

(De)mystification of History and Myth in the Victorian
Response to the Indian Rebellion

with a particular reference to Sherlock Holmes' Narratives

History and myth represent frequent sources of inspiration for numerous artists, being the central topic of enormous number of universal masterpieces. History is a discipline that should be recorded objectively. However, literary manipulation of history might undergo (de)mystification of some facts in accordance with the artist's ideological stance. Hence, the process of objective *recording* of history is transposed into subjective *making*, namely of a myth that will be propagated as if it were a reality. A case study is the Victorian response to the Indian Rebellion of 1857, through fictional and non-fictional intellectual products, with a particular emphasis on the Sherlock Holmes's narratives-- *The Sign of Four* (1890) and "The Adventure of the Crooked Man" (1893)-- by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859 - 1930).

The purpose of this paper is to explore the metamorphosis of the historical event of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 into a popular myth, propagating for and justifying the British imperial project in the mid to late Victorian cultural products. The study is

tackled from a postcolonial perspective. The methodology of the study is based on comparison and analysis.

History versus Myth: Definitions

History, according to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, is "a written or spoken account of past events"(643), related to a particular people, place or era. However, history is recorded by human authors who interpret and document these occurrences according to their own perspectives, which definitely cannot be separated from their ideological backgrounds. Those historians may mystify or demystify some historical facts to direct the reader's interpretation to a particular route. Recently, historical recording is no longer exclusive on historians; journalists, artists, politicians as well as common people can relate and document historical incidents through various social media. Their accounts are not authorized; they may transcend reality, constituting a myth, motivated by a patriotic drive, for instance.

Unlike history, Baldick notes, myth is a kind of story "through which a given culture ratifies its social customs [...] usually in a supernatural or boldly imaginative terms"(143). Further, Baldick distinguishes between the 'rationalist' and 'romantic' versions of myth, pointing out that while the former is "a false or unreliable story"(143), the latter is "a superior

intuitive mode of cosmic understanding" (143). Nevertheless, a myth is not utterly a fictional story. Rather, it can be weaved around a historical event, fusing it with such false details to convey the simulacrum of reality for serving a particular purpose. Thus, the borders between reality and fiction are blurred. The Victorian intellectual adaptations of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 illustrate how a myth can be created of a real historical event.

The Indian Rebellion of 1857: A Historical Overview

The Indian Rebellion, Bandyopadhyay points out, is also referred to as India's First War of Independence, the Indian Mutiny, the Great Rebellion, the Sepoy Rebellion, the Sepoy Mutiny, the Revolt of 1857 and the Uprising of 1857 (523). Towheed states that in that Mutiny, Indian soldiers and civilians rebelled against the rule of the British East India Company. This rebellion lasted till (8 July 1858), it was the first serious challenge of the British rule in India (429). According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the Mutiny was 'widespread' but 'unsuccessful'. It extended to Delhi, Agra, Kanpur and Lucknow (n.p.). The Rebellion took place among both military men and civilians, as a result of a number of accumulated factors, mainly social, financial and religious.

On the military level, there was a prevalent reluctant attitude among sepoys following the annexation of Awadh by the East India Company in 1856, as many of them lost their former positions as landed gentry, and expected increased land revenue payments (Brown 88). Another reason of anger was the issuance of the General Service Enlistment Act of 25 July 1856, according to which the sepoys of the Bengal Army had been exempted from overseas service to be enlisted only for service in territories to which they could march. Thus, "serving high-caste sepoys were fearful that it would be eventually extended to them, as well as preventing sons following fathers into an army with a strong tradition of family service" (Mason 261). Further, Fremont-Barnes maintains that there was an increasing number of "European officers in battalions" (25). Everywhere, the Indian aristocracy was being replaced by British officials.

On the financial level, the resentment of sepoys was for their service in less familiar regions such as Burma as a result of the successive victories and annexations of the Company, together with losing their "foreign service remuneration" that they used to receive (Bandyopadhyay 171). Moreover; the sepoys dismayed the general service act which "denied retired sepoys a pension" (Fremont-Barnes 25). Also, Fremont-Barnes illustrates that the Bengal Army was paid less than the two other

armies, namely, the Madras and the Bombay (25). Unlike the British officers, promotion was very slow for the Indian Sepoys.

On the religious level, the Indian sepoy suspected that the Company intended mass conversion of Indians to Christianity due to the heavy presence of missionaries (Metcalf 48). However, the spark of the rebellion was caused by the ammunition for the new pattern 1853 Enfield Rifles which used pre-greased paper cartridges. To load the rifles, "sepoys had to bite the cartridge open to release the powder" (Towhead 135). The grease used on these cartridges was rumoured to include tallow derived from beef-- which would be offensive to Hindus-- or pork, which would be offensive to Muslims (Headrick 88). Edwardes elaborates that there were rumours that the British aimed to force the native soldiers to violate their sacred code, consequently to destroy the religions of the Indian people (23), embodied in the caste system.

In an attempt to quell the Indian soldiers, David points out, Colonel Richard Birch-- the Military Secretary-- gave orders that all cartridges were to be free from grease and that the sepoy could grease them themselves using whatever mixture "they may prefer" (Indian Mutiny 54). In addition to this, the new cartridge was to be torn with the hands, not bitten, a matter which

ascertained the sepoys that the previous rumors were true. David comments that additional rumors circulated that the paper in the new cartridges which was glazed and stiffer than the previously used paper was impregnated with grease (Victoria's Wars 293), a matter which increased suspicion among the Indian soldiers.

