attempted to refine the inductive methodology to complement Deductive methods (Ellegard 365, 372), revolutionising and adapting traditional scientific methodology for progress. Similarly, within the Church, Orr contends that some Christians were open to considering Darwin's theories, as "this new science forced the church to abandon literalist readings of the book of Genesis" (771) and explore other methods of spiritual interpretation of Scripture, such as allegorical readings. Thus, the undermining of prior metaphysical certainties coincided with the Victorians' burgeoning desire to review past systems of knowledge and redefine the knowable in order to address existential questions. These new ways of establishing knowledge and sifting for truths thereby offered and demanded new ways of presenting and unveiling truths about human nature as a mystery of the modern world.

2. Sensation Fiction

Literature proved to be an active site for such dialogue in navigating the mystery of the nebulous, complex self and sifting for the truths of human nature. This process of re-evaluating past knowledge and the pursuit of truth can be seen most clearly in Gothic literature, specifically in the updated genre of sensation fiction, which experimented with ideas of moral ambiguity, inquiry and the seeking of truths about humankind. The Gothic explored the mysterious in terms of questioning “the nature of the self” as a “vehicle of a fragmented modern subjectivity” (Pykett, “Sensation and the Fantastic” 214), externalising cultural anxieties through settings of “haunted castles, dungeons, or sublime landscapes” and through tropes of “the psychological splitting or doubling of characters... dynastic ambition and intrigue, and Faustian overreaching, and they frequently involve violence, tyranny, imprisonment, and persecution”(214). Robert Kiely posits that “the subordination of person to place enables the gothic to explore ‘the whole concept of individual identity’” (41), to show “human personality as essentially unstable, inconsistent” (116). The gothic thus established the human condition as the mystery, and explored the depth of such human instability and inconsistency as a means in order to reveal the truth about humanity’s condition.

As a subgenre of Gothic literature, sensation fiction transplanted the mystery of the older gothic novel and of human nature into the current contemporary setting, exploring these human complexities in updated contexts and through modern social issues. In sensation fiction, the sense of the gothic mystery is retained though now no longer merely relegated to far off and abandoned landscapes, or necessarily centred around “detached, often politically and/or psychologically alienated individuals” (Pykett 214). Rather, sensation fiction brought the sense of mystery close to home and into the everyday realm of the

realistic and domestic. Characters in these texts were often revealed to be harbouring some dark crime or secret, mirroring the frequent, sensationalised crimes reported in the newspapers and feeding on “fears that one’s respectable-looking neighbours concealed some awful secret” (Pykett, “Collins and the Sensation Novel” 53). The ugly truths of how seemingly incredible scandals – murder, blackmail, conspiracies, thefts – involving presumably respectable members of society fuelled anxieties surrounding the mystery of human nature, especially in how things were not as they seem. Through the revelation of “respectable-looking neighbours” perpetuating such scandals, sensation fiction cast the mystery of human nature into the mould of crime, commenting more broadly on how things were not as they appear and once more encouraged new means of reading and ascertaining the truths of such mysteries.

This theme of appearances extended to the Victorian household and to members of the family. Sensation fiction engaged with the shifting notions of human nature and roles in society by challenging the idea of how the Victorian household, the germ of Victorian society, was ordered. The roles in the domestic realm had been firmly established on “truths” about women, marriage and the home. However, Patrick Brantlinger states that the sensation novel questions these ideals of “virtue and domesticity... at least by implication” (5) and that, more poignantly, “the plots of sensation novels lead to the unmasking of extreme evil behind fair appearances. In doing so, they threatened their first readers’ cherished assumptions about women, marriage, and the fair appearances of the Victorian scene” (11). Generalising more broadly from the domestic, Pykett summarises that sensation fiction features “the return of the repressed in which... subjugated, silenced, or invisible social groups or impulses rise up against the social institutions or forces which seek to deny or contain them” (“Sensation and the Fantastic” 212). In this way, sensation fiction

delves into the undercurrent issues behind facades of domestic propriety to address concealed, hidden skeletons in the closet. This extends the mystery of human nature from the individual to the society, thickening the sense of mystery with regards to roles and appearances in Victorian society. Sensation fiction thus discusses alternative ways of reading current social issues to get to the truth of different people's experiences.

Another focal point of truth finding in sensation fiction novels revolves around decoding the human body – female, disabled or dead. Laurence Talairach-Vielmas posits that just as how sensation fiction decodes the body, the evolutionary theories of the time similarly decode humankind's place in history. In sensation fiction, the body acts as a codified text or manuscript that is ploughed for secret narratives, the truth lying "beyond the smooth surface of the skin...a buried manuscript ...to be deciphered" (31). Talairach-Vielmas notes how this decoding of bodies in sensation fiction moves from the churchyard of Gothic fiction to "more modern sites" (34) of the laboratory,⁴ following the move from supernatural or religious readings⁵ of the earlier gothic traditions to medically and scientifically more advanced approaches in decoding the body – or the mystery of human nature – for truths. These would constitute part of the new lenses of reading the mystery for truths in sensation fiction.

Meanwhile, critics such as Jonathan Loesberg and Anne-Marie Beller have primarily read the mysteries and the subsequent truths of identity in sensation fiction as historical and political problems, where themes of identity in the text are legal and social issues,

⁴ This interestingly parallels the phenomenon of body-dealers or body-snatchers who raided churchyards for cadavers and sold them to medical schools. See "The Victorian trade in Dead Bodies" (2012) by Elizabeth T Hurren and "The Art of Bodysnatching" (n.d.) by Susie Lennox.

⁵ Grant Allen highlights that as the "Resurrection [of the body was] the avowed and authoritative belief of the Christian world" (qtd. in Stolte 407), the fears of body-snatching was relatively tangible, especially before the Anatomy Act in 1832 which licensed medical practitioners and students to dissect on donated bodies.

rather than psychological ones. Loesberg considers sensation fiction to run parallel to the culture of the times, responding particularly to the parliamentary reform of the late 1850s and 60s by including quintessential moments such as “images of a loss of class identity” and “a fear of a general loss of social identity” (117) within the text. Similarly, Beller studies how sensation fiction responds to the current marriage laws and organised feminism movements amongst other social issues. Though the primary thrust of her work articulates how sensation fiction had existed before the publication of three definitive sensation fiction texts,⁶ she considers sensation fiction’s role in the discussion of ‘the Women Question’, that is, the discussion revolving around the “nature, role and legal position of women” (12) in light of the reformation of matrimonial laws in 1850 and the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act⁷ and shows how sensation fiction explores such topics in their plots, notably in the anonymous text *My Lady* (1858). She also highlights sensational “novels with a purpose”, such as Charles Reade’s *It is Never Too Late to Mend* (1856) which critiques the English Prison system, as an example amongst other sensational works that delve into contemporary issues. In this light, the ambivalence raised by the mystery in sensation fiction becomes more of a commentary to the social issues of the day, where the revealed truths featured in the novel point towards existing problems or flawed perspectives in society.

Truth finding in sensation fiction is further complicated by the genre’s evolution in terms of literary structure and style. Apart from the subject matter discussed in sensation fiction, it is important to consider the narrative authority which frames and articulates the text in the establishing of the truth. Regarding the narrative structure and authority of such

⁶ *The Woman in White* (1859-60), *East Lynne* (1861) and *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862)

⁷ The Matrimonial Causes Act made divorce legal in Britain, led to the establishment of divorce courts and enacted other laws protecting the wife’s property and ruling on child custody. For more information, see Kelly Hager’s “Chipping Away at Coverture: The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857” (2012).

sensation fiction, Brantlinger discusses how the narrator and detective figure seem to bolster the sense of the mystery by withholding certain details from the reader. Brantlinger suggests that there is the disintegration of narrative authority as narrators become complicit in concealing the mystery from the reader. The role of the detective is similarly complicated; though he substitutes the forthright narrative personae and tells the story that the narrator refuses, he seemingly collaborates with criminals and narrators in withholding information and revealing them at his own leisure (Brantlinger 15-16). The revealer of truths is thus presented as a double-faced role, which is a point of suspicion in reading such narratives. Brittany Roberts offers a kinder reading of the detective figure in sensation fiction. Instead of the detective figures withholding certain truths from readers, Roberts explores how detective figures were not often written to “show off their brilliance” (49) as much as they were used to bridge the ordinary circumstance of the middle-class families to the world of sensational crime. Roberts also considers the social position of the detective and the narrator and how it affects the revelation of truths, specifically through Wilkie Collins’ detective duo of the “hired expert” – such as the professional Sergeant Cuff in *The Moonstone* – and the “servant narrator” counterpart (49) in Gabriel Betteredge who catches the “detective fever”. The characters’ status as to whether they are amateur or professional detectives, and whether they are members of the household or outsiders to the family, are all influencing factors regarding the information they are able to access and contribute to their resulting narrative. Hence, such studies of the literary structure in sensation fiction are useful to consider alongside the themes of the mystery itself in evaluating the methods of detection, the revelation of truths and the establishing of the facts of the matter, contributing to the analyses of truth finding in sensation fiction.

This paper will evaluate sensation fiction in matters of truth finding as sensation fiction offers new ways of presenting and revealing the truth of things while challenging the current frameworks. Through the suspense, intrigue and mystery of sensation novels, current ways of truth finding are employed alongside more advanced and specialised alternative approaches, according to the developments in society at the time. Taking into account the existing scholarship on the ways of reading sensation fiction for truth finding, this discussion explores two other lenses of reading the sensation fiction mystery – the aesthetic and scientific – and how they work in quintessential sensation fiction novels to reveal the conspiracies and the truths of circumstances and of individuals.

3. Scientific and Aesthetic Discourse

Victorians were generally characterised for their spirit of self-discovery, pursuing various fields of knowledge without discrimination. This was reflected in how Victorian culture was proliferated with magazines and literary journals which discussed any number of subjects of the time and were accessible to the public. For example, a typical volume of the publication *All The Year Round*⁸ (1859-93) by Charles Dickens consisted of sensation fiction ("The Woman in White") alongside studies on the position of the sun ("Deluges" 40), reviews of new art pieces in the National Gallery ("A Portrait in the National Gallery" 69) and commentaries on religion, progress and zoological bird studies ("Vatican Ornithology" 65). Another popular publication of the time, *The Cornhill Magazine* (1860-1975), published by George Smith, showed a similar variety of content. Priced at a shilling per magazine, the *Cornhill Magazine* (1865) contained opinion essays ranging from how machines will embellish life as "quieter feelings, [will be] purified and enlarged, while the rougher, turbulent emotions will die away" ("Machinery and the Passions" 547), to "The Economics of Country Life" (548), complete with accounting tables, to articles on social concerns calling for better medical facilities ("Plague and Pestilence") in between stories from *Armadale* and *Wives and Daughters*. As Flohr summarises, "a common discourse was ... sustained by the great reviewing journals and periodicals which contained articles on literature, science, theology, philosophy and much more so that readers could find a discussion of a poem by Tennyson on one page and an assessment of Mary Sommerville's *Connexion of the Physical Sciences* on the next 'without any feeling that . . . they were moving to a different kind of discourse'" (Chapple qtd. in Flohr 3). The Victorians took such developing studies and fields

⁸ A continuation from Dickens' previous publication, *Household Words* covered "material of social import, informational articles, and material for entertainment" (Lohrli 4).

of knowledge as part of their holistic way of life and of understanding the world around them. Of the various fields that the Victorian was involved in, the two budding areas which gained much traction in coming alongside or displacing the religious foundations of humanity's means of knowing the world are seen in the scientific and aesthetic.

3a. Scientific Discourse

Alongside Darwin's theories on natural sciences, scientific discourse was garnering great public interest and gaining much traction across several related fields.⁹ Amidst the broad proliferation of mainstream scientific subjects – quack and legitimate alike – there were developing areas of scientific discourse which were focused on better understanding the human condition in its implications regarding the moral capacity of humankind, such as in psychology, physiology and phrenology¹⁰ (*British Medical Journal* 1844, 1846).¹¹ The popularity of psychology could be seen in how medical journals wrote and reviewed books on these subjects, especially in conjunction with crime and insanity, as noted in an article, “On the Preservation of the Health of Body and Mind” from the *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal* (1842):

The study of insanity, is, however, inseparably connected with that of the science of mind... Indeed, we cannot expect to arrive at sound views with regard to the mind in a diseased state, unless we have some acquaintance with its powers and operations in a healthy condition; and, until the study of ... psychological medicine, becomes a part of medical education, and is taught generally as a distinct branch of medical science (155).

⁹ See “Specialist Journals and Professional Rivalries in Victorian Medicine” (1979) by M. Jeanne Peterson on the other scientific and medical topics covered in Victorian medical journals. W.R Lefanu's *British Periodicals of Medicine; A Chronological List* (1937-8) also helpfully summarises the lay and medical periodicals published in the nineteenth century discussing scientific themes.

¹⁰ Watson C. Hewett's *Statistics of Phrenology* (1836) additionally notes that phrenological societies grew from one to twenty-four, with fifty-seven books and pamphlets published on phrenology since 1823 (Parssinen 1), indicating the field's popularity.

¹¹ *The British Medical Journal*, previously known as the *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, published articles such as the “Observations on the Connexion of Insanity with Diseases in the Organs of Physical Life” (1844) and “Thoughts on the Structure and Functions of the Nervous System; And on Their Relations to the Phenomena of the Soul” (1846) discussing the physiological connections of the body and the mind to more intangible psychological and moral aspects.

Suzy Anger explores the psychological aspect of the Victorian sciences in her article “The Victorian Mental Sciences”, citing that “developments in the sciences of the mind in the nineteenth century”, such as dreaming, hallucination, the unconscious, the role of conscious volition in behaviour, comparative psychology with animal minds and the criminal mind amongst many others, “transformed our notions of what it is to be human” (276). Anger shows how the impact of these developing sciences could be seen in the literary works of the period, was fairly represented across Victorian culture and so actively engaged by society. Additionally, much of the debate surrounding the development of psychology was in the attempt to read the “body and soul” with “mathematical precision” (Fechner, qtd. in Coriale 105) and reconcile disconcerting questions of the individual’s volition and the body (Daston 199). Alongside psychology as a scientific study of the mind, the interest in physiology was also burgeoning with regards to the individual’s morals and habits. An article titled the “Physiology of Intemperance” (1852) was published in *Household Words*, where several characters such as a Physician, Bishop and Clergyman, discuss the topic through a conversational narrative. This suggests that such scientific topics were not limited to medical publications but were enthusiastically taken up on different platforms, overlapping into other moral or mundane spheres of life. Finally, Rhonda Boshears and Harry Whittaker trace the development of phrenology as a scientific study of morality and character, and its implications in Victorian literature. Derived from physiognomy,¹² phrenology proposed that each aspect of character or personality resided in a discrete location in the brain, which “impacted the shape of the skull” (88), and so insinuated that a person’s character could be

¹² Physiognomy is a long, popular notion that personality traits are revealed in the face (Boshears and Whittaker 88).

read based on their character traits.¹³ By extension, phrenology proposed that the individual's apparent propensity for crime and moral degeneracy could be read "based on the size and location of the lumps, bumps, and depressions of the skull" (Boshears and Whitaker 93). The pseudoscience was so popular that it even led to plaster phrenological busts of infamous criminals being sold in London shops (Parssinen 12). Though phrenology thus posited that an individual's fate is predetermined by their organs and the bumps on his skull and so encouraged individuals to "engage only in the activities for which he is best suited" (93), aiding in self-exploration, it was criticised for marking the individual to be helpless in improving on their identified shortcomings and to accept their pre-destined lot in life. In all, such scientific and pseudoscientific discussions reflect the Victorians' earnest pursuit in piecing together a deeper, consistent understanding of human nature in addition to and apart from purely religious roots.

Though science was becoming more specialised, the average, working-class Victorian still found science to be relatively accessible and actively participated in such scientific discourse. Peter Katz, in his introduction to the issue on *Victorian Literature and Science*, summarises how the "multiplicity of scientific discourses: psychology, medicine, bacteriology, sleep studies, mathematics, and eco-criticism" (1) influenced Victorian culture and society, notably in how the development of science was readily interwoven into literature and culture for active and mutual discourse, concurring with Anger, Boshears and Whitaker's observations in noting the mutual dialogue between both science and literature. Janet Stalvies notes the trend across several Victorian magazines and publications in engaging with scientific topics, with *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (1840-1873) notably

¹³ By the 1820s, Boshears and Whittaker note that "phrenology provided a ready-built framework of traits and types that were familiar to all literate persons" (88), and was used as a common tool in novels.

moving from ridiculing science in the 1840s to including discussions on the relationship between technology and art and seeking a tasteful blend of manufacture and aesthetics in the 1860s. Scientific inventions and technologies that had practical impact on the daily life of the common Victorian were also highly popular. Magazines such as *All the Year Round* (1859-1862) also covered science-related subjects more frequently (Stalvies 3) and tended to write about practical scientific advancements such as mining and mechanical engineering,¹⁴ rather than more theoretical science. In literature, scientific models often appeared in the plots or the course of Victorian texts “as mechanisms to consider both the science in question and adjacent elements of culture”, and allowed science to be critiqued on “emotional as well as rational grounds” (Katz 2). Scientific lectures were also a source of entertainment and information for the Victorians. Leading Victorian scientist and Professor of Natural Philosophy John Tyndall, who was dedicated to making science a professional vocation alongside his contemporaries, T.H. Huxley and Herbert Spencer, conducted public science lectures at the Royal Institution in London. These lectures were well-received and “were indicative of the popularity of scientific exposition with Victorian audiences” (Stalvies 6). As science developed and spawned other branches of study, these various fields overlapped to offer new ways of reading the natural world and of humanity, suggesting newer, more nuanced understanding of the world to posit scientifically-informed truths that society could consider in moving forward.

¹⁴ Articles such as “Wise Saws and Modern Instances” (Feb. 18, 1860) elaborated on the uses of sawdust and “new mechanical means for fabricating mouldings and veneers” (Stalvies 4) while “Easy Boots” (Aug. 24, 1861) explored “the mechanics of the foot and knees [which] led to improved boot construction” (Stalvies 4).

3b. Aesthetic Discourse

Meanwhile, the development of the aesthetic discourse offered yet another perspective in the evolving discussions on human nature. The culture of aesthetic criticism leading up to the mid-Victorian period was rich and varied under thinkers such as Immanuel Kant (*Critique of Judgment*) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (*Biographia Literaria*, *Kubla Khan*, *Christabel*), who extended on theories of taste and pleasure as human qualities that can be cultivated. In *Critique of Judgment*, Kant proposed the notion of judgment of taste to have a “universal validity” and for taste itself to be “the faculty of estimating an object or a mode of representation by means of a delight or aversion apart from any interest” (479). Coleridge added to Kant’s theories, emphasizing “the close and reciprocal connection of just taste with pure morality” (qtd. in Creed 150), and thereby the importance of producing good art so that the inherent good taste in humans that make “all men [poets]” (qtd. in Coleridge 184) would not fall into disuse. Towards the 1850s, several critics approached the aesthetic as being an important part of human nature that ought to be refined and cultivated to lead to the general improvement of the individual and of society. Thinker and philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) proposed that the human action was composed of three aspects – “its moral aspect... its aesthetic aspect, or that of its beauty; its sympathetic aspect” (*Bentham* 387). Hence, Mill advocated that aesthetic education as “the education of the feelings, and the cultivation of the beautiful” (“Inaugural Address” 42) was as indispensable as intellectual and moral education; it was part of a holistic and necessary education for the flourishing of the individual and of human culture. In a similar fashion, Matthew Arnold (1822-88) advocated for an aesthetic education in response to democratisation, the rising middle classes and the increasing sense of individualism. In these great social shifts which complicated the role of the individual in society, Arnold called for

the cultivation of aesthetic unity where the excessive tastes of the individual were tempered to help society advance as a harmonious whole to an “aesthetic state” (Arnold 28).

More closely related to matters of art and paintings, John Ruskin (1819-1900) promoted aesthetic cultivation as a matter of refining the human senses of perception, specifically “powers, namely, of observation and intelligence, which by cultivation may be brought to a high degree of perfection and acuteness” (50). This idea of art being useful in matters of perception and judgment is valuable in my evaluation of my chosen literary texts which engage explicitly with all manner of arts, music, domestic handicrafts and even other literary works to reveal the truths of the situation.

The field of art during this time was largely influenced by the formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848. In response to the political upheavals of the day, including several European revolutions and the rise of a new social reform, Chartism, the social ills and effects of mass industrialization, and the dissatisfaction of the British Royal Academy’s style of idealised art,¹⁵ several artists, poets and painters came together to form the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a society committed to the cause of “creating a new British art” (Meagher). The Pre-Raphaelites advocated for creating good and realistic art out of “truth and experience”, conveying the “truth to nature” and preserving the fidelity of the subject’s appearance “even when this risked showing ugliness” as a means of “expressing both nature and true emotions in art” (Souter). Taking inspiration from the late medieval and early Renaissance Europe before the work of the artist Raphael, Pre-Raphaelite art was characterised by “minute description of detail, a luminous palette of bright colours that

¹⁵ That is, a “prescriptive and idealistic approach to art” taught through rote and formal teaching methods. See Souter’s “The Pre-Raphaelites Movement Overview” (n.d.).

recalls the tempera paint used by medieval artists, and subject matter of a noble, religious, or moralising nature” (Meagher). This extended to their landscape paintings, which Ruskin was greatly supportive of, as he admired “their dedication to working *en plein air*, strict botanical accuracy, and minute detail” (Meagher), a refreshing recall of the English countryside in the midst of industrialisation. In engaging with religious or literary figures, the Pre-Raphaelites depicted their subjects in realistic detail with respect to their expressions, bodies, and postures, humanising these otherwise distant, ideal figures for viewers to form deeper and more profound connections with such art.¹⁶ As Pre-Raphaelite painters aimed to create good art through the detailed study and faithful representation of nature as it is, this movement and its art pieces featured in my chosen texts are significant to my analysis of truth finding in sensation fiction.

The Pre-Raphaelite artists greatly influenced the art and aesthetics of the Victorian Period, even after the official disbanding of the group in 1854. Pre-Raphaelite artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones continued to be heavily involved in the Aesthetic movement and the Arts and Crafts Movement from the 1860s. The Aesthetic movement, notably spearheaded by the likes of Walter Pater (*The Renaissance; Studies in Art and Poetry*) and Oscar Wilde (*The Picture of Dorian Gray, Art and the Handicraftsman, The Critic as Artist*) advocated “Art for Art’s Sake”, indulging in the pursuit of beauty, sensuality and self-expression without necessarily having a deeper cause or meaning (“An Introduction to the Aesthetic Movement”). The Aesthetic movement esteemed the “experience [of art] itself” where art gives “nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments’ sake” (*The Renaissance*). In the

¹⁶ See *The Annunciation* (1849-50) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Rossetti’s rendering of *The Annunciation* highlights Virgin’s youth and frames the traditionally pious figure in a posture of hesitance as she receives the prophecy from the angel. Mary’s uncertainty transposes the usually sacred scene into a realistic world.

same spirit, Wilde declares that “All art is quite useless” (*Dorian Gray*) as “its aim is simply to create a mood. It is not meant to instruct, or to influence action in any way” (*Letter to Bernulf Clegg*). Meanwhile, the Arts and Crafts Movement responded more pointedly to the Industrial Revolution and the plight of impersonal, mechanised mass-produced goods by promoting “a simpler, more fulfilling way of living... use of high-quality materials and for its emphasis on utility in design” (Clericuzio). Morris would start his own firm where he “sold furnishings made by artist-craftspeople as well as by rural peasantry”, with the intention of offering creative, unique handmade goods that could not be derived by mass production, though this eventually proved to become too expensive for consumers (Oshinsky). Both movements were deeply interwoven with the rising middle class and their new purchasing power as consumers able to buy such art as goods. These movements coinciding and spilling into the realm of architecture and interior decoration had a social aspect as well, as the middle class turned to such decorations for their homes in order to show their “taste”.¹⁷ The development of the aesthetic discourse in the Victorian period then, both in the manner of being an intrinsic aspect of human nature to be cultivated and developed, or in being externalised and through the creation of truthful, realistic art, and commodified through goods and household furnishings, contribute to the burgeoning discussion and expression of human nature, amidst the many social, political and economic changes of the time. These movements suggest the truth of human nature having intrinsic aesthetic faculties deeply intertwined with the flourishing and morality of humankind. Yet, while philosophers called for the cultivation of these sensibilities, acquiring commodified art in the form of household

¹⁷ See Kathryn Rachel Ferry’s “Clutter and the Clash of Middle-Class Tastes in the Domestic Interior” (2017) and Julie Halls’ “A Momentous Question: Decorating the Victorian Home” (2013).

decorations to project one's "taste" suggest that the appearance of an individual's human nature could be "shaped" through material goods and possessions.

4. Truth finding through these lenses

The developments of aesthetic and scientific discourse in the Victorian period are woven into the mystery plots of sensation fiction, offering new readings of the texts which either contributes to the suspense of the mystery or as means of coming to the truth. Instead of solely eliciting the truths of humankind based on the Christian religion, sensation fiction employed current aesthetic and scientific readings to derive the truths of human nature.

