Religion and superstition cause many of the characters in The Moonstone to behave in ways the other characters cannot understand. Miss Clack's religious fanaticism, the actions of the Indians, and the superstitions of Gabriel Betteredge all strike other characters as odd. How do these personalities help you understand what is going on in the immediate environment that the characters inhabit? In what ways do they also comment on larger social issues of the period?

The Moonstone Theme of Religion

Religion is an important part of the daily lives of most of the characters in The Moonstone, as it was for most English people in the nineteenth century. But of course there are degrees: both Rachel and her mother, Lady Verinder, are Christian and members of the Church of England. But their relative, Miss Clack, is convinced that they're going to go to hell unless they convert to her branch of Christianity (an extremely evangelical form of Methodism). Godfrey Ablewhite is very vocal about his faith, as well. But both Ablewhite and Miss Clack are total hypocrites. In the world of The Moonstone, it seems that those who talk about their religion all the time are more likely to be hypocrites about it.

Questions About Religion

Which characters are most openly religious, and what are their religious leanings? What does religion prompt them to do?

Which characters have the most strongly held morals? Note that it's not the same list. What might this suggest?

Would you argue that Betteredge's reliance on Robinson Crusoe for guidance and comfort constitutes a religion? Why or why not?

Collins seems most critical of characters who are religious hypocrites, like Miss Clack and Godfrey Ablewhite. What other kinds of hypocrisy are discussed in the novel?

Chew on ThisTry on an opinion or two, start a debate, or play the devil’s advocate.Characters in The Moonstone who flaunt their religious faith are the most likely to

The matron's opinion of Rosanna was (in spite of what she had done) that the girl was one in a thousand, and that she only wanted a chance to prove herself worthy of any Christian woman's interest in her. My lady (being a Christian woman, if ever there was one yet) said to the matron, upon that, 'Rosanna Spearman shall have her chance, in my service.' (1.1.4.14)

The ideas of second chances, forgiveness, and redemption are closely linked to the theme of religion. Lady Verinder, as a "Christian woman," is willing to give Rosanna a second chance in spite of her past as a thief.

'And I desire that my […] sister may be informed, by means of a true copy of this, the third and last clause of my Will, that I give the Diamond to her daughter Rachel, in token of my free forgiveness of the injury which her conduct towards me has been the means of inflicting on my reputation in my lifetime; and especially in proof that I pardon, as becomes a dying man, the insult offered to me as an officer and a gentleman, when her servant, by her orders, closed the door of her house against me, on the occasion of her daughter's birthday.' (1.1.6.36)

We're meant to believe that Lady Verinder is sincerely "a Christian woman" when she gives Rosanna a second chance. But John Herncastle's Will, in which he claims repeatedly that he forgives his sister for the "insult" of not inviting him to Rachel's birthday party, is meant to sound insincere. After all, he knew that the Indians were after the Moonstone and that it would be dangerous for Rachel to be in possession of it. This is the first example of a character using religion for hypocritical, self-serving reasons in this novel.

(Nota bene: I am an average good Christian, when you don't push my Christianity too far. And all the rest of you—which is a great comfort—are, in this respect, much the same as I am.) (1.1.21.29)

Gabriel Betteredge compares his own religion to the reader's: he says that everyone is basically good, as long as you don't push them too far.

She handed me back the tract, and opened the door. We must sow the good seed somehow. I waited till the door was shut on me, and slipped the tract into the letterbox. When I had dropped another tract through the area railings, I felt relieved, in some small degree, of a heavy responsibility towards others. (2.1.1.12)

Penelope is not interested in reading the religious tract Miss Clack offers her. But Miss Clack can't just let it go. She shoves the tract through the mail slot on her way out, and insists that it's part of her "heavy responsibility towards others." It's not that the other characters are not Christian; Miss Clack just thinks that her own version of Christianity is far superior to others.

