

Imperial neuropsychology and an Indian diamond: The quantum ground of dreaming in *The Moonstone*

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Summary. In Wilkie Collins' novel *The Moonstone* (1868), Franklin Blake's censored dream—and his somnambulant theft of the eponymous diamond—was a pioneering thought experiment in Victorian literature, which is also believed to have invented the English detective novel. The question, whether Blake's *supposed* dream and somnambulism were constituted by his conscious waking experience or emerged from an unconscious source, remains unanswered as the contents of the dream are not known. Taking *The Moonstone* beyond the ambit of postcolonial criticism and Anglo-Indian imperial history, I present evidence for the novel's theme of dreaming being encrypted with principles of Vedanta and ancient Indian dream theories from the *Mandukya Upanishad*. The novel compels us into a reassessment of the dream continuity hypothesis that its critics have hitherto presumed in one way or another. Taking a few concepts of quantum physics as insightful metaphors—though not as generalizable theories—I argue that, *The Moonstone* is a remarkable statement on Victorian science, which paves the way for what I define in 'the quantum ground of dreaming'—a mental state superimposed in experiences of more than one geography and entangled with the desires and anxieties of more than one brain, at once.

Keywords: Wilkie Collins; *The Moonstone*; Sigmund Freud; Carl Jung; psychoanalysis; neuroscience; Vedanta; *Mandukya Upanishad*; Turiya; dream quanta

1. Introduction

Victorian England's interest in dreaming can be judged from the frequency of dreams in writings by the Bronte sisters, Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins, among several others, which makes us wonder if Victorian fiction preceded Sigmund Freud's theory of dreams (Bernard, 1981). The Victorians had a full-fledged science of psychology, beginning with Wilhelm Wundt, Herbert Spencer and William James, leading up to Sigmund Freud. By 1850, the rudimentary foundations of modern neuroscience were in order (Clarke and Jacyna, 1987).

Although early nineteenth-century England's interest in dreams tended to be ecclesiastical, supernatural or mystical (Gray, 1808; Blair, 1843; Grant, 1865; Newnham, 1830), increasingly, secular neuroscientific analyses calling for more anatomical complexity in studying brain faculties that caused dreams, trance and somnambulism gained momentum (Dendy, 1832; Macnish, 1838; Hammond, 1873). By the end of the nineteenth century, English and American theorists began taking up interpretation of dreams and dream-imagery for aesthetic and empirical studies (Sully and Robertson, 1888). In the English literary world, Sam-

uel Taylor Coleridge's poem 'Kubla Khan; or a Vision in a Dream' (1816) made dreaming appear as a surreal Oriental experience. With almost no immediate real life equivalents to Coleridge's imagery of Mount Abora and the Abyssinian maid with the dulcimer, were these the mutated images of the poet's waking experiences or profound imaginings in an opium-induced dream?

'Dreaming, psychedelic drug states, and artistic creation are *not* identical,' writes J. Allan Hobson. 'But they are analogous.' If not always works or sources of art, dreams are 'autocreative' (2001: 285). David Hartley, who was Coleridge's friend and founder of British Associationism, proposed that dreams help us forget anxieties, 180 years before Francis Crick and G. Mitchison rewired the idea to propose the reverse learning or unlearning hypothesis of dreaming (Hobson, 2011: 80; Crick and Mitchison, 1983). Dreams have also been seen as thresholds to virtual or augmented realities (Hobson and Schredl, 2011).

2. Scope and Objectives

Taking the cue from Romantic and Victorian representations of dream activity, this paper examines Franklin Blake's censored dream from Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* (1868)—hailed as the 'first and greatest', the 'finest' and among the most 'impeccable' English detective novels—where the eponymous gemstone represents the dark underbelly of British imperialism (Reed, 1973; Frick, 1984). *The Moonstone* has been seen as a metaphor for Victorian imperialist panic (Roy, 1993; Duncan, 1994; Farmer 1999; Kuchta, 2010), which sets in as the diamond—an object of imperial loot—is stolen a second time, by none other than the novel's supposed hero, Franklin Blake, in a somnambulant state.

Franklin's dream can be called *censored* as its contents are unknown. All we know are the effects the dream had on

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him, which were to turn him into a sleepwalking thief in a somnambulant state of anxiety. While interpreting the novel as a subversion of British imperialism, scholars have mostly assumed one kind of continuity hypothesis—that geopolitical and sociological realities of an individual's waking experience are reconstituted in dreams and somnambulant activity. However, such an understanding continuity hypothesis needs reassessment while looking at *The Moonstone*, as it tends to ignore key evidences from the novel and its sources.