On the social level, three groups of civilians were at unease: the feudal nobility, rural landlords and the peasants. According to Bandyopadhyay, many of the nobility lost titles and domains under the doctrine of Lapse, which refused to recognize the adopted children of princes as legal heirs. After the death or abdication of the ruler, his lands were annexed. They felt that the Company interfered with their system of tradition (172). The rural landlords, on the other hand, had lost half their landed estates to peasants as a result of the land reforms. Paradoxically and out of feudal loyalty, the peasants participated with those rural landlords in the Rebellion to restore the lands (Metcalf and Metcalf 102).

Humanitarians, such as Lord Dalhousie, the governor-general of India (1848-56), according to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, tried to improve the conditions of women and proposed a bill to "remove all legal obstacles to the remarriage of Hindu widows". Further, the introduction of "Western methods of education was a direct challenge to orthodoxy, both Hindu and

Muslim". All these factors contributed to raise the suspicions that the British intended to eradicate the Indian traditions.

The Rebellion was initiated on 29 March 1857 when Mangal Pandey, a sepoy, declared his rebellion against his commanders and attempted to shoot them, but hurt none in the military garrison in Barrackpore (David, *Indian Mutiny* 69). On 6 April, he was court-martialled, and on 8 April he was hanged. Ishwari Prasad, who refused earlier to arrest Pandey, was sentenced to death and executed on 22 April (Sen 50). After this incident, that regiment was dissolved and stripped of its uniforms for harbouring ill-feelings towards the commanders. Sepoys in other regiments demonstrated as they thought these punishments were unjust and exaggerated.

At Meerut, Mason maintains, on 24 April, Lieutenant Colonel George Carmichael-Smyth ordered 90 of his men to parade and perform firing drills. Most of them refused their cartridges, so they were court martialled and sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour (278). According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "this punishment incensed their comrades, who rose on May 10". The next day, the Indian troops led by the 3rd Cavalry broke into revolt and European officers who tried to suppress the rebels were killed by their men. The

rebels assaulted the quarters of the European officers and civilians and they killed some together with Indians who tried to hide them (David, Indian Mutiny 69). Singh states that within the city of Meerut, the gate of jail was opened (339), and the sepoy freed their commorades from the jail, along with other prisoners (Hibbert 80).

Kaye and Malleson state that "some sepoy escorted trusted British officers and women and children to safety" (49). In Delhi, on 11 May, the rebels destroyed the house of chief Magistrate Theophilus Metcalfe (Singh 339). Sen points out that "European officials and dependents, Indian Christians and shopkeepers within the city were killed, some by sepoy and others by crowds of roiters" (71). In the afternoon, the nine British Ordnance officers had opened fire on the sepoy, including the men of their own guard. Then they blew up the arsenal, so that many people in the nearby streets were killed (Hibbert 98).

The next day, Bahadur Shah , the King was alarmed by the events, accepted the sepoy's allegiance and gave his agreement on the rebellion. On 16 May, up to 50 Europeans were killed by the King's servants (Hibbert 93). The spread of the news of the revolt at Delhi provoked other sepoy to rebel in various districts. Also, many Company administrators hastened to move with their

families. This encouraged more rebels in the regions they left (Hibbert 152). Some officers disarmed their sepoys, an action that led to local revolts as in Benares and Allahabad (Edwades 52).

In Thana Bhawan, the Sunnis declared Haji Imdadullah their Ameer. In May 1857 the battle of Shamli took place between the forces of Sunnis and the British. The Sikhs and Pathans of the Punjab and North-west Frontier Province supported the British to recapture Delhi. David notes while the Bombay army had three mutinies, the Madras army had no mutinies. Most of the soldiers in the Bengal army remained loyal to it. Most of southern India remained passive as many of its parts were ruled by the Mysore royalty and thus not directly under British rule (19). When the British forces began to counterattack, the rebels lacked a centralized command and control (Singh 341). Yet, there were some decentralized rebels' leaders such as Nana Sahib and Tatyá Tope in Cawnpore and Jang Bahadur in Lucknow.

In Agra, Towheed points out, about 2000 British took refuge inside Agra Fort from July to December 1857. In Cawnpore, around 120 women and children were brutally murdered and their bodies were thrown into a well in what is

called Bibighar Massacre (430). In Lucknow, the British were besieged from 30 July to 27 November 1857.

In Delhi, the British were slow in their striking back because of their involvement in the Crimean war against Russia, and their *en route* for China. The Company established a base on the Delhi ridge to the north of the city and started the Delhi Siege from 1 July to 21 September. The rebellion in the Punjab was suppressed, allowing the Punjab Movable Column of British, Sikh and Pakhtun soldiers to enhance the besiegers on the ridge on 14 August. On 30 August, the rebels offered terms that were refused (Fremont-Barnes 40). There were street fights. The besieging force proceeded to loot the city and a large number of the citizens were killed.

Shortly after the fall of Delhi, the attackers went to support the British forces in Agra, and then in Cawnpore in a continuous line from east to west India. Chakravarty points out that the British called for the constitution of an "Army of Retribution"(32). The British authorities took measures to secure themselves against any copycat uprisings (Turnbull 100). By July 1858, the Mutiny was crushed; there were mass executions of any suspected rebels. The British and their Indian allies looted the wealth of the rebel cities (Towheed 430).

