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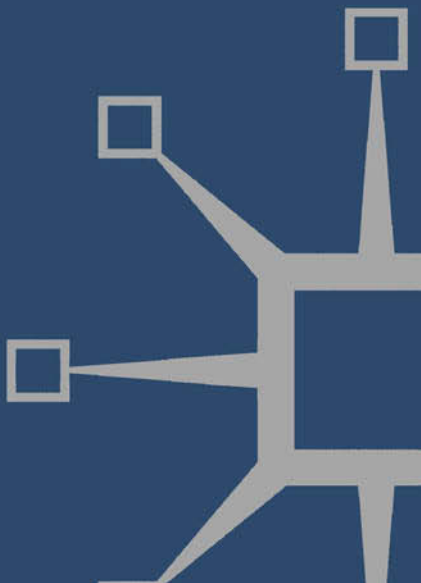

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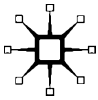

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The Fact and Fiction of Darwinism: The Representation of Race, Ethnicity and Imperialism in the Sherlock Holmes Stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Hilary A. Goldsmith

Critical explorations of the relationship between literature and science, especially with regard to the nineteenth-century novel have increased in recent decades. Notable examples include Gillian Beer's *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth Century Fiction* (1983), George Levine's *Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction* (1988) and Joseph Carroll's (2004) *Literary Darwinism: Evolution, Human Nature and Literature*. Similarly, literary scholars from Dorothy L. Sayers, in the Introduction to *The Omnibus of Crime* (1929) to Stephen Knight in *Crime Fiction 1800–2000* (2004) in the early twenty-first century have examined numerous aspects of the roles and lives of fictional detectives.

It is encouraging that the depth and scope of critical work on the detective fiction genre is increasing, especially in the areas of gender and race. Feminist readings are explored, for example, in Gill Plain's *Twentieth Century Crime Fiction: Gender, Sexuality and the Body* (2001), while Susan Rowland's *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell* (2001) and Stephen Knight's *Crime Fiction* (as above) explore issues surrounding both gender and race.

Yet the relationship between the detective fiction genre and scientific discourse remains relatively unexplored, Ronald R. Thomas's *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science* (1999) being a notable exception, while scholarship examining the relationship between race, Darwinism and detective fiction is still virtually non-existent. This chapter addresses

this fascinating area of scholarship by focusing specifically on the relationship between Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's detective fiction.

The year 2009 was important for both literature and science. It marked the 150th anniversary of the birth of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of, arguably, the greatest of all fictional detectives, Mr Sherlock Holmes, the 200th anniversary of the birth of the naturalist Charles Darwin and the 150th anniversary of the publication of *The Origin of Species*, his seminal work on evolutionary theory. Following the resurgence of interest in all things Darwinian sparked by his anniversaries, the time is now apposite for a re-evaluation of the influence Darwin's work undoubtedly exerted on the literature of the age. The coinciding of the Darwin and Conan Doyle anniversaries provides the stimulus for a new assessment and re-evaluation of the relationship between the writings of these two men and the influence which the work of Darwin exerted on Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories.

This chapter offers a short review of Darwin's theories, specifically in relation to the races of mankind. It then compares and contrasts Darwin's assertions with those expressed by Conan Doyle in *The Sign of Four* (1890), *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892).

Conan Doyle offers a moderating influence on some of the most notorious misinterpretations of Darwin's work. For example, through his exploration of the character of the aboriginal Tonga in *The Sign of Four*, Conan Doyle demonstrates how racial stereotyping is wholly misleading, race being no indication of character. While Darwin suggested that some of the races of man are less developed than others, Conan Doyle shows that the imposition of colonial rule over less advanced races does no good to either the colonised or the colonisers. The Sherlock Holmes stories demonstrate that whereas Darwinian evolutionary theory is based on ideas of progressiveness and forward motion, the brutality of the act of colonisation itself is as likely to cause the regression of the colonisers as it is to speed the advancement of the colonised.