Evidence suggests Collins intended the novel as an allegory for Victorian imperial politics and the burning Indian question, being critical of Britain's foreign policy and the way it had handled the Great Rebellion (Collins, 1858). But *The Moonstone's* relation to India is not necessarily only political. It goes back to the philosophical Vedantic tradition of dream analysis which flourished between circa 600 and 800 AD. Overlooked by scholars, Franklin's somnambulant theft of the Moonstone bears uncanny resemblance to two ancient stories from the *Upanishads*—the 'Prince of Kashi' and Sage Ashtavakra's analysis of King Janaka's dream. Underlying Collins' political statement are the subliminal networks of dream studies pioneered by Adi Sankaracharya, primarily in his commentary on the *Mandukya Upanishad*, where he divided reality or phenomenology into four states: waking, dreaming, deep sleep and *Turiya*. Besides, in creating Blake as the agent and the site of a subversive imperial dream, Collins' also created the threshold of a quantum ground of dreaming that will be discussed in the last section.

3. Continuity Hypothesis

In dream studies, the continuity hypothesis postulates the determinism between waking memories and dream experiences. Waking experiences that affect dreams and their intensities also influence subsequent waking moods (Schredl and Reinhard, 2010). Our waking emotional intensities, rather than emotions themselves, tend to trigger and regulate the contents of our dreams (Schredl 2006). Factors affecting continuity and incorporation of waking experiences into dreaming are complex and variegated, therefore resist a generalizable theory (Schredl and Hofmann, 2003). However, champions of the continuity hypothesis also consider dreams to be factors of personality traits (Domhoff 155).

Foregrounded by Sigmund Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), the continuity hypothesis is based on the observation that dreams preferred recent impressions in memory, while often discarding what is considered *important* in the waking experience in preference for the banal, even accessing memory matter from our infancy (1959: 10-22). Although Freud also spoke of *hypermnesic* dreams, which share little determinism with memories and stimuli in waking or conscious minds, Freudian interpretation rationalizes dreams as determined from discernible material realities. Challenging this determinism, Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious postulated a hereditary or atavistic model of interpreting dreams, nightmares, fears and fantasies through archetypes (1959). Jung's conception of '*acausal*' synchronicity in perceptual experiences shares structural similarities with dreaming. Events we experience as unfolding are not necessarily only causal and transactional relations between objects in the world, according to Jung. Rather, there is an unconscious or non-deterministic synchronicity between the observer and those observed.

Jung's attempts at quantum psychology deeply affected the works of no less than two physics Nobel laureates, Niels Bohr and Wolfgang Pauli. The latter was Jung's patient, before friend. In 1954, he even wrote the famous essay, 'Ideas of the Unconscious from the Standpoint of Natural Science and Epistemology', arguing that the structure of the unconscious is analogous to what physics would call the 'field'. Pauli saw the 'quantum level not as some ensemble of miniscule interacting particles but rather as an undifferentiated whole from which such particles and their relationships would emerge' (Frentz 2011). Recent experiments have also paved the way for a new biochemical explanation, arguing that influences of probiotic or microbial colonies in the human gut—that significantly outnumber hereditary genes—also regulate the neurochemistry of the human mind. This influences social and patterns in individual psychology (Heijtz, Wang, Anuar, Qian, Björkholm, Samuelsson, Hibberd, Forsberg and Pettersson, 2011; Flight, 2014; Sarkar, Harty, Lehto, Moeller, Dinan, Dunbar, Cryan and Burnet, 2018). This is one possible scientific explanation for what Jung meant by the collective unconscious, and is relevant to the scope of this paper.

Researches into the gut-microbiome-brain connection are very much an ongoing project and there is very little evidence of the absolute and direct independent impact of microbiomes on sleep, dreaming and sleepwalking activity. Therefore, the reassessment of continuity hypothesis that *The Moonstone* compels us towards should not be taken as a new generalizable theory, but understood within the context of the novel and the various strands of critical discourse it has garnered. I argue that the ramifications of Franklin Blake's drug-induced dream and somnambulism cannot be explained simply by the continuity hypothesis but that they guide us towards a new paradigm that acts parallel to, not in spite of, observable continuity in dreams. Further, they provide new ground for discussion on whether dreams of literary characters can indeed be interpreted and explored with the same scientific tools as *real* dreams.

4. Historical Background and Critical Summary

This section discusses the historical background to the novel, necessary from the point of view of the continuity hypothesis in which Franklin's somnambulism and censored dream is usually understood by critics. In *The Moonstone*, the Orient acts as a spectral agency working within an imperial geography. Erstwhile notions of environmental purity, pastoralism and aristocracy became casualties of imperialism with great demographic transformations in metropolitan centres like London (Kestner, 2000; Siddiqi 2008). By the end of the Victorian era, Indians too were an unavoidably large presence in London (Chatterjee 2020). The tremendous and fast-paced marketplace seen in nineteenth-century English fiction—the chinaware, jewellery, Oriental portraits, hookahs or narcotics disseminated—was in fact a mode of censoring from the Victorian mind the imperial violence carried in the East. By daydreaming an Orient within, Britons too underwent a great cultural disorientation owing to fetishes for exotic Eastern commodities, artefacts and with Orientalism in general (Kiernan, 1969; Said, 1979; Nandy, 1983; Armstrong, 1987; McClintock, 1995; Arnold, 2011).

