



JACLR

*Journal of Artistic
Creation & Literary
Research*

JACLR: Journal of Artistic Creation and Literary Research is a bi-annual, peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access Graduate Student Journal of the Universidad Complutense Madrid that publishes interdisciplinary research on literary studies, critical theory, applied linguistics and semiotics, and educational issues. The journal also publishes original contributions in artistic creation in order to promote these works.

Volume 6 Issue 2 (December 2018) Article 4

Julio San Román Cazorla

"Threatening the Victorian Empire: Colonialism and Womanhood"

Recommended Citation

San Román Cazorla, Julio. "Threatening the Victorian Empire: Colonialism and Womanhood" *JACLR: Journal of Artistic Creation and Literary Research* 6.2 (2018): 33-43.

<<https://www.ucm.es/siim/journal-of-artistic-creation-and-literary-research>>

©Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

Abstract: This work, based on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of the Four* and *A Scandal in Bohemia*, will deal with the analysis of Victorian society, considering Imperialism as the beginning of a new way of thinking and industrialization as a reflection of the new ideology and social system in Great Britain. I will develop the explanation of the Victorian project, dealing with the threat that imperialism supposed to it, the 'Woman Question', the creation of a collectively-driven personality and the differences between social classes, exposing the character of Sherlock Holmes as the ultimate Victorian gentleman (according to the ideas of the Carlylean hero).

Keywords: Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle, Victorian project, Imperialism, reverse colonization, femme fatale.

Julio SAN ROMÁN CAZORLA

Threatening the Victorian Empire: Colonialism and Womanhood

0. Introduction

In the late nineteenth century, when the British Empire had reached its peak by flourishing during centuries thanks to the expansion of its territories to Africa, South America and Asia and to the establishment of commercial routes with all these colonies, Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle decided to write a detective novel in which deduction and reasoning were highly praised, in contrast with other stories in which the investigator reached the conclusion by chance or by accident. The two first stories of his personal sleuth, Sherlock Holmes, *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of the Four* (published in 1887 and 1890) were a complete success.

This led to a series of short stories, published in the famous magazine, *The Strand*, until Doyle decided to kill his character in the short story *The Final Problem*. Nevertheless, Doyle's success obliged him to resurrect Holmes in *The Baskerville Hound* and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*. But what was the reason for this popularity? Why did the late-nineteenth century reader like these stories? It might be argued that the popularity that resurrected Holmes was due to the fact that his stories dealt with the themes of society, empire and industrialization that concerned late-Victorian readers. As Judith R. Walkowitz argues in *City of Dreadful Delight*, "a crisis in epistemology is joined with the blurring of boundaries of class, race, and gender that seem to be transgressed and, finally, to collapse." (38-39)

1. The Victorian project: the world's vision of man

During the Victorian Era, an expression used to refer to the period during Queen Victoria's reign (20th June, 1837-22nd January, 1901), the Industrial Revolution and the British Empire were nearing their breaking point. The development of the country and the socio-economic improvements led to a series of changes in the Victorian cultural sensibility and political concerns.

Discipline and morality were exacerbated in Victorian society with solid prejudices and strict prohibitions. Appearances had a very important role in society and thus appearing to be a good family, organized and ruled by a paternal figure, was essential; hence, men dominated the public and private life while women were designated as caretakers, assuming the role of mother, housekeeper and peace bringer in the house. The conception of the Victorian man as a family man was an important part of the new mentality, representing a way of showing moral order and correctness. The breakup of morality supposed a scandal and a crime, as was the case for Oscar Wilde, condemned to prison under charges of sodomy.

Viciousness was considered socially repulsive. Thanks to Imperialism, new drugs like opium arrived to the British Isles and, though they were a profitable source of income, drug addiction was considered a deplorable condition. This social repulsion to viciousness was also present in sex, which though valued as a form of reproduction from a utilitarian perspective, was negatively regarded as a source of hedonistic corruption. This vision partially stemmed from the development in the lowest-class quarters of a sexual *milieu* which included several variants, like orgies, erotic spectacles, or homosexual relations and rapes. The consequences of illicit sex arrived in the shape of illnesses like syphilis and illegitimate children. Therefore, according to Victorian morals, chastity had to be protected.