In 1871, Darwin published *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* in which he extended the principles of his evolutionary theory first posited in *The Origin of Species* to offer an account of the origins of man himself. In the introduction to *The Descent of Man,* Darwin recognised that "[t]he conclusion that man is the co-descendant with other species of some ancient, lower and extinct form, is not in any degree new" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 3). His main accomplishment was

to assimilate for the first time the current theories regarding the origin of species, and to present a consistent, well-reasoned, logical argument that was backed up by numerous practical examples, many acquired during his journey on the Beagle. That all living beings are linked to one another through a chain of increasing complexity stretching from "some one primordial form, into which life was first breathed" (Darwin 1859: 455) to Man at "the very summit of the organic scale" (Darwin 1871: Vol. II, 405), forms the fundamental tenet of Darwin's Theory of Evolution. Man and all other species, therefore, were not individual, separate creations but formed part of one great chain of existence.

This concept of interconnectedness is not only fundamental to Darwin's theory, but also underpins Holmes's "Science of Deduction" which is the title heading of both chapter 2 of *A Study in Scarlet* and chapter 1 of *The Sign of Four.* Scientific deduction is, of course, of paramount importance to the solution of so many of Holmes's cases.

The employment by the fictional detective of such intellectual powers as logic, reason, deduction and induction did not originate with Holmes. Arguably, the greatest use of such skills is demonstrated by Edgar Allan Poe's cerebral detective C. Auguste Dupin, who, at the beginning of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841), likens solving crime to a game of chess, a purely intellectual exercise. However, both Holmes and Darwin required physical evidence as well as intellectual power to form their hypotheses. Indeed, one of Darwin's prime achievements was to support intellectual reasoning with concrete examples collected from the observation of living specimens and from the evidence of the geological record. Holmes emphasises this requirement for solid evidence in "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches" (1892) when he cries "Data! data! data! [. . .] I can't make bricks without clay" (Doyle 1981: 322). A good example of this is the amount of information Holmes is able to deduce regarding the ownership of a hat in "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" (1892). The owner of the hat and the goose in whose crop the blue carbuncle was found was the same man.

Darwin's theory contended that each group of animals showed an advance over those directly below it through modification of the smallest detail of its anatomy. Similarly, Holmes's method required the linking of what might appear disparate facts through the observation of their similarities and logical, reasoned progression from the simple to the complex. Holmes, like Darwin, contended that "all life is a great chain, the nature of which is known whenever we are shown a single link of it" (Doyle 1981: *Study*, 23).

The understanding of life as a chain inevitably implies a hierarchy. Darwin's findings regarding the relationship between the various races of man and their place within the hierarchy of the animal kingdom are central to *The Descent of Man*. One of Darwin's main concerns regarding the various races of man was whether the diversity of these races required that they should be considered as separate species. The terms "species" and "sub-species" lacked standardisation in Darwin's time, and were applied differently by different naturalists (Darwin 1859: 107). This consequently rendered Darwin's task more challenging.

However, having considered all positions in careful detail, Darwin concluded that the races of man should not be considered as separate species, but as sub-species (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 235). For example, he argued that "[a]lthough the existing races of man differ in many aspects, as in colour, hair, shape of skull, proportions of the body , &c., yet if their whole organisation be taken into consideration they are found to resemble each other closely in a multitude of points" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 232). This multitude of points includes the "close agreement in numerous small details of habits, tastes and dispositions" and "the numerous and unimportant points of resemblance between the several races of man in bodily structure and mental faculties" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 233). Holmes similarly recognises that a wealth of difference can be encompassed within that which is man. While noting, in *The Sign of Four*, that "a strange enigma is man" he goes on to observe that "while the individual man is an insoluble puzzle, in the aggregate he becomes a mathematical certainty" (Doyle 1890: 196). This seems to echo Darwin's view, implying that while individuals demonstrate considerable variety one from another, mankind taken as a whole exhibits within its membership far more similarities than differences.

Darwin did recognise similarities between different races' physical and mental characteristics. However, his categorisation of the sub-species of man as "barbarians" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 239) or "savages" and "civilised nations" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 238) is, of course, repugnant to us in the twenty-first century. These distinctly racist attitudes were common in late Victorian times and acceptable for much of the nineteenth century so required little explanation or justification. Nevertheless, the implications of Darwinian racial stereotyping are alarming. For example, commenting on "[t]he great break in the organic chain between man and his nearest allies" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 200), Darwin noted that "the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 201). This is in line with Darwin's concept of "the survival of the fittest".