Oh, my young friends and fellow-sinners! beware of presuming to exercise your poor carnal reason. Oh, be morally tidy. Let your faith be as your stockings, and your stockings as your faith. Both ever spotless, and both ready to put on at a moment's notice! (2.1.1.17)

Miss Clack preaches to the reader against using "reason" or intellect in solving problems. This is obviously questionable advice. The next piece of advice, in which she compares religious faith to "stockings," isn't just an odd simile. She suggests that her "faith" isn't something that she "wears" at all times – it's something that she can "put on at a moment's notice." This is strange: does that mean that her devout religious faith is something that she can "put on" and turn off? Is she letting slip that it's all a show?

He beamed on us with his beautiful smile; he held out a hand to my aunt, and a hand to me. I was too deeply affected by his noble conduct to speak. I closed my eyes; I put his hand, in a kind of spiritual self-forgetfulness, to my lips. He murmured a soft remonstrance. Oh, the ecstasy, the pure, unearthly ecstasy of that moment! I sat—I hardly know on what—quite lost in my own exalted feelings. When I opened my eyes again, it was like descending from heaven to earth. There was nobody but my aunt in the room. He had gone. (2.1.2.94)

Miss Clack's "ecstasy" seems more than religious in this passage. It seems like it's not just "spiritual self-forgetfulness" when she kisses Godfrey's hand. Sounds to us like she's got a major crush and she is trying to disguise it by calling it religiously "exalted feelings."

Sorrow and sympathy! Oh, what Pagan emotions to expect from a Christian Englishwoman anchored firmly on her faith! (2.1.3.7)

Most "Christian Englishwom[en]" wouldn't think it was "Pagan," or ungodly to feel "sorrow and sympathy" when they find out that their aunt is dying. But Miss Clack claims that she's happy at the news because she'll be able to guide her aunt in her last days to become a better Christian. Of course, the way she says it suggests that she's really only excited by the idea that her aunt might leave her money when she dies.

[Mr Bruff] is the family solicitor, and we had met more than once, on previous occasions, under Lady Verinder's roof. A man, I grieve to say, grown old and grizzled in the service of the world. A man who, in his hours of business, was the chosen prophet of Law and Mammon; and who, in his hours of leisure, was equally capable of reading a novel and of tearing up a tract. (2.1.3.12)

Miss Clack thinks that Mr. Bruff is too obsessed with "worldly" or non-spiritual things. He is motivated by "Law and Mammon" ("Mammon" means "money" or greed).

Rachel and I went alone together to church. A magnificent sermon was preached by my gifted friend on the heathen indifference of the world to the sinfulness of little sins. For more than an hour his eloquence (assisted by his glorious voice) thundered through the sacred edifice. I said to Rachel, when we came out, 'Has it found its way to your heart, dear?' And she answered, 'No; it has only made my head ache.' (2.1.7.36)

Miss Clack says that she feels exalted by the "thunder[ous]" voice of the minister. But Rachel only gets a headache. Which of them is the reader supposed to sympathize with?

'Oh, Rachel! Rachel!' I burst out. 'Haven't you seen yet, that my heart yearns to make a Christian out of you? Has no inner voice told you that I am trying to do for you, what I was trying to do for your dear mother when death snatched her out of my hands?' (2.1.8.104)

Miss Clack finally lets the cat out of the bag: she tells Rachel that she wants to "make a Christian out of" her. Of course Rachel would be offended by this –after all, she's already a Christian. But what really offends her is that Miss Clack suggests that her dead mother, Lady Verinder, has gone to hell because Miss Clack didn't save her soul in time. To Rachel, this is both offensive and ridiculous, since her mother was a good, kind woman her whole life.

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be hypocritical. Collins seems to condemn evangelism in favor of a more private morality.

Before Herncastle acquires the Moonstone at the siege of Seringapatam in 1799, the stone has already passed through the hands of a number “vain conquerors”. The opening narrative transforms the sacred object into a symbol of wealth and power that no mere mortal should possess, but which, despite its properties, immoral warriors of various nations have sought to acquire. In fact, owning what no one should possess merely adds to the Moonstone's allure.

