

亞瑟柯南道爾「四簽名」中的殖民空間和身體

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摘 要

本論文旨在討論亞瑟柯南道爾「四簽名」小說中的身體和空間。本論文欲指出即便道爾企圖在小說結束時回歸父權對殖民和英國本地治理的傳統，但其小說在身體和倫敦空間的呈現上則顯現出相悖的特質。在 1888 年出版的這本小說中，可見得道爾似乎想要參與英國於 1890 年代興趣的印度殖民地反叛論述，而在這本小說所創造出的虛構歷史中，印度殖民地反叛而佔了重要篇章，亦成為引響小說現在時序的重要因素。本論文試圖將道爾「四簽名」小說放回此脈落，並嘗試在此脈落中理解道爾所塑造出的角色和空間的模糊性。

關鍵字：亞瑟柯南道爾、《四簽名》、殖民身體、殖民空間

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Colonial Space and Body in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four*

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Abstract

This essay preoccupies on the representation of body and space in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four*, and believes that despite Doyle's attempt to form a definite conclusion of patriarchal order in this fiction, the bodily and spatial representation of this fiction betrays his inner debate and uncertainties about the colonial history, in which the Indian Mutiny is a chapter. Doyle creates a "historical" narrative that occurred thirty years ahead of the fiction's present time frame, and embeds the history into the actual history of the 1887-88 Indian Mutiny. The "fictional" history becomes the force that strongly influences the fiction's present movement, in which Doyle addresses the Mutiny history and seems not able to come to a definite conclusion. In the following section of this essay, the essay aims at the representation of the bodies of the characters: Tonga, Mary Morstan and Sholto twins, and illustrates the equally ambiguous spatial representation of the city London.

Key words: Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four*, colonial bodies, colonial space

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Colonial Space and Body in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four*

This essay preoccupies the representation of body and space in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four*, and believes that despite Doyle's attempt to form a definite conclusion of patriarchal order in this fiction, the bodily and spatial representation of this fiction betrays his inner debates and uncertainties about the colonial history, in which the Indian Mutiny is a chapter. Doyle creates a "historical" narrative that occurred thirty years ahead of the fiction's present time frame, and embeds the history into the actual history of the 1887-88 Indian Mutiny. The "fictional" history becomes the force that strongly influences the fiction's present movement, in which Doyle addresses the Mutiny history and seems unable to come to a definite conclusion. In the following section of this essay, I am going to discuss the representation of the bodies of the characters: Tonga, Mary Morstan and Sholto twins, and illustrate the equally ambiguous spatial representation of the city London.

In *The Sign of Four*, Watson lists the traces left at the crime scene of Sholto's death as followed: "diminutive footmarks, toes never fettered by boots, naked feet, stone-headed wooden mace, great agility [referring to the murderer], small poisoned darts" (Doyle, 2007a, p. 85; bracket mine). Holmes illustrates his conclusive observation of the footmark as followed:

[...] the remarkable character of the foot-marks caused me to reconsider my views. Some of the inhabitants of the Indian peninsula are small men, but none could have left such marks as that. The Hindoo proper has long and thin feet. The sandal-wearing Mohammedan has the great toes well separated from the others because the thong is commonly passed between. These little darts, too, could only be shot in one way. [...] (Doyle, 2007a, p. 85)

Immediately concluding the murderer is a "savage," Holmes tries to look for the references about the "savages" by consulting a gazetteer, the latest publication deemed to be authoritative.

Becoming increasing popular in the nineteenth-century, gazetteer is a kind of geographical dictionary or directory that provides information about a country, region or continent's geographical makeup, social and economic statics and inhabitants, and is often consulted to with its inclusions of maps and atlases. Empiricist nature of the gazetteer often reveals the imperial power exerted to rule and the knowledge to dominate and control, as its listed topographical and anthropological knowledge is the results gained through successive and innumerable imperial/colonial excursions and expansions. In the course of British Empire's colonization of India, the territory becomes a site to procure and produce colonial knowledge. The scrutinizing gaze upon the region and inhabitants, as well as the empiricist colonialist aims to rationalize both, reveal colonizers' endeavor to produce knowledge discourses and control the colonized lands and bodies.

Going through the lists of the climatic, geographical and agricultural entries of the gazetteer,

Holmes satisfies himself with the findings as follows:

The aborigines of the Andaman Islands may perhaps claim the distinction of being the smallest race upon this earth, [...] The average height is rather below four feet, although many full-grown adults may be found who are very much smaller than this. They are fierce, morose, and intractable people, [...] They are naturally hideous, having large, misshapen heads, small fierce eyes, and distorted features. Their feet and hands, however, are remarkably small. [...] They have always been a terror to shipwrecked crews, braining the survivors with their stone-headed clubs or shooting them with their poisoned arrows. These massacres are invariably concluded by a cannibal feast. (Doyle, 2007a, p. 86)

In the fictionally-real gazetteer passage quoted, we see the aspired “objective” measurements and statistics of body dotted with subjective, often ruthless and demeaning, detailed depiction of inhabitants’ body, and supplemented by additional accounts of natives’ unbridled brutality.