The Moonstone was written before these developments, although with their possibility in sight. Following the Last Treaty of Lahore, signed in 1849 by an eleven-year-old Maharajah Duleep Singh, the kingdom of Punjab and the Kohi-

noor was handed over to Queen Victoria. In July 1850, when the diamond entered London, Prime Minister Robert Peel succumbed to an untimely death from a fall off his horse, and the Queen suffered an injury. The following year, Prince Albert had it cut by Dutch jewellers to a significantly smaller size, in order to please the Queen. Within three years of the Great Rebellion, Prince Albert passed away. Superstitions of the day fabricated these disconnected events into a fable of the diamond's supernatural powers. In 1871, *The Spectator* published a report stating that while accepting the Kohinoor, Queen Victoria had 'accepted the destiny which accompanies that jewel, and will either have to endure severe misfortunes or be left without successor to her throne' (442). In 1880, the *Vanity Fair* ran a satirical piece suggesting the various nefarious devices that the diamond could be put to by the Government (70). Even as late as 1897, the *Blackwood's Magazine* reported that British psychology was still haunted by the screams of 'the Indian Mutiny' (Gregg, 1897).

In the bizarre scheme of *The Moonstone*, the criminal himself transforms into a detective. He is aided by the entire household against which the crime has been supposedly committed. The crime revolves around Franklin Blake's theft of the Moonstone, which was left as a birthday present to Rachel Verinder by the will of her deceased uncle, Colonel Herncastle. Herncastle, the brother of Rachel's mother, Lady Julia Verinder, had been ostracized by his family owing to his bloody role in the Siege of Seringapatam, of 1799, when the army of the East India Company, led by Lord Cornwallis stormed through Tipu Sultan's battalions, ending the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War. It was here that the Colonel acquired the Moonstone, which was an ancient diamond, stolen from a temple in Somnath. Since the eleventh century, the diamond had travelled from one lawless hand to another before falling into the Colonel Herncastle's hand during the Siege of Seringapatam. After retiring to England, Herncastle lived a solitary life given to opium and occult practices, before dying a lonely death. A legacy of three Brahmin priests has closely watched the diamond's movements in every generation, since its first disappearance from Somnath. Franklin Blake, Rachel's putative fiancée, is given charge of bringing the diamond from London to the Bank of Frizinghall and thence to the Verinder household.

On Rachel's birthday, Doctor Candy, the parish physician, tells her that the diamond could be put to many scientific uses and by manipulating its temperature and chemical composition, it could even be made to disappear. During her birthday party, three Brahmin priests arrive at the Verinder household as jugglers. Rachel's diamond is spotted by the priests as well. While Rachel's friends drool over her diamond, her suitor, the well-known philanthropist Godfrey Ablewhite, cynically suggests to Betteredge that the Moonstone is nothing but an isotope of carbon. Franklin, who has meanwhile given up smoking in order to please Rachel, has been sleeping badly. Candy, determined to cure him of insomnia, prepares a concoction of laudanum, laces the soda water with it, and has Betteredge give it to Blake. While returning home, Candy contracts pneumonia, and is debilitated for life. Blake sleeps very peacefully that night. Before bed, Rachel puts her Indian diamond in her Indian cabinet. Next morning, the Verinder household wakes up to find that the cabinet is flung open. The Moonstone has been stolen!

Rachel believes Franklin stole her precious diamond, because she saw him in the act, although Franklin is unaware of this. As Franklin and Rachel separate, Ablewhite presents

his marriage proposal before Rachel, who is still recovering from her lovelorn state. Ablewhite is a womanizer and charlatan, who wants to marry Rachel to seize her estate and property. Rachel is cautioned by the family solicitor, Mr Bruff, of Ablewhite's nefarious scheme. As Franklin recovers from the shock of being thwarted by Rachel, and returns to London, she breaks off her engagement with Ablewhite. Mr Bruff secretly arranges for Franklin to meet Rachel, where she tells him of the weird incident from the night her diamond was stolen; that the thief was none other than Franklin himself. Baffled by the revelation, Franklin turns to Doctor Candy, who is living a catatonic existence, although his assistant, Ezra Jennings comes to the rescue. From his shorthand notes, it is revealed that on the night of Rachel's birthday, Franklin was given a heady dose of laudanum. It sedated him to sleep but also intensified his subconscious anxiety of protecting Rachel's diamond. Franklin's somnambulant theft was a manifestation of his subconscious desire to ensure the safety of the diamond. His anaesthetized will had been subordinated to his censored fears, 'exactly as an ordinary dream subordinates to itself your judgment and your will' (Collins 1874: 413).