Regarding the society itself, rural migration to urban areas was continued throughout the century. As a result, cities became overpopulated as industrialization had developed to its highest extent up to that moment. The individual landowner transformed himself into the rich businessman who belonged to the bourgeoisie and whose workers were turned into a depersonalised and alienated collective due to the fact that Victorian society was based on the failure of a lot of people for the success of one only person and

the standardisation of the industry lead to the conception of the individual as a consumer or a producer. The omission of the identity of the worker came along with the destruction of nature by industrialization. In *The Sign of the Four*, Doyle highlights the difference between the exotic India, a place still mostly unknown to the Victorians, who were fascinated by it, and the city of London, full of smoke, brick buildings and muddy dirtiness:

Mud-coloured clouds drooped sadly over the muddy streets. Down the Strand the lamps were but misty splotches of diffused light, which threw a feeble circular glimmer upon the slimy pavement. The yellow glare from the shop-windows streamed out into the steamy, vaporous air and threw a murky, shifting radiance across the crowded thoroughfare. (Conan Doyle "Sign" 123)

[...]

And then again interminable lines of new, staring brick buildings —the monster tentacles which the giant city was throwing out into the country. (Conan Doyle "Sign" 124)

On the one hand, Doyle emphasizes the colours of London: first, he uses dun, associated with the smog and the mud and that is the result not only of the wet earth but also of the removed soil. This is done in order to show that the city of London is industrialised and that the ground has been removed to build houses and factories that cover the sky with brown smoke as dirty as the ground. Second, he employs yellow, which is associated with a common disease of the time, syphilis, and with the Decadent movement, which focuses on art, beauty, life and death. This warns the reader that he is in a world where these elements are joined and that the characters of the novel are going to find in their destination a story of beauty (treasure) and death (Major Sholto, Major Morstan and Bartholomew Sholto).

On the other hand, Doyle refers to the buildings as "monster tentacles", making a metaphor about a monster which destroys the countryside and devours nature. This sets the difference between the characters who are in contact with industrialization (Sherlock Holmes, Doctor Watson, Athelney Jones), considered as rational men, and the ones who are in contact with India and other exotic places (Jonathan Small, Tonga), depicted as more irrational and corrupted.¹ Thanks to this assumed superiority, the Victorian characters imposed their design over those of the colonies, a power dynamic analogous to that of the city over the countryside.

Apart from the destruction of nature, Watson also talks about the loss of the individual identity of the characters as they traverse across London's streets: "There was, to my mind, something eerie and ghostlike in the endless procession of faces which flitted across these narrow bars of light —sad faces and glad, haggard and merry. Like all human

¹ See section 2. "Imperialism: a double-edged sword" in pages 38, 39 and 40 of this work for a full discussion on this topic.

kind, they flitted from the gloom into the light, and so back into the gloom once more.” (Conan Doyle “Sign” 123)

The fact of considering all of them as a “procession” suggests the idea of depersonalised masses that industrialization imposed over the lower social classes. Moreover, by giving them the “eerie and ghostlike” aspect, Doyle is converting these people into corrupted (or, vicious) people. It can be assumed that Watson does not have the vices of the ones he is describing because of his attitude towards them. He criticises humanity by saying that humankind, in its darkest moments is able to rise and be successful (linked to the beginning of the Victorian Era) only to fall into darkness again shortly after (associated to the Decadent movement).

1.2. Sherlock Holmes, the Perfect Gentleman

Who is Sherlock Holmes? He is the most renowned detective of all times, the sleuth who Watson “could not but think what a terrible criminal he would have made had he turned his energy and sagacity against the law instead of exerting them in its defence” (Conan Doyle “Sign” 141).