The above passage describes first the distortion of the native’s facial and physical features: the dwarfish height and the disproportionately large head and small hands. The toddler- or ape-like head-body proportion and the general implication of toddler and ape-like creatures contributed by the description point to something beyond the physical features and easily slide to the implication of the under-developed mentality and intelligence, as toddlers or apes are still on their early, crude stages of human mental and physical development. The description of the barbarity and cannibalism suggests that the native’s violence is natural, without causes and thus innate; the brutality shared between community and tribe also implies that the violence is collective, inherited and inborn.

Nineteenth century discourses of psychological abnormality tend to associate madness and criminality with the degeneration in both human and civilization scales. Edith Walton observes that “[m]adness and criminality were accounted for as negative evolution—degeneration—and links were made between insanity and mental defect, and between *the lower mental evolution of uncivilized humanity and non-European races* (Walton 32-33).” Likewise, Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee (2003) adds on that “[...] theories of madness and heredity contributed to the anxieties about shrinking human capability and sapped the confidence about progress and reform” (p. 170).

Similarly, the affiliation between the colonized natives and the under-developed savagery was also affirmed in many nineteenth-century evolutionary anthropologists’ works. For example, Edward Burnnet Tylor explicates that the evolutionary progress of civilization must necessarily be heading towards “the reign of the positive.” In other words, “a crude old culture” must continue to progress into the better enlightenment in the ladder of evolution. Asia and Africa, in Tylor’s interpretation, are the parts of the world whose civilization status is in a “condition of stasis.” Thus their practices, preserved through time, become the demonstration of “the vestiges of the barbaric

and even the savage past.”¹ Worked in the similar grain, John Lubbock also considers savage peoples ancient anthropological fossils because of their consistency of customs and their mentality—hence intelligence—that is in the condition of unchanging stasis. To Lubbock, these “lower races of men” “illustrate much of what is passing among ourselves, many customs which have evidently no relation to present circumstances, and even some ideas which are rooted in our minds as fossils are embedded in the soil.”² Frank observes that the penal colony established after the Mutiny of 1857-58 at Port Blair on South Andaman Island provided an access to the study of Andaman aborigines whom in the eyes of Englishmen is the embodiment of the primitive past – or Lubbock’s living fossils (Frank, 1996, p. 66). Tonga in Doyle’s description can be seen as the very emissary representable of the living fossil.

The above quotation from Doyle’s *The Sign of Four* also hints that the native’s outward attribution is suggestible to and reflexive of their degenerated mentality, which, to the nineteenth-century discourse of Psychology, can be accounted for the inward criminality and brutality. As humanity and morality are often considered indicators of civilization, the brutality and violence attributed to the natives are easily aggrandized to the scale of civilization; the native’s deficiency of humanity and intelligence are just reflexive and representable of the crude old culture to which they belong. The native Islanders’ collective retrograded morality and the unnecessary brutality that can only derive from something shared and inborn lend themselves to the collective and macro. The Islanders’ dwarfish body becomes the metaphor of their inward retrogression and the atavism of the culture to which they belong.

In the novella, the Islander who intrudes London, Tonga, is explicit of the described inward and outward beastliness and barbarity. Tonga becomes yet again the affirmation of criminality and beastliness that Tylor associated with the colonized parts of the world. In the fiction, Jonathan Small, the English perpetrator who brings Tonga to London to reclaim his loot, in his self-defense, repeatedly proclaims that he has no intention to kill Sholto Bartholomew. Small’s claims that Tonga killed Sholto before he could have stopped him (Doyle, 2007a, pp. 114-115). Watson rephrases Small’s confession that “[...] the savage instincts of his companion broke out (p. 71).” In the justification of himself, Small asserts his innocence and emphasizes Tonga’s innate criminality. Small’s account and Watson’s paraphrasing can be considered the reiteration of the Islanders’ acclaimed natural violence. Throughout the fiction, Tonga the Islander is without a single line that he could possibly address; his only expression, however, is facial. The ferocity of the facial expression is the same as what primate uses to intimidate enemies; the kind of facial expression that has been eradicated from the faces of the “more civilized and advanced” race through evolution and remained on the faces of the under-developed. The ferocious and animalistic facial expression, the indication of atavism, again echoes Tylor’s assumptions that the vestige of barbarous past still exists in the non-European races.

¹ L. Frank (2003) quotes E. B. Tylor’s *Primitive culture: research into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, language, art and custom* on pages 127-137 and 195-197.

² L. Frank (1996) quotes John Lubbock’s *The Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man* on pages 66.

The Criminal(s) and Colonial Body

In the fiction, the gazetteer's statistical and racial typing of the Andaman aborigines is first used to give hints of a savage perpetrator from the Indian colony. As the identity of the murderer is confirmed to be the Andaman aborigine Tonga, Tonga becomes not only the representation of the gazetteer-depicted racial other, but also the embodiment of the criminal other that is equally potent in the quotation.