The direct political consequence of the Mutiny was the transformation of the British rule from being indirect through the East India Company to a direct rule by the British Crown. It is argued that:

this process was formalized by the proclamation of Queen Victoria as empress of India in 1877. Although the Mutiny was a political event, yet it had a long lasting cultural impact which was demonstrated in the large numbers of novels, histories, memories, paintings, poetry that tackled it, that is more than any other event in the British career. In India, the rebellion was the single favorite subject for metropolitan and Anglo-Indian novelists. (Chakravorty 3)

Other immediate results, illustrated in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, were the reorganization of the Indian Army, the sense of the urgent need of communication with Indians as "it was widely felt that a lack of communication with Indian opinion had helped to precipitate the crisis". On the Indian side, the rebellion meant a popular "protest against the incoming alien influences". Hence the traditional structure of Indian society "began to break down and was eventually superseded by a westernized class

system, from which emerged a strong middle class with a heightened sense of Indian nationalism" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

Bratlinger argues that "no episode in [the] British imperial history raised public excitement to a higher pitch than the Indian Mutiny of 1857" (199). Close reading of the Mutiny news reveals that Victorian "literary reinterpretations [have] turned historical fact into popular mythology" (Towheed 431). Hibbert comments that the Mutiny should not be considered as a "geopolitical event, but as a literary and in effect, a fictive one as a story recounted over and over, in one stylistic register after another, in various journalistic media" (80). He adds that the British accounts of the Mutiny have reached a "hyperbolic register"(85) in regard to what the British termed "the Red Year" of 1857.

"Newspapers and magazines as varied as the *Illustrated London News*, *Punch* and *Household Words* carried increasingly hysterical (sometimes wildly inaccurate) reports from India, and with it, intemperate calls for revenge"(Towheed 431). In their accounts of the events, British writers have distorted the native Indians as well as history. For instance, they have propagated the idea that all British women in India were exposed to rape although many of those who survived the incidents denied this. The British newspapers, Beckman notes, presented various eye

witness accounts of the rape of English women and girls (18). Tuson maintains that women's "fragile female bodies" were violated by the mutiny's accounts of rape (291).

In 2 September 1857, *The Times* published a letter giving detailed account of the death of Captain Skene, the Superintendent of the Jhansi District, his wife and Captain Gordon:

[...]. Gordon had a regular battery of guns, also revolvers; and he and Skene picked off the rebels as fast as they could fire, Mrs Skene loading them. The Peons say they never missed once, and before it was over they killed 37, besides many wounded. ... [At last] Frank Gordon was shot through the forehead and killed at once. Skene then saw it was of no use going on any more, so he kissed his wife, shot her, and then himself [...].

In the Victorian narratives, the Mutiny "becomes a widely used paradigm in English fictions of the time, to embody the perceived treacherous nature of the colonized Indian populace" (Bratlinger 205). Victorian writings about the Mutiny reflected the racist ideology of 'orientalism', which "serves to create and affirm ontological and epistemological distinctions between the orient and the occident" (Said, *Orientalism* 2-3). Racism,

Campbell argues, "invites [an] analysis of the role of the imaginary in the production of knowledge, even strategic knowledge, and more broadly, of discourse" (272)

The study of orientalism is crucial in understanding the Victorian texts. Said claims:

Without examining Orientalism as discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage-- even to produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period (Orientalism 3)

This reveals that the British literary canon is culturally constructed, misrepresenting the native culture of the colonized in order to maintain the popular myth of the superiority of British center.

Said suggests that the British imperial prejudice justifies its culture to accept texts which affirmed its primacy. Said elaborates that the British culture encouraged 'canonical inclusion and exclusion.' (Culture 70). This requires depicting the colonized natives as being marginalized, and distorted in texts accepted by their contemporary British audience. The imperial motif is recurrent as well as central in the British canon. Loomba argues that any culture dictates the

content of the literary canon according to its ideology. Further, texts justifying imperialism and colonialism are "crucial to the formation of colonial discourses precisely because they work imaginatively and upon people as individuals" (74).

Edward Said illustrates that this imperial ideology manipulates some popular tools and commodities to act as propagators for the empire. Said points out that these manipulative devices vary:

from cigarette cards, postcards, sheet music, almanacs, and manuals to music-hall entertainments, toy soldiers, brass band concerts and board games extolled the empire and stressed its necessity to England's strategic, moral and economic well being, at the same time characterizing the dark or inferior races as unregenerate, in need of suppression [...]. (Culture 181)

In their reaction to the Indian Mutiny, Victorian intellectuals contributed to weave a popular myth out of the event in the imperial consciousness of the public. Those include Charles Dickens (1812- 1870), Wilkie Collins¹ (1824 - 1889),

¹ His contribution is through *The Moonstone* (1868), and collaborating in writing *The Perils of Certain English Prisoners* (1857) with Dickens.

Alfred Tennyson¹ (1809- 1892) and Christina Rossetti (1830-1894).

In his response to the Indian Rebellion, Dickens advocated genocide against the Indian race writing the allegorical story, *The Perils of Certain English Prisoners* (1857). In *Perils*, Dickens depicted the native Sambo, a paradigm of the Indian mutineers as "a double-dyed traitor, and most infernal villain"(12; ch. 1) who takes part in a massacre of women and children. In 4 October 1857, he wrote a letter to Baroness Burdett-Coutts: "I wish I were the commander in chief in India... I should do my utmost to exterminate the Race upon whom the stain of the late cruelties rested [...]."

In his poem, "The Defence of Lucknow", Tennyson tackled the incident of the Siege of Lucknow which lasted for eighty seven days and was finally relieved by General Campbell on Nov. 16, 1857. As a typical Victorian artist, Tennyson celebrates the British supremacy in relation to other cultures, particularly the Indian:

Never with mightier glory than when we had reared thee
on high

Flying at top of the roofs in the ghastly siege of
Lucknow—

¹ His contribution is through his poem, "The Defence of Lucknow" (1879)

And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England
blew. (3-4, 6)

Over and again in the poem, Tennyson tries to excite the national sympathy through stressing the vulnerability of women and children: "women and children among us, God help them, our children and wives!" (8). He stresses the British spirit of perseverance in repeating "Everyman die at his post!" (13), "kill or be killed, live or die, they shall know we are soldiers and men !" (41). A strong belief in racism is expressed in the lines: "Handful of men as we were, we were English in heart and limb,/ strong with the strength of the race to command..."(47- 48).