Jennings' scheme—in which Betteredge, Rachel and Mr Bruff enlist as eager accomplices—is to recreate the conditions from around the time of Rachel's birthday and providing Franklin with a heavier dose of laudanum, to reproduce the same stimuli and responses in him as during the night of the theft. Bewilderingly, the experiment is successful. It is established that the laudanum had helped Blake sleep peacefully, before turning him into a somnambulant burglar. After stealing the diamond in his sleep, Blake had passed it on to Ablewhite, who was himself after the Moonstone. Ablewhite is found murdered, as the diamond finds its way back to India in the hands of the three mysterious Brahmins. Rachel and Franklin are reunited, as the latter is supposedly restored to his original state, much like the diamond itself, while the Moonstone is restored to a homeostasis (Thomas 204-208). The catharsis of Franklin's repression demonstrates that the diamond was an isomorphic sign of Rachel's chastity which he desperately wanted to safeguard (Nayder, 1997; Law & Maunder 2008; Ryan, 2012). In reproducing the sequences of the diamond's somnambulant theft, Jennings possibly points to the collective unconscious of a family caught unawares in its subordination to a larger imperial dream. Franklin's psychological restitution is not just his own, but also of the Verinders.

The Moonstone is a compendium of semi-untold dreams. Franklin's own dream is neither shared nor even reported by anyone, and yet made obvious, given the recurrence of 'dream' analogies in the novel. Among the most noteworthy dream sequences in the novel are the one seen by the ancient Brahmins of Benares where Lord Vishnu appears and commands that 'the Moonstone should be watched, from that time forth, by three priests in turn, night and day, to the end of the generations of men,' while predicting a 'certain disaster to the presumptuous mortal who laid hands on the sacred gem, and to all of his house and name who received it after him' (Collins 1874: 13). Then there is the to-and-froing of the Moonstone between a London bank and the Bank of Frizinghall that makes Betteredge wonder if the diamond's footfall in the vicinity was not a result of his dream. Rosanna Spearman, one of the housemaids in Betteredge's care, is repeatedly described as 'like a woman in a dream' (Collins 1874: 164-166). She too is considered to have a

criminal past, from which she suffers incessantly. Tellingly, she commits suicide by drowning herself by the sea, in a quicksand called the 'shivering sands,' which is a metaphor highly suggestive of dreams. When Betteredge remembers her mournfully, he does so 'in the vision of a dream' (Collins 1874: 177). Spearman's suicide note which is addressed to Franklin, with whom she was in love, describes him to be 'like a lover in a dream' (Collins 1874: 335). Later Godfrey Ablewhite tells Drusilla Clack that his and Rachel's matrimonial proceedings had been rushed into 'like something done in a dream,' while Clack holds his hand and talks to him 'as if in a dream' (Collins 1874: 271-72). When Franklin is asked by Jennings to give up smoking and prepare for the experiment, he sleeps terribly once again, finding that his 'waking fancies' pursued him in his dreams (Collins 1868: 380).

Finally, it is in the nightmares of the 'dreamy eyed' Jennings, who is also an opium addict, that we deduce that Franklin did also have an opium-induced dream before sleepwalking. Since it is with Jennings' diagnosis and experiment that we know of Franklin's unintended somnambulist theft, the former's report of his own drug-induced dreams becomes vital. 'At one time I was whirling through empty space,' writes Jennings, 'with the phantoms of the dead, friends and enemies together. At another, the one beloved face which I shall never see again, rose at my bedside, hideously phosphorescent in the black darkness, and glared and grinned at me' (Collins 1874: 417). Jennings' recourse to opium is on account of untold tragic circumstances in his past life and an undisclosed illness. The drug continues to cause him frightful dreams which he chooses over the 'physical suffering' of his waking state. In all these, Franklin is situated by Collins as a metaphorical axis around which all other dreams orbit. In that, he represents that undifferentiated whole—the quantum ground of dreaming, as I define in the final section—from which all other dreams emerge.

5. Encryptions of Vedanta

This section discusses how some dreamlike states in the Vedanta offer intertextual models to interpret Franklin's somnambulism. *Vedanta* refers to the 108 Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Geeta*. The *Mandukya*, the shortest of all Upanishads, containing only twelve verses, is acknowledged as one of the finest pieces of Upanishadic literature. Like many other *Upanishads*, it is not about religious rituals but the human mind and its states of reality.