The connection of the properties of the Moonstone to "ancient Greece and Rome" (p.2 Ch. II of the prologue) is the first indication that India is not a barbarous and backward series of petty principalities but an ancient civilisation. The British army storming Seringapatam under General Baird, whom we as mid-Victorian readers of All the Year Round would normally regard as the bearer of European law, science, technology, religion, and culture are, Collins implies, no better than those eleventh-century Moslem invaders of India, who committed an act of wanton vandalism and sacrilege in stripping "the shrine of Hindoo pilgrimage, and the wonder of the eastern world" (p.2 Ch. II of the prologue). We hear of the barbarism and "rapacity of the conquering Mohammedans" then meet Colonel Herncastle after we have been told that the British army has converted the city's Moslem defenders into a "heap" of corpses. In retrospect, absurd, foolish, hot-tempered, Herncastle is ridiculous when he boasts to his fellow officers "that we should see the Diamond on his finger" (p.3 Ch. III), for he clearly has no idea of the dimensions of the sacred object he covets and wades through blood to attain but can never enjoy.

Ironically, until the close of the novel, no one seems to regard the three Brahmins as the gem's rightful custodians. While Herncastle maliciously bequeaths the stone to Rachel Verinder, his niece, to punish the family that rejected him, the Brahmins risk their immortal souls by masquerading as members of a lower caste (jugglers and musicians) in order to retrieve the gem, dedicating their lives to the service of their god. The Moonstone brings out the worst in the worldlings that seek to appropriate it, for it brings out the hypocrisy of the outwardly charitable, pious, and Christian Godfrey Ablewhite, desirer of Rachel Verinder’s affections, who is unmasked in death as gross a sensualist and hedonist as Herncastle himself. In contrast to the selflessness of the Brahmins, sensual pleasure and self-love motivate Godfrey Ablewhite as they had Colonel Herncastle, and frustrate recovery of the diamond.

The colourful, exotic history of the stone which becomes its meaning, both opens and closes the novel. The story of The Moonstone is a fable, a cautionary tale with an overt moral. The bulk of the novel is merely the European chapter in that history. The prediction of disaster to befall each successive owner implies that the gem's story is one of successive thefts: this prediction, based entirely on the limitations of human nature, is a curse to all but Franklin Blake, and the focus of his affections, Rachel Verinder. Rachel's selfless love that prompts her to sacrifice her honour for the sake of her beloved (whom she mistakenly believes to be a thief) parallels the religious dedication of the Brahmins, so that romantic love becomes the Western equivalent of Eastern reverence. Just as the holy men recover the diamond to restore the powers of their deity, so Franklin Blake recovers Rachel's respect, lost for a time through a plausible, but inaccurate, error in judgment based on seeing but not understanding. The Moonstone becomes a catalyst for emotional and moral growth for the only Europeans who have not coveted it.

Returned to its proper guardians, then replaced in the forehead of the Moon god, the Moonstone once again becomes a metaphysical rather than a material signifier. Only at the end is the reader compelled to see the death of Godfrey Ablewhite as poetically just and the Brahmins as heroic conservators capable of great personal sacrifice: they have "forfeited their caste, in the service of the god. The god had commanded that their purification should be the purification by pilgrimage" (p.465 "The Statement of Mr. Murthwaite"). Having been constantly together their entire lives, the trio depart in separate directions: "Never more were they to look on each other's faces."(p.465) With the exception of the lovers, Rachel Verinder and Franklin Blake, who always esteemed each other rather than the diamond, the Western "possessors" of the stone we now regard as thieves, charlatans, and fences. Herncastle's acquiring the gem through deception and murder establishes the pattern of repeated thefts as symbolic of England's imperial conquests and the Moonstone itself as the symbol of a national rather than a personal crime. Perhaps to Collins, and ultimately to his less prejudiced and more open-minded readers, the British Raj is not civilising and benevolent, but economic and military imperialism at its worst. In the idol, it inspires faith in the community of believers; as a useless bauble, it excites the Christian sins of lust, envy, greed, and even murder.

