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# Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and British Liberal Imperialism

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# SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE AND BRITISH LIBERAL IMPERIALISM

A thesis presented by
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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This study does not propose to expand or replicate the voluminous scholarship already surrounding Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Rather it will attempt a view of the man and his work from a decidedly political and philosophical perspective, and through him examine the debate on British imperialism as it existed—and evolved—throughout Conan Doyle's life. Throughout his literary career Conan Doyle attempted to reconcile the overwhelming contradictions between Liberalism and Empire. His attempt at ideological compromise was further impeded by other conflicting loyalties—to party, lifestyle, religion, and race. To aid himself in this debate, Conan Doyle used his work and position as a writer to disseminate his ideas. In an 1895 article in *Literary Digest*, written while he was on tour through the United States, Conan Doyle commented on the role of novelists and their work. Though he admitted that the fiction-writer's first aim is "to amuse mankind," he envisioned greater roles for writers in society:

> I think the age of fiction is coming—the age when religious and social and political changes will all be effected by means of the novelist.
> To get an idea to penetrate the masses of the people you must put fiction around it, like sugar around a pill.

Clearly, Conan Doyle saw a role for himself in society greater than that of artist. He felt himself to be in a unique position to promote ideas, believing that "if [the novelist] has strong convictions, he will have wonderful facilities for impressing them on others."[1] Thus, his writing served to influence the public to settle an ideological struggle, a struggle with which he himself was still wrestling.

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[1] "Arthur Conan Doyle," *Literary Digest* vol. X (1895): 13.

The tensions that compounded Conan Doyle's struggle with liberal imperialism operated on three interconnected levels.[2] First, most of his work as a writer, as well as his lifestyle, supported the tradition of "manly" Victorian imperialism, championed by the Tories and the public school. Conan Doyle, however, relished the tradition of scholarship and reflection which seemed to be at odds with nineteenth century "manliness." Second, in keeping with contemporary scientific racialism, Conan Doyle promoted the ideal of an English race in a social-Darwinist struggle against the other European races and those of "color." Yet he was an Irishman in the middle of English society, at once central and provincial. Third, the empire of Britain was indebted to Protestant ideals, which infused missionary activity and supported the chivalric content of imperial jingoism. Conan Doyle, progressed through the religious turmoil of the late nineteenth century on a religious odyssey. Rejecting the Catholicism of his youth, he became a materialist, embracing religious freedom, before converting to spiritualism, as many did at the collapse of Pax Britannica in 1914—none of which ever brought him into accordance with the predominant Anglicanism of the political arena.

These three themes merge with the onset of a "New Imperialism" that coincided with Conan Doyle's emergence as writer in the last decades of the Nineteenth Century. Marked by the Scramble for Africa and a renewed national interest in imperial activity, this imperial revival served as the cornerstone for conservative imperialists like Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli and later Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scouts. Despite his adherence to imperialism, Conan Doyle was a Liberal—a Liberal-Unionist, one of many Liberal "dissenters" who broke with Gladstone over empire and Home Rule. As

[2] "liberal imperialism" here is used to describe a philosophy and is not intended to imply affiliation with the Liberal-Imperialist party.

John Dickson Carr notes in his excellent biography of Conan Doyle: "All his life he remained politically restless, a sort of Tory democrat with his belief in the Empire. He might have been a Conservative who held democratic equality, or he might have been a Liberal-Imperialist."[3] Conan Doyle's politics reflect the Liberal line of consolidation and non-expansion, though his fiction betrays a competing hero-worship which glories the conquests of Britain's past. Conan Doyle's struggle with paternalistic imperialism and Liberal principles of laissez-faire and individualism reflect the struggle within his entire party—even within the imperialist wing of his party—from Lord Rosebery's Whig Liberal-Imperialism to Joseph Chamberlain's Radical Liberal-Unionism.[4]

Though the "New Imperialism" of the last quarter of the century prompted a vigorous expansion, the debate on imperialism had been raging for years, both in and out of Parliament. Most scholarship credits Benjamin Disraeli with altering the face of imperialism. Before Disraeli's premiership, Britain's empire had been run mostly by Liberal governments interested in preserving Free Trade and laissez-faire social, economic political policies abroad. In the Nineteenth Century, the champion of such policies was Lord Palmerston, who controlled foreign policy by a simple creed, which Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher describe as expansion "by informal means if possible, or by formal annexations where necessary."[5] Gladstone, vociferously denounced empire-

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[3] Carr, John Dickson *Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), 137.