In an utter opposition to the innocent vulnerable British women and children, the Indians are depicted as the 'foe' and presented through predatory animal imagery:

'children and wives—if the tigers leap into the fold
unawares—

Everyman die at his post—and the foe may outlive us at
last—

Better to fall by the hands that they love, than fall into
theirs! (51- 53)

In an attempt to reach the peak of pity in the British reader, Tennyson emphasizes the dilemma of women and children:

Valour of delicate women who tended the hospital bed,
Horror of women in travail among the dying and dead,
Grief for our perishing children, and never a moment for
grief (88-90)

In her poem, "In the Round Tower at Jhansi, 8 June 1857", Rossetti introduces an imaginary final conversation between Captain Skene and his wife before their death. Rossetti claims that Mr. Skene had killed his wife then committed suicide when the rebels were approaching them as to save her from rape. Rossetti depicts this as an act of patriotic love:

Close his arm about her now,
Close her cheek to his,
Close the pistol to her brow—
God forgive them this! (9-12)¹

For Rossetti, the couple have preferred death to dishonor at the hands of the mutineers, together with the fear of the possible rape of Mrs. Skene. This poem was first published in 1862. However, in the revised edition of 1875, the poet added the note: "I retain this little poem, not as historically accurate, but as written and published before I heard the supposed facts of its first verse contradicted" (69).

¹ First published in 1862 in *Goblin Market, the Prince's Progress and Other Poems*, London, Macmillan.

Rossetti's poem is visually represented in the engraving entitled, "The Death of Major Skene and his wife at Jhansi" adding the figure of a dead young child beside Mrs. Skene's body (Ball 433). This addition asserts that the British artists responded to the historical event subjectively not objectively, allowing their imagination to reinterpret the events emotionally, creating a myth that justifies the expected revenge.

However, "the many official histories, memoirs (including those by the women who survived) and reports of the events of 1857-8 that emerged in the years following found no evidence of rape as a weapon in the conflict" (Towheed 432). Towheed asserts that a massacre of officers and their families did take place at Jhansi in June 1857, but the circumstances differed from the events depicted in Rossetti's poem and the engraving .

Further, the report of *The Times*, 11 September 1857 about the events at Jhansi contradicts the content of the poem:

[...]. At last Major Skene and the rest were deceived by assurances that their lives would be spared if they surrendered, and they opened the gate.... Major Skene marched out first; they were taken to a garden, tied to two ropes in two rows, men and women separate,- Burgess's servant says the men alone were tied,- and then every soul,

whatever the age, rank, or sex was killed by the sword [...].

Therefore, this detailed real account of the events has refuted the suicide incident or the possibility of rape waiting for Mrs. Skene, as the British women were "spared any violence save death" (*The Times*, 11 September 1857). Consequently, literary accounts of the Mutiny were not historically accurate, but written and published motivated by the patriotic drive of allegiance to the empire.

Three decades later, the events of the rebellion were tackled in two of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes' narratives—*The Sign of Four* (1890) and *the Adventure of the Crooked Man* (1893). In producing them, Doyle depended largely on those mythological accounts engraved in the British popular memory. The presence of the Indian Mutiny in Sherlock Holmes' narratives acts as a link between Doyle's fiction and the contemporary body of English fiction and non-fiction.

In *the Adventure of the Crooked Man*, the rebellion is briefly tackled through the incident of Henry Wood, the crooked man of the title. During the time of the Mutiny, Henry Wood was a corporal in the same regiment of James Barclay, a sergeant at that time. Both of them proposed to a pretty young woman called Nancy. When water ran out of the regiment, Henry volunteered

to summon help. Barclay directed him to a safe route, which turned out to be an ambush to the enemy.

In his account to Sherlock Holmes of the Indian rebels, Henry Wood states, "it was many a long year before ever I saw a white face again. I was tortured, and tried to get away, and was captured and tortured again. You can see for yourselves the state in which I was left"(386). This traumatic experience left Henry Wood a deformed figure who led a life of a slave, a wanderer, who learnt how to be a conjurer. That is, the prolonged contact with the Indians strip a European man of his civilization.

Thirty years later, Henry's mere appearance to Colonel James Barclay, "who was raised to commissioned rank for his bravery at the time of Mutiny" (378) was enough to draw "a sudden dreadful cry in the man's voice, with a crash, and a piercing scream from the woman" (379). The man fell dead, while his wife lost her consciousness for a considerable time. In other words, the Indian Rebellion disturbed the peace of the English blissful life turning it to a nightmare.

In *The Sign of Four*, the rebellion has been tackled more extensively. Bratlinger comments that mid to late Victorian fiction contained an immense amount of writing about the Indian Mutiny: Doyle conforms to these texts when he mentions the

Indian mutineer Nana Sahib (151), who was suspected to be responsible for the Bibighar Massacre , so he became a concurrent British literary symbol for the perceived treacherous nature of the colonised Indian subjects (Bratlinger 205), a matter which constitutes a condensed form of the racist ideology of Orientalism.

Sign is structured of twelve chapters. Each chapter has a summary title, and consists of 3000 words , with the exception of the last one, as the novel was serialized in the regional and popular press. The plot of *Sign* revolves around a precious treasure looted from India during the incidents of the rebellion and particularly in Agra. Three Sikhs: Dost Akbar, Abdullah Khan, and Mohamet Singh together with a European military man , Jonathan Small, hide the treasure till they have completed their term of imprisonment. With the revelation of the secret of the treasure to two other British officers, Major Sholto and Morstan, in return for helping them gain their freedom, Sholto stole the treasure alone and escapes to Britain. After his death, his twin sons Thaddeus and Bartholomew disagree whether Mary Morstan should have a share.

Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson support Mary Morstan to solve the mystery of the disappearance of her father, as well as the mysterious benefactor who has been sending her

one precious pearl per year throughout the last three years. Mary Morstan falls in love with Doctor Watson and the novel ends with their expected blissful marriage, with the Agra treasure as an obstacle in the way of that bond, depicted by Watson as intervening "like an impassable barrier"(22; ch. VII).

Sign is a domestic novel which is set in Britain in 1888 representing it as "a safe and morally righteous home" (Towheed 413). In this work, the reader is taken on a tour of a number of British interiors as Brixton, Camberwell, Upper Norwood, Baker Street (the residence of Sherlock Holmes) - in which the story begins and ends, creating an atmosphere of "familiar domesticity" (Towheed 413). This is in addition to a number of famous roads and places such as "Rochester Row", "Vincent Square", "Vauxhall Bridge Road", "Wordsworth Road", "Priory Road", "Lark Hall Lane", "Stock well Place", "Robert Street", "Cold Harbor Lane" representing a "labyrinth of streets in London"(10; ch. III) . The depictions of 221B Baker Street as well as the domestic interior urge the reader to think of the setting as real rather than fictional.

The setting of the novel depicts a "comfortable bourgeois life" (Towheed 413-414). The London setting is presented as comfortable and joyful, with refreshing baths, breakfasts, coffee,

reading newspapers, ham, eggs (29; ch. VIII). Whenever tired, Sherlock Holmes "sank back into the velvet-lined arm-chair with a long sigh of satisfaction"(3; ch. I). Holmes is depicted playing on his violin "some low, dreamy, melodious air" (30; ch VIII), while Watson "seemed to be floated peacefully away upon a soft sea of sound" (30; ch. VIII). Later, Holmes "was deep in a book" (31; ch. IX).

In London, meals are "merry" (35; ch. IX), there are "oysters and a brace of grouse", "white wines" (35; ch. IX). In the house of Thaddeus Sholto, "the carpet was of amber- and- black, so soft and so thick that the foot sank pleasantly into it"(11; ch. IV). The house of Mrs. Cecil Forrester is delineated as a "tranquil English home" (22; ch. VII). Thus, the setting embodies the coziness of the Victorian home. The depiction of London as a 'giant city' is both literal and figurative, emphasizing the primacy of London as a metropolitan center. The setting of *Sign* is built on parallelism and contrast between London and India. London is pictured as a secure home, with emotional order, comfortable interiors, and blissful marriage, as that between Doctor Watson and Mary Morstan as opposite to the threat lurking in India.

India, on the other hand is depicted as a land of extremes; of wealth versus poverty; and menace versus financial opportunity. Both the wealth and the danger of India constantly

threaten to destabilize London life. While bringing home the wealth of India can make life in London extremely comfortable, the prospect of retributive action being brought home at the same time is an ever-present danger (Towheed 428-9), a matter that is ascertained through the murders of Major Sholto and later his son Bartholomew who was shot inside his home by a poisonous dart, and the stealing of the treasure.

Sign was written during the Victorian era, in which India was seen as “the Jewel in the crown of the Britain’s imperial possessions” (Towheed 428). Thus India is not a background, it is a foreground, combining two sets of contradictory epithets: those representing opportunity, and those representing threat. The intrusion of India into London represents a threat. Thaddeus Sholto recounts: "early in 1882 my father received a letter from India which was a great shock to him. He nearly fainted at the breakfast-table when he opened it, and from that day he sickened to his death"(12; ch. IV).

Said argues that both imperialism and colonialism resulted in the formation of a "socially desirable, empowered space in metropolitan England.... [which is] connected ...to distant or peripheral worlds....conceived of as desirable but subordinate" (Culture 61). Doyle perpetuates an established belief in racism in

Sign. The murdering of the Indians and the plundering of the Agra Jewels by the British during the Mutiny is approved, while the restoration of the treasure or even sharing it with the Indians is not accepted.

The narrative is constructed upon a parallelism and contrast between Britain and India, not only in the setting, but also in characters. Through the character of the protagonist Sherlock Holmes, Doyle presents the distinction between East and West. Holmes stands for the occident, occupied to observe and study the orient. Therefore, he is an orientalist who is supposed to employ a scientific method in his investigation, namely, "the science of deduction"(49; ch. XII). He treats the Indians as mere objects, sub-humans, liable to research.

Holmes manipulates deduction as a method which is described as being "an exact science" that "should be treated in ... a cold and unemotional manner"(3; ch. I). Holmes states that the three requirements of a successful detective are: "observation", "deduction", and "knowledge"(4; ch. I). Moreover, Holmes has monographs about some technical subjects "Upon the Distinction between the Ashes of the Various Tobaccos". Another monograph is "Upon the Tracing of Footsteps"(4; ch. I). Holmes's discourse is almost scientific. He claims:" a client is to me a mere unit- a factor in a problem"(8; ch. II).

Holmes is described by the narrator as having "great powers", "masterly manner" and "experience"(3; ch. I). Holmes boasts that his mind "rebels at stagnation"(3; ch. I). Arrogantly, he claims, "I crave for mental exaltation. That is why I have chosen my own particular profession,- or rather created it, for I am the only one in the world" (3; ch. I). Doctor Watson, the narrator, depicts Holmes as having "a small vanity"(4; ch. I). Holmes is said to receive letters acknowledging his assistance from various areas such as Riga, St. Louis, and France. In his comment on the French letter, Watson states that the French detective addresses Holmes "as a pupil to his master" (4; ch. I).