India in The Moonstone serves much the same function that certain elements provide in Gothic fiction. Its mysteriousness, mysticism and availability of curses and omens, furnish the background that once belonged to castles, remote areas, winding passageways, Mediterranean-type killers, and medieval premonitions. The Moonstone diamond is embedded as deeply in superstition, as it was in the forehead of a fourhanded Indian god typifying the moon. It serves something of the function of the statue in Walpole's The Castle of Otranto, which is often regarded as the tale that began the Gothic genre. The Indian connection, however, gave Collins an additional dimension for his crime-detection novel, for it suggested light-dark imagery, aspects of surface versus subsurface, external events versus background, history, and shadows. If nothing else, India’s complex history reinforced the pressure of the past upon the present.

In The King of the Inventors: A Life of Wilkie Collins, Catherine Peters sees the novel The Moonstone as subverting not merely the conventions of the Sensation Novel (the sub genre that Collins had been pivotal in creating) but also the traditional tenets of nineteenth-century British imperialism. The Brahmins are hardly mindless primitives, and the British army is not shown intervening to prevent bloodshed between rival factions, nor are the conquering English superior, enlightened beings attempting to confer the benefits of European culture and Christian morality upon benighted savages. Whereas the focus of the Sensation Novel had been sexual indiscretion (illegitimacy, bigamy, adultery), the centre of The Moonstone is crime and detection. Perhaps the new genre and Collins's apparently ambivalent attitudes owe something to context in which his readers would have viewed any subject associated with India after the 1857 Sepoy rebellion, produced by an English failure to understand the deeply religious nature of India's Muslims and Hindus. This novel represents what was part of a continuing interest in India. However, Collins was evidently changeable somewhat in his view of India. In A Sermon for Sepoys, another of his writings, Collins chose to portray India in quite another light when addressing the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. In this, he demonstrates the volatile quality of this valuable "property" and also is partly responsible for providing English writers with the idea of the "murderous Indian."

Collins's mythical Moonstone stands for an India that is not the world's most populous democracy, as we know it today, but the India of the Raj. To Collins's readers, whether the common reader of the serial instalments in All the Year Round from 4 January to 8 August, or the more privileged reader of the triple-decker (16 July, 1868), mention of India would have instantly conjured up the terrific events of the series of mid 19th century mutinies; the Cawnpore garrison massacre, the horrors of the well at Bibighar, and the ensuing siege of Lucknow. Could Collins’ readers possibly identify themselves with the novel's faithful Brahmins? The reasons that led to these rebellions would be overlooked from the first and eventually absorbed into the myth of blood-thirsty, raving rebels so well captured and disseminated by Collins and his contemporaries in many of their writings.

The British Raj vanished as a direct result of the altruism and idealism of Mahatma Ghandi, who saw, as no other leader of his age had done, the necessity for interracial conciliation and transcendent faith if India were to arise from bloody, mutually destructive, strife and take her rightful place in the society of nations. Today, Collins's The Moonstone may be viewed not as a response to a national insurgency and/or European determination to keep the native in his place, but rather as a love story between two people who only come to see each other for what they are after misjudgements, misunderstandings, accidental and intended deceptions, and considerable self-sacrifice.

Themes, Motifs, and Symbols

Themes

Subjective Experience versus Objective Knowledge

The competition between these two forces—subjective experience and objective knowledge—characterize the conflict experienced by the two main characters of The Moonstone, Rachel Verinder and Franklin Blake. If we take the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity to mean something like feeling versus fact, we can begin to see Rachel Verinder's dilemma as the conflict between the evidence of her senses that Franklin Blake stole her diamond and her overwhelming love for Franklin. Franklin's dilemma is similar—he must reconcile the objective evidence that he stole Rachel's diamond with his subjective impression that he would not have done any such thing. These two dilemmas are paradoxically gestured to the concern, stemming supposedly from his European education, that Franklin has with the "Subjective- Objective" and "Objective-Subjective" viewpoints throughout the novel.