The use of the “scientific” in this analysis will primarily refer to the nature of the scientific method, including the idea of hypothesis and experimentation, as well as other medical or chemical fields of study relating to the physical and physiological state of the individual (opium use, vivisection, brain disease etc.).

The use of the term “aesthetic” will refer broadly to the artistic accomplishments and sensibilities of characters, such as their make-up, dress and appearance, musical or artistic inclinations, or the element of art such as the Pre-Raphaelite painting in *Lady Audley's Secret*.

5. Thesis

This paper will analyse three sensationalist gothic works - M.E Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* (1868) and Collins' *Heart and Science* (1882), each engaging with the aesthetic and the scientific discourse in varying degrees in order to conceal and reveal the truths of the mysteries. A critical analysis of these texts shows how the evolution of aesthetic and scientific discourse work to reveal not just the truths of mysteries, but ultimately the conceptions and realisations of the nature of humanity at the heart of these mysteries.

In Chapter Two, I will analyse Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* to comment on how the concept of the aesthetics is employed to suggest a system of normative language, which society uses to read individuals' appearances for truths. The use of the aesthetics in the text questions this coded language of reading for truths with the character of Lady Audley, a figure so familiar with the ins and outs of the domesticated, virtuous female aesthetic that she can manipulate its elements to present "truths" about herself. The aesthetics reveal alternative readings of the same symbols in questioning the accuracy of the symbols denoting truths in the current system. Yet, despite Lady Audley's artfulness, her artificial manipulation of aesthetic elements ends in the inevitable revelation of her identity as Helen Talboys, suggesting that truths cannot be fully concealed but will find some expression in the aesthetic.

In Chapter Three, I will engage with Collins' *The Moonstone* and show how the scientific lens is used to account for the mystery of humankind's contradictory nature and establish the truth of the series of events. Though the plot revolves around a stolen Indian diamond, the undercurrent theme of the text is the mystery of human nature being contradictory and occasionally inexplicable, even unto himself. Where *Lady Audley's Secret*

is concerned with the reading and being read by others, and the presentation of one's curated image for society, the mystery of *The Moonstone* is in the individual being a mystery to himself. Despite the courtroom style narrative which employs several types of evidence often used in trials for truth finding, it is the scientific lens that resolves the climatic point of contradiction of the protagonist and amateur detective figure stealing the very diamond he is looking for, and to have stolen it without his own knowledge. The scientific lens thus highlights a new perspective of viewing human nature, as well as offers handles in reading human nature for truths that are concealed from the individual himself.

Finally, in Chapter Four, the evaluation of Collins' *Heart and Science* points to how both scientific and aesthetic lenses are employed in reading for truths in the obvious and exaggerated mundane. *Heart and Science* contrasts figures who are so fixated in the pursuit of certain truths that they lean into the extremities of reading social relations myopically through highly developed scientific and aesthetic lenses. Such readings fail to acknowledge and take into the account the aspect of humanity and common love, ultimately negating the efforts of these specialised readers to find the truths. Nevertheless, should the characters be inspired to seek out these truths out of their common love for humanity and for each other, the scientific and aesthetic lenses prove to be vital in eliciting important truths for the good of the characters. Thus, towards the end of the nineteenth century, though there were more specialised, developed lenses available for seeking truths in human nature at an individual and societal level, *Heart and Science* acts as a reminder as to why such lenses are being developed to seek out truths in the first place, for the flourishing of humanity, especially in community, rather than to read for truths for the sake of it or for selfish gain. Only by reading the truths for the good of humanity would the right lenses be employed to the appropriate extent to find these truths.

Thus, though sensation fiction was characterised by its penchant for tantalising the bodily senses and carried negative connotations of causing social anxieties and degeneracy, its Gothic nature in terms of the secret and mysterious persists in engaging with pertinent questions of human nature, allowing it to respond to and address modern issues through modern ways of looking at the world. Thus, my analysis presents these mid to late Victorian sensation fiction texts as case studies that define the thread of truth finding as a means of re-establishing and providing alternatives to understanding humanity's place in the world through two broader spheres of reading the world in spite of their sensationalism, and would be a useful precursor to further studies revolving around the concept of truth in the Victorian period.

CHAPTER TWO: LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET (1862)

1. Re-Reading Aesthetic Conventions that create and reveal Lady Audley's Secret

Written in a climate of increasing organized feminist movements and growing interest in challenging current marriage laws (Beller 17), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) is best known for its commentary on the social roles and mobility of women, no less in demonizing how Lady Audley attempts to move up in society. While building on existing scholarship, this paper seeks to explore Lady Audley's engagement with aesthetic elements, specifically in concealing and creating certain truths about her identity. Moving beyond the villainous archetype of women figures, this paper analyses how Braddon uses the aesthetic in truth finding and in revelations of the sensational plot. The aesthetic elements that will be evaluated include the performance of Lady Audley's domestic accomplishments, such as her music, sewing, painting, and her elaborate domestic rituals of tea-making, her use of dress and cosmetics, and of Lady Audley herself as a work of art in Audley Court.

As the main character and apparent antagonist of the sensation novel, Lady Audley weaves a web of deceit about her through these several aesthetic elements in playing her role as a lady. These elements both serve as a means of obscuring and revealing truths as two sides of the same coin. Braddon uses these aesthetic elements to highlight the artificiality of Lady Audley concealing her guilt as well as how she frames herself before other characters, drawing attention to the obscured truth and the suspicion of things not being as they seem. Although Lady Audley attempts to manipulate these aesthetic elements to her advantage and use them to obscure certain truths, they ultimately work against her in inadvertently revealing the cracks and inconsistencies to her character. Thus, the aesthetic conventions in *Lady Audley's Secret* question and subvert the system of normative

visual cues in reading for the truths as it can be manipulated and re-appropriated. In this questioning, art nevertheless reveals the real and reality by offering alternative readings of the same symbols, leading to the inevitable revelation of the truth.

2. Literature Review

Braddon weaves a scandalous story of how an unknown, married woman, Helen Talboys, manipulates her situation, including abandoning her infant child and attempting to murder her husband, to establish herself as an upper-class noblewoman, Lady Audley. With its sensational themes of bigamy, madness and attempted murder, *Lady Audley's Secret* was greatly popular, as evident from its publication history. First serialised in *Robin Goodfellow*, it was then fully released in *Sixpenny Magazine* in 1862 when *Robin Goodfellow* failed and was subsequently published as an expensive three-volume novel by Tinsley in October the same year, before the end of its serial run. Its success could be credited to Braddon who was “always alert to the changing tastes of readers and a shifting literary marketplace” (Pykett 123) and, in the theme of the sensation fiction genre, mirrored “the passions of the age for which it is written” (Sala qtd. in Pykett 131). Lynette Felber suggests that *Lady Audley's Secret* was so popular as it “exposed the contemporary moral underworld for class readers and offered vicarious pleasures by depicting acts forbidden by their moral code ... [titillating and moralizing] at the same time” (471-472). Thus, though the story ends with Lady Audley being locked up in a madhouse – the “deserved” comeuppance for her deceit – the excitement of the plot is likely to be mostly derived from Lady Audley's fraud, where readers both sympathize with her as they vicariously live through her audacity, yet accept her incarceration.

The text demonstrates how one's identity is so easily mutable, given the many names Lady Audley adopts throughout the text. Lady Audley's multiple identities and

her ability to go beyond pretending and actually “transform” into a lady (Eure 185) aggravate “anxieties about class distinctions that were quickly crumbling” (Acts qtd. in Eure 204). She does this convincingly and successfully through the procuring of material goods and possessions, this culture of commodification bolstering new means of establishing and perceiving social roles in Victorian England. The consumer culture is particularly important in the performance of these new identities. As Krista Lysack states, “in the age of consumerism, identity . . . was generated through one’s proximity to commodities” (qtd. in Seys). Lady Audley plays her role in this way, her material possessions and luxurious furnishings as physical extensions of her aristocratic performance. Yet, just as her virtuous, innocent and aristocratic performance is reflected and supported by such commodities, her identity dissolves with the flow of her possessions out of Audley Court by the end of the text, cheapened into souvenirs of her briefly led life of aristocracy.

In addition to Lady Audley’s possessions and her furnishing of the house, Katherine Montwieler elaborates on how the aspect of consumerism and materialism fuels Lady Audley’s performance as an aristocratic lady of virtue through the artful adornment of make-up and dressing. In pointing out how her maid, Phoebe Marks, could also become as beautiful as she is with make-up and hair dye and so commodify herself, Lady Audley affirms how this convincing performance of virtue and subsequent aristocracy can to be achieved “through the purchase of material possessions” (43), only that “the actress must simply apply her makeup correctly and perform impeccably” (54). Montwieler posits that Braddon, through

Lady Audley, in fact offers readers the “recipe” to become the next Lady Audley through such material means and elevate their own social position.

Additionally, Lady Audley has been read as a female figure of madness and hysteria, a familiar Gothic trope. Ann-Marie Dunbar evaluates Lady Audley’s madness in the context of her confession, and how her supposed madness contradicts the chain of circumstantial evidence pursued by the amateur detectives respectively, discrediting the detective work in the text with an anticlimactic answer (98).

Meanwhile, Jill Matus notes how the concept of madness was not so much a comment on biological madness as it was about immorality (338), specifically in the non-conformity to class and gender models dictated by society (334). Rather than focusing on such class and gender issues, madness (and the obsession with tracing the inheritance of madness from mother to daughter) is thus used as a distraction to glance past the root of these other societal problems.

I will firstly be exploring Lady Audley’s performativity in her outward actions and expressions in order to maintain a specific, constructed image of virtue. She does this through various theatricalities of pretence, going offstage from the audience of her society and dressing a certain way to conceal her emotions. Next, I will discuss Lady Audley’s attempts to frame herself as an artistic image through the tableaux that she positions herself in, her duties of tea-making, her artful use of make-up. Despite her best efforts to curate her image through such aesthetic means, I argue that Lady Audley’s Pre-Raphaelite portrait illuminates her wickedness as the Pre-Raphaelite style of painting renders her in detailed definition, making clear her

malevolent streak as compared to the other tableaux she embodies in the different scenes at Audley Court. Finally, I will comment on how Lady Audley's execution of her artistic skills, namely in her piano playing and her painting, which were meant to bolster her innocent reputation end up revealing clues to her false identity. Thus, while Lady Audley attempts to appropriate the aesthetic conventions to conceal and re-write truths, Braddon uses it as a means to offer alternative readings to these conventions and inadvertently reveal the truth.

3. Creating Lady Audley through Theatricalities and Imagery

Lady Audley is very much aware of the other characters, primarily Sir Michael Audley, Alicia Audley, and Robert Audley, as well as the villagers whom she interacts with, as “viewers” watching her. From her first appearance as Lucy Graham at the beginning of the text, she performs her identity as an unmarried, childless orphan and plays into the typical governess figure at the Dawsons. When she is elevated to become Lady Audley, she builds on this performance, carefully maintaining this innocent image of herself as the mistress of the house. She does so by concealing her emotions through several aesthetic theatrical parallels – veiling her thoughts with a measure of pretence and playacting, moving offstage away from the gaze of the audience and dressing intentionally to distract viewers from her inner turmoil. Though her person is scrutinised (and praised) by her expressions, manners and interactions with others, each expression and gesture Lady Audley enacts is planned in advance, curated and performed, emphasizing a sense of artificiality and the performativity of Lady Audley’s role.

3a. Analysing Lady Audley's Aesthetic Theatricalities

Lady Audley is cautious of others watching her, especially when she is plotting and fretting about not being exposed of her crimes. To disguise her emotions, she turns to pretending and playacting in order to maintain her unruffled, carefree image. This can be noted when she is mulling in despair over Robert Audley's latest discoveries about her past and is struggling to plot against him. Her thoughts are interrupted by a knock on the door, to which Lady Audley "rose suddenly, startled...and threw herself into a low chair near the fire. She flung her beautiful head back upon the soft cushions, and took a book from the table near her" (323), pretending to read when Phoebe Marks enters the room. Her instinctive response in picking up a book - an idle pastime - when she is fretting about Robert Audley reflect persistent fears "of a mind that in its silent agonies was ever alive to the importance of outward effect" (323), suggesting how Lady Audley is perfectly wary of her thoughts being seen and read externally from her expressions. Although her observer is not Robert himself but her own maid, her confidante, she maintains her privacy with regards to risking her thoughts being read from her features.

In exploring Lady Audley's particular characterisation of "deviant femininity", Hansson and Norberg examine "the way she displays and performs emotion" (442), specifically anger. The article argues that while masculine anger being outwardly expressed is viewed as an emotionally healthy construction, feminine anger is embodied and bears negative, devilish connotations. Hansson and Norberg highlight how Lady Audley is considered deceptive in concealing her anger. Conversely, women who do express their anger, such as Alicia Audley who displays violent outbursts of temper, are considered childish. As the alternative model of feminine anger seen in Alicia Audley is no more approved than Lady Audley's, the analysis ironically shows how Lady Audley needed to

conceal her emotions all the more to portray herself as a woman who avoided anger “in order to allow her to fulfil her domestic role” (450), perhaps the only acceptable response to feminine anger. The article thus lends to a perhaps more sympathetic reading of how Lady Audley finds the performance of her emotions “the awful necessity of her life” (323). To conceal such thoughts and emotions from being reflected in her expressions, Lady Audley therefore turns to such mundane acting and pretence to preserve her idle and unperturbed image.

Apart from the nonchalant playacting, Lady Audley also removes herself offstage to conceal her emotions and prepare herself to be seen by others. After Phoebe enters her room and delivers a final ultimatum to her by Robert, Lady Audley is positively set on edge and is filled with murderous rage. She rushes into the next room, and shuts the door behind her for “she could not endure any witness of her horrible despair” (331), physically removing herself from the scene and other gazes to agonise over her situation. Similarly, on the morning after she sets fire to the Castle Inn, she locks herself in her octagon ante-chamber “to guard against the chance of any one coming in suddenly and observing her before she was aware – before she had had sufficient warning to enable her face their scrutiny” (362). She thus moves offstage or creates a “backstage” where she is out of sight from possible viewers in order to lower and re-assemble the appropriate mask which will conceal her guilt and keep consistent with her persona as Lady Audley. Having to demarcate a separate space for herself from even her own maid highlights how Lady Audley’s emotions displayed in company are likely not her natural responses but an artifice that she has curated in her own time before she allows herself to be viewed. Thus, this points to how even Lady Audley’s expressions are a mask that she has to put on for her role and conceals the truth of her character.

The choice of Lady Audley's dress is also used as a form of distraction for the observer, as a means to conceal her feelings. Nearing the close of the mystery, where Lady Audley feels the most vulnerable and threatened, she "dressed herself rapidly but carefully" (365). It was not for beauty's sake that she dressed carefully, but that "she looked upon that beauty as a weapon, and she felt that she had now double need to be well armed" (365). Her choice of dress was practical for concealing her thoughts and feelings, for though she was very pale, "the brightness of her dress and of her feathery golden ringlets distracted the observer's eyes from her pallid face" (366). She precisely dresses the reverse of "loose, disordered garments, and dishevelled hair" (366), commonly associated with mental distress. Her thought process in dressing, now made known to the readers through the narrator, shows how Lady Audley is completely aware of the influence of dress upon her society, and how she uses it to her own advantage. This intentional way of dressing once more drives home the fact that she has secrets that she wishes to conceal, as she dresses in a way to distract the viewer from observing the worry reflected in her pale face. Thus, Lady Audley uses cosmetics and her way of dressing to enhance her beauty and innocence while concealing her other fears and worries. Through these aesthetic social ceremonies and dressing habits, Lady Audley's falsity and artfulness is highlighted, thus drawing attention to the truths she does intend to hide.

In this manner of theatricality through pretence, going offstage and dressing the part, Lady Audley conceals her emotions, specifically her anger, desperation and guilt that is incoherent with her image as the innocent Lady Audley.

3b. Analysing Lady Audley's Framing as Aesthetic Imagery

Apart from her theatricalities, the aesthetic elements in *Lady Audley's Secret* points to a curation of her image artistically through static imagery in order to present a specific idea of herself to other members of society. Through the enactment of her mundane domestic duties in tea-making, her use of make-up, and her positioning of herself in tableaux, Lady Audley attempts to curate and enhance her innocent, lady-like reputation, controlling how she is being seen by others. Her employment of these aesthetic rituals nevertheless highlights a sense of artificiality, which draws attention and suspicion to the obscured truth.

i) *Reading Lady Audley through Tea-making*

Although it has been argued that hosting teas was a “means of social control in a patriarchal society” (Cusack 8) given the many rules women had to follow to organise them, Lady Audley appears to be empowered in preparing the tea as the lady of the house, using the tea-time practice as a means of establishing her image as the ideal Victorian domestic angel. Tea-making, as a ritual of the Victorian British household, was part of the respectable Victorian woman's responsibility in constructing the domestic ideal of the house as a haven and a refuge. The English tea was seen as an “ideal moment of hospitality, community, nourishment, and comfort, and an ideal vision of femininity to uphold all of those elements of home” (Fromer 23). Hosting teas was therefore a strictly female domain, guided by the likes of etiquette books such as *A Manual of Etiquette For Ladies* (1856) in matters of suitable conversational topics, food preparations and dress-codes. Through the tea table, “women's individual roles as domestic angels [in constructing the peaceful refuge of the home] thus resonated throughout English culture” (Fromer 13-14) and by extension, “the

foundation and scaffolding of the continued renewal of class, gender, and national identity” (20).

This role of the domestic angel – the Victorian woman who secures the home’s “order, comfort, and loveliness” and “rules it” by means of her household duties to make it a “place of Peace” (Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*) – is one that Lady Audley adopts by hosting at the tea table. Lady Audley engages herself with the aesthetic social ritual of tea-making, the effect of which presents her as “pretty and innocent” (242) to her guests, and enshrines her as the ideal, domestic Victorian woman. The narrator describes tea-making to be one of the “most feminine and most domestic of all occupations” which “imparts a magic harmony to her every movement, a witchery to her every glance” (242). The narrator claims that “a pretty woman never looks prettier than making tea”, the action of preparing the tea and handling the “delicate opal china and glittering silver” (242) as something of a ritual which beautifies the woman handling them. Indeed, “the floating mists from the boiling liquid in which she infuses the soothing herbs... envelop her in a cloud of scented vapour, through which she seems a social fairy, weaving potent spells with Gunpowder and Bohea” (242). The aesthetic performance of preparing the tea, draws a veil of “scented vapour” over her such that, looking at her through this veil, her guests would perceive her to be the gracefully perfect “social fairy”. Alongside this added aesthetic to the hostess, the tea-making also imbues her with power, where she “reigns omnipotent, unapproachable” in her “legitimate empire”, that which her male counterparts know nothing about (242). In this way, tea-making – anchored in secrecy as a woman’s mysterious art – defines her image as a pretty, innocent perfect hostess for her guests while establishing her authority among the society at the tea table. Though her every gesture at the table may appear to be for “no higher purpose than [for] the infusion of Bohea” (243), the narrator’s description of the tea-making

ceremony suggests that Lady Audley herself is aware of the influence preparing tea amongst the “marvellous Indian tea-caddy of sandal- wood and silver” (243), and artfully plays her role in preparing the tea to affirm the lovely image of herself upon others. In relying upon such extensive ritual to give such an impression upon others, Lady Audley’s calculated shrewdness is suggested, as well as the idea that she is in fact not quite as innocent as she appears, since she requires the tea-making ritual to define her in this way for the observer.

ii) *Reading Lady Audley through her use of Make-up*

Upon a closer look, the tea-making ceremony draws parallels to the rituals of Lady Audley’s dressing and make-up. While tea-making allows Lady Audley to cement her image as the domestic ideal through social rituals, her suggested use of cosmetics work towards enhancing her natural beauty in order to project a consistent lovely appearance and visual reminder of her goodness. However, several passages highlight the artificiality of her beautiful appearance through the suggested use of cosmetics, thereby suggesting a sense of falseness to Lady Audley.

Due to the influence of the pseudoscience of physiognomy, most Victorians believed that one’s character could be read from their appearance and that “a woman’s use of beauty products to alter her appearance was seen as particularly objectionable—as a hiding of inner truth” (Lennox 10). Women who did use beauty products were “associated with the actress or prostitute” (Black qtd. in Lennox 11) because covering one’s skin in this way “was tantamount to hiding one’s true character” (Lennox 11). Furthermore, such painted women were associated with “making pleasure [their] only good and the world [their] highest god” to the point of abandoning their “natural duties” of wife and mother (Linton). Female journalist Eliza Lynn Linton empathetically declared in her essay, “The Girl of the Period” (1883), that the young woman who “dyes her hair and paints her face” is one who is ill-bred,

and who “lives to please herself, she does not care if she displeases every one else”. Thus, women who used cosmetics were disparaged to be morally suspect. As an alternative to maintaining their appearance, Victorian women were instead encouraged to use natural beautifying treatments, supposedly “healthy living practices that cleansed and preserved the body”, hence helping to facilitate “physiognomic assessments” (Lennox 10).

Famed stage dancer and actress Lola Montez similarly decried the use of cosmetics in her detailed beauty regime in *The Arts of Beauty*. Instead, she prefaced practical remedies with moral advice, recommending “temperance, exercise, and cleanliness” as the “secret to acquiring a bright and beautiful skin” (29) before divulging her recipe of “tepid water and bran” (32) to soften and purify the skin. She anchored her beauty advice in the notion that “the face is the index of the mind” and so “the recipe for a beautiful face must be something that reaches the soul”, concluding that “If a woman’s soul is without cultivation, without taste, without refinement, without the sweetness of a happy mind, not all the mysteries of art can ever make her face beautiful... I have found no art which can atone for an unpolished mind and an unlovely heart” (37). Montez’s piece reflected the Victorian idea of the individual’s good nature being reflected in her face, and the condemnation of cosmetics as “deceptive tools used to mask, cover, or hide the natural surfaces of the body” (Lennox 10).

This physiognomic logic is the very aspect that Lady Audley transgresses in the suspected use of her cosmetics, and the negative connotations of women who use cosmetics likely compel Lady Audley to keep her use of them a secret. Lady Audley’s beauty is described to be real and natural, which her use of cosmetics then preserves, conceals and enhances. Even before she attains her position as Lady Audley and the lavish resources of cosmetics and dress, Lady Audley’s beautiful features remain consistent from her first

husband's description of his "childish little wife", Helen Talboys, who had eyes "as blue and as clear as the skies on a bright summer's day, and [hair which] falls about her face like the pale golden halo you see round the head of a Madonna in an Italian picture" (283), to the villagers' admiration for the governess, Lucy Graham, with her "pretty looks", "soft blue eyes" (8) and "the most wonderful curls in the world – soft and feathery, always floating away from her face, and making a pale halo round her head when the sunlight shone through them" (10). In this manner of inventorying her beauty even in her lowly position, Lady Audley's beauty is established as wholly natural and remains a foundational aspect of her identity throughout her social elevation.

However, although Lady Audley's lovely features are constantly emphasized, several scenes of her beauty come to connote a sense of artificiality, preserved by a suggested use of cosmetics. While readers never witness Lady Audley undergoing a full makeup transformation process, there are several instances where Lady Audley's vivid rosy colours, intended to suggest her natural beauty, seem to jar with her natural surroundings and come across as artificial. For example, when Lady Audley visits Robert at Castle Inn on a "cold and snowy January morning", her "pretty little rosebud of a mouth retained its brightest colouring and cheeriest freshness" where "other people's lips turn pale and blue with the chilling influence of the bitter weather", neither had her nose been "rudely assailed by the sharp fingers of the grim ice-king" (151), as other people's were. Similarly, Lady Audley seems to recover quickly from the bad storm in the night, from having a "poor white face, and the purple rims around [her] eyes" to recovering her "rosy cheeks and bright smile" the morning after (84). Through these occasions, there is the suggestion of using artificial means to present her consistently rosy, radiant appearance. The use of cosmetics itself points to her intentions to deceive, and suggests that she is not as innocent as she presents herself.

Despite her natural beauty, she employs makeup to preserve and maintain these consistent colours, to the point of being jarringly artificial. Braddon thus hints at her cunning character, not by explicitly pointing out her use of make-up, but subtly highlighting how she looks “too good to be true” against the other people. The secret of Lady Audley’s “colours” and cosmetic beauty are also emphasised as a point of deception through the narrator’s discussion of the lady’s maid as the most “privileged spies” (364) of her mistress’ secrets. The narrator writes of the secrets the lady’s maid is privy to, such as knowing when her mistress’ “ivory complexion is bought and paid for – when the pearly teeth are foreign substances fashioned by the dentist – when the glossy plaits are the relics of the dead” (364). Thus, Lady Audley does use cosmetics to present a radiant appearance and to enhance her natural beauty to cement the unchanging image of her beauty and innocence. Aware that she has to invest in maintaining a consistently lovely appearance despite the changes in the weather or after a bad night’s sleep, she turns to cosmetics to present her beauty, underscoring her deception and her artificiality.

