ENGL 453: The Victorian Novel

Dr. Alisha Walters
Sutherland 227
Tues. & Thurs. 10:30-11:50 a.m.
March 26, 2019
ENGL 453: March 14 Class Overview

- Quiz
- Culture report
- The Moonstone & Wilkie Collins
- Empire and Narrative
- Midterm Return
Clear your desks for Quiz #4

You have 9 minutes
Culture Report

Victorian Travel & Exploration
Collins was the child of a painter, and of mixed Irish, Scottish, and English decent.

The Moonstone published in All the Year Round.

The novel is an early, pioneering work of detective fiction.
The India Mutiny, or the Sepoy Revolt
This percussion-lock rifle was produced in the British Ordnance Factory at Enfield near London. It came into use in the British army in 1853. Shortly afterwards it was sent out for trials for the Company army in India. The ‘rifling’ on the inside of the barrel made the shot more accurate and gave the weapon a greater range. It was an enormous improvement on the Brown Bess smooth-bore flintlock musket which had been the standard weapon of all British forces since the early eighteenth century.

A greased cartridge

How it was loaded

1. The soldier tears open the paper case.
2. He pours the powder.
3. He loads the gun.
George William Gordon
• Polyphonic: “Literally, many-voiced”
• “Thus a polyphonic novel is one in which several different voices or points of view interact on more or less equal terms.”

(--Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms)
The Novel as a Polyphonic Genre

J. Paul Hunter: Characteristics of the novel

1. Contemporaneity.
2. Credibility and probability.
3. Familiarity.
4. Rejection of traditional plots.
5. Tradition-free language.
6. Individualism and subjectivity.
7. Empathy and vicariousness.
8. Coherence and unity of design.
9. Inclusivity, digressiveness, and fragmentation.
10. **Self-consciousness about innovation and novelty.**
Rebellion in the 1860s
Next Class

– I’ll be covering all aspects of *The Moonstone*.
– Try to read all of it, especially if you don’t want spoilers.
– **Make sure you’ve encountered Ezra Jennings**
ENGL 453: March 28 Class Overview

• Review
• Race & Englishness in *The Moonstone*
“In the first part of ROBINSON CRUSOE, at page one hundred and twenty-nine, you will find it thus written:

“Now I saw, though too late, the Folly of beginning a Work before we count the Cost, and before we judge rightly of our own Strength to go through with it.”

Only yesterday, I opened my ROBINSON CRUSOE at that place. Only this morning (May twenty-first, Eighteen hundred and fifty), came my lady’s nephew, Mr. Franklin Blake, and held a short conversation with me, as follows…”

--Page 7
“If he was right, here was our quiet English house suddenly invaded by a devilish Indian Diamond – bringing after it a conspiracy of living rogues, set loose on us by the vengeance of a dead man. ... Who ever heard the like of it – in the nineteenth century, mind; in an age of progress, and in a country which rejoices in the blessings of the British constitution?”

--p. 33
“The 3rd of August, I found the grapes I had hung up perfectly dried, and, indeed, were excellent good raisins of the sun; so I began to take them down from the trees, and it was very happy that I did so, for the rains which followed would have spoiled them, and I had lost the best part of my winter food.”

“In this place also I had my grapes growing, which I principally depended on for my winter store of raisins, and which I never failed to preserve very carefully, as the best and most agreeable dainty of my whole diet; and indeed they were not only agreeable, but medicinal, wholesome, nourishing, and refreshing to the last degree.”

– Defoe, from Robinson Crusoe
Things to Have on a Desert Island:

1. A Bible
2. Raisins
3. The Institution of Slavery
Focused Freewrite

• Take into account the narrative of the first 14 chapters of The Moonstone; this includes Betteredge’s anxiety about the Indians and the diamond and his passion with *Robinson Crusoe*, etc. It also includes and also The Prologue and the appearance of Cuff.

• Then we have the narrative of sergeant Cuff, the start of his detection.