If we take the subjective/objective dichotomy to refer also to the interaction between character (subjective) and circumstance (objective), Collins himself explicitly stated his interest in this interaction in the original preface to The Moonstone. Here Collins proclaims his "attempt made, here, to trace the influence of character on circumstances. The conduct pursued, under a sudden emergency, by a young girl, supplies the foundation on which I have built this book." Thus we see that objectivity and subjectivity do not have to be in competition—the novel is also interested in the effect of each upon the other, as when Rachel's subjectivity—specifically her characteristic unwillingness to tell on another—enables the plot of The Moonstone by continuing to hide the thief's identity. The effect of subjectivity on objective fact is also traced in each of The Moonstone's narratives. Each character reports events and facts surrounding the disappearance of the diamond, yet more often than not, the report of these facts is affected by his or her personal perceptions and opinions.

The Nobility of Self-Sacrifice

The theme of self-sacrifice first arises in relation to the Indians in pursuit of the diamond. The Indians, guardians of the diamond, were born high-caste Brahmins in India. In order to track the diamond under-cover, they have disguised themselves as low-caste Indians and have thus violated their caste and, by extension, sacrificed their place in the next world. It is Murthwaite who points this out to the English, and it becomes a reason to respect the Indians and the urgency of their quest to pursue the diamond. The novel ends with the ceremony that features not only the replacement of the diamond in India, but the dramatization of the sacrifices made by the three Indians and the further cleansing and penance they must continue to undergo. The willingness of members of the Hindu society to sacrifice themselves for the spiritual good of the whole is presented as a source of strength for India.

The English counterpart to this noble self-sacrifice is Rachel Verinder, who sacrifices her public reputation by keeping the secret of Franklin's guilt from everyone. While the Indians have made their sacrifice in the name of spirituality, Rachel's sacrifice is made in the name of love. It is this conventional love of Rachel for Franklin (the basis of the marriage plot of the novel) that is presented as English society's competing source of strength.

The Disparity Between Different Systems of Value

When the diamond is given to Rachel Verinder by Franklin and she shows it to the company assembled in Chapter IX of the First Period, everyone is entranced by its strange beauty bbut Godfrey Ablewhite, who says to Betteredge, "Carbon, Betteredge! mere carbon, my good friend, after all!" Not coincidentally, it is Godfrey who sees the diamond, and later uses it, for its cash-value as a commodity, while others view the diamond for its non-market value.

The Moonstone's entrance into various systems of value traces its trajectory through the novel. When the diamond is part of the Indian Moon god idol, it is spiritually valuable. When stolen by John Herncastle and willed to his niece, the diamond becomes valuable as an exotic heirloom—in other words, it is so valuable that it is "priceless." It takes Godfrey Ablewhite and Septimus Luker to place the diamond into the market economy and put cash value on it.

These different spheres of value—spiritual, familial, and commercial—are also used to define the various communities of the novel—the East; upper-class, provincial English; and modern, urban English, respectively.

The Unwelcome Return of the Past

The preface to The Moonstone alerts us to the fact that the diamond carries with it a menacing history that can arise and infect the present with bad luck. Thus contemporary English society must pay for crimes committed (by extension) by imperial England. This threatened return of an evil, or shameful past (in this case, John Herncastle's violent conduct), is a theme that defines many of the characters of the novel, as well as the diamond itself. Ezra Jennings, in Chapter IX of the Third Narrative in the Second Period, says, "Perhaps we should all be happier, if we could but completely forget!" He is speaking explicitly of Mr. Candy, but he is also referring to his own shameful past, which arises again and again in the present via painful gossip. Rosanna Spearman, too, finds she cannot escape her painful past, when she is immediately suspected of having stolen the Moonstone because of her history of being a thief.

The Moonstone seems to advocate a straightforward interaction with one's past as the surest way of escaping the haunting of that past. Thus, once Franklin Blake lives through his past again in the recreation of the night of the diamond theft, he becomes completely free from the shameful implications of that past.

Motifs

Editorial Presence

Franklin's presence as editor is apparent at selective moments in The Moonstone. It arises mainly in the form of footnotes but also in narrators' accounts of instructional conversations with him. The implications of his presence are twofold. First, it serves to remind us that the driving force of all of these narratives is to clear Franklin Blake's name of suspicion. Second, it encourages us to read the text of The Moonstone non-linearly. Franklin will often step in to refer us back to another section of another narrative for a different (or corroborating) viewpoint on the same facts. Thus the experience of reading The Moonstone becomes a comparative, revisionist one.