Lady Audley’s natural beauty thus subverts the physiognomic belief of one’s morality being reflected in her physical features, as she proves to be cunning and manipulative. Her beauty, instead of accurately denoting her supposedly virtuous character, conceals the truth of her greed and deceit. In an ironic twist, it is Lady Audley’s attempts at enhancing her beautiful features through cosmetics that inadvertently points towards her deceitful character. Nevertheless, even the beauty of her powdered features will be decoded and unveiled through the artistic Pre-Raphaelite rendering of her portrait, which will be elaborated in the next section.

iii) *Reading Lady Audley as Tableaux*

As Lady Audley is aware of being watched by her society, she pushes the envelope in performing her role visually by taking on the role of the art subject and posing against the backdrop of Audley Court to connote notions of innocence, goodliness and the angelic. By posing in tableau, Lady Audley draws on the aesthetic traditions of paintings, relying heavily on her surroundings, possessions and even other characters to cast her in a virtuous light. However, when she is viewed and painted without the other characters, her beauty and her dresses conversely suggest cruelty, mischief and highlights her artificiality, suggesting that it is her role as a wife and mother in the Audley family which bestows her with virtue, rather than her person being intrinsically pure.

Lady Audley adopts specifically docile and domestic postures alongside the visual props and setting of the house, such as being engaged in embroidery work while being framed by an embrasure and preparing tea amidst her beautiful tea utensils, which cause her to resemble artistic subjects of virtue and thereby symbolically suggest her innocence. On one occasion, after Robert comments on how some women would go through great lengths to achieve such a social improvement as Lady Audley had, Lady Audley drops her brush in guilt and shock, ruining her painting. She immediately packs it away and “seating herself in the deep recess of another window, at a considerable distance from Robert Audley, settled to a large piece of Berlin-wool work—a piece of embroidery which the Penelopes of ten or twelve years ago were very fond of exercising their ingenuity upon—the Olden Time at Bolton Abbey” (129-130). By moving away from Robert, she was separated from him “by the whole length of the room, and the young man could only catch an occasional glimpse of her fair face, surrounded by its bright aureole of hazy, golden hair” (130). Lady Audley distances herself from Robert’s gaze so as to avoid being read by him or

to reveal any other traces of her feelings through her features, especially after his remark strikes close to home. In moving away, she turns to another celebrated domestic accomplishment – embroidery work – instead of painting, and places herself in the window embrasure such that she only her prominent fair face and golden hair can be seen. Her position at the window embrasure frames her almost as a subject of an art piece, in which she is occupied with the domestic feminine recreation of embroidery, complete with her halo of golden hair, the picture of innocence and domestic goodness. She thus moves away from Robert to prevent him from being able to note the details in her face and the fear reflected in the tint of her blue eyes which “[flickered and trembled] betwixt blue and green” (129), but to view her from a distance, framed by the window where only her beautiful features and her domestic act of sewing visually defines her. This points to how Lady Audley’s guilt and cruelty can be read in close-up details of her features and she repositions herself in the space that she occupies, relying on these externalities to keep her viewers at an arm’s length and maintain her lovely image by resembling the virtuous artistic figures of the time. This is also reflected in how she prepares tea, where she “looked very pretty and innocent, seated behind the graceful group of delicate opal china and glittering silver” (242). The beautiful, precious tea-making apparatus, as well as the graceful way she prepares the tea (yet another feminine stronghold), frames her as a “social fairy” (242), an ethereal creature who could not possibly be cruel, reigning rightly in the sphere of the domestic as a proper lady. Thus, in order to re-present herself, she relies on her environment and props, her lovely features and lady-like occupations as broad strokes to resemble domestic figures of aesthetic traditions and paint her favourably as a paradigm of feminine virtue.

Lady Audley also frames herself as a work of art and takes on a subservient pose in another tableau, bearing the posture and features of a saintly “angel in the house” archetype, even to the far-removed imaginary eye of the reader as an observer, in sharp contrast to her completed portrait. This takes place in the chamber where Sir Michael lies ill in bed:

The interior of this luxurious bed-chamber might have made a striking picture for an artist’s pencil. The massive furniture, dark and sombre, yet broken up and relieved here and there by scraps of gilding, and masses of glowing colour; the elegance of every detail, in which wealth was subservient to purity of taste; and last, but greatest in importance, the graceful figures of the two women, and the noble form of the old man would have formed a worthy study for any painter. Lucy Audley, with her disordered hair in a pale haze of yellow gold about her thoughtful face, the flowing lines of her soft muslin dressing-gown falling in straight folds to her feet, and clasped at the waist by a narrow circlet of agate links might have served as a model for a mediaeval saint, in one of the tiny chapels hidden away in the nooks and corners of a grey old cathedral, unchanged by Reformation or Cromwell; and what saintly martyr of the Middle Ages could have borne a holier aspect than the man whose grey beard lay upon the dark silken coverlet of the stately bed? (Braddon 235)



Figure 1 Three Standing Female Saints: Clare, the Virgin Mary, and Barbara (1470-1480). Lady Audley's appearance might have recalled such images of the saints, such as Virgin Mary with a halo and a long gown with a cirlet around her waist.



Figure 2 Woman's Mission: Companion of Manhood (left) and Comfort of Old Age (right), by George Elgar Hicks (1862-3). The last two of a triptych "representing the three stages in a woman's life as a 'ministering angel'" (Fowle). The panel on the left depicts "a wife in the act of giving solace to her husband under a severe blow of affliction" while the one on the right shows "a dying father, sedulously watched and waited on by a daughter's affection" (*The Art Journal*, 1863). Both roles are assumed by Lady Audley and Alicia Audley in this scene respectively.

The background of the old house, as well as the figures of Sir Michael and Alicia, highlight Lady Audley as a visual resemblance to a "mediaeval saint" In this scene, it is the background and the environment which makes Lady Audley appear saintly. When she is viewed at a distance, clothed in the "correct" apparel of "soft muslin dressing-gown falling in straight folds to her feet, and clasped at the waist by a narrow cirlet of agate links" which visually resembles the mediaeval saints, her proximity to the Audley family members

and of Audley House work together to present her in such a favourable light, elevating her beyond merely as a beautiful titled lady to be quite the “angel of the house”. Lady Audley, familiar with the language of the aesthetic and the traditions of the medieval saints, contrives to depict herself in such a way. Anna Royal also discusses how Lady Audley performs as a desirable “angel of the house”, her manners and appearance recalling Coventry Patmore’s idealized wife figure in his book which inspired a similar phrase. Based on his own wife, Emily, Patmore’s *The Angel in the House* (1854, revised in 1862) extolled the virtues of his patient, gentle, angelic wife as a model for Victorian women, that though “Man must be pleased; ...him to please/Is woman’s pleasure”. Lady Audley typifies this perfectly in this particular scene as the saintly wife and mother in caring for her ailing husband. Yet, as several elements are required to portray Lady Audley in this saintly glow, Lady Audley’s supposed virtue assembled through such artistic tableau hints at being artificial, constructed and contrived.

This is a sharp contrast to the depictions of Lady Audley alone, without the props of the other characters situated around her. When she is depicted alone, as in her portrait or in her dressing room, the aura of her innocence and goodliness disappears. Instead, her luxurious setting and clothing highlights her artificiality as a beautiful commodity at best and paints her as a “beautiful fiend” at worst. In the completed Pre-Raphaelite portrait of Lady Audley which Robert glimpses just before entering Sir Michael’s room, he is shocked to catch the sight of her “mocking smile” (235). The juxtaposition of Lady Audley’s sinister streak in the portrait jars against her saintly appearance in the tableau of her as a medieval saint so attentive to Sir Michael, suggesting that one of these artistic renderings to be artificial compared to the other. Without the other characters depicted in the painting to situate her as an individual in the portrait, her exaggerated features are shown to reflect

and heighten her cruelty. Though still depicted against her expensive furnishings, the vivid features and details of her many beautiful possessions delivered to such high definition only work together to emphasise the sinister aura of the portrait's sole subject.

Similarly, when she is alone in her dressing room, she is characterised as a work of art, posed in distress against a detailed background of luxury. Lady Audley's beauty seems to be enhanced by her exceedingly luxurious possessions and treasures. Yet, in this tableau, her beauty no longer suggests the associated goodness of her character. It is merely observed and described in the same way the narrator details the rest of her surroundings, in the form of a list. In the privacy of her own boudoir with no other character present to view her, the readers are privy to beholding Lady Audley posed amidst "all this lamplight, gilding, colour, wealth, and beauty" (321) as she considers her situation:

If Mr. Holman Hunt could have peeped into the pretty boudoir, I think the picture would have been photographed upon his brain to be reproduced by-and-by upon a bishop's half-length for the glorification of the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood. My lady in that half-recumbent attitude, with her elbow resting on one knee, and her perfect chin supported by her hand, the rich folds of drapery falling away in long undulating lines from the exquisite outline of her figure, and the luminous, rose-coloured firelight enveloping her in a soft haze, only broken by the golden glitter of her yellow hair—beautiful in herself, but made bewilderingly beautiful by the gorgeous surroundings which adorn the shrine of her loveliness. (Braddon 321)

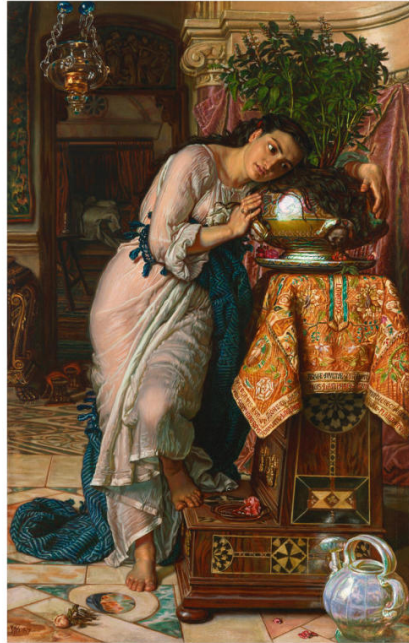


Figure 3 Holman Hunt's *Isabella and the Pot of Basil* (1868) as an example of a Pre-Raphaelite tableaux.

In addition to establishing Lady Audley's identity and position, her beautiful material goods and splendour are shown to enhance her beauty. In this way, her beauty, so enhanced, usually works towards her favour of associating her with conventional goodness and purity. However, in this passage, she is almost conflated as one of these beautiful possessions, a prop so well-fitted with the backdrop of such a tableau. Rather than being a truly virtuous person as her beauty might traditionally suggest, she is a mere figure, a subject, modelling and playing at a role which befits her surroundings. Alone, there is no other character who sees her now to make the association of her beauty with goodness. Instead, as an individual in and of herself, Lady Audley is shown to almost be but a beautiful art piece, neither moral nor immoral but a lovely, two-dimensional figure. Though not directly revelatory, this underscores the artificiality of Lady Audley, whereby though she relies on external products to set the stage of her aristocratic, virtuous role and lend her such a lovely aura, she shares in the mere essence of these possessions' beauty as a commodity, hollow of virtue.

Even after her ploys are exposed, Lady Audley is obsessed with retaining her beautiful things as a means of setting the stage for herself, regardless of where she ends up. When Robert arranges to remove her from the house, she tries to take with her the most expensive and loveliest things, “her mercenary soul [hankering] greedily after the costly and beautiful things of which she had been mistress” (413) as she hid her precious teacups and vases in silken dinner dresses. While her desperate grasping of her valuables may be seen as a means to keep her from poverty, it more likely suggests how she hoped to find a “liege of knights and willing subjects” (412) with her beauty and frame herself with her beautiful possessions, wherever she is removed to. With her material luxuries, she would be able to once again enhance her loveliness and play her role of an innocent angel more perfectly than before. She is confident that as long as she has viewers and admirers of her beauty, she will surely be able to exert her influence on them by recreating and abiding by the visual aesthetic conventions of goodness. Unfortunately for her, Lady Audley is deprived of viewers with her removal to the “Madhouse” where she will have no such audience. Without an audience, she is unable to exert her influence on society as a work of art in society. Just as how she is relegated to the asylum and is curtained off from society, her portrait at Audley Court is similarly covered by a curtain, no longer viewed by even the visitors who come to the house, marking the end of Lady Audley’s final memory and platform of influence.

iv) *Reading Lady Audley’s Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood Portrait*

While Lady Audley invests in using these arts to frame herself as a lovely innocent, one particular rendering of her image under a Pre-Raphaelite painter’s brush, intended to pay tribute to her beauty, ends up suggesting and revealing a cruel streak in Lady Audley’s seemingly pure character. Upon a closer analysis of Lady Audley’s portrait in the scene

where George and Robert first spy it in her private rooms, Lady Audley's beautiful features are re-interpreted and conveyed in a rendering which once more emphasises her possibly cruel nature. Lady Audley's naturally beautiful features, which had connotated purity, innocence and goodness to her society, suggests (and proves to George Talboys) her truly immoral nature in her Pre-Raphaelite-styled portrait now that she is painted alone. The luxurious props and settings around her not only fail to enhance her beauty to point to goodness but seem to foreshadow the revelation of an uncomfortably contradictory truth by offering such an alternative reading of Lady Audley's sweet features.

From the first chapter, Lady Audley, then known as the governess Lucy Graham, is quantified by "her grace, her beauty, her kindliness", "her pretty looks" and her "sweet voice" (8). It is this paradigm of beauty, "the soft and melting blue eyes; the graceful beauty of that slender throat and drooping head, with its wealth of showering flaxen curls; the lovely music of that gentle voice" (9) that overwhelms Sir Michael Audley and moves him to propose marriage to her. Lady Audley's reputed beauty precedes her, the description of her blue eyes, rosebud mouth and golden hair recurring from the audience of her society, from Sir Michael, to George Talboys, to Robert Audley himself. Thus, when she is read and described by an audience, from one viewer to the next, her beautiful features are conflated with her gestures in how she thanks the boy who opened the gate for her with a "sweet voice" and gratifies the vicar with her attentiveness in the "soft blue eyes uplifted to his face as he preached his simple sermon" (8), elevating her neatly into the idea of domestic, feminine purity and establishing her noble character.

However, when Lady Audley is depicted alone in a painting and a static image rather than through the descriptions of an adoring society, her features take on a different colour to suggest devilish connotations, quite the opposite of how she had been described before.

Lady Audley is quintessentially characterised by her Pre-Raphaelite portrait, which reveals the truth of her deception to her first husband, George Talboys, as well as hint at her true immoral nature to readers. George Talboys and Robert Audley come across Lady Audley's unfinished portrait by sneaking into her locked ante-chamber while she was away. The portrait, though not yet completed, was "wonderfully like" (73) to its subject. Her portrait was described to be so incredibly detailed in reflecting, "hair by hair, those feathery masses of ringlets with every glimmer of gold, and every shadow of pale brown" (77). The narrator seems to evaluate the portrait for its aesthetic merits, listing the "lurid lightness to the blonde complexion", "strange, sinister light to her deep blue eyes" and the "pretty pouting mouth [a] hard and almost wicked look" (77) to conclude that the painter was a Pre-Raphaelite. Nevertheless, such a reading of Lady Audley's beautiful features casts the subject under a new light and offers an alternative reading to her innocent prettiness, which had always been affiliated with the suggestion of her kindly nature.

Pre-Raphaelite paintings portrayed female subjects in familiar roles of literary heroines or Biblical figures. However, the models featured had "pale skin, flowing locks, scarlet lips, and melancholic expressions... with strong jaws, wide mouths, and larger hands" instead of the usually "sweet, delicate looks to represent [women's] humble, submissive characters [with] rosy cheeks, plump faces, and maternal bodies" (Achurch) seen in early Victorian art. Though Lady Audley is not described to share in having a strong jaw or large hands, her "pretty pouting mouth" and "feathery masses of ringlets" (Braddon 77) are distinct features of the Pre-Raphaelite subjects' "scarlet lips" and "flowing locks".



Figure 4 Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Aurelia (Fazio's Mistress)*, 1863-1873, modelled by Fanny Cornforth. These Pre-Raphaelite female portraits share in having "scarlet lips" and "flowing locks". Lady Audley's portrait, though fictitious, might have intended to resemble such Pre-Raphaelite portraits.



Figure 5 Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* (1872-3) with the face of Alexa Wilding. The painting was altered from a previous version in 1866-68, modelled by Fanny Cornforth and similarly features a "pretty pouting mouth" and "feathery masses of ringlets".

The Victorians were noted to also be especially obsessed with women's golden hair (Gitter 936). Gitter argues that the symbol of golden hair could be doubly read; "When she was saintly—a wife, nurse, mother, or victimized princess—the gold on her head was her aureole, her crown, the outward sign of her inner blessedness and innocence. But when she

was dangerous and corrupt, her gleaming hair was a weapon, web, or trap, a glittering symbolic fusion of the sexual lust and the lust for power that she embodied" (943). These two different readings of women's hair can be seen in how Lady Audley's golden hair and beautiful features are described by her admirers such as George Talboys and Michael Audley to exalt her presumably pure and innocent nature, yet seem to take on the second set of malevolent meaning in the Pre-Raphaelite's painting. The Pre-Raphaelite painter brings this alternative reading of Lady Audley through heightening the details and colours of the portrait, as well as exaggerating some of painting's features. The portrait is described to be faithful enough, in taking visual inventory of her characteristic golden hair, fair complexion and red lips. However, the intense detail rendered to the subject, "the perfection of feature, the brilliancy of colouring" (77), and the exaggeration of her crimson dress which now appeared to "[hang] about her in fold that looked like flames" all come together "to render the effect of the painting by no means an agreeable one", whereby Lady Audley constitutes a "beautiful fiend" (77). The Pre-Raphaelite style of painting, which is the very style that intends to reflect the subjects the way they are through meticulous detail, elicits this less-than-flattering reading of Lady Audley. The Pre-Raphaelite style of painting aims to "achieve the highest degree of objectivity in their depictions of nature", producing art "to render the reality of its subject-matter without concern for the constraints of convention, or for notions of the 'beautiful'" (Souter). As John Ruskin exhorts in an 1851 letter the *London Times*, the Pre-Raphaelites "will draw either what they see, or what they suppose might have been the actual facts of the scene they desire to represent, irrespective of any conventional rules of picture-making" ("The Pre-Raffaelites"). As the essence of the Pre-Raphaelites lies in capturing the reality of the subject as closely as possible, Lady Audley's portrait is suggested to be an accurate and true depiction of her person. When

rendered to the highest definition, Lady Audley is presented less as an innocent angelic figure and more of a lovely fiend “peeping out of a lurid mass of colour, as if out of a raging furnace” (77) or of some hellish pit. Thus, since Lady Audley’s image appears so sinister under the Pre-Raphaelite painter’s incredibly precise brush, her immoral nature is hinted to be the truer and more accurate reading of her character. The narrator summarises the oddity of how the portrait was “so like and yet so unlike; it was as if you had burned strange-coloured fires before my lady’s face, and by their influence brought out new lines and new expressions never seen in it before” (77). In this description, as well as in Alicia’s comment about how though they “have never seen my lady look so as she does in that picture... she *could* look so” (78), it is suggested that Lady Audley does have the capacity to look so sinister and wicked if only placed in specific circumstances, where her lovely features, so innocent in Robert and Alicia’s experience, would be heightened and extrapolated to reveal the streak of cruelty beneath. This insinuates that the person of Lady Audley that the characters are familiar with is incomplete and hides several layers of complexities and vice beneath, which she has not yet revealed.

The portrait also plays the double role of not only suggesting Lady Audley’s secretly cunning side but confirming it for George Talboys in that instance. George, who had believed his wife dead, finds himself staring at her in Lady Audley’s portrait. The portrait thus not only hints at Lady Audley’s cruelty, but explicitly reveals to George Talboys for certain that she has been duplicitous in hiding from him to pursue her life and marriage to Sir Michael. George confronts Lady Audley after this revelation and subsequently disappears, compelling Robert to search for him and seek the truth of Lady Audley. Hence, on the level of the plot, the portrait plays a significant role in truth finding by causing the unfolding of the mystery and the unravelling of Lady Audley’s façade.

Lastly, Lady Audley's sinister resemblance in the portrait is shown to surface in her real-life interaction with others, proving that there is some measure of accuracy to the painting's rendition of her hidden cruelty. Midway through Robert's investigations for George's disappearance, Sir Michael falls ill and Robert returns to Audley Court. Already suspecting Lady Audley's involvement in George's disappearance and harbouring "a vague yet hideous fear" (231) that Lady Audley might also connive against Sir Michael, he reminds her that "happiness... prosperity...safety depend alike upon [Sir Michael's] existence" (236), the subtext of which appears to be him warning her not to attempt to endanger Sir Michael in any way. Lady Audley's eyes reveal a "gleam of triumph" (237) in reply, responding that she is well aware that she will be safe in Sir Michael's protection for "those who strike [her] must strike through him" (237). She is confident that she will not be exposed for her misdeeds since Robert would not wish to hurt Sir Michael by revealing the truth about his beloved wife. In taking perverse pleasure at Robert's impasse and defying him triumphantly, she smiles "with her quiet smile – a smile of fatal beauty, full of lurking significance and mysterious meaning – the smile which the artist had exaggerated in his portrait of Sir Michael's wife" (237). Here, she is put before the "strange-coloured fires [whose] influence brought out new lines and new expressions never seen in it before" (77). In her fiendish triumph of self-preservation, this fatal smile surfaces, resembling the exaggerated version perceived by the painter of her Pre-Raphaelite portrait and affirming the truth of her nature. Similarly, when Lady Audley tries to convince Sir Michael that Robert is mad, "the lines about her pretty rosy mouth, those hard and cruel lines which Robert Audley had observed in the pre-Raphaelite portrait, were plainly visible in the firelight" (308). Once more, in her attempts to send Robert away to the madhouse before he can expose her deceit, the resemblance to her portrait is elicited in the familiar feature of her pretty mouth.

No longer limited to the portrait, these “hard and cruel lines” are now etched upon her face in her desperate manipulation of the situation. Thus, when thrust into situations of such cunning and perversity, Lady Audley’s true colours reveal themselves in her features, reaffirming her potential for selfish wickedness as the portrait ascribes. Lady Audley’s immoral nature is hence suggested to be quite present in her character, as the pre-Raphaelite painter elucidates, yet only expressed when she is pushed to extremes of self-preservation or at the threat of losing her titled position. Thus, the portrait illuminates the wickedness she conceals and points to the cracks in her artificial mask which ultimately surfaces over the course of the story.

3c. Revelation through the Execution of Artistic Accomplishments

As Lady Audley contrives to portray herself in a flattering light, she plays into her role of a lady through her accomplishments in music, painting and the like, as befitting of well-bred ladies in the Victorian Period. Though Lady Audley wins the confidence of aristocratic society through these artistic hobbies and seemingly succeeds in inheriting the domestic innocence associated with the position, it is ultimately the execution of these same accomplishments which inadvertently reveal Lady Audley's underlying guilt and exposes her duplicitous nature.

Lady Audley's hobbies align with the expectations accorded to Victorian ladies of the time. As approved in Florence Hartley's *The Ladies' Book of Etiquette, and Manual of Politeness*, the chapter of "Accomplishments" states that

a lady without her piano, or her pencil, her library of French, German, or Italian authors, her fancy work and tasteful embroideries, is now rarely met with, and it is right that such arts should be universal. No woman is fitted for society until she dances well; for home, unless she is perfect mistress of needlework; for her own enjoyment, unless she has at least one accomplishment to occupy thoughts and fingers in her hours of leisure (178-179).

Hartley's handbook suggests that these accomplishments are expected of well-bred Victorian ladies, as "every lady will endeavour to become, not only well educated, but accomplished" (178). Lady Audley plays up to these expectations well, winning her admiration from her society and attempting to make a home at Audley Court. Her maid, Phoebe Marks, describes how she was so admired by everyone on her trip aboard, being so accomplished in "her singing, her playing, her painting, her dancing", in the same breath with "her beautiful smile and her sunshiny ringlets" (32). In such a summary of Lady

Audley's warm reception abroad, it is suggested that her artistic accomplishments, well-aligned to Hartley's recommendations, are in themselves a kind of beauty akin to her appearance, very much intertwined with her identity and aligned to her lady-like image. Hence, apart from her innocent beauty, Lady Audley is characterised by her artistic accomplishments, which are befitting of her role as a lady and which pave the way for her to being both accepted and admired by aristocratic society.