The result of this will be that "[t]he break will then be rendered wider for it will intervene between man in a more civilised state [...] and some ape as low as a baboon [...] instead of as it is at present between the negro or Australian and the gorilla" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 201).

One reason for the misinterpretation of Darwin's work, especially with regard to the supposed superiority of European white, Christian man and man's relationship to the lower animals, is that Darwin's view is itself frequently unclear. On the one hand Darwin states that "all races agree in so many unimportant details of structure and in so many mental peculiarities, that these can be accounted for only through inheritance from a common progenitor [...] [which] [...] would probably have deserved to rank as man" (Darwin 1871: Vol. II, 388). This clearly implies that all the races of man are descended from a common ancestor, not from one another.

And yet, in the concluding remarks of the *Descent of Man,* Darwin states that "there can hardly be a doubt that we are descended from barbarians [...] I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved this dreaded enemy in order to save the life of his keeper [...] as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies" (Darwin 1871: Vol. II, 404). That man is descended from these barbarians and savages seems to contradict Darwin's previous conclusion that all the races of man are descended from a common progenitor.

It was therefore unsurprising that ideas about race would filter into detective fiction. While Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories frequently associate certain characteristics with certain races, he is also keen to demonstrate how mistrust or suspicion of other races, purely on the grounds of their ethnic origins, can be at best misleading and at worst dangerous. In "The Adventure of the Speckled Band", for example, Holmes reaches entirely the wrong conclusion by assuming that gypsies are responsible for Julia Stoner's death.

However, unlike Darwin, Conan Doyle avoided the worst type of racial stereotyping in that he did not necessarily link behaviour, especially that associated with a moral viewpoint, with race. But in "The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge" (1908) Conan Doyle seems to subscribe fully to Darwin's notion that the "lower races" are "savages" and "barbarians". The cook, a "huge and hideous mulatto, with yellowish features of a pronounced negroid type" named Henderson is really Don Murillo, the Tiger of San Pedro, a "most lewd and bloodthirsty tyrant", who was "as cunning as he was cruel", a "savage" (e.g. Doyle 1908: 880, 881, 884, 887) who practises voodooism. And yet Conan Doyle's

portrayal of Tonga, discussed below, an aborigine of the Andaman Islands in *The Sign of Four* is again rather different.

The Sign of Four (1890)

The white, British, wooden-legged Jonathan Small is one of the "four" of the title (Small, Mehomat Singh, Abdullah Kahn and Dost Akbar) who initially steal the great Agra treasure from its rightful owner. A man is murdered during the theft, for which the four men stand trial and are convicted. They are imprisoned on the Andaman Islands where the British Major Sholto and Captain Morstan are in command of the native troops. Small offers Sholto and Morstan a map showing the whereabouts of the treasure in return for their aiding his escape. Sholto takes the map, finds the treasure and returns to England without honouring his promise to free Small.

During his captivity, Small came across a sick native Andaman islander named Tonga and nursed him back to health. It is Tonga who helps Small escape. Small and Tonga follow Morstan to England in search of the treasure, which, after Morstan's death, is now in the possession of Thaddeus and Bartholomew, Sholto's sons. Small and Tonga visit Bartholomew's home to repossess the treasure they regard as rightfully theirs. Surprised during the attempted theft, Tonga kills Bartholomew with a poison dart, under the misapprehension that Small wishes him dead.

Meanwhile Morstan's daughter has received a letter which, in a roundabout way, leads her to the house of Bartholomew Sholto. Taking Holmes and Watson for company and protection, the trio arrive at Bartholomew's home just too late to save him from Tonga's poisoned dart. Holmes and Watson discover that Small and Tonga have hired a boat in which they plan to escape with the treasure. Chased by a police boat, they are trapped. Tonga is shot dead and Small captured.