Holmes asserts that he has a "train of thought" that should be followed "(5; ch. I). Watson depicts Holmes as possessing "marvelous faculty"(6; ch. I). In explaining his view of the way in which Bartholomew was murdered, Holmes is compared to "a clinical professor expounding to his class" (18; ch. VI). Holmes employs scientific discourse as he boasts that his "diagnosis" is always true (24; ch. VII). He also claims that he has such extensive 'knowledge' that enables him to trace criminals in various methods (24; ch.VII).

Although he has not been to India before, he is interested to read British newspapers to discover more about India ; he even

can mention the difference between Hindu and Muslim footprints (4; ch. I). Also, he has the ability to identify a culprit by whether he is smoking an Indian cigar or not, "if you can say definitely, for example, that some murder had been done by a man who was smoking an Indian Lunkah, it obviously narrows your field of search"(4; ch. I). In one situation, Holmes was pictured as a scientist in a laboratory. Watson states that Holmes:

busied himself all evening in an abstruse chemical analysis which involved much heating of retorts and distilling of vapors, ending at last in a smell which fairly drove me out of the apartment. Up to the small hours of the morning I could hear the clinking of his test-tubes which told me that he was still engaged in his malodorous experiment. (32; ch. IX)

Later, Watson declares, "I had never known him to be wrong"(33; ch. IX), as if he is infallible. Holmes' emphasis of superiority echoes the British or the western sense of sovereignty. Loomba comments that Holmes's "scientific" study was "far from being an objective, ideologically free domain,...[and] was deeply implicated in the construction of racist ways of thinking about human beings and the differences between them [...]." (61). Articulating Doyle's as well as the British views, Holmes declares that "some facts should be

suppressed, or at least a just sense of proportion should be observed in treating them"(4; ch. I). In fact, it is not the strategy of Holmes only, but of the British culture in general .

While Holmes' knowledge of India is primarily theoretical, extended from his reading, Watson's knowledge is practical as he is an ex-colonial, a veteran of a war on the Indian borders . He participated as an army doctor who suffered from leg wound and a recurring pain resulting from Jezail bullets in the Battle of Maiwand (27 July 1880). He represents the character of the military oppressor for the marginalized natives. Said comments that the "cult of the military personality was prominent [in late Victorian British culture], usually because such personalities had managed to bash a few dark heads [...]."(*Culture* 181).

Watson's orientalist discourse is manifested in his account of the chase of Aurora launch, Watson comments upon the sight of Jonathan Small and his accomplice Tonga:

Holmes had already drawn his revolver and I whipped out mine at the sight of this savage, distorted creature... that face was enough to give a man a sleepless night. Never have I seen features so deeply marked with all bestiality and cruelty. (38; ch. X)

Watson kills the native Indian islander Tonga, Small's accomplice, whom he shoots as he is standing on a barge on the River Thames. Consequently, he constitutes the British heroic and patriotic spirit as he is ready to eradicate any danger posed by the native Indians threatening the British security. After the death of Tonga, Watson expresses the British anxiety and fear of the other, the alien outsider whose coming threatens the national security : "somewhere in the dark ooze at the bottom of the Thames lie the bones of that strange visitor to our shores"(38; ch. X).

Dr Watson is the narrator of the Holmes tales, and a spokesman of the author. Watson's narrative voice is geopolitical, therefore "subject to topographical metaphors: centers and margins, crossing boundaries, borderlands" (Bartkowski, XXIV). Watson stands for the stereotypical colonizer who considers anything originating in India as the rightful property of England. Watson views the Indian treasure from a British perspective, denouncing its being a part of Indian heritage and claiming it to be the rightful property of Mary Morstan. He falls in her love at first sight.

Mary Morstan is depicted as having "an outward composure of manner" (6; ch. II), "sweet, brave nature" (22; ch. VII). "She was a blonde young lady, small, dainty, well gloved,

and dressed in the most perfect taste"(6; ch. II). Her expression was sweet and amiable, and her large blue eyes were singularly spiritual and sympathetic"(6; ch. II). She has "a face which gave a clearer promise of a refined and sensitive nature"(6; ch. II). She works as a governess for the family of Mrs. Cecil Forrester. From a British perspective, the narrator views her as a "wronged woman" for denying her share in the Agra treasure (7; ch. II). Mary is described as having a "sweet calm face"(16; ch.V) which makes Mrs Bernstone feel relaxed at the extreme moment of trouble – the discovery of the murder of Bartholomew.

Mary Morstan is presented as a contented character who is not interested in the expected fortune. Out of self denial, she is anxious for Thaddeus Sholto's future: "I think that he has behaved most kindly and honourably throughout. It is our duty to clear him of this dreadful and unfounded charge" (31; ch. IX). An example of the western orientalist discourse is found in Mrs. Forrester's comment on Mary Morstan's story: "It is a romance... An injured lady, half a million in treasure, a black cannibal, and a wooden-legged ruffian. They take the place of the conventional dragon or wicked earl"(31; ch. IX).

Major Sholto was in the 34th Bombay Infantry (7; ch. II). He had prospered in India, and brought back with him a

considerable sum of money , "a large collection of valuable curiosities, and a staff on native servants. With these advantages he bought himself a house, and lived in great luxury"(12; ch. IV).

The British supremacy is frequently asserted through the discourse of the British characters who egoistically repeat the "I". Thaddeus Sholto says of himself: "I am a man of ... refined, tastes.... I live, as you see, with some little atmosphere of elegance around me. I may call myself a patron of the arts"(12; ch. IV). Bartkowski comments that "the self that says "I" is purchased at the cost of obliterating or minimally distorting another.... That "I" is located in a history and culture that also prize themselves at the cost of another history" (XXIII).