This section attempts to elucidate why Sherlock Holmes could be considered as the best depiction of the ideal Victorian man regarding his values and morality. Although he is presented as a single man whose only family is his brother Mycroft Holmes, he can be compared with the definition of the ideal hero according to Thomas Carlyle. In accordance with Carlyle’s description of the hero’s characteristics in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, the main feature of the hero is his communion with deity (“Heroes” 91-118). In the Holmes canon, this deity is Truth, given that the job of the detective is to resolve the crimes and mysteries which are presented to him. Holmes is in a constant search for truth with a fearless attitude. The detective’s resolution towards his cases evinces in the character two other characteristics of the Carlylean hero, both sincerity and courage. Moreover, the Hero must be noble, which is shown in *The Sign of Four* through Holmes’ words: “He [Jean Paul] makes a curious but profound remark. It is the chief proof of a man’s real greatness lies in his perception of his own smallness. It argues, you see, a power of comparison and of appreciation which is in itself a proof of nobility.’ ” (Conan Doyle “Sign” 153)

Furthermore, the Hero must be in communion with a universe and an age, product of History and the actions of the heroes themselves. In order to create a world able to be in communion with the sleuth, Sherlock Holmes is not conceived as a detective but as a narrator who compiles all the events that surround him and puts them together into a single rational narration; a fact that also assigns him the label of artist:

‘My mind,’ he said, ‘rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can dispense then with artificial stimulants. But I abhor the dull routine of existence. 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' (Conan Doyle "Sign" 110)

In the case of Holmes, his universe is Victorian Great Britain (London, typically) in an era that is the consequence of Imperialism and the British politics that had made possible the development of the nation until it became one of the most powerful countries of the world. In this universe, Empiricism and Rationalism were the two prominent philosophical currents of the time and so Sherlock Holmes uses the science of deduction and observation to discover Truth. This idea can be appreciated in the following fragments: "Eliminate all other factors, and the one which remains must be the truth.'" (Conan Doyle "Sign" 1, 110); also in "'How often have I said to you that when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth?'" (Conan Doyle "Sign" 150); and in "'You see, but you do not observe. The distinction is clear.'" (Conan Doyle "Scandal" 5)

The task of the Hero is to report the false heroes, idealists, who cause chaos and disorder when preaching the worship to unsubstantial figures or imagery (Eidolon), which are of different nature or tendency but equally empty of meaning and that prevents the contact between humankind and the Divine Truth and put the rest of the people in contact with the deity (resolving the cases to show people the Truth). In the case of *The Sign of Four*, this role is represented by Jonathan Small, an individualistic man that criticises the Victorian nation and attacks it; while in *A Scandal in Bohemia*, Irene Adler, who tries to ruin the Prince of Bohemia's marriage, incarnates it.

Notwithstanding, regardless of the several similarities between the Carlylean hero and Sherlock Holmes, there are two differences between them: their conception of work and their will. Firstly, for Carlyle, work is "purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up, and of sour smoke itself there is made bright blessed flame" ("Past" 396) while for Sherlock, work is another of the poisons (apart from cocaine)² that he is addicted to. Thereby, while Holmes represents an excess that enables him to be the centre of his own universe and be in communion with his space, Carlyle presents work as a way of erasing the passions of irrationalism and animal savagery. Secondly, for Carlyle, the will of the Hero must be to join society and the Divinity to bring justice and peace to it. On the contrary, Sherlock Holmes' will has nothing to do with justice. His will resides rather in his search for pleasure. He avoids the routinary in order to overcome ennui and obtain pleasure. He constantly seeks the extraordinary and eludes the commonplace as he is an artist, a transgressor who creates his own narrative, avoiding emotional elements and gathering all the rational facts that occur around him; and, as he manages to do so, he finds pleasure in as a result.

