The novel records a subtle social and political transition from Hobshawn's 'age of revolution' to 'the age of capital'. Miss Clack's 'genuine document' (197) is hemmed between 'Mr. Blake's cheque' and her desire to restore 'moral balance' (226). Furthermore, the Moonstone itself is to an extent a capitalist signifier (it is difficult to forget that it fetches twenty thousand pounds in the market), and the concern for property and money is ubiquitous in the novel. '[M]ercenary eagerness' and a fluctuating 'money market' (225) permit crime and theft to infiltrate domestic space. Rachel and Blake are suspects for they are supposed to be in debt. Godfrey Ablewhite is the criminal for rather than being 'the most accomplished Philanthropist', he is a swindler driven by self-interest (63).

Clearly, the detective's investigation strikes at the roots of Victorian anxieties and unacknowledged concerns of a culture in transition. Cuff's investigation threatens the landed gentry in fundamental ways. The mysteries that he investigates do not belong to the London streets or the Newgate prison. Rather the initial domain of investigation is the country-house of the bourgeois landed gentry. His insinuation that Rachel rather than being a lady is a thief reveals the vulnerable state of the landed gentry in the period. There is no stable domestic relationship as domesticity has come to rest upon 'economy—with a dash of love' (21). Marriage is merely a contract. Betteredge offers an insight into relationships as they existed in his milieu: 'we were not a happy couple, and not a miserable couple. We were six of one and half a dozen of the other' (21). Indeed social and
moral chaos has spread to the inner sanctum (including Rachel's room). The 'scandal' has infected the emblem of domesticity. Unlike Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* (1814), who resists theater 'scandal' to maintain the sanctity of the bourgeois home, Rachel fails to preserve the bourgeois domestic norms at the Yorkshire estate. She cannot restore the domestic ideal for she herself is enmeshed in a sordid tangle of theft and deception; 'I don't suspect' claims Cuff, 'I know' (175).

Sergeant Cuff further disrupts the hierarchies on which the stability of the bourgeois estate depended. Rossana and Rachel, the lady and her maid, are regarded as partners in crime. Doctors, barristers, social-reformers, ladies and erstwhile thieves who share the Yorkshire roof on the occasion of Rachel's birthday are all subjects of suspicion. But neither Sergeant Cuff nor the scandal solely could have brought about the destabilization of the domestic order. Clearly the stability of the home is also threatened. The descriptions of the Shivering Sands that stimulate a shudder of foreboding are to an extent a metonym for the dangers that surround the home. This 'lonesome and horrid retreat' (32) seems to be a space which has in the words of Rossana 'hundreds of suffocating people under it' (35). It is Limping Lucy who draws attention to the volatile context: 'the day is not far off when the poor will rise against the rich' (190).

It needs to be pointed out that in a novel which fragments the narrator's and detective's roles, Sergeant Cuff is not the only detective who opens up the domestic space for interrogation. The 'three mahogany-coloured Indians' visit the Yorkshire home even before Cuff makes an appearance (38). They are not only able to keep themselves well-informed regarding the whereabouts of the Moonstone but are also able to punish Ablewhite before the English law takes its course. Clearly underlying the social spaces in the novel are the actual geographical underpinnings of the imperial and cultural contest. The Yorkshire estate cannot be disassociated from the wealth coming from the imperial world. *The Moonstone* ties up the metropolis to the colony.
Interestingly the 'storming of Seringapatam' (11) by the English soldiers and the theft of the Moonstone by the 'wicked Colonel' i.e. Herncastle (39) are referred to as 'crimes'. These crimes it is suggested bring their own 'fatality' with them (16). Collins opens up for interrogation 'imperialism's regime of truth' (Edward Said, 324). The rhetoric of 'civilizing mission' or 'white man's burden' is undermined as English men are revealed to be neither benevolent nor civilized. Collins can establish that the covert purpose of colonizers was always to exploit the natural resources, even when their stated aim was to civilize the 'savages'. The British are incapable of rendering justice to the Indians. When Indians are 'committed' for a week, Betteredge suggests: 'Every human institution (Justice included) will stretch a little, if you can only pull it the right way' (91). The Englishmen at the Verinder estate are even incapable of solving the mysteries inside the home. Interestingly the chief analytical instrument that helps Jennings (who himself has the 'mixture of some foreign race in his English blood'367) to solve the mystery i.e. opium is a colonial product. Collins novel condemns British law and 'able-white', not the Brahmins. Indeed, Collins's representation of the Brahmins often undermines nineteenth-century stereotypes. They are depicted as intelligent, resourceful people and not simply as savages.

It seems then that imperialism in the novel produces troubling self-images (wicked colonel, a white thief, etc.). One can detect an obsessive need to present and represent peripheries as there is a realization that periphery too determines the metropolis. The colonial possession becomes the centre of attention as it disrupts the already precarious socio-moral order of the Verinder estate: 'here was a quiet English home suddenly invaded by a devilish Indian diamond' (43). The tremendous anxiety regarding the Moonstone cannot be overlooked. Although one could read the loss of the Moonstone from Rachel's unlocked cabinet as a sexual threat, Ashish Roy indicates the extent to which sexual and colonial discourses are intertwined in the novel:

'In so eagerly embracing with equal enthusiasm the improper gift, and then, in being beguiled by its Indianness with equal enthusiasm, the virginal Rachel's 'little flow of nonsense' forms a collusive opening for the amoral forces already at work. However, in as much as the 'nonsensical
'improprieties of this 'weak and guilty'sexuality are put to work for more lucid purposes, they keep the otherness signified in the 'diamond' . . . with its awful moony light' beyond the pale' (663).

Works cited