Outcast Counterparts

Rosanna Spearman and Ezra Jennings exist as their own characters, yet also as the tragic, outcast counterparts to the respectable Victorian hero and heroine, Franklin and Rachel. Rosanna is aligned with Rachel in her love for Franklin, as well as her quick intelligence. Jennings is aligned with Franklin through his non-English background, his imaginative capacity, and his tragic history of being falsely accused of a crime he didn't commit. Rosanna and Jennings are both dead by the end of the novel. There is a sense that they exist to show the possibility of what could have happened to Rachel and Franklin if things had gone differently (for example, if Franklin had not acquitted himself of the theft of the diamond and had to wander around England away from his love and running from damaging rumors). Thus the deaths of Rosanna and Jennings are necessary to the harmonious closure of the novel in which Rachel and Franklin triumph against adversity.

Skepticism and Mysticism

Franklin Blake, when explaining the superstitious history to a skeptical Betteredge in Chapter VI of the First Period, supports his own belief in the superstition by saying, "But then I am an imaginative man; and the butcher, the baker, and the tax-gatherer, are not the only credible realities in existence to my mind." When this statement was made, Franklin and Betteredge would have both had in mind Franklin's often-referred-to foreign education. A dichotomy is set up in The Moonstone between characters with non-English backgrounds and the accompanying imaginativeness or mysticism that comes from this (like Ezra Jennings, Franklin Blake, or the Indians), and the solidly English characters who seek logical explanations for supernatural phenomena and are, consequently, adverse to imaginative explanations (such as Betteredge and Mr. Bruff).

Addiction

Several critics have remarked that the novelty of The Moonstone lies in the fact that it is a story that hinges on opium and features an opium addict, as told by another opium addict—Wilkie Collins himself. Indeed, addiction of various sorts crop up in The Moonstone. Ezra Jennings and John Herncastle are both opium addicts. Franklin Blake and Gabriel Betteredge are tobacco addicts. We might even say that Miss Clack is addicted to the distribution of her Christian pamphlets, as this action is presented as something that Miss Clack requires to make her feel normal and satisfied.

Symbols

The Moonstone

The Moonstone stands, in the first place, as a symbol for the exoticness, impenetrability, and dark mysticism of the East—Gabriel remarks that the stone "seemed unfathomable as the heavens themselves" and "shone awfully out of the depths of its own brightness, with a moony gleam, in the dark." In the second place, the Moonstone is associated with femininity and even feminine virginity, through its associations with the moon and with pricelessness. The theft of the Moonstone from Rachel Verinder's bedroom by her nearly betrothed, Franklin Blake, can be read as a metaphor for her deflowering.

Robinson Crusoe

Gabriel Betteredge uses Robinson Crusoe as a prophetic text for his life, and often reads it while smoking tobacco. Robinson Crusoe is one of the first novels about early British imperialism—Crusoe leaves England and conquers a foreign, exotic territory. Taken together, the novel and the tobacco—a crop of English colonies—stand as symbols of the imperial domination that England unthinkingly enjoyed over its own colonies.

Godfrey's Disguise

Godfrey's facial disguise—making him look dark-complected with a black beard and hair—stands as a fairly obvious symbol for his own duplicity in leading a double life. The dark-complexion that Godfrey has chosen also serves as a symbol for the willingness of some of the English characters to believe that the Indians—and not one of their own countrymen—were responsible for the theft of the diamond.

Ji Min Lee wow

When Wells first sat down to write The War of the Worlds in the late nineteenth century, he certainly could not have imagined that it would remain popular for over a century thereafter. With the advancement of science and the advent of NASA, we have long discovered the Mars is not and was likely never a home for intelligent life. And yet, published find that millions today are still captivated by H.G. Wells' shockingly realistic science fiction novel. We can only explain out fascination by analyzing the truths which lie resplendent in the novel, infection curious and eager minds, young and old. These truths spoke to the men and women of the bygone horse-and-buggy era but, like all truths, refused to die with the passing of humanity's epochs. Even now, in the year 2010, Wells appeals to a vast audience and doesn't fail to address a few surprisingly modern issues. In addition to the thrill of an alien invasion, The War of the Worlds contains penetrating comments on science and methods of warfare, all of which can be applied to the modern era.