• *Think of the many narrators of The Moonstone and how the text is narrated. How do you think the novel’s narrative structure is priming us to read imperial contexts?*

• Is the importance of imperial narratives undermined with Betteredge’s almost comic obsession with *Robinson Crusoe*? Or is the opposite true? [Go to scenes in the novel and close read one]

• *Can we get outside of a matrix of Imperialist thought?*

• Answer any or all of these questions. Just dive in!
“I am not superstitious; I have read a heap of books in my time; I am a scholar in my own way. Though turned seventy, I possess an active memory, and legs to correspond. You are not to take it, if you please, as the saying of an ignorant man, when I express my opinion that such a book as ROBINSON CRUSOE never was written, and never will be written again. I have tried that book for years—generally in combination with a pipe of tobacco—and I have found it my friend in need in all the necessities of this mortal life. When my spirits are bad—ROBINSON CRUSOE. When I want advice—ROBINSON CRUSOE. In past times when my wife plagued me; in present times when I have had a drop too much—ROBINSON CRUSOE. I have worn out six stout ROBINSON CRUSOES with hard work in my service. On my lady’s last birthday she gave me a seventh. I took a drop too much on the strength of it; and ROBINSON CRUSOE put me right again. Price four shillings and sixpence, bound in blue, with a picture into the bargain”

--p 9
On Robinson Crusoe:

- John Ballantyne: 1834: “Perhaps there exists no work, either of instruction or entertainment, in the English language, which has been more generally read, and more universally admired, than the *Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* ... There scarce exists a work so popular ... Neither has the admiration of the work been confined to England ... It is computed that within forty years of the appearance of the original work, no less than forty-one different Robinsons appeared, besides fifteen other imitations, in which other titles were used”

- William Hazlitt: 1840: “The first, and by far the most celebrated, of those works of imagination, which have conferred immortality upon the name of De Foe ... Next to the Holy Scriptures, it may safely be asserted that this delightful romance has ever since it was written excited the first and most powerful influence upon the juvenile mind of England”

- John Stuart Mill: 1873: “Of children’s books, any more than of playthings, I had scarcely any, except an occasional gift from a relation or acquaintance: among those I had, *Robinson Crusoe* was preeminent, and continued to delight me through all my boyhood”
LIFE
AND
STRANGE SURPRIZING
ADVENTURES
OF
ROBINSON CRUSOE,
OF YORK, MARINER:
Who lived Eight and Twenty Years,
all alone in an uninhabited Island on the
Coast of America, near the Mouth of
the Great River of Ogonorq;
Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, where-
re all the Men perished but himself.
WITH
An Account how he was at last as strangely deli-
ver'd by PIRATES.
Written by Himself.

LONDON.
Richard Westmacott, "A Celtic Group: such as may be seen at any time in Marlybone, London." From Robert Knox, *The Races of Men*, 1850.

"The Iberians are believed to have been originally an African Race..."
“After the mid-century, and especially from the 1860s onwards, English spokesmen adopted a more stridently racist stance, as they placed foreigners into racial categories, and judged them inferior by reason of their inherited characteristics. .... In this new racialist vision, the ethnocentric hope of civilizing the world in conformity to British standards seemed to be a naïve fantasy of an aged, sentimental, and now senile generation.”

--Douglas Lorimer, *Color, Class, and the Victorians*
Morant Bay: An Overview

- During the mid-1860s, drought and trade interruptions created economic turmoil within the island of Jamaica.
- On October 11, 1865, hundreds of native Jamaicans marched into the town of Morant Bay, in the sugar-growing parish of St. Thomas, to demonstrate against injustices.
- Several members of the crowd, on both sides, were killed.
- In the ensuing days, The governor of Jamaica, Edward John Eyre, declared martial law.
- The British Army was called in and over 500 (mainly black and coloured) people were murdered along with hundreds wounded.
- These events, while shocking, did not seem to grab the English public’s initial interest as much as Eyre’s dealings with George William Gordon, a well-known mulatto landowner, who was a vociferous critic of Eyre’s policies.
- Eyre, who felt that Gordon had helped to instigate a riot, ordered Gordon from Kingston to Morant Bay, where martial law was in effect. There, he was tried by court-martial, convicted, and executed on scant legal evidence.
Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865

George W. Gordon

Paul Bogle
On George W. Gordon:

Gordon was “a singular compound of opposites. A great pretender in religion.... One who professed to be a preacher of the Gospel of peace and love, and yet a plotter of rebellion, anarchy and bloodshed, a pietest in pretension, and a traitor in heart. Such a mixture of strange contradictions leads to a suspicion that he could not have been a man of sound mind....for if otherwise he must have been one of the most desperately wicked men, as well as the vilest hypocrite that ever disgraced the pages of history.”

--From a letter, quoted in Papers Laid Before the Royal Commission of Inquiry by Governor Eyre (London: 1866) 245.

He was “bold as a lion in the cause of truth, but [full of] kindness of disposition.”