The "savage" that Watson and Holmes contrived to look for and hunt down does not re-surface until the penultimate chapter of the fiction; in the chapter, the name Tonga is to replace "the savage," the convenient and racially-condescending reference used since the gazetteer information first confirms Holmes' hypothesis. Tonga becomes the physical embodiment of the gazetteer-depicted "savage," portent with brutality and criminality. Meanwhile, he is also the corporeal embodiment, out of the depiction of the innumerable, collective and faceless racial others.

When Watson depicts his first encountering of Tonga, we see his choice of words freely borrowed from the gazetteer; this narrative leak betrays Watson's (unconscious) colonizer's gaze towards colonial bodies. Watson's free association of words is resonant with the gazetteer's portrayal:

There was a movement in the huddle bundle upon the deck. It straightened itself into a little black man—the smallest I have ever seen—with a great, misshapen head and a shock of tangled, dishevelled hair. [...] I whipped out mine [my gun] at the sight of this savage, distorted creature. (Doyle, 2007a, p. 110; bracket mine)

The much sought-for "savage" emerges from the huddle, metaphorically materializes from the portrayal of the collective bodies of natives, and rises into a "half-man." The description of his body, in accordance to the gazetteer description, is disproportion and savagery. The wanted perpetrator Tonga re-surfaces to answer the calling of the racial other that he has been assigned to since the early stages of the story, and immediately fills into the vacancy of the criminal where he has been assigned. Racial and criminal other converge and roll in one onto Tonga's body. In this double embodiment, he is once a racial other subjugated by colonial narratives and criminal other to be tamed in the detective fiction.

Crime Scene, A Scientific Lab and Traces

The crime scene in this fiction is Thaddeus Bartholomew's room, which he furnishes for a chemical laboratory. This scientific laboratory is not unlike the one where the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes's adventures begin and where the great detective is metaphorically born in the early description of this fiction. The laboratory is not unlike either, symbolically, the one where the foundation of the imperial science grounds; that is, it is, symbolically, a laboratory where the collected data is processed and theorems proposed, in the higher rung of the colonial science. From

such a laboratory, the evidence against the colonial beast is to be produced and presented.

The room is thick with distinctive smell of chemical substance, one of which then becomes the trace of scent that the detective uses to hunt his prey down:

It [Thaddeus's room] appeared to have been fit up as a chemical laboratory. A double line of glass-stoppered bottles was drawn up upon the wall opposite the door, and the table was littered over with Bunsen burners, test-tubes, and retorts. In the corners stood carboys of acid in wicker baskets. One of these appeared to leak or to have been broken, for a stream of dark colored liquid had trickled out from it, and the air was heavy with a peculiarly pungent, tar-like odor. (Doyle, 2007a, pp. 45-46)

When Tonga comes into Bartholomew's room and commits the murder, he accidentally treads on the creosote that leaks from the cracked carboy. The pungent smell of the creosote becomes the traces that Holmes follows. Hiring a dog that has especially keen olfactory sense, Toby, for help, Holmes and Watson follow the scent nearly around half of the city, and finally comes to a wharf where Tonga and Small took a boat and left.

Depicted by Doyle and Victorian anthropological-psychological discourses as a creature no better than a beast, Tonga is placed in the lower ladder in the hierarchy of evolution. The scent as the only guidance to Tonga's whereabouts accentuates the "beastly" qualities that numerous 19th-century psychological and anthropological discourses associate with Tonga's colonial body. A dog, Toby, is hired to engage in this beast hunt. Upon the crime scene where Tonga commits the murder, creosote, a heterogeneous and non-biological material, is attached on Tonga's body; the scent attached to his body changes the nature of his corporeality, and forever turns him into a subject to be chased, hunt-down—an object of prey. Tonga's body, beastly, scented with criminality and at large, is further to incriminate and contaminate the city.

The Transformation of Space

In the 9 pages long pursuit of the scent, the smell of creosote appears to be everywhere, as Holmes points out that "[i]f you consider how much creosote is carted about London in one day, it is no great wonder that our trail should have been crossed. It is much used now, especially for the seasoning of wood" (Doyle, 2007a, p. 75). The scent of the creosote Tonga stepped on intermingles with other creosote carted about the city. Creosote, used for outdoor and seagoing wood preservation,³ is one of the city's scents. The scent of the city makes the best disguise, in which Tonga's smell mingles and is hidden. Tonga's creosote scent, mingling with that of the city, seemingly makes his traces and scents "invisible." After Tonga and Small's departure from the wharf, they hide in a lair of the city and the boat they hired harbors in some boat-builder or repairer,

³ One might also consider the chemical substance of creosote that is historically used for anti-rot preservation on wooden parts, particularly for the seagoing, colonial ships that were sent out for military and economic purposes and that brought back all the colonial goods and peoples, from the periphery into the centre.

having undergone some minor alteration for the purpose of disguise. Tonga and Small are so well-hidden in the city that even Holmes's Baker Street Irregular⁴ cannot account for their whereabouts. The oozy, dark and sticky substance of creosote attached on Tonga's feet covers the city, making the city sodden with traces of creosote; Tonga and Small are so deeply penetrated into the city that their whereabouts become a problem for Holmes and his division. The sluggish element of the creosote that carries Tonga's criminality is all over the city, and it figuratively turns the city into a Southern-Eastern swamp or wetland, in which Tonga and Small mingle and become invisible.⁵ The metaphorical transformation of the city is completed with the final chase down the Thames, where the watery ooze and mud of the river end both Tonga's life and Small's escape.