2. Imperialism: A Double-edged Sword

Imperialism was the main impulse for Great Britain's conversion into a global power thanks to the establishment of commercial routes and the raw materials that were obtained from

² See section 3.2. "Dangerous exotic pleasures: addiction and drugs" in pages 41 and 42 of this work for a full discussion on this topic.

the colonies. Consequently, the settlement of colonies and strategic ports all around the world made the British Navy become one of the most important and powerful of the time.

The concept of Imperialism was based on an active competition between the most powerful countries to conquer oversea territories and on the appearance of doctrines that justified the racial superiority of white colonisers and denied the capability of the subjugated countries to govern themselves. However, the power of Great Britain depended on the stability of the colonies since its economy relied on the trade between its territories. The development of the Industrial Revolution was encouraged by the discovery and use of new technologies to reach the colonies and the importation of raw materials and new products such as fabrics, spices and tea. Such was the influence of the colonies in the Victorian Great Britain that their relationship became symbiotic: the colonies were governed by English rulers who established English laws and imposed their way of life as well as contributed to the evolution and improvement of the country's economy and society while Great Britain needed the trading connections with these countries in order to keep its power.

Imperialism is the central issue of *The Sign of the Four*, whose plot addresses the search of a fabulous treasure in colonial India and the corruption that affects all who own it. Particularly, the novel focuses on the Indian Rebellion of 1857, in which Jonathan Small, an ex-soldier of the British army and an overseer on a tea plantation, meets two Sikh troopers while hiding in the Agra fortress. The two soldiers tell him about a treasure owned by a Rajah and persuade him to steal it. The discovery of the robbery leads to the imprisonment of Small and his companions, while the treasure arrives to Major Sholto and Major Morstan, who are both corrupted by greed and would have a miserable ending.

Great Britain established a power dynamics based on the coloniser subjugating the colonised, a system motivated by British society's fear about the colonial influences that could corrupt its Victorian project. In one of the stories of the Sherlock Holmes canon, *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*, one of the characters, Helen Stoner, describes India as "a corrupting force that causes moral degradation" (Conan Doyle "Adventure" 154-179). Doyle also expresses this feeling in the text of *The Sign of the Four* by creating different contaminated characters who can represent a significant threat to Victorian society. This corruption can be caused by the consumption of colonial products, their stay in the colonies or the colonial origin of the character. The rest of the characters observe these others with fear, assuming the danger that they pose to their nation and trying to make them submit by invoking Anglo-cultural images of superiority.

Firstly, the corruption of morality with the consumption of colonial products can be seen in the characters of Thadeus Sholto, who is addicted to opium,³ and Majors Morstan and Sholto, who will have eventually a miserable ending due to their greed. This is clearly reflected in Jonathan Small's words when he explains what the presence of the Agra treasure has caused in the lives of those who have been in contact with it:

³ See section 3.2. "Dangerous exotic pleasures: addiction and drugs" in page 42 of this work for a full discussion on this topic.

'It was an evil day for me when first I clapped eyes upon the merchant Achmet and had to do with the Agra treasure, which never brought anything but a curse yet upon the man who owned it. To him it brought to murder, to Major Sholto it brought fear and guilt, to me it has meant slavery for life.' (Conan Doyle "Sign" 181)

The confrontation between the treasure and Victorian society is a metaphor of the corruption that can be caused by the colonies. The Indians are considered here a primitive civilization more in contact with nature than the Victorians so that their irrational part makes them behave as animals that can only be guided by a Victorian man, in this case, Jonathan Small. However, ironically Small's stay in India has separated him from the Victorian project. At this point, it is established the second kind of corrupted characters: those affected by their presence in India. Jonathan Small is the perfect depiction of colonial perversion in the Victorian mentality. He is physically described as an English man but with certain characteristics that imply a physical degeneration, so he cannot be considered a Victorian anymore:

He was a sunburned reckless-eyed fellow, with a network of lines and wrinkles all over his mahogany features which told of hard, open-air life. There was a singular prominence about his bearded chin which marked a man who was not to be easily turned from his purpose. His age may have been fifty or thereabouts, for his black, curly hair was thickly shot with grey. His face repose was not an unpleasing one, though his terrible expression when moved to anger. (Conan Doyle "Sign" 180)

Not even psychologically can he be considered a Victorian. When he drops the treasure into the Thames, he breaks the Victorian power chain that considered the individual as indebted to the community. At this point, the social being who is searching for the common welfare changes to become a powerful individual who only cares about himself: "'Justice' snarled the ex-convict. '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?' " (Conan Doyle "Sign" 186). In this manner, Jonathan Small can be considered as a Byronic villain, opposed to Sherlock Holmes. In fact, Small does not take responsibility for his actions. Indeed, he is proud of losing the treasure since he knows that nobody is going to own it. In other words, with the abolition of his responsibilities, he eliminates his guilt. The lack of guilt implies a will to exert pain over others, the cruelty that he has accepted as part of life; a characteristic that reminds again of the Byronic villain, who acts without considering morals.

Finally, the third kind of characters in relation with the colonies are the natives themselves. In this case, Tonga is the best example and probably the most negatively depicted character of all Holmes' stories. According to Holmes, he is the element of the mystery which turns it from ordinary into extraordinary due to his fascination towards the exotic Andaman indigenous. For Holmes and Watson, Tonga is the ultimate terror, a native that has crossed the frontiers of their nation to pose the threat of the "reverse colonization" (Arata 622-624). Tonga is the representation of all foreign threats, like colonial insurrection or unfounded savage violence. Watson cannot conceive the Andaman islander as a man, but

as a monstrous animal that lacks reason and conscience, as it is seen in his description of Tonga:

“It straightened itself into a little black man —the smallest I’ve ever seen— with a great, misshapen head and a shock of tangled disheveled hair. [...] I whipped out mine [revolver] at the sight of this savage, distorted creature. He was wrapped in some sort of a dark ulster or blanket, which left only his face exposed; but that face was enough to give a man sleepless night. Never have I seen features so deeply marked with all bestiality and cruelty. His small eyes glowed and burned with sombre light, and his thick lips were writhed back from his teeth, which grinned and chattered at us with half-animal fury.” (Conan Doyle “Sign” 178)

In the end, Holmes, as the incarnation of the Carlylean hero and the defender of the Victorian nation, manages to arrest Smith, who is still considered a man although he has suffered the influences of colonialism and of involution, and to kill Tonga, who had no right to be judged as he was not considered a person and was supposed to be a cannibal. In this way, order is restored and Sherlock Holmes ends with the savagery that threatened Victorian society. To conclude this topic, the message which Doyle tries to send to his readers seems to be that there are countries that must be conquered to put an end to the savagery that remains present in the uncivilised parts of the world. Even so, it is also a reflection upon cultural guilt on account of the British imperial practices that might be mirrored and return in dangerous forms.

3. The Corruption of the Victorian Project

The idea of ‘the Other’ was tried to be defined in the Victorian project. It included foreign communities or countries (as part of the discourse of Imperialism) and womanhood, both considered as threatening and dangerous because they could easily break the already established morality, and corrupt society.

3.1. The Woman Question

In Victorian literature women are depicted as victims or as queens. In the Holmes canon, specifically in both *A Scandal in Bohemia* and *The Sign of the Four*, both types of women are found. There is a great contrast between Watson’s wife, Mary Morstan, and the one that “to Sherlock Holmes she is always the woman” (Conan Doyle “Scandal” 3), Irene Adler.

Irene Adler, who even outwits Sherlock Holmes, is depicted as the figure of the New Woman, whose main characteristic is the definition of her womanhood by her own identity and independence. Irene Adler is an American opera singer who threatens the nation of Bohemia by thwarting the marriage of its prince due to her possession of a picture, a *souvenir* of her old *liaison* with him. Due to her defiance of social conventions, this *fin de siècle* woman becomes a symbol that Victorian female readers must define themselves against. The fact that Doyle made her American places Irene in the same position as Tonga (as mentioned in the previous section) as a foreigner that crosses the frontiers of the nation to pose a threat against it.