Lady Audley's genteel pastimes as the lady of the house also intersect with the culture of consumerism in which her idle hobbies establish and display the Audleys' social position. Her pastimes of painting and embroidery were common hobbies which allowed women to exhibit the household's "disposable wealth" in the manner of creating furnishings or "trinkets". Madeleine C. Seys contests that these hobbies, rather than being "mere leisure", are tools of secrecy, meant to create a "semblance of idleness to disguise [Lady Audley's] deception and guilt". Unfortunately for Lady Audley, it is precisely her expertise in these hobbies which points towards how she is using them as tools of secrecy. Though the taking up of these roles facilitates her assimilation into the upper class, it is Lady Audley's performance of her aesthetic accomplishments which ultimately leads to revelations about her possible violent involvement with George Talboys' disappearance and her truly calculative nature so different from her naïve persona, exposing her duplicity.

i) Lady Audley's Piano playing

Helen Maldon inadvertently reveals her deeper, complex self through engaging with aesthetic hobbies that offer her catharsis and a platform to express her wordless guilt and sorrow as Lady Audley, such as through her piano playing. Lady Audley takes to playing the piano, a skill she is presumably excellent in, after a gloomy dinner following George Talboys mysterious disappearance. Though her performance is intended to entertain the family at

Sir Michael's request for music, Lady Audley's choice of music is sombre, not so much to entertain as it is to express her own feelings. She "wandered into a pensive sonata of Beethoven's. It was one of the many paradoxes in her character, that love of sombre and melancholy melodies, so opposite to her gay, frivolous nature" (96). The narrator underscores the juxtaposition between her choice of music and her usually happy, light-hearted ways, pointing towards how the engagement with music subconsciously draws some aspect out of her which she has not yet been observed to possess and suggests that Lady Audley has a deeper, unseen sorrowful side to her character. Instead of using her music to establish her frivolous façade, she appears to subconsciously turn to music to express her guilt over George Talboys, as she cannot vocalise her anxieties about George with anyone else as Lady Audley. Her musical accomplishments thus externalise hidden aspects of deeper, melancholic feelings that are not consistent with her desired portrayal of being a simple and gay woman.

Her piano playing also undermines her goodly, innocent image as Lady Audley as it raises Robert Audley's suspicions of her character as a petty liar through the concrete, physical details of having bruises on her wrists. As she plays the piano, Robert "amused himself by watching her jewelled white hands gliding softly over the keys" (96). When Lady Audley executes a quick musical passage, the gold bracelet moves from her wrist, revealing a bruise of "four slender, purple marks" with a "darker tinge" (97), which she explains away with her playing with a piece of ribbon. The appearance of the bruise coupled with Lady Audley's unconvincing explanation causes Robert to make several succinct judgments about his young aunt, namely that she is telling "childish white lies" (97). The narrator additionally supplements the descriptions of the physical bruises with suggestive explanations for the readers, describing the four marks as that which "might have been made by four fingers of a

powerful hand that had grasped the delicate wrist a shade too roughly” and that the darker tinge suggested “a ring worn on one of these strong and cruel fingers” (97). Though these suggestions do not appear to make any more of an impression on Robert, and indeed they do not come up again until the close of the mystery, Robert notices enough that the “bruise is of a more recent date than a few days ago” as the “skin has only just begun to change colour” (97), which leads him to ascribe the characteristic of petty deception onto Lady Audley, a novel idea to the current idea of Lady Audley’s virtue suggested by her beautiful golden hair and bright blue eyes. Thus, it is Lady Audley’s attempts of playing the part of the musical lady which inadvertently draws Robert’s attention to noticing the bruises on her wrists and eliciting an unconvincing answer from her, pointing to this first disjunct between her assumed virtue and her more secret and deceptive nature.

ii) *Lady Audley’s Painting*

Similarly, Lady Audley’s artistic endeavours in painting directly elicits her true self as Helen and gives voice to her triumphant delight at her elevated status and wealth, exposing her calculative nature and her greed, another aspect which she is unable to share with others and is forced to conceal as it contradicts her innocent, generous image. In mixing her colours for a watercolour sketch, Lady Audley forgets herself and responds to Robert’s offhand question about her previous station as governess for Mr Dawson in terms of her salary. She emphasises the lowly pay of “five-and-twenty pounds a year”, or “six pounds five a quarter” she received as governess by measuring them against the cost of the paints she uses now, which “cost a guinea each at Windsor and Newton’s – the carmine and ultramarine thirty shillings” (128). As a painter, her familiarity with the quality and cost of her paints provide the basis upon which she measures her change in fortunes, and further points to her calculated shrewdness in delighting over her newfound wealth. The sheer

thought at how she used to be “glad” to get such a pay is so laughable to her when she considers her current position now, and how she is able to indulge in her artistic pursuits with the finest of materials. This unguarded display of joy and comment on the cost of her paints suggests that Lady Audley does indeed know, to a detailed and calculated extent, how great her change in fortunes are. She is not as naïve about the monetary improvement her marriage to Sir Michael has won her, as she so appears. Rather, she is shrewd and perfectly aware of her newfound position’s worth in terms of materials, goods and possessions. Thus, her temporary moment of glee over her selection of fine paints in her artistic enthusiasm reveals glimpses of her worldliness and how she is thoroughly enraptured by her position and possessions, a contrast to her naïve, innocent persona.

Her guilt is also reflected upon her art in a moment of shock as she accidentally spoils the painting after Robert’s lightly veiled accusation. In response to Lady Audley’s joyous delight in her new position, demonstrated by the cost of her art materials, Robert comments that “it is a change” and that “some women would do a great deal to accomplish such a change as that” (129). He hints that such a change is a reasonable motivation to account for “a great deal”, possibly to some scandalous extreme. At Robert’s remark, Lady Audley accidentally ruins her nearly-finished sketch. Though she had only “some critical little touches” left to complete the work, she drops her small brush in her nerves at Robert’s remark, blotting out “the peasant’s face under a widening crimson lake” (129) and puts away her colours and sketch at once. Lady Audley had been so close to completing the difficult task of copying the “impossibly beautiful Italian peasant, in an impossibly Turneresque atmosphere” (129), which would have required much patience and precision. Despite being meticulous and presumably skilful at her painting, Robert’s comment causes her to be careless and to ruin the sketch with the dropping of her brush. Her strong reaction

and carelessness in spoiling the sketch suggests her guilt, specifically as one of those women that Robert mentions. Lady Audley's innocent persona could hardly have been found guilty of anything, yet her reaction reveals otherwise, hinting at how Lady Audley has some secret cause for such guilt, so unexpectedly contradictory to her goodly image. Hence, the performance of her artistic hobbies and the intimate technicalities of the paints' cost plays upon Lady Audley to reveal a little more of her cunning, as well as her triumph and delight in achieving this position which allow her valuable material possessions above her previous stations in life, ascribing some new aspect of greed to her otherwise innocent character.

4. Conclusion

With such a beautiful protagonist revealed to be a villain, *Lady Audley's Secret* embodies the suspicion of things not being as they seem and overturns conventional ideas of knowing one's characters by their outward appearances and manners. Braddon uses these aesthetic elements of the cosmetic, feminine domestic duties and accomplishments, as well as art and tableaux, to highlight how the new truth of Lady Audley's identity as a virtuous lady can be written and achieved through the performance of these various aspects. Despite her ultimate comeuppance, Lady Audley does enjoy a measure of success in becoming an upper-class lady, pointing to how Lady Audley can re-write her history and identity by decoding and manipulating the normative language of beauty and goodness through these aesthetic elements of femininity and domesticity, enhancing and playing up to these connotations of feminine virtue in order to scheme her way up the social ladder. Through her veil of pretence, moving out of sight to process her feelings and dressing a specific way, Lady Audley conceals her guilt and villainy, simultaneously framing herself visually as a paragon of virtue and loveliness through her duties of tea-making, her artful makeup and her positioning in tableaux with the family. However, even as Lady Audley employs these elements to hide her secrets, they end up revealing the inconsistencies in character and her subconscious slips which directly associate her with George's disappearance. The truth seems to find expression in the aesthetic despite her best efforts, in her piano-playing where a hidden, darker side of Lady Audley is heard through her choice of music and through her painting hobby where Robert glimpses her calculative nature. The aesthetic thus points to the truth in Lady Audley's execution of these arts, hinting at traces of her guilt and, as the aesthetic is deeply related to matters of her inner self, reflects her inner turmoil. Finally, with the Pre-Raphaelite painting revealing Lady Audley's double life to

George and hinting at her truly selfish nature to Robert, Braddon negotiates the tension of the aesthetic being a tool that can both conceal and reveal, except that, as the truth ultimately finds articulation in the aesthetic, the manipulation of such aesthetic elements, even in behaviours, hobbies and manners, are only skin deep and cannot be sustained. Nevertheless, the appeal of Lady Audley as a character and an actress in her situation evokes hope for readers that new truths might be written in a similar fashion through such aesthetic elements as long as her mistakes are not repeated.

CHAPTER THREE: THE MOONSTONE (1868)

1. Decoding the Unconscious Theft of the Moonstone through the Scientific Lens

Praised by critic T.S Eliot as “the first, the longest and the best of modern English detective novels” (*The Moonstone* 615), Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone* (1868) was considered a milestone for English detective fiction. *The Moonstone* consists of several narratives recounting a series of events following the theft and recovery of a precious Indian Diamond. In the text, family members and friends become potential suspects in a scandalous crime revolving around the stolen jewel. Set against a domestic backdrop, such crime occurring in the traditionally safe space of the household heightens fears of things not being as they seem and acts as an amplified extension of these modern anxieties.

While the established scholarship considers much broader discourses of *The Moonstone* pertaining to the political and the literary, this paper focuses on evaluating the truth finding methods featured in *The Moonstone*, specifically the current scientific lens, in resolving the mystery. *The Moonstone* is primarily framed as a mystery revolving around the theft of a precious diamond. However, the paper shows that it is the human individual that is the greatest site of mystery in the text, a mystery which can only be understood, decoded and answered with the development of new lenses of reading. As the characters attempt to hunt down the series of events and the thief, the individuals within the text often come to consider the other people as “mysteries” in and of themselves. For example, Franklin wonders why his cousin and love interest, Rachel Verinder, behaves so coldly towards him after the theft of the diamond. The servant girl, Rosanna Spearman, is confused at her master, Franklin’s, inconsistent behaviour in stealing the diamond and yet looking for it in earnest. These mysteries all culminate in demanding an explanation as to how Franklin stole the diamond without his own knowledge, articulating and addressing the main mystery as

humanity's apparently inconsistent nature. The paper highlights how *The Moonstone* defines humans as being fragmentary and complex through the limitations of other methods of truth finding – direct and circumstantial evidence, as well as character witnesses – and how newer, multiple lenses of reading are required to piece himself together more fully for some sense of himself and of the truth.

In *The Moonstone*, this new lens of reading is seen in the scientific, medical field. The scientific lens accounts for the physiological aspect of the human individual as being an influencing factor to one's behaviour beyond one's social relations and merely physical interactions, offering a new truthful possibility of how the will and the body can act independently from each other and ultimately vindicating Franklin from the crime. With *The Moonstone's* mystery plot resolved through scientific reading and experimentation, the paper thus posits that it is the development of new lenses of reading which thus acknowledges the fuller complexity of humankind and aids in the pursuit of truth regarding human nature.

Before I analyse the text on how it approaches truth finding, I will firstly summarise how *The Moonstone* has been read through postcolonial discourse, a critique of the domestic English household, and as a reflection of courtroom trials based on its narrative structure. Following that, I will analyse the several lenses of reading for truths that are employed in the text, paralleling the types of evidence presented in a courtroom – witness statements, circumstantial evidence and direct evidence, according to the changing Victorian court procedures which will be elaborated later on. Though these lenses are used both in attempting to seek out the thief and to explain the seeming contradictions of the characters, I will evaluate how these three angles are ultimately limited in truth finding, demanding a new lens to discern the truth of the events. Finally, I will re-establish the main

mystery of the text as the inconsistent and physiologically-limited nature of humankind/humanity, and analyse how the scientific method conveyed by Ezra Jennings addresses the mystery of human nature, as well as derive the actual series of events relating to the stolen diamond.

2. Literature Review

The Moonstone was published in the respectable journal – *All the Year Round* – edited by Charles Dickens. It was an important detective novel as it featured advanced forensic deduction and police work, engaging with current scientific developments and forensic practices, which was well-received by the reading public.¹⁸ *The Moonstone* has been read through postcolonial discourse, a critique of the domestic English household, and as a reflection of courtroom trials based on its narrative structure.

Political undertones are invoked with the text's dramatic opening – the storming of the Seringapatam – and the original theft of the diamond, which incites a sacred Indian curse and frames the rest of the mystery. Tamar Heller remarks that through the theft of the jewel, "the seemingly opposed realms of exotic (wild) and English (domestic) permeate each other" in *The Moonstone*, especially in how the Indians pursue the diamond out of an "English' sense of justice" while Englishmen such as Franklin appear to have "turned foreign" (145). Heller claims that the revelation of Franklin and Godfrey being the thieves "radically disrupts" (145) the boundaries of Englishness and foreignness, and that this family affair comments on the wider narrative of imperialism. Ian Duncan agrees that these imperialist elements shed new perspective on the traditional ideals of the English domestic, in a way that the domestic "appears reduced, artificial, bright but fragile" (300). Collins' text thus subverts the presumably noble-minded morals of conventional Victorian ideals with the introduction of the foreigner and the outsider figures. Beyond these political readings, Ronald Thomas also notes that British imperialism of its colonies "eventually becomes the focus of intense scientific scrutiny and speculation rather than political commentary" (68).

¹⁸ See "Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*" (n.d.) by *the British Library*.

Apart from the postcolonial critique of the text, *The Moonstone* has also been read as a critique of the domestic space, where the supposedly safe private space becomes the very site of danger and mystery. Elizabeth Rose Gruner elaborates on how Collins' novel questions the domestic and warns against trusting its goodly appearance as it is replete with its own secrets and multiplicities (127-8). Though detective fiction typically expels the foreign element that had "invaded a secure community or family" (Gruner 127), the inverse appears to be true in *The Moonstone*, where it is the outsider figure of Jennings who comes to access the truth and it is the family members who are complicit in covering up the crime (128). Along these lines, Gruner evaluates how it is the express silence of women in the Verinder-Herncastle clan that perpetuate the very mystery and secrecy, drawing examples from Rachel Verinder and Rosanna Spearman's silence as they attempt to conceal Franklin and their own guilt, eventually deeply implicating the family's privacy (131-3). Both women maintain their silence regarding their knowledge about Franklin's theft as both are in love with him and wish to protect him. Elaine Showalter contextualises female secrecy and privacy as that which was "basic to the lives of all respectable women" in the mid-nineteenth century (5), though in the case of *The Moonstone*, it appears to lead to the concealing of crimes and sets off "a chain of circumstances which includes theft, suicide, and murder" (Gruner 133).

There has also been much research on the reliability of the narrators, and about how the text reflects the changing ways of the courtroom in order to seek the truth. The legal and communal means employed in the courtroom to seek the truth of the matter and enact justice are an extrapolation to the current models of truth finding seen in the text. As in the courtroom, the elements of character testimonials, direct and indirect (or circumstantial)

evidence, and forensic science comes in to aid the search for the thief in *The Moonstone*, as I will later elaborate.

Gruner and Roberts discuss how the narrative structure of *The Moonstone* points to the limitations of Franklin's attempts in reconstructing the sequence of events through character witnesses. Gruner highlights how the retrospectivity in the characters accounting for the events of *The Moonstone* requires them to inevitably conceal certain evidence or knowledge gained on hindsight, potentially complicating their roles and evidence as "eyewitnesses" in the course of events (130). She also critiques Franklin's assembling of several first-hand witnesses and his choice of narrators to account for the progression of events, as he selects family members and household staff who are loyal to the family but are poor observers, biased and have their own individual idiosyncrasies to the point of being blindsided in various ways (128). Hence, though there are several witnesses to corroborate the case, they are quite unable to tell a coherent truth without being partial to the family and overlooking certain details. Roberts concurs on this point, noting the exclusion of characters such as Godfrey or Rachel from narrativizing their side of the story. Roberts points out that even though Franklin attempts to use his selected multiple narrators to derive a clear conclusion of the truth, the assembly of accounts reveal such different points of view, such that the reader himself would have to make their own decision on how to read the situation (and consequently, the narrators themselves), rather than merely access the revealed truth (177). Franklin's own multiple roles in the construction of the text as "detective, thief, narrator, and even a kind of general editor" where he "solicits" narratives, "restricts" narrators, "arranges their stories" and dialogues with other narrators in the act of narrating (Roberts 170) also highlights the construction and particularly his intervention in accounting this event, despite the many witnesses. Hence, despite Franklin's efforts at

assembling an accurate record of the event – gathering several witnesses to derive a single corroborated testimony – the text challenges the idea of being able to access the objective truth through human witness and testimonials, problematising the very idea of reading and knowing the situation accurately.

As *The Moonstone*'s narrative structure resembles the proceedings of the courtroom, my analysis thus aims to complement such studies in truth finding by evaluating the relatively new methods of the scientific reading and how leads to both the acquittal of Franklin's innocence, and in offering an alternative lens to discern the truth of the mystery of humankind's contradictory nature.

3. Ways of Truth finding in *The Moonstone*

The text employs the various methods of truth finding often seen in the courtroom in order to seek out the thief of the Moonstone. These methods include the reference to witness statements, and the examination of circumstantial and direct evidence; they aim to elicit the truth of the crime by reading the individuals involved and wholly piecing together the series of events. Within the Victorian courts of law themselves, the reliance on these methods of truth finding was also evolving. For example, the weight of character testimonials, which used to be an authoritative influence in the courts of law, was beginning to decline in favour of the circumstantial and scientific evidence then.¹⁹ As Roslyn Jolly explains, the suspicions against human testimony rose because of the possibility of deception or of unintentional mistakes by the witnesses in their recollection (81). The relativity and instability of language also invalidated the authority of the human testimony. In comparison, “circumstantial evidence seemed to offer the testimony of pure fact, uncontaminated by language altogether, or separated from the designs of its users” (Jolly 81-82) and so became the new source of valuable evidence. These trends of truth finding in court are reflected in *The Moonstone*, especially in the insufficiencies of character testimonials. Through the text, the efficacy of these methods for truth finding are thus explored, in which they prove useful in pointing to several salient aspects of the case, yet fall short in decoding other clues.

The three methods of referring to character witnesses and analysing circumstantial and direct evidence operate on the assumption that the individual acts in his full knowledge and volition, and so, can be read accurately through his actions and his interaction with his

¹⁹ See Ann-Marie Dunbar’s “Making the Case: Detection and Confession in *Lady Audley’s Secret* and the *Woman in White*” pg. 99-101 regarding the rise of circumstantial evidence being used in court.

physical environment. However, *The Moonstone* shows how these three lenses prove to be limited in revealing truths as the subject in question is shown to still need to confess the truths themselves. Without these confessions, such lenses more often than not amount to some measure of misreading and further deterrence of the truth by pursuing false trails.

Furthermore, *The Moonstone* renders such readings inaccurate by offering characters who act in ignorance and non-volition, and so become the site of mystery. Owing to the characters' inconsistent nature in how they think one way yet act in another, and their physiological limitations under the influence of external factors such as opium, alcohol or illness, the truth of what these characters do is obscured, even to themselves. These three lenses of external reading thus prove to be limited in addressing the mystery of human nature as they are unable to access truths which are concealed from the individual himself.

A fourth external reading – embodied by the professional scientific gaze in the text – is thus required to read these subjects and reveal their own secrets, redeeming the external gaze to pursue truth for the subject themselves. Nevertheless, while the scientific lens illuminates the critical truth of Franklin's innocence despite his theft which the other three lenses fail to do, science is similar to the other lenses as it can only offer an incomplete version of the truth. This incomplete reading still needs to be supplemented by the other external readings of interpersonal relationships and direct and circumstantial evidence to elicit the individual's inconsistencies and truths that the subject cannot derive by himself independently. Thus, through the text, Collins not only highlights the value of external, professional lenses of reading in ascertaining a different aspect of the truth of humanity such as the subconscious or the physiological, but also suggests yet more unknowns to human nature, which demand more varied approaches for truth finding.

3a. Witness Statement

The first method of reading relies on one's direct, intimate, personal experience with the suspect through interpersonal relationships, subsequently accounted for in a witness statement. Collins uses this courtroom technique of the witness statement through characters, such as Gabriel Betteredge and Miss Clack, who contribute their accounts of events and their interactions with others according to their personal, first-hand experience and memory. The premise of Betteredge's and Clack's accounts of personally interacting with the several main suspects of Franklin, Rachel, Rosanna and Godfrey Ablewhite form a large part of "knowing" these suspects and frames their narrator's accounts as witness statements to aid in truth finding. These narrators thus assume the role of character witnesses and testify to the personality of these individuals accordingly.

This way of reading permeates throughout the text as a foundational lens of establishing specific characters' innocence. However, I argue that although the various narrators are sure in their judgements of these suspects, this reading is at best limited in accessing the truth as it is unable to prove the innocence of these specific individuals unless and until the accused explain themselves. At its worst, this reading additionally compels characters to deter investigations in their loyalty and defence to the suspects, impeding the pursuit of truths.

This reading is undertaken most clearly by the family steward, Gabriel Betteredge and Rachel's mother, Lady Julia Verinder herself, in reading Rachel Verinder. Although it is Rachel's diamond which is stolen in the course of the night, Rachel behaves oddly in refusing to assist with the investigations, leading to Sergeant Cuff's conjecture that Rachel is involved in stealing her own diamond. At this suggestion, Betteredge protests, citing that "if Cuff were Solomon and determined that Rachel had mixed herself up in this mean guilty

plot, I would have said “You don’t know her; and I do” (Collins 175), despite his lack of evidence proving her innocence. Similarly, Lady Verinder finds it difficult to concur with the Sergeant’s conclusion, defiantly stating how her “knowledge of [Rachel] dates from the beginning of her life” (211) and that, as she knows her child, she is certain that “the circumstances have misled [Cuff]” (213) as such a theft is out of Rachel’s character. Nevertheless, Lady Verinder agrees to put Rachel to Cuff’s test. Before Rachel quits the Verinder house, the female servant, Rosanna Spearman, whom Cuff suspects as an accomplice to Rachel in the theft, commits suicide. Cuff thus proposes a test by having Lady Verinder bring up Rosanna’s suicide to Rachel to incite a guilty reaction. However, Rachel passes the test, presumably unperturbed. Lady Verinder once more asserts that she is “more firmly persuaded than ever, that the circumstances, in this case, have fatally misled him” (227). Hence, both Betteredge and Lady Verinder cite their personal history and years of experience of knowing Rachel as justification to Rachel’s character and innocence, despite not having any concrete evidence.

On the resolution of the mystery, Betteredge and Lady Verinder are proved right for having their faith in Rachel’s integrity through other forms of direct and circumstantial evidence. Rachel was proven not to have taken the diamond, and to have kept her silence in witnessing Franklin’s theft of the diamond out of her loyalty to him. However, Betteredge and Lady Verinder’s testimonies of Rachel’s character is limited in truth finding as they were not able to prove Rachel’s innocence in this particular situation. Betteredge himself conveys his helplessness when he heard Cuff’s conjectures against her: “It was downright frightful to hear him piling up proof after proof against Miss Rachel, and to know, while one was longing to defend her, that there was no disputing the truth of what he said” (214) in terms of the situation before them. Thus, though both witnesses were accurate in reading Rachel’s

character and claiming her innocence, their testimonies were unable to prove her innocence in the face of Cuff's evidence and reconcile her silence with her involvement in the theft. It is ultimately Rachel who vindicates herself from suspicion by breaking her silence, and recounting to Franklin that she saw him take the diamond. Her revelation explains her cold behaviour towards Franklin during the investigations as she considers him hypocritical in stealing the diamond, yet leading the search for it. This also addresses why she makes several decisions which seem to impede the resolution of the case, though she is innocent of the theft. Thus, this lens of character witness is limited in truth finding as it is unable to prove the character's true innocence without the character's own confession.

Betteredge similarly offers witness statements in favour of the servant, Rosanna Spearman's integrity. As with Rachel, Betteredge's testimony of Rosanna's honest character is insufficient in proving Rosanna's innocence until the revelation of her own posthumous confession. While Betteredge's staunch belief in Rachel's character did not add value in proving the truth of Rachel's innocence, his defence of Rosanna conversely waylays the Sergeant from getting to the truth of the matter. In the course of his narrative, Betteredge briefly mentions his knowledge of Rosanna's shameful past as a thief and her time at the reformatory. However, as he considers Rosanna a diligent worker and pities her for being unpopular among the other servants, as well as having a deformed shoulder and plain looks, he conceals her history to keep her out of the authorities' suspicions during the investigations. When Inspector Seegrave seeks out Betteredge's help with regards to the servants' character, Betteredge withholds the girl's tainted background from the Superintendent. He does not offer her history of crime to Seegrave, claiming that he does not wish "to direct suspicion against a poor girl, whose honesty had been above all doubt as long as I had known her...it was the Superintendent's business to discover reason for

suspecting her first – and then, and not till then, it would be my duty to tell him how she came into my lady's service" (116-7). Although this does not have much bearing on the unravelling of the mystery since Rosanna was not the thief, it reflects how Betteredge's confidence in her leads him to withhold certain knowledge about her, potentially obstructing the pursuit to truth.