Around 750 AD, Adi Shankaracharya, who was determined to reform *Sanatan dharam*—what is today loosely referred to as Hinduism—took up the reinterpretation of Vedanta. The commentaries written on the *Mandukya* by Gaudapadacharya—Shankara's grand teacher—and by Shankara himself, are especially relevant to present-day consciousness and dream studies. The *Mandukya* offers a quadrangular model of reality, where waking, dreaming and deep sleep are appended to a fourth state. Shankara later named this last state as *Turiya*, literally meaning the fourth, is seen by Vedanta as the seat of pure consciousness. Accordingly, *Turiya* means disembodied awareness, classically defined as *not* the body, *not* the mind, but a nonlocal orbit of pure knowledge about the body, mind, self and the world. The *Upanishads* call this as *Brahman*.

Brahman is both a noun and verb—a processual entity. While explaining *Brahman*, *Turiya* and the mysteries of consciousness, sages invented thought experiments in the form of stories or fables. One such is the 'Prince of Kashi,' which

resembles Franklin Blake's censored dream, whether or not Collins was even aware of the story. The 'Prince of Kashi' has been returned to popular consciousness by Swami Sarvapriyananda, in his commentary on Gaudapadacharya's *asparsha yoga*—the yoga of no contact—the epithet that has been given to the teachings of the *Mandukya*, owing to its supposed healing powers (2019).

The story goes that once a young and handsome prince lived in ancient Kashi. As a child, he was chosen to play the role of a princess during a theatrical performance. Seeing how *beautiful* her child looked as a princess, the queen commissioned his portrait, which was then safely tucked away in the royal collection. When the Prince of Kashi grew into a marriageable youth, he chanced upon a portrait of a beautiful young *princess* in the cellar. Besotted by the princess, he made desperate inquiries and ordered one of his ministers to find her whereabouts. When the minister asked the prince how he came to know of this elusive princess, the latter pointed him to the portrait. The minister, who was one of the spectators during the performance, understood that the cause of the prince's romantic neuroticism was his own isomorphic form—his reflection from the past—which had effected his displaced narcissism. With ample care, the minister sat the prince down and patiently explained to him: 'O Prince, many years ago, there was a play staged in the court and we found you to be the perfect one to play the princess of Kashi! The princess of Kashi is none other than you! *Tat tvam asi*, you are that!' (Sarvapriyananda, 2014: 128-29). What binds the neuroticisms of the Prince of Kashi and Franklin Blake is what may be diagnosed in Upanishadic terms as false identification of the self with the non-self. The prince is besotted by his own reflection; the etiology of Blake's neurosis lies in a highly reflective diamond.

Another such story is the legend of King Janaka and Sage Ashtavakra, the foundational backdrop to *Ashtavakra Gita* (or *Ashtakavakra Samhita*). King Janaka—who is also a character in the epic *Ramayana*, as the father of Sita—is said to have lived around 700-800 BC. Once, he found himself and his battalion faced against a giant army of an unknown invader. Janaka's men were defeated, captured, killed or scared away. He was himself badly wounded, but managed to escape to the neighbouring village, where no one agreed to help him. The invader who had conquered Janaka's kingdom, estates, courtiers and wives had also issued statewide orders for everyone to shun him. On the verge of death by starvation, the wretched king suddenly woke up from what had been a nightmare. Surrounded by his courtiers, wives, ministers and a pile of administrative work, and still traumatized by his nightmare, he was unable to return to worldly life and kingly duties. Sage Ashtavakra, who was in the vicinity, was informed that all ministrations to the king had been met with the disoriented response: 'was that true or is this true?' Ashtavakra understood the etiology of Janaka's trauma. As he approached the king and offered his salutations, Janaka asked him the same question: 'was that true or is this true?' The sage asked back: 'O king, when you were writhing, wounded and humiliated in the battlefield, was all this that you see now—your courtiers, ministers, wives and the pomp and luxury—there?' The king answered, no. 'And,' continued Ashtavakra, 'were these ministers, courtiers, your wives, your kingdom and your power that you see now, there in the battlefield?' Once again the king answered, no. Finally, Ashtavakra revealed to Janaka, 'and therefore, my king, neither this is true nor

that is true. Only you are the truth.’ Although reading the discourse of the sage in the *Ashtavakra Samhita* cannot itself bring enlightenment, engaging with it and other Upanishadic stories create an experience of the microstructures of enlightenment (Stroud 2004).

Much to the frustration of *Westernized* psychologists and Enlightenment rationality, the psychological principles of Vedanta are deceptively simplistic. Although they sound fabulous, the ‘Prince of Kashi’ and the legend of Janaka and Ashtavakra are not immediately amenable to the pragmatics of clinical practice. Vedantic ideals tend to diagnose the etiologies of trauma or suffering (the Sanskrit word is *samsara*) within what they refer to as sleep or dreaming. Vedanta’s classification of a bulk of neurotic symptoms as *prapancha*—a misperceived play of senses, memories or biases—actually stems from a very systematic Upanishadic understanding of the ecology of human sensorium and sensibility. Neurosis is described by Vedanta as something similar to, what Jacques Lacan called, *meconnaissance* or a misrecognition of reality. Taken literally, such an attitude may have a detrimental rather than healing effect on the sufferer. Nonetheless, even though Vedanta considers neuropathological etiology to lie in *mithya* or the unreal, its intention is far from trivializing psychological trauma.