Textual and Inter-textual Time Frame

With the intention to claim his share of loot, Small brings Tonga to London, and sets loose the chain of incidents that take place in the fiction's present time frame. What happened in Agra Fort, India 1857 triggers the series of mysteries and murders in London thirty years after the incident. As the result, all main characters—Mary Morstan, Captain Mostan's orphaned girl, and the Sholto Twins, sons of Major Sholto—in *The Sign of Four* are wittingly and unwittingly enmeshed in the web of multiple betrayals and scrambles. Small's confession directly refers to Indian Mutiny as the point during which the Agra incident took place, and some critics consider that when *The Sign* was published in 1890, it took parts in the revival wave of Mutiny discourses; though to some, Doyle's attempt was not successful. The referent of 1857 Mutiny becomes the historical event where the fictional mysteries are deeply ingrained, and it also becomes a historical past that Doyle implicitly addresses in his arrangements of the fiction's spatial representation.

The story is set in the year 1888,⁶ 30 years after the Indian Mutiny that took place during 1857 to 1858. The murders and adventures in London can be seen as the aftermath of what happened in Agra, India, 1857. Doyle's London narrative starts with Mary Morstan, an orphan and now a governess, seeks advice from Sherlock Holmes. Recounting the story of her father's disappearance immediately after his return to London in 1878, and the queer incident of receiving a pearl annually from a complete stranger since 1882, Mary expresses her intention to seek help, upon her reception of another mysterious letter that claims her to be "a wronged woman," and that she "shall have justice" (Doyle, 2007a, p. 15). The letter also requests a meeting with her in person. Both letters and pearls turn out to be sent by one of Sholto's brothers. Doyle's narrative also constructs the temporal past when Major Sholto and Mary's father, Captain Morstan, two colleagues and close friends

⁴ Holmes's division and extension of his vision. The Irregular is especially used for looking-out, and penetrating into the places where Holmes cannot be personally at once. The Irregular, constituted by homeless teenagers as Holmes's sub-division of visions and stationed in each's original or designated spot, is akin to the omniscience of vision and "knowing," and the kind of looking that does not arouse the slightest attention.

⁵ A swamp or wetland is damp and sluggish; it is the same kind of geography as what Small describes of Andaman Islands: humid, hot and damp.

⁶ In chapter 2, Mary mentions his father, Major Morstan, disappeared in 1878, "nearly ten years ago." And in the same chapter, she also mentions that the advertisement looking for her was posted "about six years ago—to be exact, upon the 4th of May, 1882" (Doyle, 2007a, p. 14).

serving in the regiment of 34th Bombay Infantry, works as officers in charge of the convict-guard in Andaman Islands where they met the prisoner Jonathan Small.

Small first acquires the Agra treasure in collusion with Mahomet Singh and Abdullah Khan, two Sikhs in alliance with the English force. The three joint with Dost Akbar in their scheme of killing Achmet, the trusted servant of a rajah, while Achmet is entrusted with the mission of sending a box of treasure, later known as Agra treasure, to the Agra Fort to be concealed till peace time. With the discovery of Achmet's dead body, the crime was exposed and the four were sentenced to death. They were finally sent to The Andaman Islands prison settlement where Singh, Khan, Akbar and Small made a deal with Sholto and Morstan, yet only found they were all betrayed by Sholto, who took the treasure and left for England. Major Sholto died in 1882. Before his death he demands his sons, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, to make compensation to Morstan's orphaned daughter, Mary. Despite the disagreement between the two brothers on the compensation, Thaddeus still sends a pearl annually to Mary, and when the treasure is finally excavated,⁷ sends Mary the letter to request her presence. It is Thaddeus's plan that together they could demand Bartholomew to part with Mary's share of the treasure; yet when Mary, Holmes, Watson and Thaddeus arrive Bartholomew's place, Pondicherry Lodge which the two brothers inherit from their father, they only found Bartholomew dead. Thus starts the whole narrative of London mysteries and Holmes's investigation of murder.

Colonial Ambiance and Colonized Bodies

The plunder and double-betrayals occurred thirty years ago in Agra and Andamans set the London murder and adventures to start. As a matter of fact, the colonial past that entwined Sholto and Morstan still very much influences their sons and daughter; not merely does the colonial past draw all of them into the mystery and danger, but it also in some way resonates with their body representation and identity. When Watson first sees Mary, he describes her as wearing something particularly un-English.