Wells' descriptions of the scientifically advanced Martians apply particularly well to science today. The weapon and tools used by the Martians are significantly more effective then those used by the humans, as evidenced by how the Heat-Rays and Black Smoke obliterate the Army in a matter of hours. Here Wells quite possibly might have been warning posterity of the dangers of creating weapons of mass destruction; in the Epilogue, he writes, "[T]he generator of the Heat-Rays remains a puzzle. The terrible disasters at the Ealing and South Kensington laboratories have disinclined analysts for further investigations…" (201). He then makes no further comment on that aspect of the invasion, preferring instead to spend a large majority of the rest of the novel on the possibility of another Martian attack. Given this lack of prolific or laudatory observation and the destruction caused by these weapons throughout the novel, Wells Is clearly not a proponent of the Heat-Ray. Unfortunately, modern society has already created a weapon that far surpasses the Martians' in its destructive power: the atomic bomb. We can infer that Wells, had he been alive, would have adamantly opposed the creation of the bomb, which is still a real threat in the Middle East and North Korea today. While we may not be able to turn back the clock and prevent the creation of the atom bomb, modern scientists and politicians would do well to heed Wells' disapproval of its use.

Beyond weaponry, the anatomy of the Martians themselves warns of a possible evolutionary tendency, natural or man-made, towards, "intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic" (3). Regarding the Martians'' nonexistent body and large brain, Wells says that "[w]ithout the body the brain would, of course, become a more selfish intelligence, without any of the emotional substratum of the human being" (143). His statement suggests that emotion is an important factor in distinguishing the humans from the Martians, and tat any meddling with the brain may alter the more sympathetic side of humanity insofar as driving people to kill indiscriminately, as the Martians do. While humans cannot do much to deter a natural evolution to this state of being, people can and do work to prod the genome in a decidedly unnatural direction. Wells displays in his statement a prophetic disapproval of the genetic manufacturing of the brain, an aspect of science which continues to interest the modern scientific community. His surprisingly prescient remarks on both alien and human intelligence compel us to acknowledge the possible dangers of such tinkering.

Wells often integrates descriptions of the Martians' scientific advancements with emphasis on the methods of warfare used by the aliens throughout the novel. The barbaric nature of the Martian invasion and the cool inhumanity of the aliens' habits, especially in devouring humans, show up frequently. The crimes committed by the Martians against the humans seem, of course, inconceivably barbaric form the human point of view, and this gap between the human and alien demonstrates the classic "us" and "them mentality rampant in modern wars such as the Vietnam War and the War on Terror. The apparent disparity in aesthetics between the Martians and the humans only serves to underscore this chasm. Tough the Martians are the persecutors in the novel, Wells seems to warn people of all times against the brutality that so often emerges from the dehumanization of an enemy during war. European nations in particular would do well to "promote the conception of the commonwealth of mankind," as British imperialism and United States atrocities during the Vietnam War have not yet been forgotten by the rest of the world (203). Modern readers will likely recognize the importance of Wells' call for temperance in warfare today.

Despite his warning for and misgivings toward humanity, Wells' overall attitude regarding the survival of civilization is hopeful; his descriptions of a future of interplanetary travel and colonization attest to his confidence in intelligent civilization's ongoing success. Wells, however, cannot be called a blind optimist, for his narrator confesses that "the stress and danger of the [Martian Invasion] have left an abiding sense of doubt and insecurity in [his] mind" (204). Wells, it seems, understood that it was still to early to claim a prognosis for the fate of humanity. In many ways, this is an appropriate stance to take. As all students of Zen know, the true master lives in the present, learns from the mistakes of the past and, occasionally, dreams of the future. Wells, it is safe to say, not only does all three but also influences his readers to do the same.