The Agra treasure which is an Indian loot, and a symbol of the status of India in the British estimation, estimated as "not less than half a million sterling" (14; ch. IV). Watson conceives it from the perspective of "the British economy, its status as a part of Indian heritage is suppressed and it is taken to be the rightful property of Mary Morstan" (Bratlinger 205). Miss Morston "would change from a needy governess [in camberwell] to the richest heiress in England"(14; ch. IV).

Thaddeus Sholto comments that "'the value of the jewels [is]....not less than half a million pounds sterling....'" (14; ch. IV).

The pearls of the treasure "have been pronounced by an expert to be of a rare variety and of a considerable value"(7; ch. II).

However, the Agra treasure at the end is depicted as "a curse ... upon the man who owned it. To [Achmet] it brought murder, to Major Sholto it brought fear and guilt, to me [Jonathan Small] it has meant slavery for life"(39; ch. XI). As the treasure stands for India, therefore India is seen as a curse from a British perspective.

Another form of Indian loot is the furniture at Thaddeus Sholto's home in South London, which is furnished with the tiger skins, Indian fabrics gained from his family involvement in India as the "oriental vase"(11; ch. IV)," two great tiger-skins thrown athwart it" (11; ch. IV). Inside Bartholomew's house, there was "a straight passage of some length, with a great picture in Indian tapestry"(17; ch.V).

In contrast to the European characters, the natives are stereotypically presented as treacherous, savage , and violent. Hence, Doyle adapts what Said terms 'latent Orientalism' (Orientalism 207). According to this concept, there is a constant binary opposition between the orient and the occident, with the West constituting the superior power. As a Consequent, 'the Indians were viewed in a framework constructed out of

biological determinism . That is why, Doyle's presentation of the natives is distorted. The native Indians in Doyle's text are presented as criminals who threaten the national security of Britain . Holmes suggests that the participants in Bartholomew's murder "breaks fresh ground in the annals of crime in this country,-- though parallel cases suggest themselves from India"(19; ch. VI).

Bartholomew Sholto's butler Lal Rao is the first to be suspected by Holmes to be Small's accomplice by providing him information about the house. In his comment on the murder of Bartholomew, Holmes maintains that Small's accomplice must have "savage instincts" (25; ch. VII). Thus, the natives are pictured as being undesirable, even though they are exploited by the white British masters.

Jonathan Small is depicted as "a poorly-educated man, small, active, with right leg off and has been a convict" (21; ch. VI). The orientalist discourse is equally found in Mrs. Smith's response to Holmes in which she describes Small as having "a brown, monkey-faced chap"(28; ch. VIII), because he is not British, with a "thick and foggy voice"(28; ch. VIII). Tonga was pictured as "a black cannibal. He would eat raw meat and dance his war-dance" (50; ch. XII). In another context, he is described as a "hell hound" (39; ch. XI) and a "little devil"(39; ch. XI).

Watson's reply to Holmes' question about the description of the person with "diminutive footmarks, toes never fettered by boots, naked feet, stone-headed wooden mace, great agility, small poisoned darts. What do you make of all this?" Watson's answers "a savage", "one of those Indians who were the associates of Jonathan Small"(30; ch. VIII).

This negative presentation of the natives enhances the establishment of a hierarchal power structure between the colonizer and the colonized . The employment of most of the native Indian characters as servants to the British ones, is meant to stress their inferiority to the metropolitan imperial center. For example, Major Sholto's house includes three Indian servants. "Thaddeus Sholto's *Khitmutgar* (which is Hindi for butler), 'clad in a yellow turban' (13; ch. IV), who welcomes both Holmes and Watson upon their arrival in Brixton. Then, we have Major Sholto's late butler, 'The faithful old Lal Chowdar'(13; ch. IV), who was arrested in getting rid of captain Morstan's corpse. The third servant is Bartholomew Sholto's servant, Lal Rao , who acted as an accessory to his employer's murder by Jonathan Small. Those servants are brought by Major Sholto upon his retirement soon after the disappearance of the Agra treasure.

British characters deprive the Indian servants from their identity , while perpetuating the British identity of the white servants by respecting their individual names "I left Pondicherry Lodge, taking the old Khitmutgar and Williams with me"(14; ch. IV). In contrast, many of the Indian characters are stripped of their names and are called as "oriental figures"(10; ch. III), or merely 'the Indians'. They are deprived of naming because "naming is power and that power both confers and limits identity, shape and place" (Bartkowski, XXV). Doyle's narratives assert both the British superiority and the Indian inferiority. Bartkowski claims that "identities are both/either claimed and/or resisted because of their representational status" (XXVII).

Doyle's satirical contempt is not only directed at the Indians, but on the eastern in general. A satirical orientalist discourse is clearly found in Watson's account of "a dozen dirty and ragged little street Arabs" (29; ch. VIII), commenting on the taller and older person in them as having "an air of lounging superiority which was very funny in such a disreputable little scarecrow" (29; ch. VIII).

In *Sign* , language is employed as a tool of imposing colonial power, and maintaining hierarchal power structure. Therefore, the novel is abundant with Indian names of places, people, objects and events, which are not provided an

explanatory notes in the original text, for instance, "*khitmugar*" signifies the presence of an "alien" Indian figure and culture in relation to the British society. Other untranslated words are "sahib" and "sash", "a *strakhan* collar". Those untranslated words are functional in producing a sort of Oriental discourse. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin note that the use of 'untranslated words' in post-colonial texts is a means of expressing native cultural identity on the part of an author writing in a colony or ex-colony infiltrated by imperial ideology (64). The foreignness of the Indians has been emphasized or "made so by the scene of the encounter at some crossroads of cultures" (Bartkowski, XXII,)

Images of dark and light enhance the opposition between orient and occident. Darkness is given negative associations unlike light. In one instance, Watson reflects, "if my future were black, it was better surely to face it like a man"(8; ch. II). In another instance, Holmes is depicted as having "fits of the blackest depression"(9; ch. III). Major Sholto expresses his fear after the death of Morstan, at the moment of the quarrel, that it "would be black" against him (13; ch. IV). It is said that "a long, dark thorn stuck in the skin just above the ear" (17; ch. V) found in Bartholomew's body causing his death. Holmes complains of

this "insoluble mystery" which "grows darker instead of clearer"(17; ch. V). In his search for the criminal, Watson comments on the situation as being a "black tragedy"(24; ch. VII).