We must appreciate the fundamental distinctions between Abrahamic and Upanishadic traditions. Western theology largely operates on determinants of morality and jurisprudence. Here, conscience or the binary of good versus evil takes precedence in ecumenical or jurisprudential analysis. The analytical foundations of Vedanta, on the other hand, lie in phenomenology and spiritualism, and the binary of permanent versus impermanent. Vedanta does not override morality. Vedantic morality, as Sarvapriyananda explains, is ‘an expression of what is already intrinsic to the one reality within us.’ Accordingly, immorality is redefined as ignorance of the intrinsic nature of the human soul. Vedanta’s ethics are not based on sociological or juridical epistemologies of the individual—whether as holy or unholy—but are instead ‘grounded in the ontology of the self’ (2014: 210).

When a Vedantic diagnosis explains the etiology of neuroses as a factor of the unreal, it transcends the binaries between good and evil, moral and immoral and even permanent and impermanent. Instead, *unreal*, in this regard, implies an identification of the self (or *atman*) with something that is not intrinsically real or permanent to the existence of the human soul. In the story of the ‘Prince of Kashi’, the prince’s neurosis is caused by his fixation with his portrait—misperceived as that of his prospective romantic other—which was commissioned by his mother owing to her own narcissistic identification with her child’s beauty. Similarly, King Janaka’s neurosis stems from his identification with the iron burden of responsibility that he misperceives to be constituted by his wives, courtiers, ministers or the battlefield where he lies vanquished. According to Vedanta, neither the portrait of the princess is essential to the spiritual singularity of the prince of Kashi, nor are the royal court and battlefield integral to Janaka’s soul. Like the prince’s love for the princess in the portrait, Janaka’s glory or defeat are fleeting performances (*prapancha*).

The Moonstone is also encrypted with aspects of these Upanishadic stories. Franklin Blake’s theft of the Indian diamond is also a *prapancha*. It is not stolen by Blake himself but a manifestation of his somnambulant self, constituted not by the person that Rachel loves but by the laudanum that he

consumes unknowingly. Even the Moonstone is something amorphous and impermanent, as both the scoundrel, Ablewhite, and the man of science, Candy suggest. The Indian cabinet, where Rachel keeps the diamond, is a simulation or abstraction of the Orient.

Unlike the royal and international significance of the Kohinoor, the Moonstone, in the end, serves a largely *immaterial* purpose. As a material possession—or dispossession—the diamond only delays the union of the two lovers. It seems to drive the plot before it is restored to the temple in Somnath, finally marking a cessation in the neuroses of the Verinder household. For Collins, dreaming, neurosis and sleepwalking appear as stages of reality before spectators. However, the spirit of the actor or even the criminal—in this case Franklin—is potentially unchanged as though the whole act was just a performance. By indicating that imperialism was a grand neurotic spectacle and the imperial spirit was indeed anything but imperialist from within, Collins attempted to restore the symbolic sanctity of the Orient and the Occident.

6. Quantum Ground of Dreaming

The Moonstone’s linkages to Vedanta are consistent with Freudian psychoanalysis and postcolonial criticism, although the novel transcends both. Franklin’s repressed desire to protect Rachel is what yogic literature calls *vasana* (desire) and *raga-dvesha* (attraction-aversion) (Muktidananda, 2019). Under the influence of opium, his will acts as a spectral identity, abducting his conscious judgment and memory. The novel’s catharsis coincides with Franklin’s own catharsis—what Sarvapriyananda elsewhere explains as the state of ‘no mind’. Contrary to a commonsensical understanding, *no mind* does not mean not-thinking. ‘*No mind* is not shutting down the mind. No mind is not being inactive. What is *no mind* then? It means managing the mind, spiritualizing the mind’ (2019: 128).

The purpose of Candy’s administering the laudanum into Blake’s drink was to create for him an experience of *no mind*. What the doctor had not known was that the secret ingredient in the concoction—opium—could itself project a mind of its own. Psychoanalytical readings of *The Moonstone* take the novel’s characters as real people with real intentions, pasts and possible futures. English authors like Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas De Quincey were infamous opium eaters. The drug’s use as a palliative, digestive and even cure for hunger was well known in Victorian England. But in Franklin’s case, the effects of opium represent symptoms shared by a community of people in the novel, while he acts out their collective unconscious.