The Sign of Four is particularly relevant to this discussion of the connections between Darwin's theories and Conan Doyle's detective fiction in its representation of Tonga. Through an exploration of Tonga's character and role, Conan Doyle addresses the comparative moral and social qualities of white and so-called "lower" races.

The use and power of articulate language for Small and Tonga is telling here. Darwin keenly noted the apparent relationship between the development of articulate language, which is peculiar to man, and the development of the human brain (see Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 53–62 for Darwin's discussion of the importance of language). Don Murillo

in "The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge" is "a perfect savage [...] hardly speaks a word of English [...] but grunts" (Doyle 1890: 881). Tonga, however, seems to have a reasonable command of the English tongue. Small mentions how he discussed their escape with Tonga (Doyle 1890: 155). Tonga was, therefore, not only capable of articulate language but was able to conduct a reasoned argument.

It is significant then that Tonga never speaks directly. Conan Doyle gives him no direct voice. Small, on the other hand, is given a substantial voice. The last chapter of *The Sign of Four* is given over solely to Small's account of the events of the story, an account which is not only long, but surprisingly articulate. Holmes encourages him to speak with little interruption calling Small's narrative "a very remarkable account. [...] a fitting windup to an extremely interesting case" (Doyle 1890: 157). Tonga's lack of a voice is not suggestive of a limited intellect, but rather of its suppression and, arguably, of the oppression of his race by those supposedly more intellectually advanced. Small's ability to use language effectively should not be taken as any indication that he is in possession of other higher qualities such as trust and loyalty, which in him were sadly lacking.

In chapter 3 of *The Descent of Man,* Darwin discusses the moral sense, noting "the low morality of savages" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 97) and cited an example where "the robbery of strangers is considered honourable" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 94). However, in *The Sign of Four,* that the white, British Small is one of the four thieves who initially steal the great Agra treasure shows that such an immoral action is not purely the province of the "lower races".

Small lost his right leg as a result of its being "nipped off by a crocodile" (Doyle 1890: 145). This is an intriguing metaphor. It is after this incident that Small's personality alters. As part of his physical body has been destroyed, so some of his human qualities are also diminished and he becomes less human. The crocodile, representative of the animal behavioural instincts which man constantly strives to subdue, has risen up and attacked Small's humanising characteristics. For the rest of his life he must bear the physical evidence of this diminished humanity for all to see. His wooden leg warns Major Sholto of his presence and alerts Holmes to his identity as the stealer of the Agra treasure. The crocodile, traditionally symbolic of revenge through patience, has certainly bitten Small as he waits many years to regain the treasure he regards as rightfully his.

Along with low morality, Darwin also considers weak-will and greed as characteristics of the "lower races" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 97). While

it is true that the initial idea for the theft came from Singh and Kahn, Small's weak-will and greed ease his persuasion into collaboration. This demonstrates both the contaminating influence of colonisation on the coloniser and that weak-will and greed can be displayed equally well by the more "civilised races".

Tonga is shot as he fires a poisoned dart at Holmes in an attempt to save Small. Tonga's aiding and befriending of Small contradicts Darwin's assertion that "savages" enjoy witnessing the distress of strangers and only help members of their own tribe (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 94). Contrary to what Conan Doyle's readership might have expected, it is Tonga, even though Doyle describes him as "as venomous as a young snake" (Doyle 1890: 155), who demonstrates loyalty and fidelity. The British thief Major Sholto demonstrates only treachery and greed. As Small says, "he was staunch and true, was little Tonga. No man ever had a more faithful mate" (Doyle 1890: 155). After his betrayal by Sholto, Small lives "only for vengeance" (Doyle 1890: 155) exacting it by "knocking the whole front of [a convict-guard's] skull in" (Doyle 1890: 155).

Thaddeus regards Miss Morstan, Captain Morstan's daughter, as the rightful heir to half the treasure. As well as suggesting that the robbery of strangers is considered as honourable and praiseworthy among "savages", and not by members of civilised nations, Darwin notes the importance to the "lower races" of loyalty within a tribe (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 94). Both of these characteristics seem in this instance to be demonstrated by the white British Sholto family. In true Darwinian fashion, Thaddeus shows loyalty to his own "tribe" family or race, but, like Small, has no conscience regarding the initial theft of the treasure from its rightful owner. Contrary to Darwin's implications, Conan Doyle again shows that moral sense cannot be linked to race.