Betteredge further attempts to prove Rosanna's innocence by her relations to other society members, once more appealing to other character witnesses to clear her name. He agrees to help Sergeant Cuff in his interview with the Yollands, friends of Rosanna's whom Betteredge is sure would testify favourably on Rosanna's character. Betteredge was convinced that showing how Rosanna "had been in company with the fisherman and his family was as good as to prove that she had been innocently occupied, so far, at any rate. It would be doing the girl a service, therefore, instead of an injury..." (162). However, Mrs Yolland ends up revealing Rosanna's decision to leave her employment, raising new suspicions against Rosanna. This is a shocking revelation to Betteredge as Rosanna had not mentioned this to him as her employer. Nevertheless, instead of pursuing this curiosity, Betteredge's confidence in Rosanna's innocence compels him to prevent Cuff's efforts from finding out more about it. He begins to "to smell mischief in the air [and] tried to take Sergeant Cuff out... [he] went on to the door, excessively uncomfortable, and said [he] thought [he] must bid them good-night" (164). Though he is equally in the dark about Rosanna's decision, he tries to detract Cuff repeatedly and attempts to steer him out of the house three times at the expense of not learning more about Rosanna's plans. After the interview, Betteredge bemoans how Sergeant Cuff "had made another discovery to the prejudice of Rosanna Spearman, in the place of all others where I thought her character was safest, and all through me" (166). Though Betteredge senses that Rosanna's circumstance is

indeed suspicious, his confidence in Rosanna's character overrides his pursuit of the truth, leading him to feel guilty at contributing to such a discovery, rather than feel the elation of "detective fever" at finding out some new clue. Thus, though Betteredge himself suspects that Rosanna is somehow involved in the theft of the diamond, his role as a character witness for Rosanna inclines him to obstruct Cuff's pursuit of the truth about her in relation to the missing diamond.

Franklin appears to follow Betteredge's inclinations as a character witness for Rosanna's innocence, attempting to defend Rosanna by withholding the content of his conversation with her from Sergeant Cuff. Even with the revelation that Rosanna did have something to hide and had been caught moving around town when she was reportedly ill in bed, Franklin declares that he "can't, or won't, help Sergeant Cuff find the girl out" (186), answering Cuff's questions about his conversation with Rosanna unhelpfully as he insists that he "had nothing more to say" (184). One possible reason behind both Franklin and Betteredge's protection of Rosanna is that as members of genteel society, they are attempting to resist Cuff as a foreign element, according to their "genteel code of honour and loyalty" (156), as suggested by D.A Miller. Miller reads the relationships between these members of the family members and servants as that which relates to the traditional Victorian titled hierarchy, relations which still overrule the foreigner and the outsider, such as Sergeant Cuff. Miller examines Franklin and Betteredge's response to Cuff's accusations of Rosanna, and concludes that when they were "unable rationally to extricate Rachel from Cuff's impressively taut weave of evidence, the community relies most simply on a strategy of disavowal" (157), as seen in how the pair refuse to answer Cuff's questions helpfully. While Miller states that "Cuff's intervention is a sign that the community has failed to know itself" (158), the final resolution of the mystery being aligned to the "community's

intuitions” rather than Cuff’s conclusions points to how Cuff should have “done his ‘detective business’ along with the community” (158) to seek out the truth. As it is, whether it is such genteel loyalty for Rosanna as a servant in aristocratic society to the Verinders, or the pair’s personal interactions with her, both Franklin and Betteredge testify for her as character witnesses to the point of obstructing Cuff’s investigations and limiting the pursuit of truth.

Nevertheless, their efforts in protecting her and in proving her innocence through their testimonies of her character prove futile. Similar to Rachel, despite the character witnesses of Betteredge and Franklin reading Rosanna’s honesty and their best efforts of defending her, it is Rosanna’s own confession through her posthumous letters that reveals the truth and explains her suspicious behaviour, ultimately vindicating her. Thus, though the societal members of these suspects – in this case, Rosanna’s employers – stand by them as character witnesses, they are insufficient to prove the suspect’s innocence and delve further to the truth until the suspect herself confesses her actions.

While these examples reflect how witness statements are ineffective in proving the innocence of characters and coming to the truth, character witness could also be completely inaccurate and outrightly wrong, as seen in the counterexample of Miss Clack’s glowing testimony of Godfrey Ablewhite. Miss Clack’s exaggerated account is characterised by an extreme bias for Ablewhite, whom she hero-worships in the name of religious zeal. At the end of the text, Ablewhite was revealed to be the true thief in his efforts to finance a sordid double life with his mistress. Yet, Miss Clack fails to discern these truths of Ablewhite in her personal interactions with him, affectionately calling him “my precious and admirable friend” (254) and a “Christian Hero” (256). She is instead enamoured by the “heavenly gentleness of his smile [and] the richness of his deep voice” (265), glorifying even the

smallest details of how he follows the servant into the room at a perfect pace and distance (264). Hence, although Miss Clack places her infinite trust in Ablewhite based on his charm and his Christian philanthropic efforts for charity, she is proven to be wrong in her judgements of Ablewhite's goodness and uprightness, and fails to come to the truth of his duplicitous nature.

Thus, though character references do prove to be accurate on hindsight after the resolution of the mystery – as in the case of Rachel who would never steal her own diamond, or even Rosanna who had become involved in a theft which was not premediated – it is limited in truth finding as it is unable to justify the innocence of the suspect and impedes the pursuit of the truth on occasion. Character witnesses may also prove to be biased and so, completely wrong in reading for innocence or guilt, thereby hindering the pursuit of truth of the suspect.

3b. Circumstantial Evidence

The second reading offered is the evolving lens of circumstantial evidence. Roslyn Jolly summarises that circumstantial evidence refers to:

any form of evidence other than the direct evidence of the senses, or the direct testimony of a witness. Circumstantial evidence included many different kinds of physical and psychological evidence, but the feature they shared was that the fact to be proved had always to be inferred from the evidence - it was not directly witnessed or attested. (81)

Based on the evidence of the situation, characters read the circumstance for a likely narrative which aligns to the facts put before them, usually leading to some conclusion. Though this lens appears to elicit truths about characters by extrapolating based on their actions and certain coincidences, it relies on a measure of theorising to fit the clues into a likely narrative of the series of events. If characters are innocently unaware of their own movements, or if coincidences are truly just that – mere coincidences, this lens ends up reading clues inaccurately and proves to be unable to sieve out the truth of the matter in totality, limiting this lens for truth finding.

Sergeant Cuff reads characters through circumstantial evidence in order to deduce the thief of the Moonstone. Based on the circumstantial evidence of the theft, Sergeant Cuff rightly ascertains some aspects of the truth regarding the servant, Rosanna, but wrongly concludes that Rachel and Franklin are the masterminds whom Rosanna is working in cahoots with. His initial investigations revolve around the smeared paint on Rachel Verinder's bedroom door, which leads him to inquire "whether there is any article of dress in this house with the smear of the paint on it... who the dress belongs to [and] how the person can account for having been in this room, and smeared the paint, between midnight

and three in the morning” (Collins 136) while the paint was wet. Such circumstantial traces narrow the possible window in which the theft took place, as well as providing a new lead in searching for the incriminating gown belonging to the thief. Going on this lead, he peruses the washing-book and follows up on the missing night-gown, which points him to Rosanna Spearman and her attempts to destroy the night gown while sewing a new one in replacement. Hence, through circumstantial evidence, Cuff rightly deduces that Rosanna is guilty and though not the mastermind of the theft, a likely conspirator as she concealed the incriminating stained nightgown with paint and replaced it with a new one.

However, though circumstantial evidence leads Sergeant Cuff to rightly suspect Rosanna’s involvement in the theft, further “circumstantial evidence” or coincidences leads him to draw the wrong conclusions in suspecting Rachel (and Franklin in turn) as the mastermind working with Rosanna. When Rosanna returns from the Shivering Sands and Rachel makes her decision to leave the house within the same hour, Cuff concludes that “the two must have communicated privately” (182), pointing to Rachel as the mastermind in directing Rosanna to hide something in the Sands. This “coincidence” in the window period of the hour leads Cuff to connect the two women in the crime, and he conclude that Rachel “couldn’t go away until she knew it *was* hidden” (182). Based on his conjecture, he even spends the night in the middle a connecting passageway, so as to intervene any attempted correspondence between Rachel and Rosanna. However, by the end of the text, it is proven that Rachel is not the thief, and that these occurrences of Rosanna returning from the Sands and Rachel making her decision to leave are indeed mere, unrelated coincidences. The misreading of such circumstantial evidence highlights the limitation of this lens, as it misleads Cuff in his suspicions towards Rachel and fails to accurate read the situation for the truth.

Based on circumstantial evidence, Cuff also wrongly suspects Rosanna and Franklin to be in cahoots with each other in stealing the diamond. Cuff happens to overhear the conversation between Franklin and Betteredge, in which the former was sharing with the latter of how Rosanna had seemed as though she had wanted to confess some secret to him earlier (178). Though Cuff is only privy to a snatch of the conversation, he reads it alongside his observation of Rosanna's abrupt and awkward exit from Franklin when Betteredge enters the room, and Franklin's determined silence in response to his queries (184) to conclude that Rosanna and Franklin are working together in some way with regards to the theft. His mis-conjecture based on circumstantial evidence and coincidences leads him to test Rosanna and Franklin's relationship, which yields a negative result as the two were not at all working together to steal the diamond. This test, which was executed on the presumption that Rosanna and Franklin were in contact, fails to illuminate Cuff and ultimately drives Rosanna to her suicide. Thus, as Cuff's deductions based on circumstantial evidence are only able to partially derive the truth, this method of truth finding winds up misleading investigations with tragic consequences and limits the pursuit of truth.

Rosanna Spearman also (mis)reads Franklin's involvement in the theft through circumstantial evidence. Although she comes to the realisation that Franklin stole the diamond through circumstantial evidence, this reading is insufficient in giving her the full picture of how Franklin was not acting out of his volition and had stolen the diamond subconsciously, leading to her several other misunderstandings which detract Franklin from getting to the truth. Because Penelope told her about the wet paint on the door, Rosanna pieces together that it is likely for the thief to have stained his or her nightgown upon it. She finds Franklin's nightgown with such a stain, and firstly suspects Franklin to have had a tryst with Rachel, before subsequently realising that "the smear on your nightgown might have a

meaning entirely different to the meaning which I had given to it up to that time... the thief is ... Mr Franklin Blake" (412). Thus, through circumstantial evidence, she makes the accurate discovery of Franklin pilfering the diamond. However, her additional reading of Franklin's behaviour showing himself to be "the busiest of anybody in fetching the police, as a blind to deceive us all" (412-3) in light of this discovery is inaccurate as the theft is not known to Franklin himself. When she tries to hint to Franklin that he has an accomplice in her, she is only met with Franklin's honest confusion and they wind up having several misunderstandings, which ultimately detracts both from getting to the truth of the matter, especially with Rosanna's suicide. Hence, similar to Cuff, Rosanna's reading through circumstantial evidence only ascertains part of the truth in rightly deducing Franklin as the thief but is limited in revealing the truth of his innocence, leading her to misread his character and ultimately obstruct the pursuit of truth.

Thus, though circumstantial evidence was gaining traction in the courtroom as a reliable and valid source of evidence and does point towards aspects of the truth in the text, such as Rosanna being an accomplice to the thief and Franklin as the one who stole the diamond, its role in truth finding is limited and occasionally misleading, guiding Cuff into wrongly suspecting Rachel and Franklin as being complicit to the crime in turn, and leading Rosanna to misunderstand Franklin. In trying to align such evidence to read characters, circumstantial evidence presents a wide margin for error in reading the character through situations or physical objects for incomplete conjectures, which obscure and detract from the truth. Hence, circumstantial evidence is insufficient in unravelling other important aspects of the mystery beyond the preliminary clues and require other supplementary lenses of reading.

3c. Direct Evidence

The third reading for truth finding is in consulting the direct evidence of the case, that is, the direct witness by one's own senses. Though seemingly incontestable as a form of evidence for truth finding, direct evidence proves to only be able to make incomplete conjectures based on external observations of the suspects, which may ultimately lead to further misreadings, obscure the truth or come to the wrong conclusions of the matter, similar to the readings of character witness and circumstantial evidence.

Through direct evidence, Rachel Verinder comes to the truth of Franklin as the thief who removed the diamond from the cupboard that night. It is Rachel herself, the main character of secrecy and Cuff's chief suspect, who delivers the incriminating testimony against Franklin by reading him via this third lens of truth finding. She confesses that she "saw [him] take the Diamond with [her] own eyes" (443), perceiving Franklin to be the thief. However, Rachel could not perceive that Franklin himself was drugged when he took the diamond though she directly witnesses him "stealing" the jewel, thus mistakenly concluding that Franklin is not as noble as he appears. Additionally, Rachel Verinder misjudges the truth of Franklin's character through this lens of reading, as she directly witnesses him stealing the diamond, yet earnestly leading the investigations to recover it. Franklin was "working harder than any of them to recover the jewel", and even trying to question Rachel "about the loss of the Diamond – the Diamond which [he himself] had stolen" (452). In directly witnessing such conflicting behaviours from Franklin, Rachel is greatly angered by his "horrible falseness and cunning" (452) and concludes that he is duplicitous, thereby spurning him. When Franklin chides her for not speaking out sooner in this interview, she is indignant that the misunderstanding would hardly be cleared up any more easily, as she summarises her case: "You stole it – I saw you! You affected to help the police – I saw you!"

(453). As the lawyer, Mr Bruff, summarises, “the evidence of her own senses [were] backed...by circumstances which appear... to tell dead against [Franklin]” (457), especially since he appears to deny his involvement or knowledge of the theft.

Thus, though Rachel’s reading of direct evidence reveals the identity of true thief, she fails to grasp at the whole truth of the theft and of Franklin’s character based on direct evidence, pointing to how this reading is limited in suggesting the incomplete truth. This reading also proves to be insufficient in advancing the mystery for Franklin who was unconscious of his theft, and delays the resolution of the mystery owing to Rachel’s misgivings against him. The truth of the matter remains incomplete, misread, and obscured with this lens, underscoring the need for other complementary readings to derive the entirety of the truth.

3d. The Main Mystery in The Moonstone

These three readings of character witness, direct and circumstantial evidence unfortunately fall short in reading the suspects and the situation to derive the truth of the theft, simultaneously pointing towards the characters not only as poor readers limited by their lenses, but more notably highlighting how the individuals themselves are the subjects of mystery which cannot be categorically and simply explained by such readings. Under the guise of resolving the theft of a stolen diamond through these few lenses, the text crystallises the heart of mystery as the Victorians' anxieties about human nature and identity. In addition to the limitations of these lenses to truth finding, it is the complex subject matter of human nature, namely, the seemingly helpless inexplicable contradictions within the individual, as well as the inability for them to understand and clearly convey their own personal experiences owing to physiological limitations, which form the foundational nature of the mystery in *The Moonstone*. Such a mystery thereby demands a new approach to supplement the other lenses in reading for truths about human nature.

i) *Human Inconsistencies between Thoughts and Actions*

In *The Moonstone*, the mystery of human nature is encapsulated by characters who are unable to explain the contradiction between their thoughts and behaviour. Rather than purposefully creating inconsistent characters, Collins draws up realistic human characters who, like the real witnesses who testify in court, occasionally prove to simply be inconsistent as part of being human. The characters themselves are aware of their own inconsistencies as human beings, yet find that they cannot explain the contradictions between their own thoughts and actions. They are a mystery to themselves, unable to understand their own apparent inconsistencies, and thus require new ways of reading for finding out the truths about themselves.

The theme of human nature being inconsistent and contradictory is established from the beginning with Franklin Blake and foreshadows the heart of the mystery as humankind's incoherent nature. Upon his arrival to the Verinder household and his first appearance at the Shivering Sands, Betteredge establishes Franklin Blake's inconsistencies as an individual, highlighting his many foreign sides and attributing it to his Continental education (59). Betteredge points out how Franklin takes up the "lead in the business" of the diamond in one instance, and then asks Betteredge what was to be done in the next. Franklin's sudden change from being "clever" and "clear-headed" to exhibiting "this helpless leaning upon [Betteredge]" (59) is an example that Betteredge cites to show how he considers Franklin to be a mixed up, contradictory figure. Betteredge accounts that "these puzzling shifts and transformations in Mr Franklin were due to the effect on him of his foreign training" (59), as Franklin had been sent abroad and had "come back with so many different sides to his character" which jarred with each other such that "he seemed to pass his life in a state of perpetual contradiction with himself" (59). Thus, prior to the theft of the diamond and the

ensuing investigations, Franklin, as the protagonist, is already presented as an incoherent site of mystery.

Although Franklin contests Betteredge's reading of him in this way as having no "real existence, except in our good Betteredge's own brain" (378), Franklin himself admits to his own inconsistencies and limitations in conveying an accurate recount of events, even in his own narrative. In the heat of the investigations regarding Sergeant Cuff and Rosanna Spearman, Franklin confides in Betteredge that although it is possible that Rosanna is involved in the theft, Franklin "can't, or won't, help Sergeant Cuff find the girl out", acknowledging that "my conduct is not very consistent" (186). Betteredge himself shares Franklin's sentiments, admitting that it is "unreasonable" for such behaviour. Yet, he appeals to readers that "If you will, for once in your life, remember that you are mortal, perhaps you will thoroughly understand him too" (186). Here, Betteredge seems to accept Franklin's contradictions and accounts that such inconsistency is part of being human. Hence, although both seem to be aware of their own inconsistencies and are unable to justify them, Betteredge enshrines them as being part of human nature. This inconsistency in Franklin and Betteredge establishes and foreshadows the true mystery of the text as humankind's inexplicable nature, that which requires new lenses to decode and discern the truth.

Apart from Franklin, other characters also appear to be contradictory or complex, classifying this apparent theme of human inconsistency to be universal among society and so requiring these new lenses of reading for truths. In describing Rachel Verinder's character from her childhood, Betteredge recalls how Rachel is "self-willed" and admirably loyal in taking the blame for "some fault committed by a playfellow whom she loved" (73). Although she is not false and never lied, she also never reveals the culprit she is trying to protect.

Betteredge acquiesces that this may appear to hold “a certain contradiction” in her character, but goes on to exhort the reader to look at his wife and if that “good lady doesn’t exhibit something in the shape of a contradiction...you have married a monster” (73). In this, Betteredge once more reveals his opinion that these contradictions are inherent and part of being human, and that to have no contradictions at all would be to be monstrous. He is unable to explain how or why she apparently holds to being true and honest while simultaneously keeping her own secrets. Yet, he accepts this as it is, as simply being mortal, retaining his confidence that Rachel was absolutely trustworthy, with no “shadow of anything false in her” (72). Hence, aside from Franklin himself who turns out to be the culprit in stealing the Moonstone, other characters such as Rachel Verinder establish that these inconsistencies within the human individual are relatively universal and is the mystery of human nature.

Betteredge is aware himself of his own inconsistencies and how his personal reflections conflict with his outward behaviour. For example, when he tries to comfort Rosanna Spearman, he uses the “most comforting words [he] could find”, confessing that his “principles, in regard to the other sex, are...very severe. But somehow or other, when I come face to face with the women, my practice (I own) is not conformable” (188). Betteredge admits this almost apologetically but owns to it nonetheless, helpless in his practice although he professes something else with great conviction.

In the characterisations of Franklin, Rachel, and Betteredge, the contradictions within the individuals as an aspect of human nature frame the mystery of the stolen diamond. Before the theft and beyond the mystery of the Moonstone, human nature takes the centre stage as *the* unfathomable mystery as these characters are shown to be unable to behave according to his convictions. This theme continues to weave itself throughout the

text, surfacing even in minor characters. In Rosanna's posthumous confession to Franklin where she explains how she yearned to be useful to Franklin after witnessing him taking the diamond yet never speaking to him about the matter, she writes that "It's useless to ask me to account for my own conduct, at this time. I try – and I can't understand it myself" (421). Despite her love for Franklin, she fails to speak to him and cannot understand her own hesitation. Her being unable to bring herself to speak to Franklin ultimately leads her to commit suicide by quicksand, weaving the mystery of human nature into the larger plot of the stolen diamond.

These seemingly inexplicable contradictions are directly addressed by other characters, who notice the inconsistencies of family members and try to explain them away by claiming that these relatives momentarily "become" another person, and so cannot be held accountable for their actions. This unconvincing explanation only serves to inadvertently reinforce the mystery of human nature. In one of his conversations with Betteredge, Franklin declares that Rachel's nervous excitement over the Moonstone's disappearance has caused her to treat him quite differently and that "Rachel, properly speaking, is not Rachel, but Somebody Else" (223). Though this conclusion comes from a frustrated Franklin trying to account for her behaviour, Franklin turns to this explanation of being "cruelly treated by Somebody Else" (223) rather than Rachel herself, cementing the unexplainable contradiction in the individual into a completely separate persona to the point of absolving responsibility for her actions. Similar to how Franklin accounts for Rachel's behaviour as one owing to "nervous excitement", Rachel's Aunt Ablewhite also explains away Mr Ablewhite's harsh words against Rachel by blaming his temper. When Rachel confirms that she has called off the engagement to his son, Godfrey Ablewhite, and is no longer marrying him, Mr Ablewhite was infuriated and insulted Rachel, ultimately

turning her out of the house. In the aftermath of this outburst, sympathetic Aunt Ablewhite claims that she “should be ashamed of [her] husband, if [she] didn’t know that it is his temper which has spoken to [Rachel] and not himself” (336). Aunt Ablewhite thus absolves her husband from his cruel words against her by blaming his outburst on his temper and not on his person. In both cases, Robert and Aunt Ablewhite turn to applying for the other persona which surfaces to account for the unexpected and unexplainable behaviour of their loved ones. Though Mr Ablewhite’s momentary outburst is due to being insulted and can be conveniently explained away through the brief appearance of a separate persona, Rachel’s reaction cannot be addressed thus, as she persists in her cold treatment and odd behaviour towards Franklin even after she quits the Verinder house and does not pursue the recovery of the diamond. Rachel’s behaviour is only properly resolved through a deeper inquisition with the revelation of Franklin as the thief, and the subsequent experiment to prove his innocence in the theft. Thus, these out-of-character actions addressed by the conception of a separate persona is insufficient and unconvincing, especially in Rachel’s case, concretising the inexplicable mystery of humankind and foreshadowing the demand for a better reading of human nature in Franklin’s theft of the diamond, an act misunderstood by Rachel, and unaccountable by Franklin himself.

ii) *Human Physiological Limitations*

Apart from these apparently inevitable contradictions, the individuals also prove to be physiologically limited and incapable of understanding their own experiences fully to articulate them coherently, especially with regards to memory and remembering. Though Franklin is identified as the thief, him not knowing or remembering his actions brings the mystery to a gridlock, until a chance conversation with a doctor’s medical assistant, Ezra Jennings, suggests the possibility of Franklin stealing the diamond subconsciously under the

influence of opium. Similarly, Mr. Candy is unable to confess to Franklin about his mischief in of spiking his drink with opium after suffering from serious illness which left his memory impaired. This heightens the mystery of human nature and further veils the truth with regards to the diamond.

Human physiological limitations, namely, the limitations in his physical, medical and emotional state of mind under various circumstances of opium influence, smoking addictions and illnesses, affect the whole wellbeing of the individual such that his memory of events and his accompanying account are compromised. Nicholas Dames' work on the amnesia plot in Victorian fiction notes how Collins particularly "alliances" the sensation to amnesia, attributing the forgetting to receiving such shocks and so establishing the trope of memory loss as foundational in sensation fiction (169). In *The Moonstone*, different forms of memory loss are featured, not only in conjunction with shocks, but also through physical illness. These physiological limitations present gaps in the individuals' narratives at the least and feebly aid them to assemble unreliable accounts at the most. Though the narrators all attempt to re-enact and recount the series of events from their own perspective, they are incapable of fully doing so, emphasising the need for some new way of reading the individual and piecing together his experience when it is concealed even from the individual himself.

Such flawed memory obscuring the truth of the narrative is explored in Franklin's recollections and in Mr. Candy's illness. Throughout his narrative, Franklin often refers to his unreliable memory. When Franklin first returns to England a year after the Moonstone was stolen, he stays at a farm near Cobb's hole before visiting Rosanna's friends, the Yollands. Of his time at the farm and at Cobb's hole, Franklin narrates that he had "only the most indistinct recollection of what happened at Hotherstone's farm" (Collins 392) and confesses

that he speaks of his conversation with Mrs Yolland with “complete uncertainty” (393) in his urgency to receive Rosanna’s letter from the Yollands’ daughter, Limping Lucy. Limping Lucy passes Franklin the letter and a memorandum from Rosanna which leads him to find Rosanna’s japanned tin from its hiding place beneath the quicksand. The horror that Franklin clearly displays at the discovery of his own stained nightgown in the tin causes him to reel from shock. Franklin recounts that “the shock inflicted on me completely suspended my thinking and feeling power...I have it on [Betteredge’s] authority that I laughed... Of what was said between us on the beach, I have not the faintest recollection” (402). He vaguely remembers that the pair moves from the “plantation of first” before “the scene shifts from the plantation, to Betteredge’s sitting-room” (402). The nature of overwhelming human emotions renders Franklin unable to account for himself, even within his own narrative. Franklin’s forgetting of mundane details after receiving surprising revelations demonstrates the link that Dames proposes between receiving mental “shocks” and the physical result of amnesia, crystallising the connection between the mind and body (170). This vague notion of past events points to the individual’s limited capacity of being able to accurately convey a personal experience when he is at the mercy of such emotional stimulus. Franklin is therefore compelled to rely on other characters and witnesses to fill up these gaps for him, thrusting himself upon Betteredge’s authority and such external gaze to assemble the blanks in his memory. Thus, even the individual’s personal knowledge and testimony is inevitably limited and unreliable, highlighting the individual’s experience as a mystery and demanding new ways of reading the individual to come to the truth.