Mary's attire is strangely "Indian" in her turban and the general faded hue and texture that suggest more "Indian" than "English." Mary is dressed in "[...] a sombre grayish beige, untrimmed and unbraided" and, seemingly to match the dress, she puts on "a small turban of the same dull hue, relieved only by a suspicion of white feather in the side" (Doyle, 2007a, p. 6). The pale hue of the dress and the matching turban, together with the side white feather, contribute to make Mary's first appearance "orient," "Indian" or anything but "English."⁸ In her second appearance, Mary is clad in a dark cloak, with only her face shown (Doyle, 2007a, pp. 20 and 26). Mary's turban and the chador-like cloak make her presence problematic. As the material and fabrics that cover her

⁷ Major Sholto died before he could reveal the hiding place of the treasure; therefore, the two brothers spent nearly 6 years looking for it in their father's house.

⁸ Lawrence Frank also pays attention to Mary's bodily presentation. Mary's unconventional attires and her identity as being a mature, capable of child-bearing, woman are the focuses of Frank's essay. This article similarly elaborates on the parts of Mary's outward presentation and the implication of "ooze," yet on different approaches.

body, the dress that is in a beige hue reminiscent of late 19th colonial expeditions, the turban and the dark cloak disguise her body and become her initial identity which both Watson and readers recognize. Mary's "Oriental" presence and her English nationality give hints of ambiguous notes that challenge patriarchal hegemony – a crucial point this paper is to discuss.

Like *The Study of the Scarlet*, portions of *The Sign of Four* is constituted by the perpetrator's account of the distant and colonial past that sets motion of the events in the fiction's present time frame.⁹ In Small's confessional account, distant Indian landscape, distinctively different from that of London, is vividly portrayed, with details of Indian names of places and peoples, plantations, crops, and brief introduction of its geography. The topography that Small introduces and the distinct, "exotic" names of places serve the counter-balance of the gazetteer account of Andaman Island. Though once participated in the retaining of colonial order, Small, now serving his own claim and closely associated with Tonga, is no longer a colonial agent, but threatening emanation out of the masses of Andaman isles. Small's account, however short and complementary, serves as the intrusion of the "barbaric" voice, in the novel that is so predominated by Watson's authoritative, "English," voice.

Likewise, the transportation of colonial landscape equally occurs in Doyle's setting of the Sholtos' lodges. Thaddeus Sholto's own flat in South London is furnished with "eastern" or "orient" pieces that make his lodge hyper-representation of the possible imagination of "eastern luxury." The paragraph is quoted in full in the following passage:

The richest and glossiest of curtains and tapestries draped the walls, looped back here and there to expose some richly-mounted painting or Oriental vase. The carpet was of amber-and-black, so soft and so thick that the foot sank pleasantly into it, as into a bed of moss. Two great tiger-skins thrown athwart it increased the suggestion of Eastern luxury, as did a huge hookah which stood upon a mat in the corner. A lamp in the fashion of a silver dove was hung from an almost invisible golden wire in the centre of the room. As it burned it filled the air with a subtle and aromatic odor. (Doyle, 2007a, p. 26)

Furnished with the owner's liking (27), the flat is so quaint-essentially "Indian" and distinctively out-of-place; it seems to be like a displaced Indian castle in its immediate London surroundings. The agglomeration of Indian pieces becomes the accumulation of the convenient, too-apparent "symbols" of India. The space is so contrived and conjured up among its English surroundings that it brims on the edges of the surreal. Sholto's place becomes somewhere between "the East" and "the West;" an eastern duplication and exaggeration in the London city.

Similarly, Major Sholto names his South London house as Pondicherry Lodge, after the Indian

⁹ In *The Study of the Scarlet*, the feud that happened decades ago in Utah Mormon Territory is the reason why Jonathan Hope follows his enemies to London to seek revenge. The US was considered the United Kingdom's past colony.

city Pondicherry that commands rich colonial history. The naming of the lodge, Thaddeus's own flat and even Mary's costumes contribute to transformed London landscapes. India seems to be displaced and placed upon London. As Frank points out that "The opening scene of *The Sign of Four* would conjure up for the late Victorian reader a South America and an Asia that can be seen as creations of the British imagination [...]" (Frank, 1996, p. 58). Sholto's place and Pondicherry, with their "Indian"-ness so evoked, seem to suggest the downside of the collective British imagination associated their most treasured colony of India. Like the lofty ideals that informed colonial expeditions and domination, Pondicherry and Sholto's house are like the fantasy that first informs then sustains subsequent colonial violation and violence.

Pondicherry Lodge comes from the wealth that the major acquired in India, as Thaddeus innocently puts it as follows:

He (Major Sholto) had prospered in India, and brought back with him a considerable sum of money, a large collection of valuable curiosities, and a staff of native servants. With these advantages he bought himself a house, and lived in great luxury. (Doyle, 2007a, p. 30)

Pondicherry Lodge is the fruit of colonial exploitation and the loot from the Major's part. It is also part of the Agra treasure that Major Sholto obtained by betraying his accomplices during the height of the Mutiny. It is also the house where the Sholto twins inherit, together with the looted wealth.

Major Sholto brought back the whole Indian "package," and his sons inherit it: the lodge, servants, wealth and all. The twins, aged thirty, inherit from their father who took parts in the colonial mission and perhaps numerous plundering schemes, including the looting of Agra treasure. The incidents occurred thirty years ago when the Mutiny and betrayals were so entangled in Small's account, is also inherited by the twins, in the forms of the wealth that comes from the colonial and individual plunders.

