

Criminal Secret and Medical Possession in *The Moonstone*

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Abstract

Referred as “the first and greatest of English detective novels” by T. S. Eliot (1944), Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* illustrates a criminal secret that motivates the protagonist’s striving to solve it throughout the story. The pivotal, criminal secret is the theft of the Diamond, and the protagonist Franklin Blake eventually discovers it is he himself that steals the Diamond. The medical possession of Franklin when he steals the Diamond, according to critics, justifies his theft: Franklin’s trance under the influence of opium decriminalizes an unconscious thief, and his deed in the unconscious state suggests a chivalric motive of protecting Rachel’s property. Although the happy ending of Franklin and Rachel’s reunion manifests the decriminalization of Franklin’s theft, however, the medical power of opium remains problematic for its role in generating a criminal secret. This paper aims to study the interrelationship between the criminal secret and the medical possession of Franklin in the crucial theft of the Diamond. The medical power in this novel demonstrates not only in Franklin’s trance caused by opium but also in Ezra Jennings’s assistance based on his medicine knowledge. In other words, the medical power shows both criminalizing and decriminalizing inclinations. With the contradictory inclinations, the medical possession of Franklin sheds light on the relation among a man, medical power, and criminal secret.

Keywords: Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*, medical possession, unconscious, (de)criminalize

Works Cited:

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