This limitation of the individual and his memories is embodied on a larger scale through Mr. Candy’s loss of memory. Owing to his illness, Mr. Candy loses his memory and is unable to articulate his hand in the proceedings of the birthday night, which proves to

play greatly in the mystery of the stolen diamond. When Franklin seeks him out for him to “lend [him] the assistance of their memories” (Collins 467) of Rachel’s birthday dinner, he finds Mr. Candy unable to put his finger on why he had called Franklin to him. Franklin gets the sense that Mr. Candy “was aware of his own defect of memory” (469) and that “he really had something to say which it was vitally important to me to hear, and that he was morally incapable of saying it” (471). As Ezra Jennings’ later conjectures and experiment show, Mr. Candy had indeed withheld a vital confession of spiking Franklin’s drink with opium, under which Franklin removed the diamond from the closet without his own knowing. Mr. Candy’s memory, broken by the illness, thus shows to a greater extent, the unknowing mystery and secrecy espoused by the limitations of the individual’s physiological and physical body. Against Mr. Candy’s illness, Ezra Jennings’ novel reading of his body offers insight into accessing the truth of Mr. Candy’s memories despite them being obscured to Mr. Candy himself, supplementing the other readings of the mystery contributed by the rest of the characters to unravel the unfathomable mystery of Franklin’s apparent theft.

Through the examples of Franklin’s muddy memories after the shocking revelation of being the thief himself, and of Mr. Candy’s impaired memories after his illness, human individuals are shown to be unreliable and occasionally incapable of accounting for their experiences. These physiological limitations of overwhelming emotions or physical illness impairing one’s memories thus render the previous three lenses of reading in witness statements, direct and circumstantial evidence ineffective in reading for truths and highlight the need for new lenses to read individuals who are unable to articulate their own experiences to come to the truth.

3e. The Scientific Reading in Truth Finding

The revelation of Franklin as the thief is thereby the culmination of humankind as *the* mystery, inconsistent and limited. This compromises on both the validity of human witness and testimony in legal proceedings, and even in the reading of circumstantial evidence, where legal enthusiasm was “tempered by warnings about the inescapable process of human interpretation which destabilised and potentially corrupted its probative value” (Jolly 83). There was a demand for perhaps a more definitive lens of reading the individual to ascertain the truth, even if not in totality, to account for these discrepancies within the individual. Such a reading is supplied by the scientific method.

As a lens for reading, science was still considered a modern, recent development and treated with suspicion accordingly. Science expanded greatly to contribute in areas of public affairs, education and industry, including the courts of law, not only for matters of business and commerce, but in criminal proceedings and forensic medicine (Hamlin 488-489). Science experts were helpfully involved in technical billing matters such as gas and water supply, and in disputes over “common law rights or damage to property” (489). On the forensic front, physicians were trained for “their duties as witnesses” and were prepared for the “unpleasant experience on the witness stand” (489). Christopher Hamlin argues that this was a role which scientists found “difficult to accept” (489), owing to how the partial and adversarial nature of the court was incompatible with the impartial disinterested scientific method. This uncomfortable inclusion of forensic experts in the courts of law was apparently mutual as science’s contributions to legal proceedings were not always so illuminating or welcomed, especially in cases where expert scientific witnesses professionally disagreed with each other (Hamlin 485) or made straightforward, common sense issues “utterly unintelligible” to the jury (Hamlin 491). Further underlying

assumptions about scientists as expert witnesses were that they were “paid for their testimony” and “their behaviour [was] seen as the prostituting of science”, violating “central norms of impartiality, emotional neutrality, universality, communality, and the like” (Hamlin 486). Additionally, Hamlin writes that as the social identity of the scientific community and their norms were still in flux, the public image of scientists was poor, associated as the third species of witnesses among “liars” and “damned liars” (492). Hence, while there were others who valued scientists’ contributions in court, the induction of scientists as legal witnesses was replete with many other ethical and ideological complications, likely leading to the public’s wariness of the scientific community.

The scientific discourse in the time of the text was also a melting pot of various topics including spiritualism, mesmerism, physics, plant life (Beer vi, ix), yogic practice and psychophysical research (Karpenko 3). Gillian Beer quantifies the role of the scientific study in Victorian society as that which “seeks the strange. When found, the aim is to find a place for the discovery within the known system or, more radically and more rarely, to change the system” (v). As a system of knowledge, science was a dynamic and fluid field, consisting of mutual “exchange, dialogue, misprision, fugitive understanding...within disciplinary encounters” (2), as Beer examines in *Open Fields: Science in Cultural Encounter*, most notably in relation to Darwin’s theories. Owing to the developments of such diverse scientific subjects, legitimate scientific discourse and what was considered “quack science” traversed a fine line; the scientific field was thus viewed with general distrust, much less seen as a reliable lens for truth finding.

This response to science can be seen in some of the characters in *The Moonstone*. In a bid to understand how he could have taken the diamond unknowingly, Franklin allows Jennings to experiment on him by re-creating the night of the theft and drugging him with

opium. Opium was an accessible drug, widely used among the Victorians for various ailments ranging from “from toothaches and bruises to cough and diarrhoea” (Ng 14), “rheumatism, 'women's troubles', cardiac disease and even delirium tremens” (Diniejko). The most commonly used opium derivative was laudanum, “tincture of opium mixed with wine or water” (Diniejko), which Mr. Candy administered to Franklin that fateful night. Opium’s addictive potential was not a concern of the Victorians then, and “opiates were widely used despite a general lack of knowledge of how the drug really worked” (Berridge 440), which contextualises Jennings’ hypothesis and experiment on Franklin. Due to the limited understanding of opium “on whether its action was a stimulant or sedative one” (Berridge 440), the experiment had to be conducted despite Jennings’ certainty that the opium influenced Franklin in stealing the diamond. This experiment as the climax reflects anxieties of being physiologically handicapped in understanding one’s own experience and the mystery of human nature. However, Betteredge, who condemns the three Brahmins’ mystical ways of prophetic reading as some sort of “hocus-pocus” (Collins 29), similarly terms Jennings’ scientific theories and proposed experimentation on Franklin Blake the same way. He reluctantly assists in Jennings’ experiment, grudgingly accepting his role as what he considers to be a “conjurer’s boy” (516) in the whole affair. Betteredge firmly establishes his view of this scientific method of reading to be as dubious as the unknown, exotic mysticism of the Brahmins, by whose authority could never aid in decoding Franklin or the theft of the Moonstone. The lawyer Bruff shares in Betteredge’s sentiments, condemning the experiment as something that was “quite unintelligible to his mind, except that it looked like a piece of trickery, akin to the trickery of mesmerism, clairvoyance, and the like” (515). Here, Bruff negates science’s potential contribution to the resolution of the mystery by comparing it to the other ranks of pseudoscience that was popular of the time.

Both figures do not take to this way of reading and the principles for experimenting on Franklin as reasonable way of establishing the truth authoritatively.

As the scientific figure, Jennings embodies the foreignness and distaste attached to the scientific field. His “gipsy complexion...fleshless cheeks... gaunt facial bones...dreamy eyes...extraordinary parti-coloured hair” (472) and the “mixture of some foreign race in his English blood” (475) that Franklin ascertains marks Jennings as an exotic outsider, and reflects the scientific lens of reading which Jennings embodies as one that is foreign. Furthermore, his ugly appearance which was “calculated to produce an unfavourable impression...on a stranger’s mind” (472) aligns with the distrust and revulsion that the other characters display against Jennings’ scientific theories, even in their common endeavour to acquit Franklin. Just as how Jennings’ is treated with distrust and with “an excessive civility which is plainly the offspring of downright terror” because of a “personal appearance [which] told against [him]” (531), the scientific reading that Jennings proffers is equally frowned upon with distaste as it superficially suggests either some kind of trickery – which Bruff and Betteredge articulate – or is viewed in fear and suspicion – as Mrs Merridew confesses of her school days in a laboratory often visited by some explosion. As a man of science, Jennings’ foreignness as a scientific specialist is further highlighted against his medical superior, Mr. Candy, and Candy’s image as a sweet, bumbling family doctor. His scientific expertise is thus coded as that which is comparatively foreign and inaccessible. Jennings’ appearance, and his unconventional scientific approach, thus reflect how Jennings (and science) was viewed as unpopular in society, and society’s likely aversion in using it as a lens for reading truth when it, as a means of reading, appeared equally mysterious.

Despite these assumptions and doubts about the scientific field, the scientific method propounded by the singular figure of Ezra Jennings ultimately proves to bridge

certain gaps in Mr. Candy's memory and decode the inconsistencies between Franklin's conscious mind and unconscious actions of stealing the diamond. Where Franklin fails in jogging Mr. Candy's memory through a thinly veiled interrogation to get to the truth of the mystery, Jennings succeeds through his dogged efforts in decoding Mr. Candy through scientific methods. Franklin returns to England to pick up the trail of the lost Moonstone one year after the theft and meets Mr. Candy, who presumably wants to share some pressing thought on his mind regarding Rachel's birthday dinner. However, Franklin soon realises that Mr. Candy's "memory of events [was] hopelessly enfeebled" (473) after suffering from a bout of illness after the dinner party. Though Franklin had hoped to appeal to Lady Verinder's friends who had attended the dinner to "lend [him] the assistance of their memories" (467), Mr. Candy is quite unable to aid him. Mr. Candy "really had something to say which it was vitally important to me to hear", but "was morally incapable of saying it" (471). This memory, concealed from Franklin, is also lost to Mr. Candy himself, and appears quite irretrievable to them both. Although Mr. Candy was "evidently trying hard, and trying in vain, to recover the lost recollection" (470), earnest in trying to articulate some thought to Franklin, his physiological and physical limitations prevent him from executing his moral intentions. Mr. Candy's loss of memory highlights the body, rendered broken by illness, as the site of secrecy and mystery which requires a professional reading to be decoded so that the lost truths of his memories might come to light. As Mr. Candy himself does not know his own memory, he has to rely on others to decode his loss of memory for him, and the external professional gaze reading him becomes indispensable in accessing these truths. His illness conflates with Jennings' own professional scientific musings about whether "the loss of the faculty of speaking connectedly, implies of necessity the loss of the faculty of thinking connectedly as well" (479). For Jennings, this scientific

hypothesis articulates some aspect of the contradictions found in the individual, the underlying theme of inconsistency that has been running through the different chapters. In Mr. Candy's plight, Jennings finds an embodied subject to read and decode. Jennings thus takes down Mr. Candy's subconscious nightly "wanderings" in shorthand and "treated the result thus obtained, on something like the principle which one adopts in putting together a child's "puzzle"" until he reaches a reasonable assembly of these utterings, a "confirmation of the theory that [he] held" (479). It is through this effort of deductive methodology that Ezra Jennings uncovers a link between Mr. Candy and Franklin on the fateful night of the theft, most crucially, that Mr. Candy had given him "five-and-twenty minims of laudanum to-night, without his knowing it" (495) and that opium consists of a stimulating influence which would develop the apprehensions of the mind "into practical action" (501). Thus, Jennings' efforts to resolve his own scientific "mysteries" prove to be useful in reading individuals and accessing memories which were lost to the individual himself, decoding not only the subject but unravelling the threads of the theft of the diamond as well.

Similarly, when Franklin confesses the muddle he is in to seek Jennings' help, Jennings takes on a method of inquiry regarding Franklin's smoking habits, his temperament and his concerns about the diamond at the time of the theft. Jennings methodically probes if Franklin had "any cause for the nervous suffering, and [his] want of sleep" (491), at this time last year, except for the night of the birthday where he slept soundly. Franklin cannot point to a cause, though he mentions that "Betteredge made a guess at the cause" but he dismisses it as that which is "hardly worth mentioning" (491). At this point, Jennings takes up the role of the detective, noting this supposedly inconsequential "trifle" and that "anything is worth mentioning in such a case as this" (491). With his skills and knowledge as a scientist and a medical man, Jennings becomes the professional detective in reading

Franklin's body, making links between the clues Franklin offers and decoding Franklin's bodily actions. He is affirmed when Franklin reveals Betteredge's guess of accounting his sleeplessness to his sudden leave of smoking. Jennings elaborates that this would indeed cause "some temporary damage to his nervous system" (491) and explain Franklin's bad nights. His picking up on such a trifle which turns out to be a detail of importance parallels him to Sergeant Cuff as a detective as he uses his professional scientific knowledge to decode not just the mystery of the diamond, but to decipher Franklin's contradictory actions. He then asks whether Franklin had "any reason for feeling any special anxiety about the Diamond, at this time last year" (492) to ascertain the subject that was at the forefront of Franklin's mind. Furnished with details about both Franklin's physical and mental state, Jennings issues his hypothesis, that Franklin "entered Miss Verinder's sitting-room and took the Diamond, in a state of trance, produced by the opium" (492) alongside the revelation that the opium was given to him by Mr. Candy. Jennings' conjecture, elucidated by Franklin's answers, and justified by a large body of scientific literature, would be validated by the experiment he undertakes with Franklin in re-enacting the night of the events. He takes great professional care in setting up Rachel's sitting room as closely as possible to the night of the theft, as well as stimulating Franklin to fret about the theft of the diamond as he had the previous year, making various calculated decisions in preparing for the re-enactment of the theft for the greatest accuracy. For example, Jennings decides to increase the dose of opium from the original dose, to forty minims, considering that Mr. Candy "has a keen relish of pleasures of the table, and that he measured out the laudanum on the birthday after dinner" (529). He also made allowances for a higher dose since Franklin knows that he would be subjected to the opium and so might have "a certain capacity...to resist the effects" (529). After dispensing the opium, Jennings also "purposely assumed, in

referring to [the events of the night of the theft], to have misunderstood much of what Mr Blake himself had told [him] a few hours since. In this way, [he] set him talking on the subject...without allowing him to suspect that [he] was making him talk for a purpose” (541). Jennings’ intentional and meticulous reconstruction of the experiment, which becomes a climax of revelation in the arc of the mystery, ultimately vindicates Franklin from the theft as an act of Franklin’s volition. The revelatory experiment thus resolves the mystery by twofold – in acquitting Franklin Blake of his moral innocence regarding the theft of the diamond, and in offering this new means of bodily reading the individual for truth. With this revelation, Jennings not only advances the resolution of the mystery, but also highlights the many facets of human nature (the physical and the physiological), how they relate to each other and how science as a lens for reading is suitable in evaluating the relationship between these elements.

4. Conclusion

Where the other three angles of witness statements, direct evidence and circumstantial evidence fall short in the external gaze accounting for the contradictions within characters, the scientific reading as an external professional lens bridges the apparent gaps between the characters' conscious knowledge and their actions, revealing truths that ultimately work towards the resolution of the mystery. Jennings' earnest detail and his methodical thought process arrives at a rational and logical conclusion, suggesting the scientific discourse to be a clear and objective means of accounting and accessing the truth of Franklin's body and behaviour in the midst of the other voices and accounts of conjectures and confessions thus far. Through the scientific reading, the external professional gaze reads and deciphers the body of the individual subject for truths which the subject himself may not be privy to, contributing to truth finding in terms of explaining and reconciling the apparent contradictions between will and behaviour. This analysis does not claim that the scientific discourse is in any way more objective than the other discourses, but offers yet another way of revealing another facet of the truth, specifically when it is beyond the individual's conscious purview. In this case, it provides a different way of viewing the mystery of the theft and does in fact successfully elicit some impossible situations presented in the text, accounting for how Franklin simultaneously stole the diamond, yet remains morally innocent and ignorant of his actions, and decoding Mr. Candy's case of his loss of memory in the reading of his body.

Among the several readings featured in *The Moonstone* for the truth, the scientific reading elicits some method of simultaneously absolving Franklin from the guilt of his theft and reconciles the conflict between his actions and his volition. While the other readings are aware of these contradictions in other characters, they misread the individual and fail to

reconcile these complexities to understand the complex, fragmented modern human. It is the scientific reading which aids in truth finding by offering professional technical knowledge in reading the body physically of the individual, apart from the influence of other characters and of society.

The scientific reading also addresses truth finding on the broader scale of sensation fiction's engagement of human nature. Collins' use of the scientific reading as an effective way to elicit hidden truths of humanity newly presents the question of human identity in physiological terms, one that requires modern, professional lenses for decoding. While such modern lenses appear to offer hope in divulging such concealed truths of humanity, it simultaneously suggests the potential depths of the human nature that is unknown and remains inexplicable as many other lenses of reading would be required to fully plough and attain the complex truths of human nature. Additionally, the comparison of the scientific reading with the other lenses which yielded inaccurate readings also raises anxieties about the applicability and longevity of the scientific lens in reading accurately for truths. Hence, while the mystery of the theft and of humanity is addressed through the scientific lens establishing the relationship between the human mind and body in *The Moonstone*, the narrative does not fully resolve the fundamental question of a complex human nature. This theme indeed persists throughout sensation fiction.

CHAPTER FOUR: HEART AND SCIENCE (1882)

1. Love Redeeming Extreme Scientific and Aesthetic Readings for Truth Finding

In exploring how *Heart and Science* contributes to truth finding, the mystery of this text should be defined. Unlike *The Moonstone*, there is no overarching mystery, or a thief to be caught. Rather, the text resembles the domestic setting of *Lady Audley's Secret*, where family members and friends act and connive in self-motivated interests, destabilising the peace in the family, or exposing the lack thereof in the household. This paper establishes that the mysteries of *Heart and Science* mainly revolve around two parallel centres – that of not knowing the character's affections for each other, and the elusive cure for brain disease. Between these two mysteries, the analysis shows how the extreme and indiscriminate application of both the scientific or the aesthetic method is inappropriate and even helpless in accessing the truths of human nature. Yet, the paper explores how both the scientific and aesthetic methods of reading for truths can derive the truths of these two mysteries if and when they are employed for the good of others.

Characters in the text are either unable to accurately ascertain how another person feels about them, or are unable to perceive whether the relationships of other characters are positive or not. For example, the two protagonists and lovers, Carmina and Ovid, are not immediately able to discern the instant mutual affections for each other, their feelings proving to be a "mystery" of sorts until Ovid's explicit confession of his love. Knowing that the children's governess, Frances Minerva, also loves Ovid, Mrs. Galilee speculates on Carmina and Miss Minerva's relationship, their friendship a mystery for Mrs. Galilee. Hence, characters' feelings for each other are almost always a source of mystery and eliciting characters' feelings forms a large part of truth finding in the text.

A broader mystery is found in the vivisector, Dr. Benjulia's obsession of being the first to find the cure for brain disease so that he will leave behind a great legacy. This mystery appears to be solely dominated by Dr. Benjulia, although Ovid becomes tangentially involved in pursuing the truth of the cure to save Carmina's life when Carmina takes ill with the dreaded disease. The matter of a cure for brain disease thus forms a second, overarching mystery which crystallises the impact of truth finding with the risk of Carmina's death.

The thesis proposes that the love for others balances the extremely scientific and aesthetic sensibilities to derive the presumably hidden truths of character's emotions, even to the point of solving the case to Carmina's brain disease and saving her life. As the paper shows, the scientific and aesthetic lenses can be helpfully and accurately wielded to read and access the truths of the matter when these readings are motivated by love, thereby pointing to the rationale behind truth finding as significant above the specific truths themselves, and suggesting which lens to use to appropriately to read the situation.

2. Literature Review

Though Collins' earlier works, such as *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White* (1859), were relatively successful, *Heart and Science* was not so well-received (1882). One of Collins's later works, *Heart and Science* follows Collins' active engagement in the scientific and social issues of the time. Throughout his prolific body of work, Collins dabbled with "the effect of drugs on the subconscious" in *The Moonstone*, "heredity and the nature/nurture debate" in *No Name* and *The Legacy of Cain*, anthropology in *Iolani*, "medical and psychological issues" in *The Woman in White* and psychology in relation to the "dreaming and waking experience" in *Armadale* (Stalvies 11), to name a few. *Heart and Science* similarly discusses a controversial ethical issue of the time – the study of vivisection. Though Collins had always kept the scientific element as a sensational feature in the backdrop for his stories, the topic of vivisection was explicitly addressed and denounced in *Heart and Science*. It is perhaps this barefaced engagement with the issue and having a clear anti-vivisection message that led to a cooler reception of *Heart and Science*. This particular sentiment is reflected in the 1883 *Athenæum* review bemoans that Collins "has hampered himself by trying to write with a purpose," and Algernon Charles Swinburne concurs with the scathing comment: "What brought good Wilkie's genius nigh perdition?/some demon whispered—"Wilkie! have a mission!" (qtd. in Straley 350)

Nevertheless, *Heart and Science* finds its place in the later years of Collins' corpus and has been analysed for its presentation of vivisection and the scientific field. Jessica Straley argues that Collins successfully defends the sensational text from comparisons to vivisection through the friendship between the vivisector, Dr. Benjulia, and an innocent child, Zo. Although sensation fiction appears to be similar to vivisection in manipulating the

emotions of the reader as to how animals are subjected to experimentation,²⁰ and to morally degenerate its readers similarly to how vivisectionists appear to undergo “moral lobotomy” (Straley 355) in practicing their profession, Straley argues that Collins justifies *Heart and Science* from this charge through Dr. Benjulia and Zo’s mutual and sincere friendship. Apart from vivisection, critics have also explored the representation of science through the scientist figures in the text. Erika Behrisch Elce has even proactively attempted to argue that science was useful for the female scientist and matriarch of the Vere family, Mrs. Galilee, to form her own community and society beyond her domestic sphere, despite Collins’ disparaging portrayal of science.

More closely related to the theme of reading for truths, Steven Mollman compares the scientific and aesthetic lenses in eliciting truths and argues that it is the aesthetic sight that is more valuable in attaining “sophia”, or wisdom, compared to the scientific view of “[seeing] animals, plants, and even other human beings as objects, valuable only for what they can offer the observer”. He posits that Mrs. Galilee demonstrates this myopic, scientific view of seeing the world, as she can “count botanical regions, recalling Ruskin’s ‘measurement of space’, but she cannot see the truth of the flower, she cannot see its beauty or other ‘essential qualities’.” Comparatively, her niece, “Carmina, coming from a place of scientific ignorance but aesthetic appreciation (she loves both music and poetry), perceives the exact same object in a different way, receiving a ‘deeper emotion’.” Though Mollman concludes that the scientific perspective thus obscures while the aesthetic sight reveals, I argue that one lens is not any more insightful than the other, but that both lenses, applied to the extreme without considering the good of the other person, will prove to be

²⁰ Both apparently incite the same responses of “Harrowing the Mind, making the Flesh Creep . . . [and] Giving shocks to the Nervous system” of the captive reader” (Pykett 3).

inaccurate in reading for truths about humankind. Conversely, both lenses employed to read for truths in love for the other person provides clear and accurate readings of the situation, redeeming both lenses for useful truth finding.

I will explore how the scientific lens is taken to an extreme in reading for truths and how it fails through how Dr. Benjulia and Mrs. Galilee – the two characters who pride themselves on their scientific studies – employ this lens. After this, I will show how the scientific lens is helpfully used to elicit for truths through Ovid, a doctor and a professional man of science, as well as through Zo, his younger step sister who loves him and Carmina dearly. Similarly, I will explore the failure of the aesthetic lens when it is employed to an extreme by Dr. Benjulia's cook, and how the aesthetic lens is accurate in discerning the truths when it is employed by Carmina out of her love for Miss Minerva. These examples of Collins playing with big contrasts and constants thereby highlights how love is the differentiating factor as to whether the lenses of readings – both scientific and aesthetic – are useful and accurate in truth finding.

3. How Science Fails

This section will cover how the scientific lens fails in reading for truths through the villains of the text, Mrs. Galilee and Dr. Benjulia, as both attempt to read for truths out of personal selfishness rather than for consideration for their fellowmen. Mrs. Galilee and Dr. Benjulia's particular brand of villainy appears to be deeply intertwined with their overzealousness towards the scientific field. Though both characters reflect varying gradations of the professional scientist – with Mrs. Galilee on one end of the spectrum as a scientific amateur who delves into the sciences as a hobbyist, and Dr. Benjulia on the other as a professional scientific expert of vivisection attempting to solve the problem of brain disease – both ultimately represent the extremes of using scientific lenses to read their situation indiscriminately and inaccurately.

Mrs. Galilee and Dr. Benjulia pride themselves on embracing the scientific practice single-mindedly as a means to attain greater knowledge, without being distracted by other irrelevant, emotional sentiments. However, it is precisely their scientific preoccupation which hinders them from getting to the plain truths of the matter. As this section elaborates, their extreme use of the scientific lens can be seen through their myopic scientific readings, in which they read the mysteries of their social settings too reductively and so fail to account for other relevant details which would have illuminated the truth of how characters' felt. Additionally, both fail to use the scientific lens meaningfully for truth finding as they both demonstrate poor execution of the scientific methods in addressing the mystery of Carmina's parentage. Hence, though Mrs. Galilee flourishes as an amateur scientist and Dr. Benjulia is arguably a professionally skilled doctor, they are both unable to use the scientific lens to read for truth.