The current scientific explanation for Jung’s notion of the collective unconscious rests on the finding that psychobiotics transform psychological states and regulate stress responses. Our resistance to environmental stress is deeply controlled by our microbial colonies (Dinan, Stilling, Stanton and Cryan 2015). Microbial colonies form complex ecosystems with our gastrointestinal mechanisms, communicating with microbial colonies in other bodies. This too reaffirms the individual censored dream as a social phenomenon; that social discourses do not simply affect the localized brain contained in the human skull but also a nonlocal mind dispersed throughout the human body, which shares its intelligence with microbial colonies. Even without a Vedantic, clinical or microbial analysis, *The Moonstone* has been wonderfully interpreted by Ronald R. Thomas as ‘the recognition

that the self is a combination of selves, constituted by the discourse of society,' as an 'empire of secrets' (207-210). This is why the novel requires a social reconstruction of the 'Indian plot' through so many narrators, whom Franklin appoints to narrate the collective memory of a dream.

Despite multiple narrators, several events are censored. The contents of Blake's dream go unreported. We do not know Colonel Herncastle's true intentions behind bequeathing the cursed diamond to his niece; nor do we know the true legacy and networks of the three Brahmins (Thomas 207). The Brahmins have only very recently been emphasized as active agents altering the fate of imperialism (Narayan, 2017). We know even less about the past life of Ezra Jennings, who, as he says, grew up in an English colony. He is false accused of an unknown crime and suffers from an unmentionable disease. While his role seems to be to unravel the mystery of *The Moonstone*, he continually represses his own nightmares. Collins makes of dreaming a window into criminology.

The crime of The Moonstone links psychological and political repressions in the dream of an unwitting criminal to sketch out a conception of the mind as an empire divided against itself. The criminal element here goes beyond the criminal actions of the bloodthirsty British troops who plunder the colonial village, the mysterious Indians who are originally suspected of the theft, the servant woman with the criminal past who is also suspected, and even Franklin Blake once he discovers that the gem was stolen from him, too, while he was still in his dream (Thomas 205).

It is as though Collins was at pains to provide 'the "social parallel" to the "internal events in the mind" for the novel (Thomas 205). The British imperial dream reproduces itself as Franklin's somnambulism. Franklin is the first agent of imperial transactions we see in *The Moonstone*. He is aware of the history of the Moonstone, the Siege of Seringapatam and of the public suspicion that Colonel Herncastle left the diamond to Rachel in order to pass on his curse to the family that had ostracized him. Given the seat of imperial knowledge that Franklin finds himself in, even deep sleep does not provide a solution to his insomnia and irritability. Vedantins like Gaudapadacharya and Shankaracharya believed that the seeds of duality or perceiving the unreal as real—therefore the seeds of trauma and suffering—operated even in deep sleep. Franklin's somnambulant activity reaffirms that hypothesis. Here, Collins may have inadvertently set up Franklin as the quantum ground of dreaming.

It is important to understand that the implications of quantum here derive both from quantum physics and as it is meant in the phrase 'quantum leap,' although neither of these meanings truly encompass the meaning of 'quantum ground of dreaming.' In physics, quantum fields include teleportation, entanglement, tunneling and nonlocality which cannot, however, be scientifically examined in one dream—that too Franklin's dream—which is remarkably censored, besides experienced by a literary character. Therefore, the 'quantum ground,' although conceived with the help of quantum physics, cannot be considered a purely scientific construct. Meanwhile, to reduce it to mere phraseology—where 'quantum' stands for a voluminous aggregate of matter—would be highly disserving to the novel. Collins created Franklin Blake as a fulcrum for all other characters in *The Moonstone*, and therefore his actions and his dream

are informed by those of others, with or without his knowledge. This is one reason why Franklin's somnambulism (or even the hypothetical contents of his dream) go beyond the continuity hypothesis. Franklin's actions obey the continuity hypothesis as long as we consider that his knowledge and memory of Colonel Herncastle's opium addiction and theft of the diamond are parts of his conscious waking state reality, replayed in his unconscious state. However, that would be to overlook from its zeitgeist a very crucial theme—that of atavism—which was a defining feature of Collins' time.

In 1868, the year of the publication of *The Moonstone*, Charles Darwin's essay 'Atavism or Reversion' was also published. While this need not have a rigorously scientific bearing on the interpretation of Collins' novel or the censored dream of Franklin, it did certainly have a great bearing on the commonsense of the age. Atavism is a distinguishable theme in Victorian detective fiction. Sherlock Holmes' remark on Jack Stapleton's atavism that links him to the Baskerville genealogy, in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), or the detectives earlier reference to Darwinian atavism in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) are revealing in this context. As is the aphorism that 'the sins of fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation,' which Horace Walpole used in his preface to *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), widely considered to be the pioneer of the English gothic novel. As *The Moonstone* is predominantly based on Gothic themes and detective work, a commonsensical streak of atavism prevails in its hero, Franklin Blake. Although not linked by blood to Herncastle, he does, however, revert to the Colonel's imperial streak, which includes Oriental knowledge, the consumption of opium, theft of the Moonstone and irrepressible anxiety before and after the theft. Both Herncastle and Franklin are thieves, working under the influence of a drug. Herncastle was an opium eater by choice; Franklin was not. The Colonel was not a sleepwalker; Franklin's sleepwalking was drug-induced. Therefore, *The Moonstone* defies notions of direct biological or hereditary atavism. While this may seem to defy scientific principles, Collins' project instead follows a sociocultural atavism from one generation to another. Both the Colonel and Franklin are sleepwalkers in the metaphorical sense that they do not understand the ramifications of their anxieties—and criminality. Further, Franklin's anxieties do not simply mimic the Colonel's but also the religious fervour of the three Brahmin priests, with whom he shares neither any biological nor symbolic sociocultural atavism.