Darwin extends his assertion that the "lower races" are faithful only to their own tribe, further noting that "most savages are utterly indifferent to the sufferings of strangers" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 94). This is certainly not true of the behaviour of Tonga. He, the savage aborigine, gives his own life to save that of his friend.

Tonga left a single footprint at the home of Bartholomew Sholto. Holmes uses the (fictitious) just-published gazetteer to identify the footprint as belonging to an aborigine of the Andaman Islands. Darwin refers to aborigines as "taciturn, even morose" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 216). In this gazetteer article, Conan Doyle presents his readership with the then current racist stereotype of the people of the Andaman Islands. Through the character of Tonga, however, he goes on to point out the flaws in this description of the Islanders as a warning against the

unquestioning acceptance of such racial stereotyping. Further, in creating Tonga as a native of the Andaman Islands, Conan Doyle may be subtly suggesting a reason for the supposed aggressive behaviour of these people. Might not their less than amiable personality be a product of the mistreatment of the aborigines at the hands of their British colonisers, rather than an innate characteristic of their race? As Darwin puts it: "When civilised nations come into contact with barbarians the struggle is short with the civilised nations always being victorious" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 238).

The gazetteer's description of members of this tribe develops this, suggesting that they are wholly evil. The gazetteer tells how:

> They are a fierce, morose and intractable people, though capable of forming most devoted friendships when their confidence has once been gained. [...] So intractable are they that all the efforts of the British officials have failed to win them over in any degree. They have always been a terror of shipwrecked crews, braining the survivors with their stone-headed clubs or shooting them with poisoned arrows. These massacres are invariably concluded by a cannibal feast.
> (Doyle 1890: 128)

Anthropologist Sita Venkateswar has observed that "[o]ver the centuries the Andaman Islanders have been a subject of both fascination and dread, often being portrayed as brutish cannibals" (Venkateswar 83). As a reversal of expectations, it is interesting to note how this supposed braining of shipwreck survivors by the aborigines bears a close resemblance to the battering to death of the convict-guard by the British Small, using his wooden leg as a club and the murder of his Indian butler by the white Dr Roylott in "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" discussed later.

Through this description of the islanders in the fictitious gazetteer, Conan Doyle seems to portray them as little more than animals and thus echoes one of the common misconceptions of the age. However, rather than presenting the Andamanese as "savages", Conan Doyle's creation Tonga exhibits loyalty, devotion, bravery, fidelity and friendship to one who is not of his tribe.

That the fictitious Tonga was a native of the Andaman Islands is of particular significance. From 1858, these islands were used as a penal colony for Indian dissidents and mutineers whose appalling treatment at the hands of the British resulted in many deaths. It was not only the transportees who were badly treated. Half of the native Andamanese died as

a result of infections such as syphilis, measles and influenza introduced by the British (Scott-Clark and Levy 2001: 31). Conan Doyle may also here be offering a subtle criticism of the role of the British in India.

Darwin did recognise the detrimental effects that contact with outsiders had on indigenous populations noting that "[n]ew diseases and vices are highly destructive; and it appears that in every nation a new disease causes much death [...]. It further appears, mysterious as is the fact, that the first meeting of distinct and separate people generates disease" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 239). Perhaps it is as a result of such contact that when Small first finds Tonga, the latter is "sick to death and had gone to the woods to die" (Doyle 1890: 155). It is ironic that although Small nurses Tonga back to health here, it is as a result of his relationship with Small that Tonga meets his untimely death.

In his discussion of the development of the social qualities of man (chapter 5 of *Descent of Man*), Darwin frequently states the importance of sympathy, fidelity and courage between members of the same tribe to the preservation of that tribe (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 162). Tonga, however, has progressed a stage further than this, for his devotion is to Small, a member of the race who is set on eliminating, or at least controlling his own. Tonga's allegiance to Small, because he saved his life, outweighs his fear and prejudice against a white man whose race has mistreated and misused his own, almost to the point of extinction. Tonga, a supposed savage, is capable of valuing a man for his individual qualities rather than indulging in the trappings of racial prejudice demonstrated in *The Sign of Four,* as being characteristic of the white races.