3a. Myopic Scientific Readings

Mrs. Galilee fails in using the scientific lens for reading for truths as seen in her myopic scientific readings from her domestic, social situations. Assuming the domestic role in the Victorian household as wife, mother and now guardian to her young niece, Mrs. Galilee attempts to order her domestic sphere by understanding the truth of how her family members and servants feel. She tries to understand why her niece, Carmina, and her nurse, Teresa, are so nervous following Carmina's unexpected faint. Mrs. Galilee also tries to ascertain the relationship between Miss Minerva and Carmina, in order to engineer a rift between Carmina and her son, Ovid. She approaches Carmina and Miss Minerva with scientific methods, attempting to read both characters through a scientific method of questioning, experimentation and hypothesis. However, her truth finding and ordering of the house is based on her selfishness in retaining her position of wealth, reputation and power, which leads her to yield such myopic readings of the truth through the scientific lens and to employ ineffective (though scientific) methods to decipher their feelings and true desires.

Mrs. Galilee firstly attempts to understand her niece, Carmina, and Teresa, after the pair encounter her at a concert. When Carmina and Teresa convene at the Galilee house after Mr. Le Frank's concert and Carmina's faint, Mrs. Galilee puzzles over their behaviour and is left none the wiser. To Mrs. Galilee, Carmina's conduct of going to the concert "when she ought to have been on the way to her aunt's house", and failing "to recover in the usual way" complicated the mystery, leaving Mrs. Galilee "annoyed and perplexed" (16). Her questions about Carmina resembles the line of questioning in imitation of the scientific method. Though many such questions plague Mrs. Galilee, she does not appear to consider them in order to understand Carmina and put Carmina her at ease. Rather, Mrs. Galilee's

annoyance stems from how Carmina was “alternately flushing and turning pale when she was spoken to; ill at ease in the most comfortable house in London; timid and confused under the care of her best friends” (16). To Mrs. Galilee, the conditions which Carmina now reside in are considerably ideal, and so her line of questioning appears to stem not from her familial feeling towards her niece, but from annoyance that the subject in question is not responding as she expects in this engineered social situation. Carmina and Teresa not behaving within Mrs. Galilee’s expectations is thus taken as an affront to Mrs. Galilee’s domestic authority and hospitality. This motivates her to embark on this scientific model of questioning, overlooking other possible reasons for Carmina’s discomfort which ultimately leaves Mrs. Galilee at a loss. Her limited scientific model compels her to attempt an experiment in taking up “suggestive small talk as a means of enlightenment” (16), speaking to Carmina’s companion, Teresa, in English then Italian. Unfortunately, she “could make nothing of the experiment in either case” (16), suggesting that her scientifically-inspired decision to take her small talk in such a direction was not a prudent course, and fails to further help her understand her visitors. Collins’ use of the word “experiment” to describe Mrs. Galilee’s advances reflects how Mrs. Galilee views her guests as a scientific problem, requiring tests to be decoded. Her interactions with them are thus not organic in making them feel welcomed given the social context but intentional in adjusting certain variables so that she might learn something about them through observations. Such a cold, calculative and scientific approach conversely obscures her from learning more about her guests. Surprisingly, her own son Ovid “proved to be just as difficult to fathom, in another way” (16). Where his usual bedside manner with patients was usually “rather abrupt”, he now “showed the needful attention to Carmina, with a silent gentleness which presented him in a new character” (16). According to the narrator, Mrs. Galilee is unable to account for these

changes or ascertain the reason behind such “strange behaviour” as her scientific education “left her completely in the dark, where questions of sentiment were concerned, as if her experience of humanity, in its relationship to love, had been experience in the cannibal islands” (17). Thus, it is her pursuit of scientific knowledge, her inept, indiscriminate attempts of using the scientific lens and her attempts to defend her domestic authority that leads her to read the social situation with no measure of familial love, leaving her no more enlightened in deriving a clear understanding of the truth about her son and her guests.

Mrs. Galilee’s scientific attempts to seek the truth regarding Carmina and Miss Minerva also fall short at illuminating the pair’s goodwill towards each other, as she was solely motivated to cause disunity between the two for her own agenda. Though Mrs. Galilee rightly ascertains that Miss Minerva is in love with Ovid, she fails to grasp the truth of Miss Minerva’s self-control and cunning, and so, fails to wield Miss Minerva’s jealousy against Carmina despite her best scientifically methodical efforts. Mrs. Galilee tries to drive Miss Minerva and Carmina apart, socially engineering them to come “together, to consult with her on the delicate subject of her son, [so that] there would be every chance of exacting some difference of opinion between them” (42). However, she underestimates Miss Minerva’s own cunning in grasping Mrs. Galilee’s intentions and capacity to behave civilly to Carmina. Although Miss Minerva reveals to be intensely jealous of Carmina over Ovid in her private conversations with her, Mrs. Galilee does not perceive how Miss Minerva’s guardedness against her is stronger than her desire to win Ovid. Thus, Mrs. Galilee’s selfish agenda in trying to cause dissension leads her to the ineffective use of the scientific approach, ultimately failing “to provoke the slightest sign of jealousy, or even of ill-temper” (43) between the two.

Similarly, Mrs. Galilee wrongly hypothesizes that Miss Minerva's love for Ovid would make her useful for breaking up Ovid and Carmina. When Mrs. Galilee consults Miss Minerva about hiring Mr. Le Frank as a music master for Carmina, "she had confidently reckoned on the governess' secret feeling towards her son to encourage, without hesitation or distrust, any project for promoting the estrangement of Ovid and Carmina" (62). However, she is once more bested by Miss Minerva who dissuades her in doing so, citing reasons of accusations made against Mr. Le Frank's conduct with his female students which Ovid had taken into serious consideration. Miss Minerva accurately perceives Mrs. Galilee's intentions to employ Mr. Le Frank "as a means of making mischief between Ovid and Carmina" (61), and for making Miss Minerva the scapegoat for approving such an arrangement should Ovid find out about this. Miss Minerva is able to discern the truth of Mrs. Galilee's ploys, owing to her keen perception of the other and of looking beneath the surface of things. This aids her in successfully avoiding Mrs. Galilee's scientifically guided traps. Mrs. Galilee's experiment on Miss Minerva thus yields a nil result, where "having planted that sting, [Mrs. Galilee] paused to observe the effect. Not the slightest visible result rewarded her" (62). Mrs. Galilee's attempt to "make use of Miss Minerva, without trusting her" (62) points to the insufficiency of the scientific reading and methods in reading for truths without the necessary human relationships, negating the accuracy of her initial hypothesis.

Mrs. Galilee's scientific lens causes her to view her children's governess and her niece as objects, rather than people. This leads her to construct social experiments that resemble the scientific experiments she conducts in a laboratory. However, such scientific attempts to derive the truths of Carmina and Miss Minerva's social relationship ultimately yields poor results and fails to illuminate Mrs. Galilee to the pair's friendship. Mrs. Galilee

attempts to thwart Carmina and Miss Minerva's friendship and evaluate the impact of her revelation by revealing to Carmina that Miss Minerva is in love with Ovid. To do so, she calls Miss Minerva to Carmina's room and leaves them alone, hoping that when the two meet each other, "if there is jealousy between them, I shall see it" (78). In her shallow understanding of social conventions and through her scientific lens of objectification, Carmina and Miss Minerva appear to be no more than elements or chemicals, by which she can mix to create and observe for particular reactions. She characterises both women by the one trait of their love for Ovid, and thus hold such an experiment to test them. However, she fails to consider them as nuanced, complex human beings, such that though both share some coolness with this new revelation, they are able to restrain themselves and retain their mutual civility in front of Mrs. Galilee. Upon Miss Minerva's entry, "Mrs. Galilee discovered no mute signs of understanding between them" (77). Mrs. Galilee is so frustrated at a lack of a reaction from either that she even explicitly demands to know why Miss Minerva does not address the girl upon entering the room. Leaving them together does not further shed light for Mrs. Galilee regarding their relationship. Thus, Mrs. Galilee's extreme, reductive scientific reading of the two women oversimplifies them and prevents her from constructing a more illuminating experiment to discern their relationship.

As she harbours selfish motives for truth finding, Mrs. Galilee's attempts to emotionally understand her relatives and servants through her scientific training thus leaves her in the dark with regards to their friendships and feelings. Her scientific training, influenced by her self-centred agenda, causes her to judge her social situations too hastily, view the world reductively and people categorically. She thus dismisses any notion of sentiment which surfaces in these situations as she perceives them to be of little value in aiding her come to the truth of how characters feel toward each other. This ultimately

causes her to have many blind spots and an incomplete understanding about characters' relationships to one another.

3b. Poor Execution of the Scientific Method

Though Mrs. Galilee is an amateur scientist while Dr. Benjulia is a professional medical man in his own right, they both seem to be equally careless in terms of executing the scientific methods to draw conclusions based on the evidence. Both boast of using scientific means to objectively derive the truth. However, Mrs. Galilee and Dr. Benjulia's competence is revealed to be debatable in light of how they are dismal observers of their environment and poorly follow through in using scientific methods to pursue the truth regarding Carmina's parentage. They use this scientific lens poorly regardless of their professional scientific expertise, overlooking crucial observations and imposing their own views upon the situation rather than deciphering the truth of the situation for what it is. As both characters are also revealed to have their own personal agendas against Carmina and her father, their use of the scientific lens is suggested to be merely a means of reinforcing their assumptions of Carmina's supposed illegitimacy, rather than as a means of deciphering the truth. Thus inspired by their personal selfish motivations, they employ the scientific lens poorly in reading for the truths of Carmina's parentage, ultimately coming to the mistaken conclusion that Carmina is illegitimate.

The pair's poor execution of the scientific method can be seen in how they determine Carmina's allegedly illegitimate parentage. Collins uses a wager to illustrate the limitations of Benjulia's scientific methods, whereby Benjulia fails to confirm the identity of a woman, supposedly Carmina's mother, entering the room of her lover. As the woman was wearing a particular sea-green dress and bonnet, clothes which Carmina's mother, Mrs. Graywell, had worn just two hours before, Benjulia did not further attempt to ascertain the woman's identity, taking it for granted that "there was no mistaking the strange dress or the tall figure, when I saw her again in the student's room" (102). Hence, Benjulia draws his

conclusions based on the broad resemblances of this woman and does not attempt to further pursue the truth. It is only a later testimony from another participant of the wager, Baccani, that reveals that the woman was not Mrs. Graywell but one of their maids. Baccani had followed the woman until she lifted her veil, confirming his suspicions that the woman was indeed not Mrs. Graywell. Though he is not a scientist but a “master of languages” who subsequently entered politics, Baccani is more dogged in pursuing the truth and derives it owing to his accurate reading of how “an estimable married lady could have compromised herself with a scoundrel, who had boasted that she was his mistress” (113). Hence, for all of Dr. Benjulia’s scrutiny, dedication and efforts in resolving the difficult problem of brain disease, he fails to even come to the mundane truth of Carmina’s parentage as he does not care for the name and reputation of the Graywells as Baccani does. Dr. Benjulia does not consider it his obligation to defend the Graywells’ honour or quell such slander, leading to his ineptness and lack of thoroughness as a scientist attempting to use the scientific lens to read for truths and ultimately his wilful ignorance about the truth of the wager. With such a reader using the scientific lens, it is thus suggested that it is not science that is an inadequate lens for ascertaining truths but that it is a poor reader who fails to use these lenses well to find out the truths.

Similarly, Mrs. Galilee takes the little evidence of Dr. Benjulia’s testimony against Mrs. Robert Graywell as sufficient “proof” of Carmina’s illegitimacy although Mr. Mool’s examination points out that the proofs are not enough to affirm Carmina’s parentage. When Mrs. Galilee goes to Mr. Mool to query about the state of Robert’s will and legacy being left to Carmina, she merely glances over Dr. Benjulia’s story as a means to know if her “brother’s Will [is] no better than waste-paper [and if] the money [is] divided among his only near relations” (87), taking for granted the truth of Dr. Benjulia’s testimony. Upon Mr. Mool’s

examination, he distils that the only “proof” that Mrs. Galilee holds as irrefutable is upon the basis of Dr. Benjulia’s friend’s word, a poor man, whom in Mrs. Galilee’s opinion, is assumed to go hand in hand with vice. Mrs. Galilee claims that “vice and poverty generally go together”, and since “this man [is] poor” (88), she directly pins him to being guilty as Mrs. Robert Graywell’s lover and Carmina’s father. Her further proof cites that the friend showed Dr. Benjulia money received from his mistress, or Robert’s money. Yet, it cannot be proved that the money was Robert’s, or Mrs. Graywell’s. Mrs. Galilee merely comes to conclusions which cannot be falsifiable or proven otherwise. She cites generalisations and draws sweeping assumptions between details are not necessarily significant or useful in ascertaining the truth, in this case, of adulterous alliances between the poor student and Mrs. Robert Graywell. As a self-proclaimed woman of science, her methodical scientific questioning is not apparent in this situation, where she appears to merely grasp at straws to reach her personal agendas of discrediting Carmina from Robert’s will. Instead, she appears to narrowly justify the “truth” or results she wants through rhetorical sentiments of Mrs. Graywell being the “disgusting wife” of her brother’s “disgraceful marriage” (87), shoehorning the unrelated details of the story to work towards Carmina’s illegitimacy. Her account also bears little resemblance to her scientific contemporary, Dr. Benjulia’s testimony, which minimally includes details of seeing a woman dressed as Mrs. Robert Graywell entering the student’s room and is more closely related to the issue of ascertaining Mrs. Robert Graywell’s fidelity. The scientific approach which Mrs. Galilee employs to understand Carmina’s parentage thus fails to illuminate her to the truth of the matter as she uses it to justify her self-interests. Mrs. Galilee wanted Carmina’s illegitimacy “to be true so much that she discounts all evidence not in favour of it, like a man of science clinging to a theory of his own devising despite empirical evidence being arranged against it” (Mollman).

Hence, Mrs. Galilee is revealed to be a poor seeker of truths and a poor user of the scientific lens, jumping to conclusions and backing them up with weak evidence rather than working towards the truth based on more reliable proofs. Mrs. Galilee thus poorly demonstrates the use of the scientific lens in truth finding and this example suggests that it is not the scientific lens itself which hinders the access to truth, but the lack of proper reading through such lenses.

Based on both characters' response to Carmina's parentage and their inaccurate conclusions, it can be seen that although Benjulia is professionally skilled as a man of science, he yields the same erroneous conclusion as the amateur, Mrs. Galilee, owing to how he shares with her in their common neglect of humanity and does not seek the truth for the good of humanity but for selfish agenda. Thus, this section shows that it is not the measure of scientific skill that affects truth finding through the scientific lens, but the heart (or lack thereof) which deems the scientific lens to be useful for sifting out truths.

4. How Heart redeems Science

Though the characters of Mrs. Galilee and Dr. Benjulia present science as a poor lens of reading for truths and simultaneously prove to be poor users of the scientific lens owing to their collective lack of common love for humanity, Collins includes more nuanced, benign scientific elements through other characters, namely Ovid and Zo, whose love for humanity work together with science and aids them in truth finding.

4a. Ovid's Transformation through Love

Ovid is characterised as the redeemed scientist whose science is balanced by his love for humankind, which thereby allows him to access truths through the scientific lens. Though initially drawn as a parallel to Dr. Benjulia, Ovid evolves to embrace the love for humanity, his love tampering his practice as a doctor. Both Dr. Benjulia and Ovid act as doubles in their scientific zeal and their lack of feeling for their fellowmen. Before he meets Carmina, Ovid is preparing to go away on a travel to remove himself from his work and take a break from his slavish medical duties. Similar to Benjulia, Ovid is single-mindedly dedicated to his medical practice with few other interests in life. Even in his medical practice where he often meets patients and is compelled by his profession to engage with them, Ovid's bedside manner is characterised as "rather abrupt" where "his quick perception hurried him into taking the words out of their mouths (too pleasantly to give offence) when they were describing their symptoms" (16). He also resembles Dr. Benjulia in how the latter weighs the people around him as objects of scientific value (or not) through his scientific gaze, though to a lesser extent. This is seen in how his relationship with Carmina first begin, where "to look at her, without being discovered – there, so far, was the beginning and the end of his utmost desire" (12). His gaze on Carmina, in which "he could feast his eyes on her with impunity" (12), casts him in the role of an active voyeur and suggests something

primarily predatory about how he perceives her. His gaze on Carmina resembles the vivisector's piercing one. Just as how the vivisector takes apart the animal physically on the operating table to elicit new findings, Ovid tries to gain new knowledge about Carmina by watching her and gorging himself on her expressions in a physical way. Yet, despite his love for her on first sight, he is unable to externalise and express his feelings for Carmina such that she is unable to read him and grasp the truth of his heart for her. At the zoo where he tries to confess his love for her, "if he had returned the look, he would have told the story of his first love without another word to help him. But his shattered nerves unmanned him, at the moment of all others when it was his interest to be bold. [He] kept his eyes on the ground" (39), confusing Carmina and working himself into a state of faint. Subsequently, after he makes his feelings clear, he "pleads with Carmina to demonstrate a similar physical reaction" (Straley 367), lamenting about how he cannot look into her heart and "see what secrets it [keeps] from [him]" (Collins 46). Straley summarises that "he yearns to turn his beloved's heart inside out—to vivisect her emotionally if not surgically" (367). Hence, in relating to Carmina, his scientific, physical gaze both prevents him from accessing the truth of her feelings for him and simultaneously concealing the truth of his intentions from her.

However, Ovid's scientific lens for accessing the truth is redeemed by his especial love for Carmina, where he becomes sensitised to his fellow humans and so is able to access the truths of his patients' wellbeing through the scientific lens. With Carmina's influence over him and company of his trip in Canada, Ovid's heart is softened to become sensitive to the humanity of his patients. Where Ovid had merely engaged with his patients to carry out his medical duties before, he remains at his Canadian patient's bedside as the patient lies dying from an incurable disease, just so that he would not be alone at his final hour. Ovid writes to Carmina that the patient's circumstance "painted such a melancholy picture of

poverty and suffering, and so vividly reminded me of a similar case in my own experience, that I forgot I was an invalid myself, and volunteered to visit the dying man” (Collins 67). The patient was in such dire straits that Ovid himself claims that “any man but a doctor would have run out of the room, the moment he entered it” (67). Although Ovid could not do anything to necessarily cure the man of his malady, he remains by his side, keeping the pain “in subjection” and making death “easy when it came” (67). His motivation for keeping vigil at his patient’s bedside is not one of professional duty but one of a kindred spirit so that this poor stranger should not die alone. In Morphew’s letter to Benjulia, Morphew further applauds Ovid’s devotion and generosity, writing that “while [Ovid] could preserve the patient’s life... he was every day at the bedside, taxing his strength in the service of a perfect stranger” (81). Through Ovid’s vigil to his patient, he learns of the man’s suffering, such that “my heart overflowed with gratitude to God for giving me Carmina” (67). This reaffirms and encourages his love for humanity and his love for Carmina, shaping him to become a more holistic, humane doctor who is inspired to labour for the good of his patients. This can be seen in his treatment and care for Carmina when he returns from Canada. Where he used to be physical, distant and technical in his bedside manner, he evolves to offer her medical care through affectionate gestures, checking for her pulse “under pretence of holding her hand” (156). It is also through this move towards a more humane treatment and holistic view of his patient in Canada that leads him to the cure for brain disease, as he gains the trust and manuscript of his dying colleague. Through these examples, it is clear that Carmina’s love tampered Ovid’s medical attitude and bedside manner to consider the humanity of his patients, making him more effective in his scientific approach of seeking the truth of their maladies.

By extension, the selflessness of the American doctor whose research saves Carmina reinforces the “heart” required behind the scientific skill to discover the truths to remedy such brain disease. The technicalities of the cure itself are not elaborated for the readers. Instead, the treatment that Ovid gleans from this dying American doctor’s manuscript is defined by the passionate love he has for his deceased wife, although the latter “had disgraced and ruined him...again and again” (67). It is this devoted love that the American doctor has for his wife and his final decision to rest with her at her grave that singularly defines his work on the treatment of the brain disease. The man himself remains unnamed and his wretched past remains a mystery. The saving truth of the treatment is hence the physical manifestation of humanitarian goodness when the pursuit of truth is helmed by the force of such selfless, unconditional love.

Thus, the scientific lens derives the truth of the mystery of this particular disease which Benjulia tries in vain to procure, not through the sole dogged efforts to come to the truth via vivisection, but ultimately by the means of Ovid’s kindred spirit and his love for Carmina. Ovid’s love for humanity marries his medical skills to derive at the truth of Carmina’s condition and work out the cure for it, reflecting how science redeemed with love can be useful in truth finding.

4b. Zo's Accurate Scientific Reading through Love

A second example of how love qualifies the scientific lens to be useful in truth finding is through Ovid's stepsister, Zo. The youngest of the family, Zo is described to be a dull student, one who behaves in a strangely animal-like manner and the only person who likes Dr. Benjulia. She is keenly observant of her beloved brother Ovid, not for any scientific agenda but for a mere childish want for his attention. Though she is repeatedly referred to as the dunce of the family, her love for Ovid inspires her to make certain connections in a scientific manner based on her observations to derive the truth of Ovid and Carmina's relationship. For example, at the zoo when Ovid takes no notice of her pulling his coat tails, a phenomenon which had no precedent until then, sensitive Zo realises that something has changed in Ovid. She jealously realises that "Carmina had got him all to herself" and "little by little, her slow intelligence began to realise the discovery of something in his face which made him look handsomer than ever, and which she had never seen in it yet" (30). She observes that Ovid resembles someone else "when his face was close to [Carmina's]" (31), specifically when she saw the footman, Joseph's face, close to, the housemaid, Matilda's face, right before he kisses her. Though she is too young to understand romantic love, Zo compares Joseph kissing Matilda to arrive at the conclusion that Ovid should kiss Carmina. Her methods of arriving at such a conclusion resembles that of comparative anatomy, a well-known scientific methodology parallel to Darwin's studies on natural selection. Comparative anatomy is a branch of study where the bones and features of animals across different species are compared to each other to derive the descent of animals ("Comparative anatomy"). Zo does something similar in comparing the two couples and can be said to be thus scientifically methodical in nature, though it is not scientifically motivated. She compares the actions of both couples and arrive at this understanding of

Ovid's feelings for Carmina being similar to Joseph's feelings for Matilda, even if she does not understand the concept of love. Such a scientific method thus proves to be useful in deriving this truth and illuminating this mystery for Zo. Hence, the reading through scientific lenses are not completely blind to eliciting certain truths as long as it is inspired by love for the other.

Zo once more applies her observations effectively at the end of the text in the flurry of Carmina's illness. In considering how she could make Carmina well again, she recollects how "the member of the household, preferred to all others by Carmina, was the good brother who had gone away and left them" (123) and confirms this based on her past observations of how "in his absence, she was always talking of him—and Zo had seen her kiss his photograph before she put it back in the case" (123). Based on these astute observations, Zo comes to the truth of how she can make Carmina well; "the way to make Carmina well and happy again, was to bring Ovid back" (123). Zo immediately contrives to send Ovid a letter directly summoning him back to the house to make Carmina well. She is even sensitive enough to have noticed how Mr. Galilee was "afraid of mamma" (123) and doubted if he would keep her secret, thereby keeping him out of her decision to write to Ovid. Where the characters of science such as Mrs. Galilee and Dr. Benjulia are so fixated on dissecting characters with their overly scientific lenses, often neglecting obvious observations and missing out on contextual and social elements which would have enlightened them with truths, Zo observes all there is to be observed from her beloved Ovid and Carmina owing to her love for them, rightly connecting each aspect to come to a reasonable and effective course of action through such scientific methodology. Straley states that in essence, many of the characters' emotions are "skin-deep and easily legible" (365), so straightforward that vivisection is not required, only mere observation inspired by

the love for her brother and cousin which simple Zo practices. Hence, science remains a useful lens in truth finding about human nature and relationships as long as it is an aid in the love for another.

5. How the Aesthetic Fails

Just as Mrs. Galilee and Dr. Benjulia tend towards an extremity of relying on the scientific lenses for truth finding, the text also includes characters who overly rely on the aesthetic lens for reading their situation. Such characters, specifically Benjulia's cook, are so enamoured by their self-absorbed aesthetic readings that they become equally blinded to the truth as much as their scientific counterparts. Benjulia's cook demonstrates an extreme reading for the truths of Benjulia's feelings for her through the aesthetic lens. Inspired by a novel, the cook reads her relationship with Benjulia romantically and entertains the possibility of marrying her master, although Benjulia is not attracted to her. Her aesthetic lenses of reading the situation leads her to elevate herself as a heroine of her novels and blinds her to the truth of Benjulia's character. This misreading of the social situation ultimately leaves the cook scorned and horrified by Benjulia's cruelty, pointing to how truth finding through extremely aestheticized lenses driven by one's own self-fulfilment leads to inaccurate truths.