Colonial Identities

Compared with the Sholto twins, Mary's understanding regarding her prospect of inherited wealth, her identity as a deprived heiress, even her father's past and whereabouts are but few and limited. Her existing understanding renders her powerless in the situation she is thrown into, and she can only passively receive the danger and adventures that come in her way, while two "night-errant[s]," Watson and Holmes, "rescue" (Doyle, 2007a, p. 89) her from the danger. Since the opening of the fiction, Mary is depicted as a woman with limited means¹⁰ and her image is submissively confined to a conventional "angle in the house" under Watson's narrative that betrays his desire and idealization of an attractive, helpless and innocent woman. In one passage, Watson

¹⁰ Watson pictures Mary's dress that "[t]here [is] a plainness and simplicity about her costume which bore with it a suggestion of limited means" (Doyle, 2007a, p. 12).

portrays Mary (and Mrs. Forrester¹¹) to be of typically “angel in the house” images:

As we drove away I stole a glance back, and I still seem to see that little group on the step, the two graceful, clinging figures, the half opened door, the hall light shining through stained glass, the barometer, and the bright stair-rods. It was soothing to catch even that passing glimpse of a tranquil English home in the midst of the wild, dark business which had absorbed us. (Doyle, 2007a, p. 61)

The two are depicted as dainty, graceful and comfort-providing in the church-like domestic sanctuary in the dark London city.

Mary’s identity of a submissive Victorian woman and the one deprived of the “right” to own looted wealth easily gild into the identity of a colonized subject, being equally deprived and subjugated.¹² Thaddeus’s atonement also makes this sliding and doubling of dual-subjugated images entangled and confusing. It is difficult to disassociate Mary from and between the three entangling identities: an English heiress deprived of her “rightful” share, a subjugated Victorian woman, and a colonial subject who is equally deprived of the property and resources stolen from the exploited, colonized land.

According to the 19-centur gendered physiological studies conducted by Havelock Ellis, the natural physiology of woman is the cause of their inferiority “in stature and capacity.” Ellis asserts that a woman’s body, nervous systems and brain cease to develop, at the age around twenty.¹³ Thus, to Ellis, a woman is akin to a child, “equated figuratively with those so-called savages who embody the infancy of humankind from their place on the lower rungs of an evolutionary hierarchy” (Frank, 1996, p. 67). Watson’s unease of Mary’s possession of Agra treasure¹⁴ is explicable, especially when the fiction is written in the historical conjunctions of, on one side, the drawn equation of a woman, child and savage that a medical practitioner like Doyle is so aware of, and, on the other, the ongoing debates over married women’s right to own property.¹⁵ Mary’s claim to Agra treasure not only challenges the existing patriarchal hegemony over women, but also defiantly ignores the Ellis’ sexed physiology that Doyle is probably familiar with. Mary’s triple identity – a possible heiress owning the treasures she was *once denied*, a woman *with a claim* of looted treasure, and a colonial and gendered subaltern deprived off what she can possible possess: the property associated to freedom and right – makes an implicit yet existed challenge to the novel’s patriarchal hegemony.

¹¹ The Forresters’ house is where Mary works as a governess. The care and support Mrs Forrester shows to Mary is motherly. To some extent, Mrs Forrester “is” Mary’s mother—the future that Mary will grow into, as implied by the imagery that Mrs Forrester’s arm places on Mary’s waist, as support and the continuum of bodily image and identity.

¹² Not to mention that Mary dresses like one.

¹³ L. Frank (1996) quotes Havelock Ellis’s *Man and Woman: A Study of Human Secondary Sexual characters* on pages 66.

¹⁴ See especially Doyle, 2007a, p. 37.

¹⁵ Frank points out that Doyle writes “in a particular historical situation marked by going controversies dealing with divorce law, the right of married women to the control of their property, and the contagious diseases acts that were designed to control venereal diseases through the policing of prostitution.” (p. 54)

Equally undermining patriarchal confidence is the curious coincidence between Sholto twin's age and the time gap between the novel's present time frame and 1857-8 Mutiny. The year that the fiction is set, 1888, when the Sholto twins have just turned 30; curiously enough, the year 1888 is also exactly thirty years beyond the closure of the Indian Mutiny. Through Small's confession, Doyle enmeshes the loot of Agra treasure within the temporality and narrative of the Mutiny. The interval of the temporality and the aftermaths of the plunder-Mutiny becomes ever more inseparable in the fiction's presence. Being one of Major Sholto's inheritors, Thaddeus is eager to make up his father's fault by sending Mary pearls and by granting her share of the treasure. Through Thaddeus's revelation of his father's guilty conscious, and from his own eager atonement, we see that along with the dubiously-gained wealth, Thaddeus also inherits the guilt. On the other hand, the other of the twins, Bartholomew, is reluctant to part with his wealth, and is immediately punished by death at the commencement of the fiction. Doyle's arrangement of Sholto twins suggests a sense of plurality and collective-ness. Doyle also lets their inherited houses full of plundered wealth. Grand history of the Mutiny and Major's Sholto's micro-history are welded through multiple implications, and they are both found fully guilty through Thaddeus and Abdullah Khan's mouth.¹⁶