The image of Irene Adler represents the controversial issues with which late nineteenth century women were treating: divorce law, the control of their property, venereal diseases caused by prostitution and promiscuity, and submission to the husband's will. Each of these controversies denied the conception of women as legal subjects with the same rights as men. Additionally, Victorian men feared that women became active both sexually and in the public sphere. Therefore, giving a thought on the corrupted image of Irene Adler that Doyle presents to female readers, it can be considered that his works try to reassert Victorians patriarchal values. This attitude can also be seen in the character of Mary Morstan, Doctor Watson's wife.

As a character, Mary Morstan experiences a transformation related to gender dynamics throughout the novel. At first, she is depicted as a *femme fatale* who will bring Holmes, Watson and Sholto to their destiny. She is in possession of certain objects related to India, an exotic place unknown to the detective and his companion. Again, the issue of the colonies as a threat to the nation is addressed. In Mary Morstan there are contradictory details that are drawn from other figures of the literature of the time: the innocence of Tess in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy and the savagery of Ayesha in *She* by H. R. Haggard. Hence, Watson is fascinated by her from the first moment and during the whole novel, a desire partially resulting from his fear. In order to conquer her, he will unconsciously try to subjugate her by exchanging silent gestures and sighs (typical of feminine roles) until she her representation becomes more like that of the Angel in the House, showing the ultimate characteristic of this kind of woman: marriage. The Angel in the House is the depiction of an ideal pure woman dependent on her husband and submitted to home. To conclude with this issue, the fear of Victorian men towards women can be seen in the following quote, "I would not tell them too much. Women are never to be entirely trusted—not the best of them" (Conan Doyle "Sign" 165); but also in the next excerpt:

'Miss Morstan has done me the honour to accept me as a husband in prospective.'

He gave a most dismal groan. 'I feared as much,' said he. 'I really cannot congratulate you.' I was a little hurt. 'Have you any reason to be dissatisfied with my choice?' I asked.

'Not at all. I think she is one of the most charming young ladies I ever met, and might have been most useful in such work as we have been doing. She had a decided genius that way; But love is an emotional thing, and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true cold reason which I place above all things. I should never marry myself, lest I bias my judgement.' (Conan Doyle "Sign" 165)

3.2. Dangerous exotic pleasures: addiction and drugs

From "Sherlock Holmes took his bottle from the corner of the mantelpiece and his hypodermic syringe from its neat morocco case" (Conan Doyle "Sign" 109) to "there still remains the cocaine bottle.' And he stretched his long, white hand up for it" (Conan Doyle "Sign" 204), *The Sign of the Four* narrates a story where drugs are part of the life of the detective. Holmes uses cocaine as a narcotic for his mind, transforming the character from a

workaholic to a drug addict. Yet this dependence evinces the detective's motivation: pleasure, which explains why the character is *used as* but is not a Carlylean hero.

Nevertheless, the character who establishes the allegory between drug addiction and the threat it supposes to the nation is Thaddeus Sholto, a pathetic and physically hideous man who has been in contact with the colonies:

There stood a small man with a very high head, bristle of red hair all around the fringe of it, and a bald, shining scalp which shot out from among it like a mountain-peak from fir-trees. He writhed his hands together as he stood, and his features were in a perpetual jerk —now smiling, now scowling, but never for an instant in repose. Nature had given him a pendulous lip, and a too visible line of yellow and irregular teeth, which he strove feebly to conceal by constantly passing his hand over the lower part of his face. In spite of his obtrusive baldness, he gave the impression of youth. In point of fact, he had just turned his thirtieth year. (Conan Doyle "Sign" 125)