Dr. Benjulia's cook is described as a woman possessing "a sanguine temperament, and a taste to be honoured and encouraged—the taste for reading novels", was "an eager play-goer" (100) and had an "excitable" nature (98). She is familiar with the aesthetic culture and sensibilities, owing to her diet of books and plays. However, unlike Lady Audley who uses her familiarity with aesthetic culture to present herself in a specific way to her community and conceal her true motives, the cook becomes blinded to her reality as she sees her life through aestheticised, rose-tinted glasses. The cook's extreme inclination to reading her situation through the aesthetic lens of her novels extend to her putting "her own romantic construction on the extraordinary compliment which the doctor's jesting humour had paid to her" (98) to arrive at a far-reaching truth: "Her master admired her; her

master was no ordinary man—it might end in his marrying her” (98). She reads the other details of the interaction to point to this same conclusion. Although she had served the dinner late and had undercooked the mutton, the doctor receives her surprisingly amiably and, “(taken in connection with the master’s complimentary inquiries, reported downstairs by the footman), could bear but one interpretation” (99), which she presumes to be of Dr. Benjulia’s romantic interest in her. Her own romantic imagination fuelled by her novels thus leads her to relate these instances to such a truth of Benjulia’s feelings for her although Benjulia is not romantically attracted to her.

The cook’s delusions are further emphasized in her seeing parallels between her situation and that of the novel that she is reading, Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*. *Pamela* is the story of “a young person in service” (99) whose virtue was rewarded by her master marrying her. As the cook is similarly a member of the working class, she sees herself as Pamela. Her fantasies of social elevation, no less through the romantic means of love and marriage to the members of the upper class, are thus fuelled by Richardson’s novel and influences the misreading of her relationship with Benjulia. She relates the story to Benjulia, who responds with a simple intimation that he “now knew how Pamela’s master had rewarded Pamela” (99). Such a response would have discouraged any other “[miserable wretch] who never read novels” and who would have “felt her fondly founded hopes already sinking from under her” (99). However, the cook continues to misread and aestheticize her social situation, persisting in her attempts to attract her master’s interest. These hypothetical comparisons to other women who are not filled with the fancies of novels to look at life through such aestheticized lenses highlights how the cook’s baseless faith in Dr. Benjulia’s presumed affections are inspired from her own romantic imagination of how she could live Pamela’s life. in Dr. Benjulia’s presumed

affections. The cook draws parallels between how Pamela's Virtue "had not earned its reward on easy terms" and attempts to speak to Dr. Benjulia with the "eloquence of women's eyes" (99). In her efforts to soften his heart, she turns to a measure of storytelling, creatively painting a "pathetic picture of the orphan's little savings—framed, as it were, in a delicately-designed reference to her fellow-servant in the story" (100) for Benjulia to see the parallels between her and Pamela more clearly so that he may take up his part of the master who marries Pamela. She thus not only sees herself as Pamela and Benjulia as the master through the text, but, working on the presumed truth of her master's affections for her, tries to pave the way for the inevitable marriage through narrativizing her own past.

However, the cook's self-absorbed efforts to narrativize her life according to the aesthetic romantic novel completely blindsides her to Benjulia's true character. The truth of Benjulia's intentions begins to light when he acts out of his part by offering to tell her a story, instead of asking any of the cook's imagined questions about "why shouldn't we make love" or "why shouldn't we get the marriage license" (100). From these burgeoning discrepancies between the cook's expectations of Benjulia and how Benjulia actually behaves, it is clear that the cook takes Benjulia as a prop to elevate herself as a heroine from her book, and had not been engaging Dr. Benjulia as the man himself. Instead, she sees him and their mutual relations completely through Pamela's story, misreading Benjulia to the point that she is completely caught off-guard at the end of Benjulia's tale. Benjulia tells her a simple story of Mr. A and Ms. B, which she construes to be the doctor's own story about himself "under pretence of telling the story of another person" (100). The cook reads Benjulia's story according to the conventions of her novels even before Benjulia finishes the tale, expecting the "happy end" (100) where Mr. A would inevitably marry Ms. B and for her and Benjulia to follow suit. However, contrary to the cook's expectations, Benjulia dismisses

her on the spot, mocking her for ruining his dinner and hugging him. He further mortifies her by laughing at her horror, lamenting how there was no one with him to enjoy his prank on the cook. The harsh truth of Benjulia's character is so far removed from the cook's imagination based on the heroes of the novels that the realisation turns the cook's "fiercest heat" to that of "terror" and "wild horror" (101). The cook's aestheticized inclination of viewing her situation and herself thus veils her from the truth of Benjulia's character and leaves her susceptible to his callous pranks, where "he pursued his own ends with a penitent cook, just as he pursued his own ends with a vivisected animal" (99), "looking (experimentally) at the inferior creature seated before him in the chair, as he looked (experimentally) at the other inferior creatures stretched under him on the table" (100). Though it is in Benjulia's character to prey upon subjects of his scientific interest in this way, the cook's hapless aestheticizing of her situation robs her of a keener self-awareness and miserably reduces her to the plight of an animal subject. Thus, the cook's self-centred reading of her situation through extremely aestheticized lenses fails to "see" the truth of her employer and his (in)humanity, ultimately leading her to inaccurate truths about him which endangers her and leaves her vulnerable to his cruelty.

6. How Heart redeems the Aesthetic

Though Carmina also embodies the aestheticized lenses of reading the world to a certain extreme, her way of reading is redeemed by the mutual love and reciprocity between her and Miss Minerva. At the beginning of the text, Carmina views the world simplistically through aesthetic lenses. Her naivety prevents her from reading her aunt, Mrs. Galilee, for the truth of her coldness and the extent of her cunning. This extreme way of reading through aestheticised lenses is only balanced out and made useful for truth finding by Miss Minerva, who becomes Carmina's loyal advisor. Although the two do not immediately become friends when they first meet, Miss Minerva is slowly drawn to Carmina's sincere kindness to her, especially when Carmina comforts her in her sorrow of harbouring an unrequited love. Miss Minerva's reciprocal love and loyalty to Carmina ultimately guides Carmina's aesthetic view of the world to read for truths more accurately, especially to derive Mrs. Galilee's cunning schemes. Thus, it is Miss Minerva's loving response to Carmina's innocent gentleness which redeems Carmina's naïve aestheticised view of the world to read more clearly for truths.

Carmina's aesthetic interest and her valuing beautiful objects are intertwined with her innocence in reading the situation and of other people. From the beginning, she is characterized to an aesthetic extreme by her appreciation for the arts and good music, to the point of being so overly sensitive that she is often physically and emotionally shocked into faints and illnesses. She is attracted to a science book because of "its beautiful binding" (41), reads poetry, admires the flowers (41), appreciates good music and can judge that "the tone [of the piano in her room] is quite perfect" (41). As one who reads through aestheticized lenses of beauty, Carmina reads her situation simply and straightforwardly. She does not presume upon their intentions and never suspects that the individuals around

her are intentionally malicious and this blindsides her to the truths of her situation. This can be seen in how Carmina is veiled from the evil designs of Mrs. Galilee. Carmina does not immediately perceive Mrs. Galilee's ill intentions towards her, although she fears her upon first sight, feeling this "horrid creeping" (45) when she first sees her aunt, and does not like her. Nevertheless, she tries her best to be kind to Mrs. Galilee on account of her being her aunt and the mother of her beloved Ovid. Despite Mrs. Galilee's odious behaviour towards Carmina, Carmina only sees the truth of Mrs. Galilee's schemes and is only put on guard against her by Miss Minerva's explanation of Robert Graywell's will and its implications. When she initially confers with Miss Minerva, who tries to warn her about Mrs. Galilee's schemes, Miss Minerva questions if "those innocent eyes of yours ever see below the surface" (45). Miss Minerva suspects that Mrs. Galilee means Carmina ill and is potentially dangerous, but Carmina only keeps a distance from Mrs. Galilee because she feels that both happen to share an unexplainable and unfortunate mutual dislike toward the other, replying that "it's no use asking me what I do see, or don't see, in my aunt" (45). She concludes that Mrs. Galilee does want to keep Ovid away from her simply "Because she doesn't like [her]" and wonders "What other reason can there be" (45). Carmina's simple train of thought, fuelled by her strange encounter when she first meets Mrs. Galilee, limits her in ascertaining why is it that Mrs. Galilee disapproves of her. Though she is not wrong in sensing that Mrs. Galilee dislikes her, she fails to pinpoint the deeper truths of why this is so, and is helpless to therefore mitigate or guard herself in these circumstances. It is Miss Minerva who offers her several other possible alternatives at the truth. While Miss Minerva has not learnt about Robert Graywell's will at this juncture of the text, she still manages to decode that it is more than mere dislike that drives Mrs. Galilee to separate the two cousins, making a guess at how "Some people object to marriages between cousins" (45) and how "Some people

object to marriages between Catholics and Protestants” (45) before landing on a near accurate suspicion of how “in some way, money may be concerned in it” (46). This suspicion is confirmed when they come across Carmina’s father’s will and the clauses relating to how Mrs. Galilee might inherit Carmina’s fortune “if Carmina never marries, or if she leaves no children” (24). Hence, though Carmina’s initial aesthetic lenses of viewing the world and her kindly way of viewing her situation obscures her from certain truths, Miss Minerva’s reciprocal love for her helps to sharpen Carmina’s way of reading to be more useful and perceptive in ascertaining the truth.

Though Carmina’s aestheticised way of looking at the world blinds her in picking up on Mrs. Galilee’s malicious intentions, it reveals the true capacity of Miss Minerva’s goodness as her simple trust in Miss Minerva allows her to form a friendship with her based on her initial façade. Miss Minerva had set out to befriend Carmina “with her own base interests to serve” (44). As she is hounded by creditors, she intended to become friendly with Carmina, her rival to Ovid’s love, in order to deceive her, borrow money and settle her debts. However, Carmina does not read her situation too deeply, which leads her to trust Miss Minerva and ask for her advice. When Carmina first offends Mrs. Galilee and is at a loss of what to do, she appeals directly to Miss Minerva for help “so prettily and innocently... that even the governess was touched” (44). Her hapless innocence and trust in Miss Minerva conversely compels Miss Minerva to protect Carmina from Mrs. Galilee’s schemes, and although she did not intend to truly become friends with her, Miss Minerva finds herself responding in kind, where words of affection towards Carmina “were hardly out of her mouth before she was startled by her own fervour” (44). She goes on to help Carmina by suggesting she seek Ovid out in Canada, and when Carmina’s old maid, Teresa, returns, she helps settle her into a nearby accommodation (93). Towards the end where she is described

to have finally overcome her struggles within herself, she aids in Carmina's recovery from her illness by helping to test her memory (155). Thus, though Miss Minerva had false intentions in befriending Carmina, Carmina's simple reading of Miss Minerva forms the basis of their camaraderie and draws out some latent kindness unbeknownst to Miss Minerva herself.

Carmina herself confesses that she often does not see below the surface. Yet, she is able to derive the truth of Miss Minerva's unhappiness by reading through aestheticised lens and address it as a friend, such that Miss Minerva ultimately reciprocates Carmina's friendship. Miss Minerva, so used to others treating her poorly owing to her ugly appearance and her bad temper, fails to understand what Carmina sees in her and why she treats her kindly. Through her kind, aestheticised and sensitive perspective, Carmina looks past Miss Minerva's external appearance and anger to conclude that Miss Minerva is not so much "false", "suspicious" and "cruel" and Miss Minerva herself claims, but that she was "miserable...*That* is the truth" (69). She asks Miss Minerva to share her troubles to no avail, and yet "Because I am in love myself, do I think everyone else is like me? I thought she blushed" (69) and rightly guesses that Miss Minerva is in love. Carmina's observations and her own aestheticised perspective influenced by her own love for Ovid elicit this truth, that she loves somebody who does not love her (69), articulating the root of Miss Minerva's unhappiness. Carmina's persistence in wanting to share in Miss Minerva's burdens and in believing that Miss Minerva is a poor unfortunate rather than an evil person causes her to burst – "there she stands...and looks at me with the eyes of a baby that sees something new! I can't frighten her. I can't disgust her. What does it mean...What do you know of me that I don't know of myself?" (69). Though Miss Minerva herself tries to "[look] at herself in the glass" (69) to see what Carmina does, she is unable to and prompts Carmina as to what

else she sees. It is this aestheticized gaze which helps Carmina perceive that Miss Minerva is not malicious but hurt owing to some unhappy secret. When Miss Minerva challenges Carmina to guess who she is in love with and prompts Carmina to exercise the extent of her ability to read her, Carmina does not pursue the point as she does not consider it necessary. Instead, having deciphered Miss Minerva's secret, her instincts move her to comfort and encourage Miss Minerva by reading her a letter from Father Patrizio. Carmina does not intentionally decipher Miss Minerva for the sake of it but in the course of being concerned for her friend, and she accordingly addresses it so as a friend by offering Father Patrizio's words of wisdom. She perceives Miss Minerva's secret and gently addresses these wounds of the heart, slowly but surely softening Miss Minerva to the love of friendship. Though such a love is not romantic love, it is love nonetheless which, as Father Patrizio writes, will borne her through any hardship and give her "strength to rise again" (79) through her trials. Her sincerity in empathizing with Miss Minerva is deepened even with the revelation that Miss Minerva's love interest is Ovid. Though both are initially uncomfortable with this revelation, their friendship is reaffirmed with Miss Minerva's kissing Carmina's hand. Thus, though Carmina's naive aestheticised lens of reading had the potential to leave her as vulnerable as Benjulia's cook was, using these lenses in love for Miss Minerva illuminates Miss Minerva's true generosity and capacity to be a loyal friend. Miss Minerva's friendship would eventually help balance Carmina's extreme aesthetic way of reading to perceive other truths of Mrs. Galilee's schemes.

In reading through her aestheticised lenses, Carmina is drawn to befriend and love poor, ugly Miss Minerva, learn of her secret heartaches and soothe them accordingly, bringing to light the truth that Miss Minerva is not cruel but hurt and, once restored, has the capacity for kindness which Miss Minerva herself did not realise. Through Carmina's

kindness, Miss Minerva conquers her jealousy and her selfish interests of preying on Carmina's wealth to pay off her own debts. Her kinder nature flourishes to help Carmina survive against Mrs. Galilee's plots and Dr. Benjulia's unhelpful medical treatment. Thus, while Carmina's aesthetic lenses of viewing people and seeing the good in them through her love for humanity on the one hand conceals the depth of malicious intentions against her from some characters, especially Mrs. Galilee's intentions to inherit Robert Graywell's wealth and oust Carmina, it surfaces the truth of goodness in others who are able to lend further insights and protect her against the various schemes of the villains.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, Collins' text shows the extremities of relying too heavily on either the scientific and aesthetic lens of reading for truths of human nature and relationships, especially if they are not tampered or inspired with the love for other humans in the first place. Through the caricatures of Mrs. Galilee, Dr. Benjulia and the foolish cook, Collins demonstrates how using either lens to read into the situation for truths about people without the mutual love for these people will only lead to a myopic reading in which explicit and obvious truths are concealed. By contrast, characters who tamper their lenses with love for the other like Ovid and Carmina come to access the truths of their mutual romantic love, the cure for brain disease and truths of characters, both good such as Miss Minerva, and evil, such as Mrs. Galilee. Collins thus goes back to the reason for truth finding as an essential element to read for accurate truths. In the midst of the many advanced methods of truth finding, *Heart and Science* thus serves as a reminder to keep in mind how truth finding with regards to human nature should be inspired by the common love for humanity.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The scientific and aesthetic lenses the Victorians developed for discovering truth appear to raise more questions than they answer. Though there were various developments in reading and understanding the world, of which the scientific and the aesthetic are but two, these newer ways of reading revolve around similar themes of eliciting the seemingly unknowable in human nature. The novels of the time, particularly sensation novels, proved to be a popular form of expression for the discussion and evolution of such ideas, approaching the question of human nature through the sensational mystery, which is then decoded or illuminated by the contextual advancements in these scientific and aesthetic fields.

Through examining the new ways of scientific and aesthetic reading for truths, the thesis explored Victorian anxieties of things not being as they seem. In *Lady Audley's Secret* and *The Moonstone*, the texts present such aesthetic and the scientific lenses as ways of reading to find truths which are intentionally and inadvertently concealed. The aesthetic lens works towards eliciting the truth of character beneath Lady Audley's lovely appearance amidst the web of her contrived secrets, while the scientific lens proves the innocence of Franklin's character by shedding light on the chemical and physiological aspect of the individual despite his actions. *Lady Audley's Secret* and *The Moonstone* thus show how these new developments in the aesthetic and the sciences reveal different, unexpected truths of human nature, crystallising Victorian anxieties over their current, limited understanding of humanity. By the late nineteenth century, *Heart and Science* includes both lenses of reading to draw the emphasis back to the rationale of reading for truths in the first place. *Heart and Science* subverts the trope of truth finding where an extreme reliance of reading through these lenses causes characters to be unable to discern obvious truths. Instead of being

overly fixated on the methods of truth finding themselves, characters who truly love and care for the well-being of the other are the ones who are able to use both the scientific and aesthetic lenses to access truths. Thus, this analysis highlights how the Victorians' preoccupation moved from the suspicion and engagement of new ways of looking at human nature, to refocusing on the motivation for truth finding itself for the good of humanity.

The aesthetic lens in *Lady Audley's Secret* appears simultaneously to aid the pursuit and the concealment of the truth. On the one hand, the aesthetic lens can be used to conceal and re-write the truth as Lady Audley does. The normative expectations of associating virtue and goodness with the domestic accomplishments of women are challenged in Lady Audley's practice of her aesthetic accomplishments. In tea-making, her make-up and her dress, the text presents her as an individual who is very much aware of being watched by her society and is therefore intentional in curating her image. Through her artful tea-making, she frames herself as a domestic host and goddess before her guests. Similarly, her premediated make-up sets out to define her as consistently and definitively innocent, kind and lovely through and through, while her choice of dress acts as yet another artifice in concealing any other emotion which does not seem coherent with her angelic image. Lady Audley's intentional occupation of scenes and spaces within Audley Court also works towards framing herself as a work of art, her tableaux drawing parallels to other artworks which connote ideas of the angelic and the domestic. Lady Audley's attempts at manipulating the aesthetic codes to write new truths about herself as an innocent, aristocratic, woman highlights the artificiality of such societal codes as that which can be re-appropriated for personal agenda. Through Lady Audley's artistry, the accuracy of these societal expectations relating to the outward appearance for truths is thus questioned.

On the other hand, the aesthetic lens aids in truth finding by offering alternative readings of the expected, normative symbols in society. One of the main expectations it subverts is how someone who is so beautiful in her appearance and manners as Braddon's protagonist should necessarily be a good person and as innocent as she looks. The text subverts these expectations through the aesthetic lens by reading malevolence in the same sweet features that everyone is besotted with in her Pre-Raphaelite portrait, hinting at Lady Audley's truly cruel nature before the revelation of Lady Audley's scheming and manipulative decisions in moving up societal ranks by abandoning her infant and marrying Audley while her own husband is alive. Through this alternative reading of Lady Audley, the truth of Lady Audley's nature is suggested, though it is only affirmed by the revelation of facts later in the text. The aesthetic lens thus widens the scope of possible readings to the same symbols, which ultimately aids in truth finding. Finally, despite Lady Audley's efforts, her comeuppance suggests how the truth finds expression in the aesthetic and that though the aesthetic might be employed to conceal, it does ultimately lead to the truth of the matter, as can be seen in Lady Audley's slips when she plays the piano and does her water colours.

While *Lady Audley's Secret* is concerned with the apparent morality of the character and uses the aesthetic lens to point to an innocent-looking character's true guilt and the revelation of her schemes, *The Moonstone* engages with physiological aspect of characters through the scientific lens to reveal the truth of a character's true innocence despite his apparent thieving. The scientific lens in *The Moonstone* addresses a plethora of physiological maladies that implicate the characters and result in the theft of a precious diamond. Though the cast of characters turns to employing direct and circumstantial evidence, and character witnesses, these methods barely reveal aspects of the mystery

which were not first revealed by the suspects' own confessions, as seen in Rachel Verinder's revelation of what transpired on the night of the theft and Rosanna Spearman's posthumous confession of what she had witnessed. More importantly, these courtroom methods prove to be limited in reading deeper for truths that the individual may not be aware of himself owing to illnesses, addictions and drug influences. To unravel the mystery clouded by Mr. Candy's memory loss, Ezra Jennings' opium addiction and Franklin's unconscious, drug-induced thieving, the text turns to the novel realm of the scientific method, including hypothesis and experimentation, to come to the truth of the observed events. Apart from the hidden truths of one's character as seen in Godfrey Ablewhite's double life, the scientific lens sheds light on this physiological aspect of human nature in Franklin Blake's unconscious theft of the Moonstone. This not only highlights the complexity of human nature by bringing this overlooked aspect to the table, it also presents new, professional lenses of reading and decoding this aspect to gain a deeper understanding of humankind's presumably contradictory nature. Though the mystery is ultimately resolved in pointing to Godfrey as the real suspect who siphoned the diamond and explaining Franklin's actions through science, human nature remains nebulous and as much of a mystery despite the revelation and the decoding of his physiology. Thus, the scientific lens doubly pushes the boundaries of knowledge and demarcates the mystery of human nature, reinforcing the shifting sands of truth.

By the late nineteenth century, Collins' *Heart and Science* includes both the aesthetic and scientific lenses in yet another domestic setting, putting both side by side in their efforts for truth finding. Instead of pitting either one against the other to make a statement as to which lens is superior in truth finding, Collins presents characters who use both lenses to an extreme which conversely blinds them to the simple, skin-deep truths. Mrs. Galilee

and Dr. Benjulia are two such cases in relying indiscriminately on the scientific lens to elicit truths. Although they differ in terms of their scientific professional skills, they are left equally in the dark with regards to the respective truths they seek, regardless of whether the truths are relational or medical in nature. Similarly, Benjulia's cook takes the aesthetic lens to an extreme and romanticises her situation. She elevates herself to the position of a heroine, similar to the heroine of her romantic novels who finds a happy ending in marrying her employer, and ends up completely misreading Benjulia's interactions with her. Caught up in her aesthetic ideas of romance, the cook mistakes Benjulia's experimental advances for romantic ones and is reduced to a state of sheer horror upon the revelation of Benjulia's cruel joke.

In contrast, characters who temper these lenses with the common love for humanity appropriate these lenses usefully to ascertain the truths they seek. Ovid is an example of how his scientific inclinations of engaging with others is redeemed through his love for Carmina and with the influences of his fellow medical colleagues, Morphew and his dying patient from Montreal, such that he is able to express and read Carmina's love for him, as well as decipher the cure to Carmina's medical condition to save her from death. Even uneducated Zo who is inspired by her love for Ovid and Carmina is able to employ scientific methods to come to the truths of their mutual love and to cure Carmina from her lovesickness. Similarly, Carmina's overly aesthetic sensibilities are also moderated through the mutual and sincere affections with Miss Minerva, the governess who is at first jealous of Ovid's love for her but who ends up protecting her in Ovid's absence. Where Carmina's naïve aesthetic outlook blinds her to Mrs. Galilee's schemes, her aesthetic lenses lead her to see the truths behind Miss Minerva's surliness and pain (in essence, her unrequited love for another) and to treat her kindly so as to restore her and allow her gentler, generous nature

to flourish in the stead of her bitter stubborn selfishness. Hence, Collins draws upon both lenses in the text to emphasise how the love for humanity and the mutual love for each other is necessary in employing any lens to come to the semblance of truth. This remains a poignant reminder at the close of the nineteenth century where the development of lenses and theories for understanding the world became more professional and nuanced, upon which lies the risk of missing the point of reading for truths about human nature if not founded on human flourishing.

While sensation fiction was touted as a form of low-brow literature in the Victorian period, tantalizing the senses and engaging taboo subjects at the risk of the readers' moral degeneracy, the analysis of these texts highlights the recurrent, particularly weighty theme of truth finding, reflecting Victorian preoccupations of human nature as a mystery and the new approaches of pursuing the truth of his nature. Given that the Victorian era coincided with several important and influential developments with the Industrial Revolution and the rise of the middle class among many other social and scientific movements, this paper shows how such new developments re-shaped the foundational understanding of truth and human nature for the Victorians. Through the concurrent developments in various fields of knowledge, each new technical, professional lens of knowledge sheds light on the mystery in previously overlooked ways, re-establishing the concepts of truth finding and of the Victorian's idea of human nature. With each lens, the question of human nature itself is recast in different terms, whether moral, physiological, societal or educational, and requires the appropriate lens to read for truths. This paper explores the different facets of human nature as understood and realised by the Victorians, primarily in the social and physiological aspects. This theme of truth finding to solve a central mystery in the text proves to persist, even with the decline of the sensation fiction genre at the turn of the century, in the form of

other subgenres of detective fiction. This analysis thus serves as a good case study, paving the ground for further analysis on the evolving concepts of truth finding in Victorian popular culture.

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