“Colonial” Space of the Thames

With the multiple exchanging-hand and betrayal, Small and Tonga finally acquire the box containing the treasure, and their plan of escape is to take “a ship at Gravesend or in the Downs, where [...] they had already arranged for passages to America or the Colonies” (Doyle, 2007a, p. 103) via the Thames. During the intensity of the fight, Tonga was shot dead by Watson, and the treasure is discarded by Small piece by piece into the river and thus lost forever. Both ~~the~~ treasure and Tonga sank into the muddy and oozy river, as Doyle writes: “[s]omewhere in the dark ooze at the bottom of the Thames lie the bones of that strange visitor to our shores” (Doyle, 2007a, p. 111).

The hard-earned treasure and the barbaric “eastern stranger” who came to English shore are lost in the formless murkiness at the bottom of the Thames. Christopher Keep and Don Randall speak of the conversation and communication between nature and metaphor about the River Thames that it connects the conceptual “east” and “west”:

The Thames waterway is the portal, the threshold, of empire—the orifice of output and input, expenditure and accumulation, venture and gain. It is the empire's place of exchange, the fluid link between metropole and periphery. To evoke the “dark ooze” of its murky depths is to suggest a Thames that exceeds and eludes the controlled circulation of objects and commodities, a Thames that slips the grasp of the empire's regulatory systems of power and knowledge. (Keep and Randall, 1999, p. 217)

¹⁶ Through Abdullah Khan mouth, Doyle makes an accusation of the colonial enterprise; particularly its unsaying mercantile aims. The accusation, however, does not go further. Convincing Small to take a part in the treasure plunder, Khan says to him: “We only ask you to do that which your countrymen come to this land for. We ask you to be rich.” (131)

The fluid connection between the empire and its conquered colonies is immeasurable thus indeterminate and beyond the regulatory control of empire's power and knowledge.

To Keep and Randal (1999), Doyle's Thames evokes "the dark, brooding, inassimilable Thames that dominates the opening and closing passage of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" (pp. 217-218). In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* that also addresses colonialism, seaward expedition and colonizing adventures, the Thames, in the fiction's opening, is represented somewhat close to an interminable expanse of history; in the "beginning" the English Isle is but a barbaric land to the Romans' eyes. Conrad (1973) imagines some "prefect, or tax-gather, or trader even" first set foot on the Isle, and find the immense barbarity that surrounds him:

[They] land in a swamp, march through the woods, and in some inland post feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had closed round him—all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men. There's no initiation either into such mysteries. (p. 9)

To Watson, the part of the Thames where Holmes's company catches Small is the same wilderness and un-civilized wasteland as that depicted in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: "It was a wild and desolate place, where the moon glimmered upon a wide expanse of marsh-land, with pools of stagnant water and beds of decaying vegetation" (Doyle, 2007a, p. 111). The Thames and the Ganges depicted through Doyle's and Conrad's writings,¹⁷ as well as the river in front of the Agra fort in the text all evoke the same formless fluid of the rivers whose unceasing tides interminably wash the barbaric shores, in "history" as they do now. The unaccountable treasure is lost in the bottom of the river and, thus it belongs to no one—nor was it safely returned to the land where it was plundered and taken, as Wilkie Collins does the justice of returning the treasure to India in *The Moonstone*.¹⁸

Under Doyle's pen, London reaches its final completion as a swamp or a mire in the chase down the Thames. The muddy Thames, through Keep and Randall's lens, serves as a cross-road between the empire and the colony's peoples, between the civilized London and savage colonies, or simply put, the civilization and savagery, in its watery fluidity that bears seagoing and returning ships, peoples and cargo. The muddiness where Small is trapped is a similar place where Conrad's Roman agents embark. The gap of more than a century is infused in the formless water of the Thames; time becomes stretching and malleable. The dichotomy between savagery and civilization also blurs: The Thames where the civilized Roman officials first embarked on the barbaric English Isles is the same river where the self-acclaimed civilized Englishmen set out for their civilizing and

¹⁷ Small describes swimming in the Ganges shortly after his first arrival in India. Small, an English, colonial agent, lost his leg in the river in a crocodile attack. In this sense, the Ganges, an Indian river full of local dangers and submerging colonial agents, bears the same nature in which the "East" and the "West" is indistinguishable.

¹⁸ The two stories bear some similarities, including the missing and searching of Indian treasure stolen in the turmoil time, and the use of opium in one of the main characters.

enlightening missions. Time folds in the Thames, and the boundary between “the civilized” and “the barbaric” is eroded in the Thames’s intermediacy. The Thames is no longer the watery way that runs through the centre of the civilized (and civilizing) empire, but returns to its watery, muddy and tidal nature, aging and ageless.