Although it had been his father, Major Sholto, the one who had been in direct contact with the colonies and their dangers, Thaddeus Sholto owns a large collection of exotic furniture as well as Indian native servants. His description induces the reader to think that he has become an opium addict and that this has transformed him into a pathetic weak man whom Watson repulses and Holmes understands. But why is there such a difference between the characters? While Watson sees in Sholto's weakness and degeneration the unavoidable danger of the colonies to Victorian society, Holmes considers Sholto as another transgressive character of his time. The difference between the detective and Sholto resides in the control that each one has over drugs. On the one hand, Holmes measures with precision the amount of cocaine he is using in his doses and he can stay weeks without requiring the stimulation of drugs if he wants to. On the other hand, Sholto does not control himself over opium, becoming addicted to it. This need is seen in his narration of his father's story, as he is puffing from his hookah the whole time. Thus, Holmes' control over drugs puts him again in the position of the defender of the nation and establishes the metaphor that Victorian culture can overtake the influences of the colonies, while Sholto's addiction is the symbol of the result of reverse colonization in civilised society.

However, it is worth bearing in mind the position of Sholto in society. He is the product of British imperialism as all his fortune has been made thanks to his father's involvement with the colonies and this is the money that enable him to buy drugs. The oppression of imperialism is striking back to haunt and control Victorian society itself. In this manner, the late-Victorian fear about the nation is explained: the imperial and political forces of the Victorian Establishment, alongside its concepts of race and its own cultural and social power, found themselves in an unrecoverable decline of their own making. Indeed, here lies the real critique to society in this kind of narrative as the punishment to the sins of the British Empire assumes the form of reverse colonization.

4. Conclusion

Victorian society was built upon the foundations of a patriarchal and imperialistic mentality whose influence over their own people and the natives of its colonies was mirrored, returning as violence in the form of riots and drugs. In the end, the Victorian project was so degenerated that the acceptance of its decadence was unavoidable and the Britons had to change their mentality to keep their status among the other world powers. As Doctor Watson would have said, humankind flitted from gloom into light with the great Victorian project to go back into gloom once more when they realised that this project was destined to be unsuccessful.

Works Cited

- Arata, Stephen D. "The Occidental Tourist: 'Dracula' and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization." *Victorian Studies*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1990, pp. 621-645.
- Carlyle, Thomas. *Past and Present*. Ludovico, pp. 261-463.
 _____. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. Ludovico, 91-260.
- Conan Doyle, Arthur. "A Scandal in Bohemia" *The Adventures and Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. Wordsworth Editions, 1992, pp. 3-25.
 _____. "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" *The Adventures and Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* Wordsworth Editions, 1992, pp. 154-179.
 _____. "The Sign of the Four". *A Study in Scarlet & The Sign of the Four*. Wordsworth Editions, 2004, pp.109-204.
- Frank, Lawrence. "Dreaming the Medusa: Imperialism, Primitivism, and Sexuality in Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Sign of Four'" *Signs*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1996, pp. 52-85.
- Keep, Christopher and Randall, Don. "Addiction, Empire, and Narrative in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of the Four*." *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1999, pp. 207-221.
- Ludovico, Randolph F., editor. *The Selected Works of Carlyle*. Bibliotheca Cakravarti, 2014.
- Raheja, Lauren. "Anxieties of Empire in Doyle's Tales of Sherlock Holmes" *Nature, Society, and Thought*, vol. 19, no. 4. 2006, pp. 417-426.
- Valls Oyarzun, Eduardo. *Dueños del tiempo y del espanto*. Escolar y Mayo, 2017.
- Walkowitz, Judith R. *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London*. University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Bioprofile of the author

Julio San Román Cazorla is currently studying a degree in English Studies from the Complutense University of Madrid. A scholarship-holder for achieving excellent academic results (2018), his main areas of interest are Victorian literature; crime fiction, especially thrillers; and graphic novels. Apart from his interest in literature investigation, he devotes himself to a Creative Writing workshop that he imparts at the Complutense University of Madrid.

Contact: < julsanro@ucm.es >