In the same way that Darwin used solid factual evidence including skeletal remains to support his evolutionary theories, the fictitious Tonga's back-story is also based on historical fact. In a way, Conan Doyle's criticism of the supposed implications of Darwinian theory with respect to the "lower races" is answering like with like. Conan Doyle is perhaps demonstrating, though not necessarily consciously, how it is just as possible to implant fact within fiction as it is to accommodate fiction within fact.

One should not, perhaps, unthinkingly take either fact or fiction at their apparent face value. Such considerations would have been particularly pertinent at a time when different types of writing, including scientific treatises and fictional works, shared a common prose style. The Sherlock Holmes stories were originally published in *Strand Magazine* alongside articles about actual police cases, developments in criminology, miscellaneous news stories, political commentary and reports of scientific inventions (Thomas 1999: 75). This must have

made the separation of fact from fiction particularly challenging for the readership.

The Victorians generally became more ethnocentric as the century progressed, fuelled by the misconception that the darker races, the "barbarians" and "savages" of Darwin's work, needed somehow to be tamed and civilised. For Darwin, the "civilising" of men is synonymous with the domestication of animals (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 132), not a particularly attractive proposition, perhaps, for the darker races as it involved the control of "conditions of life" including breeding and habitat (Darwin 1859: 71). Darwinism was increasingly misinterpreted (possibly for political convenience) and his theories were used to imply that the European white, Christian, western races were surely at the top of a coherent chain of existence. This justified the spread of Imperialism, clothing exploitation in the garb of Christian charity and respectability (Eldridge 1996: 140). Darwin seemed to regard it as strange that "[m]any savages are in the same condition as when first discovered several centuries ago" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 166). The implication is that these savages should be led towards civilisation.

The acquisition of empire had traditionally been associated with both the economic interests of businessmen, looking for new markets to exploit, and the romantic imaginings of the populace with regard to the idea of empire, of adventure, of challenge and of the power of the British Crown – ideas that were reinforced by the acquisition of colonial wealth. As the century progressed, the colonies came to be regarded more as political and economic burdens, partly as the result of small colonial wars in Africa, Asia and the Pacific (Eldridge 1996: 26). By the end of the nineteenth century, concerns over Imperial expansion, together with increased social and political problems in many of the colonies, raised serious doubts as to the desirability and practicality of maintaining such a large empire. These ambiguities are evident in the portrayal of the eponymous Dr. Watson, especially in the piteous position in which Conan Doyle first presents him at the opening of *A Study in Scarlet*.

A Study in Scarlet (1887)

It is in *A Study in Scarlet* that Conan Doyle first introduces the world to Holmes and Watson. The story is a complicated one, divided into two parts. At the beginning of Part 1 Holmes and Watson meet Inspectors Gregson and Lestrade in a house which is the scene of the murder of Enoch Drebber. The word "RACHE" (German for "revenge") is written in blood on the wall above the body. Visiting the boarding house

where Drebber was staying, Holmes finds the body of Drebber's friend Strangerson, also accompanied by the word "RACHE". Through a series of deductions, Holmes identifies one Jefferson Hope as their murderer.

Part 2 takes the reader back to Utah in 1847. Set against a background of Mormonism, Lucy falls in love with Jefferson Hope but is forbidden from marrying him because he is not of the Mormon faith. She is forced to marry Drebber. Strangerson kills her step-father who resists the marriage and Lucy dies of a broken heart. Drebber and Strangerson flee to England where Hope eventually catches up with them and kills them.