The Indeterminacy Implied by the Colonial Spaces and Discourses

Small in his confessional notes recounts his first-hand eye-witnessing of the Mutiny; his reminiscent account is full of uncertainty and indeterminacy. Revisiting his memory, Small speaks of the suddenness and terror of the Mutiny:

Suddenly, without a note of warning, the great mutiny broke upon us. One month India lay as still and peaceful, to all appearance, as Surrey or Kent; the next there were two hundred thousand black devils let loose, and the country was a perfect hell. Of course you know all about it, gentlemen,—a deal more than I do, very like, since reading is not in my line (Doyle, 2007a, p. 125).

Small’s account of the Mutiny history becomes Doyle’s partial version of the Mutiny history and the direct reference of the waves of writing that address the Mutiny. Patrick Brantlinger (cited in Keep and Randall, 1999, p. 212) observes that the decades following the 1857-1858 revolt produced “a deluge of eyewitness accounts, journal articles, histories, poems and plays.” During the latter half of the nineteenth century, at least fifty Mutiny novels were written, and at least thirty more were published in the first half of the twentieth.¹⁹ Especially in the 1890s, there raised a renewed fascination with the Mutiny, and Doyle’s novel was one of such tales. Keep and Randall (1999) point out that such need to account for the origins and details of the Mutiny tell much of preoccupation, and the extent of which the 1857-1858 unrest put the empire’s authoritative and legitimate dominance into question:

The compulsive, almost obsessional need to bring the Mutiny to account, to register every detail of its origins and to explain what could have brought about such unimaginable ‘treachery’ and ‘villainy,’ is indicative of the extent to which the uprising of the 1857-1858 challenged British claim to colonial authority. (p. 212)

Yet, the Mutiny discourse Doyle creates in his fiction does not provide a definite account of the origin of the Mutiny, nor does the fiction seem to engage in one. The “historical” uncertainties and the trustworthiness of the eye-witnessing account also call into question that they seem to unsettle the literal and historical movements that try to construct a definite, answerable cause and origin of

¹⁹ Keep and Randal quote Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*. (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1988).

the Mutiny history. Doyle seems to take a turn by providing the undercurrent of guilt, atonement and accusation of colonial enterprise—becoming the psychological backlash that erodes the patriarchy of colonial and domestic control. Doyle's Mutiny discourse, then, becomes a contesting site between the empire's right to dominant, to make use, and the conflicting guilt and atonement.

Ingrained in *The Sign* in the contexts of the Mutiny discourses, the ambiguity of the London spaces and the concluding pages of the loss of the treasure become clear. The questionable, implying plunder, nature of the dual London lodges, the ambiguous Thames that evades dichotomy of "East" and "West," the Sholtos' guilt and their attempts to atone, and the accusation from the colonized side all register the fiction's inner debate and conflicts. The result of the historical plunder—the Agra treasure that equally implies grander exploitation brought by the colonial expansion—is permanently lost in the Thames where interminable waves wash away the dichotomies between East/West and civilization/barbarity. Doyle embeds the colonial deprivation and guilt through characters' identities into this fictional narrative of the Mutiny that forms an important chapter in the fiction as well as the British colonial history. Multiple London spaces also become ambiguous and paradoxical; they are neither "Eastern" nor "Western," like the Thames that dissolves boundaries.

The only thing anchored in this detective fiction that articulates colonial adventures and disputes is Watson and Mary's engagement; an off-the-note diversion that equally settles Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.²⁰ Mary is engaged with one of the "knights-errants" who come in and settle the disputes; the domestic and familial order is restored through the conjugal bliss that ends the fiction by providing a definite and emotionally-settled closure to the story. The patriarchal order on the domesticity ground is affirmed and thus re-installed to the fiction's end.

Tonga's footsteps symbolically imprint on the roads of London and change the city's texture and materiality, preparing for the depiction of the city's transformation. Doyle reconstructs multiple spaces of London that are marked with conflicting ideologies. Similarly, the bodies and identities of three English subjects—Mary Morston and the Sholto twins—are also placed on a dubious ground, seemingly reflecting the problematic geography that they are in. The troubling landscapes represented in *The Sign* can be seen as Doyle's reflection of the inner-debate concerning colonialism and as the participation in the multiple historical and autobiographical accounts addressing the 1857-58 Mutiny. Despite the patriarchal hegemony returns through Watson and Mary's marriage, the conclusion is offset by Doyle's uncertainties about the colonial enterprise, which reflects on the city spaces and English subjects' bodies that are invested with ambiguity and contradictions.

²⁰ Marlowe tells Kurtz's fiancée that "The last word he pronounced was—your name." instead of "The horror, the horror!"—Kurtz's actual last words. Kurtz's fiancée's innocent believing in Kurtz's gallantry and colonial heroism are answered by the knightly and heroically lofty claim that Marlowe fabricates; Marlow's fabrication is also the reciprocation of the lofty ideals that some Victorians would like to believe in. The irony of the fiction lies on the fact of both Marlowe and Kurtz's disillusionment about the "dark" nature of the colonialism—the central message that Marlowe tries to conceal from the fiancée, yet makes explicit to the readers.

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