--Supporter of Gordon
The India Mutiny, or the Sepoy Revolt (1857)
Rebellion in the 1860s
"In that case," says Mr. Franklin, "suppose I put you up to my point of view, before we go any further. I see three very serious questions involved in the Colonel's birthday-gift to my cousin Rachel. Follow me carefully, Betteredge; and count me off on your fingers, if it will help you," says Mr. Franklin, with a certain pleasure in showing how clear-headed he could be, which reminded me wonderfully of old times when he was a boy. "Question the first: Was the Colonel's Diamond the object of a conspiracy in India? Question the second: Has the conspiracy followed the Colonel's Diamond to England? Question the third: Did the Colonel know the conspiracy followed the Diamond; and has he purposely left a legacy of trouble and danger to his sister, through the innocent medium of his sister's child? THAT is what I am driving at, Betteredge. Don't let me frighten you."

It was all very well to say that, but he HAD frightened me.

--Chapter 5, The Moonstone
It was impossible to dispute Betteredge's assertion that the appearance of Ezra Jennings, speaking from a popular point of view, was against him. His gipsy-complexion, his fleshless cheeks, his gaunt facial bones, his dreamy eyes, his extraordinary parti-coloured hair, the puzzling contradiction between his face and figure which made him look old and young both together—were all more or less calculated to produce an unfavourable impression of him on a stranger's mind. And yet—feeling this as I certainly did—it is not to be denied that Ezra Jennings made some inscrutable appeal to my sympathies, which I found it impossible to resist.

--Page 364
“You have not always been in England?” Blake asks of the doctor’s assistant, to which the latter replies: “No. I was born, and partly brought up, in one of our colonies. My father was an Englishman, but my mother—we are straying away from our subject”

--The Moonstone, p366.

“I felt satisfied that the story which I had read in his face was, in two particulars at least, the story that it really told. He had suffered as few men suffer; and there was the mixture of some foreign race in his English blood.”

--The Moonstone, p367.
“He laid down flat on his back on the sand, and asked what was to be done next. He had been so clever, and clear-headed (before he began to talk the foreign gibberish), and had so completely taken the lead in the business up to the present time, that I was quite unprepared for such a sudden change as he now exhibited in this helpless leaning upon me. It was not till later that I learned—by assistance of Miss Rachel, who was the first to make the discovery—that these puzzling shifts and transformations in Mr. Franklin were due to the effect on him of his foreign training. At the age when we are all of us most apt to take our colouring, in the form of a reflection from the colouring of other people, he had been sent abroad, and had been passed on from one nation to another, before there was time for any one colouring more than another to settle itself on him firmly. As a consequence of this, he had come back with so many different sides to his character, all more or less jarring with each other, that he seemed to pass his life in a state of perpetual contradiction with himself. He could be a busy man, and a lazy man; cloudy in the head, and clear in the head; a model of determination, and a spectacle of helplessness, all together. He had his French side, and his German side, and his Italian side—the original English foundation showing through, every now and then, as much as to say, "Here I am, sorely transmogrified, as you see, but there's something of me left at the bottom of him still." ”

--The Moonstone, pp. 42-43.
“I sat idly drawing likenesses from memory of Mr. Candy's remarkable-looking assistant, on the sheet of paper which I had vowed to dedicate to Betteredge—until it suddenly occurred to me that here was the irrepressible Ezra Jennings getting in my way again! I threw a dozen portraits, at least, of the man with the piebald hair (the hair in every case, remarkably like), into the waste-paper basket.”

---The Moonstone, pp. 356.

“What is the secret of the attraction that there is for me and this man?....[I]s there something in him which answers to the yearning that I have had for a little human sympathy...? Mr Blake has given me a new interest in life”

---The Moonstone, pp. 393.
“To such of these as spoke to me, I gave myself out as a Hindoo-Boodhist, from a distant province, bound on a pilgrimage. It is needless to say that my dress was of the sort to carry out this description.... I know the language as well as I know my own, and that I am lean enough and brown enough to make it no easy matter to detect my European origin—and you will understand that I passed muster with the people readily: not as one of themselves, but as a stranger from a distant part of their own country.”

--*The Moonstone*, p464
“One of the spectators, near whom I was standing, saw me start. In a whisper, he explained to me the apparition of the three figures on the platform of rock.

They were Brahmins (he said) who had forfeited their caste in the service of the god. The god had commanded that their purification should be the purification by pilgrimage. On that night, the three men were to part. In three separate directions, they were to set forth as pilgrims to the shrines of India. Never more were they to look on each other's faces. Never more were they to rest on their wanderings, from the day which witnessed their separation, to the day which witnessed their death.”

--The Moonstone, p465
Next Classes

• Final class on *The Moonstone*. Finish it.
• Come up with ONE sentence in the novel that describes the diamond for next class.
• If you have finished *The Moonstone*, good for you