Irony is a key feature of Doyle's style. Ironically Holmes denounces the right of Jonathan Small in the Agra treasure, although he is the one who looted it with his Indian partners. Holmes claims that "[Small] comes to England with the double idea of regaining what he would consider to be his rights and of having his revenge upon the man who had wronged him" (25; ch. VII). Although the white characters always look at the Indians with contempt, yet the Indian artifacts are well appreciated and are used to give an air of grandeur to the British homes. For instance, in her comment on the treasure box, Mary Morstan exclaims "what a pretty box!", "this is Indian work I suppose" (40; ch. XI).

In another context, Small ironically comments on the British concept of justice which is far from being just, "Justice!... A pretty justice! Whose loot is this, if it is not ours? Where is the justice that I should give it up to those who have never earned it?"(42; ch. XII)

References and allusions are functional tools in the style. Holmes's dialogue employs famous quotes of the British literary

canon, and particularly William Shakespeare's. Holmes' comment on the solving of the mystery of the murder of Barthomelew Sholto: " All is well that ends well"(39; ch. XI), echoing the greatest Elizabethan dramatist's words asserts the supremacy of the British culture. Another similar instance of literary reference is Watson's recalling and reciting old Goethe's lines of poetry:

*Schade, daß die Natur nur
Einen Mensch aus Dir schuf,
Denn zum würdigen Mann war
Und zum schelmen der stoff* (51)

The sense of the lines is : Unfortunately, nature has created/ one man of yourself/ as there was enough material to make an ideal man/ as well as a rouge. (my translation). Recalling these immortal lines of poetry to such a European great poet is another emphasis on the European cultural supremacy.

The historical reference is maintained through account of the Indian Mutiny (10 May 1857) in the words of Jonathan Small. His account of the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny in Mathura is directed at the British reader at home. He compares his previous life in India before the Mutiny to that peaceful comfortable life of England “one month India lay as still and peaceful, to all appearance, as Surrey or Kent” (42; ch. XII). In

this description of the outbreak of the Mutiny, he recounts, when he was an overseer on a tea plantation, the Indian Rebellion of 1857 occurred and he fled to the Agra fortress:

Night after night the whole sky was alight with the burning bungalows, and day after day we had small companies of Europeans passing through our estate [in Muttra] with their wives and children, on their way to Agra, where were the nearest troops. ..Two hundred thousand black devils let loose, and the country was a perfect hell. (43; ch. XII).

He compares the rebels to demons they are “black fiends”, “dancing and howling”, like a “swarm of bees” (43; ch. XII). Later, he calls them "wild cannibal natives" (47; ch. XII). Jonathan Small is the only European survivor of the massacre at the Mathura indigo plantation. The plantation owner Abel White , the manager Dawson, and Dawson’s book keeper wife, are all killed by the rebels” (43; ch. XII). His description of the atrocities of the Mutiny is graphic and pictorial. Mrs. Dawson is said to be “cut into ribbons”, while Mr. Dawson was “lying on his face, quite dead, with an empty revolver in his hand”(43; ch. XII).

In his view of Agra, Small tells Holmes, "the city of Agra is a great place , swarming with fanatics and fierce devil worshippers of all sorts" (43; ch. XII). Small also explains that:

After Wilson took Delhi and Sir Colin relieved Lucknow the back of the business was broken. Fresh troops came pouring in, and Nana Sahib made himself scarce over the frontier. A flying column under Colonel Greathed came round to Agra and cleared the Pandies away from it. (47; ch. XII)

Small states that he expects Holmes and Watson to "know all about it... a deal more than I do" (42; XII). In other words, the enormous accounts of the Mutiny render the British reader more aware of the ongoing events more than those who were in India, despite the passage of 30 years from that historical event.

Doyle's text, and those belonging to the British imperial canon, can be critically re-evaluated as texts which are not "above" historical and political processes (Loomba 75). These texts, "in what [they] say, and in the process of their writing, are central to colonial history, and in that can help us to a nuanced analysis of that history...." (Loomba 75). Doyle's imperial account of India and the native Indians can be described as a cunning descriptive work for destroying reality.

Idioms and proverbs are manipulated to ascertain presence of the British culture. Jonathan Small comments on the loss of

the treasure saying, "I've learned not to cry over spilled milk" (42; ch. XII)

To sum up, the Victorians were both aware of the possible threat lurking in India, as well as the benefits behind it. This is reflected in their canonical texts about India, and particularly their treatment of the Indian Mutiny. Victorian fiction and non-fiction reacted to the Rebellion subjectively, motivated by racial bias against the other. The Rebellion was tackled in the newspapers, letters of correspondence among men of intellect, poems, novels, and drama. Doyle's Sherlock Holmes' narratives conform to the British imperial canon.

Both *The Adventure of the Crooked Man* and *The Sign Of Four* assume an unproblematic British rule in India, but never questions its legitimacy. Although the Mutiny was the right of Indian rebels to claim their independence and to raise oppression from their country, yet, the British misrepresent them as brutal devils who have no right, but to remain loyal slaves. In his treatment of the Mutiny, Doyle shows himself as a committed British supporter of the Empire. His account of India is not based on eye witness evidence, but on previous prejudiced British accounts.

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