Given this mindboggling scheme behind the somnambulant theft, what truly explains it is understanding Franklin's mind not as a classical brain but as a *quantum ground* for imperial dreams. His dream and somnambulism occur in a quantum state where his memories and anxieties are entangled with those of the Colonel, Spearman, the Brahmins and possibly many others. It must be restressed that the invocation of *quantum*, in this sense, is not to suggest entanglement and superposition of Franklin's brain processes in the same way as, for instance, Qubits in quantum computing. Nonetheless, quantum processes lend themselves as deeply insightful metaphors to help explain the effects of the censored dream, which cannot be taken as the product of *one* classical human brain, since it proceeds with the superposition of Franklin's brain in at least two superimposed states—one of the criminal and the other of the saviour. Franklin's brain at once straddles two geographies—an *Orientalised* London and the Indian Cabinet, on the one hand,

and the colonised geography of India, on the other (where he has never really set foot).

This hypothesis is indeed more symbolic than scientific, at this stage. However, it certainly poses an interesting open ended problem for scientists, and not just philosophers. Since the Victorian mind found it hard to explain the scientific and symbolic rationale of Franklin's theft, the public resorted to superstitions and invocation of supernatural agency.

7. Threshold of New Complexity

The Moonstone's pioneering thought experiment in the field of consciousness and dream studies brings us to the threshold of greater complexity. Franklin's atavism does not merely go back to Herncastle but indeed as far back as King Janaka and the Prince of Kashi. Besides, even while being a demonstration of the continuity hypothesis, the novel also disrupts continuity by paving way for the collective unconscious, which can possible shape new experimental methodologies.

One possible beginning for new complex model for the neuroscience of dreams has been suggested by neuroscientists Birendra N. Mallick and Asok K. Mukhopadhyay in what they call the 'T' state, tentatively derived from Shankaracharya's notion of the *Turiya*. They redefine it as 'the experience of the ground state, devoid of any content or information or even a sense of self, still retaining its overwhelming manipulating power on self, quality of information, and content of consciousness.' Accordingly, 'T' is the 'experience of unconditional consciousness,' without the meditation of the social or individual discourses, or even the presence of the self. Although they do not expressly refer to a *quantum* model of dream theory, Mallick and Mukhopadhyay suggest that the 'T' state of consciousness is nonlocal. This may at once imply a nonlocality within the human body, and a larger nonlocality transcending individual humans and human communities. Given the absence of our knowledge in the precise neural correlates of the 'T' state or the exact neurological explanation for what causes a perturbation in the *Turiya*, this runs the risk of symbolic generalizations.

However, the fact remains that dreams, nightmares and somnambulist responses indeed play out as vividly as if they were what we otherwise *identify* as reality. This is owing to discernible experiences in brain substrates and the dispersed seats of the nonlocal mind. A better understanding of the 'T' state will not only help us reconstruct the possible contents of Franklin's dream—if there was indeed one—but also help reconciling the wisdom of the Vedanta with dream quanta, en route to explaining finer levels of complexity in dream studies. To conclude then, *The Moonstone*, which has been widely lauded as a pioneering detective novel and critique of imperialism from within the imperial geography, is much more than a political allegory. Seen in its scientific context, it is a remarkable statement on complexity for studies on dreaming and somnambulism. Franklin's dual role—as the sleepwalking criminal and the waking detective—has only been interpreted within one kind of continuity hypothesis, which implies that his dream was a consequence of his waking realities. However, such a reading ignores the disruption in that continuity which Collins had possibly intended, in that the discourses and anxieties of other psychological environments of other individuals—both British and Indian—influence the dream. Franklin's dream and sleep state experiences recapitulate those of Colonel Herncastle,

besides other British and Indian characters in the novel, and also some key thought experiments on dream studies from ancient texts of Vedanta. Therefore, *The Moonstone* and its dreams should be read and analysed in these larger and diffuse contexts rather than simply as expressions of political allegory representing sequences of bloodshed and redemption in Anglo-Indian imperial history.

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