In *A Study in Scarlet*, Conan Doyle seems to reflect the dichotomy of the age when he both reassures his readership of the necessity for English Imperialism and colonisation, and pointed out its pitfalls. The novel commences with "John H. Watson, M. D., late of the Army Medical Department" (Doyle 1887: 15), introducing himself. He cuts a poor figure, not that of a proud, victorious soldier. He has just returned to England, apparently without friends or relatives, from the Second Afghan War in which he "was struck on the shoulder by a Jezail bullet, which shattered the bone and grazed the subclavian artery" (Doyle 1887: 15). Watson hardly receives a hero's welcome on his return to England. The nation, for whose glory he has sacrificed his health, seems to have deserted him. Alone and seemingly homeless, he roams the streets of London.

In reflecting upon the ideals of the Victorian age, Darwin stated that "[t]here can be no doubt that a tribe including many members who, from possessing in a high degree the spirit of patriotism, fidelity, obedience, courage and sympathy, were always ready to give aid to each other and to sacrifice themselves for the common good, would be victorious over most other tribes" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 166). If the word "tribe" is replaced with the word "nation" the above description might act as a fairly accurate account of the qualities valued in the late Victorian era. And yet, while Watson himself may well have demonstrated these qualities personally, his treatment on his return to England does not show a nation prepared to reward him in kind for his devotion to the Crown and his personal sacrifice.

Watson represents both the qualities required for the success of a nation and the fast-fading views regarding Imperialism expressed in many boy's magazines and papers of the day which emphasised a sense of duty, responsibility and self-sacrifice (Eldridge 1996: 21). Watson's fate suggests that these qualities were no longer so deeply valued, and, like Watson himself, were somewhat out of place in the late-Victorian world. As a serving army doctor, who did not fight but witnessed the carnage

of war, Watson was still supporting British Imperialism by acting as its agent. The psychological and physical harm caused to Watson by his experiences in imperialist wars might be viewed as a metaphor for the damage done to the psyche and the political and financial well-being of England by the atrocities which it inflicted on those peoples whom it colonised.

The detrimental influence of colonisation on the British colonisers is a recurrent theme within the Sherlock Holmes stories. The role of the British in India is frequently referred to, for example, in "The Five Orange Pips" (1891), "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892), "The Blue Carbuncle" (1892), "The Beryl Coronet" (1892), "The Crooked Man" (1893) and "The Adventure of the Second Stain" (1904) and can be read as emphasising the distance between the superior white races and the supposed "barbarous" and "savage races" by a kind of polarisation. Dr Roylott, in "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892) offers a pertinent example of an initially upstanding white English gentleman whose ensuing criminality results from his exploitation of the spoils of empire, especially power and wealth.

"The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892)

Miss Helen Stoner visits Holmes in fear of her life after the suspicious death of her sister, Julia, shortly before her marriage. Julia died in the corridor outside her bedroom in the depths of the night blaming a "Speckled Band". Dr Roylott, Helen's step-father, has required her to move into Julia's bedroom. Roylott had married the widowed Mrs Stoner, Julia and Helen's mother, in India, but she had died shortly after their return to Stoke Moran, Roylott's ancestral home, in England. Helen, who is herself about to be married, hears strange noises in the night including a mysterious whistling sound.

Having arranged for Helen to sleep elsewhere, Holmes and Watson spend the night in Helen's bedroom, unbeknown to Roylott, to await events. Responding to the whistle, a venomous swamp adder enters the room through a ventilator. It slides down a bell cord onto the pillow. Holmes attacks the snake, the "speckled band" of the title, sending it back through the grating into the adjoining room where Roylott awaits its return. The furious snake bites Roylott and kills him. Roylott planned to murder his step-daughters as their marriages would have deprived him of their annuities.

As "the last survivor of one of the oldest Saxon families in England" (Doyle 1892: 184), Roylott is truly British. Falling on hard times, he took

"a medical degree and went out to Culcutta where, by his professional skill and his force of character, he established a large practice" (Doyle 1892: 185). Roylott's success and his elevated position in India were arguably achieved and maintained through exploitation of the indigenous population. He has an Indian butler: the natives are reduced to a servile role. Roylott's house is robbed, probably as a result of native resentment of his wealth and position acquired at their expense. Apparently provoked by these robberies, Roylott beat his "native butler" to death and "returned to England a morose and disappointed man" (Doyle 1892: 185). Noticeable here is the resemblance between this incident and Small's beating to death of the guard in *The Sign of Four* discussed previously.

Conan Doyle's use of words here is interesting. As previously noted, "morose" is a term used in the gazetteer in *The Sign of Four*, to describe the Andamanese, while Darwin uses it to describe aborigines (Darwin 1871: 216). "Disappointed" arguably refers to a far finer sentiment. In *The Sign of Four*, Conan Doyle calls man "a soul concealed in an animal" (Doyle 1890: 135). "Disappointed" can be related to the soul qualities of man as "morose" relates to the animal. Roylott therefore displays a split personality reminiscent of Robert Louis Stevenson's dual-personality character Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886).

Helen feels that Roylott's predisposition towards a violent temper has been "intensified by his long residence in the tropics" (Doyle 1892: 185). It is implied that this, together with the thefts by native Indians, is to blame for the deterioration of Roylott's mental state and his increased ferocity. His mental faculties have been contaminated, thus causing a partial reversion to the savage state. You will remember the description in Holmes's gazetteer of how the savage Andaman Islanders would beat shipwrecked sailors to death. Reversion "to some former and ancient type" (Darwin 1871: Vol. I, 9) is a feature of Darwinian evolution, but was meant by Darwin to apply to the reappearance of now obsolete physical characteristics, not moral attributes. However, in depicting this reversion as moral as well as physical, Conan Doyle supports the importance of progressiveness, of civilising the "savage races", of moving forward, within the framework of Darwinian evolutionary theory.

Roylott indulges his passion for Indian animals by letting a cheetah and a baboon roam the grounds of Stoke Moran, much to the consternation of the local villagers who fear the animals "almost as much as their master" (Doyle 1892: 185). Even this seat of English power and respectability has become contaminated with the spoils of empire. The affinity Roylott feels with these wild beasts supports the notion that

he, at least in part, has reverted to a lower form. Indeed, the narrative describes Roylott as resembling "a fierce old bird of prey" (Doyle 1892: 189). He is thus able to relate to animals when he is unable to form relationships with humankind.

The killing of two innocent young women by the Indian swamp adder might be considered as a metaphor for the poisonous effect of the empire on its British colonisers as well as representing the immense gulf between the two. Holmes's finally gaining control over the swamp adder by returning it to its iron safe, represents the ultimate triumph of the coloniser over the colonised.

"The Adventure of the Speckled Band" demonstrates that the influence of the Indian colony is then to be feared. Its morals, represented by the thefts by natives, together with the tropical heat, threaten the sanity of Roylott, causing him to metaphorically revert to a lower form. The animals which roam the grounds of his house and threaten the villagers represent, perhaps, the threat of contamination Imperial ideology offered to the survival of pre-colonial British ideals.

Conclusion

The Sherlock Holmes stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle incorporate an assessment of the outcomes of Imperialism, by both overtly demonstrating and covertly suggesting the detrimental effects of colonisation on both the colonised and the colonisers. This chapter has considered Conan Doyle's response to Imperialism in the light of the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin. Through the scenarios set out in these stories, Conan Doyle warns that contact with anything emanating from the colonies can be dangerous both in its diluting effect on Britishness and in its contamination of British ideals. The power Imperialism exerted over the less-advanced Indian population was itself detrimental to the British character, bringing out its worst aspects, especially the lust for power, glory and greed for material possessions.

Simultaneously, Conan Doyle warns of the dangers of racial stereotyping, showing that race alone is no indicator of moral character. Tonga, the "savage" native of the Andaman Islands, demonstrates care, friendship and loyalty to his white friend, behaviour of which Major Sholto and Captain Morstan seem incapable. While Roylott's disposition may have been influenced by his stay in India, his actions are ultimately his own personal responsibility. It is his actions over which he alone has control which bring about his own death. There is much more to be said regarding the connections between Darwinism, Social Darwinism and

detective fiction, the Sherlock Holmes stories providing fertile ground for such analysis. This chapter has only touched the surface of this fascinating area of study. Much rewarding and satisfying work remains to be done by any willing to take up the gauntlet.

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