[4] Bernard Semmel points out the chief differences between Rosebery and Chamberlain resting on the issue of protectionism. Chamberlain saw the chief aim of imperialism to be the protection of manufacturing while Rosebery saw it as the protection for the free and easy export of capital, which depended on Free Trade. Both Rosebery and fellow Liberal-Imperialist H.H. Asquith maintained that imperialism benefitted rather than detracted from the Liberal program of social reform. Bernard Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1968), 51-4.

[5] John Gallagher and Ronal Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," in John Gallagher, *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 4.

building, espousing instead a philosophy of inevitable devolution of power to the existing colonial powers. According to Martin Pugh, Gladstone revolutionized British politics by bringing the imperial issue to the people in his 1880 Midlothian campaign.[6]

Though revisionist scholars such as Robinson and Gallagher argue that British policy did not change from the mid- to late- Victorian periods, it is important to note that scholars and politicians at the time certainly did note a change in policy. Disraeli's short term as prime minister marked a crucial point in British imperial policy and attitudes. The creation of Victoria as Empress of India confirmed the Liberal fears that political devolution of power to India was nearly impossible, and Disraeli's 1872 speech in the Crystal Palace stirred nationalistic spirits not easily put to rest. Disraeli made empire into a point of pride for the British, and it became a political necessity. Almost all agree that the period roughly following 1880 saw the rise of widespread national interest in empire, to the extent that Cecil Rhodes could comment in 1899 that "they are tumbling over each other, Liberals and Conservatives, to show which side are the greatest and most enthusiastic imperialists."[7] Of course there existed in Britain a strong minority of Gladstonian Liberals and other groups espousing "Little England" sentimentality, but imperialist fervor had split the Liberal Party, and by 1899, even such quasi-socialist groups as the Fabians declared themselves strongly in favor of imperialism. Of course, each political group individualized imperialism to fit their respective programs.

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[6] Martin Pugh *The Making of Modern British Politics 1867-1939* (Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1982), 1.

[7] Cecil Rhodes quoted in Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 43

The Conservatives claimed to have had the longest history of association with empire. They championed imperial expansion and attacked Liberal 'cosmopolitanism,' and it was Disraeli, the first great modern Conservative Imperialist, who turned India into the "Jewel in the Crown" and made a queen into an empress. The Conservative view of imperialism, delineated in Disraeli's speeches, seems to have contained little more than patriotic jingoism and a concern for international prestige—especially when one considers just how little the empire grew under Disraeli.[8] Lord Salisbury (Conservative Prime Minister 1886-92; Foreign Secretary 1894-5, 1895-1902) represented a more traditional Conservative antipathy to change at home and the weakness of Palmerstonian policy abroad, which, according to Richard Shannon, he saw as a "muddled mixture of blundering assertiveness and sentimental morality."[9] At its worst, Conservative imperialism was seen as expansionist; at its best, Palmerstonian and consolidationist. If there was a plan to combat the newly "discovered" problems of poverty and worker unrest, it was the theory that profits from empire would profit all Britons.

The Liberals, especially under Gladstone, took the opposite, and not always popular, tack that Britain should focus on its internal problems and lay aside its imperial efforts abroad. Gladstone had rejected Palmerstonian 'nationalism' and moved towards the theories of Richard Cobden in promoting Free Trade, devolution of Empire and avoidance of entangling alliances.[10] Though India seemed to be Britain's forever, Gladstone's Liberals pushed for the devolution of power to the colonies, a cessation of further expansion and Irish

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[8] Richard Shannon, *The Crisis of Imperialism, 1865-1915* (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1974), 105.

[9] Shannon, *Crisis of Imperialism*, 41.

[10] Shannon, *Crisis of Imperialism*, 48,49; Gordon Martell, *Imperial Diplomacy: Rosebery and the Failure of Foreign Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), 17-18.

Home rule. It was mostly this last policy which caused the split in the Liberal Party, one side of which, the Liberal-Unionists left in 1886 under Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Hartington. Bernard Semmel describes Chamberlain's Liberalism as "utilitarian," interested in protecting the manufacturing industry of which he was part.[11] In 1901, after Gladstone's final departure from politics Lord Rosebery created the Liberal-Imperialists to promote imperial ideas within his party, while rejecting Chamberlain's acquired 'Fair Trade' platform. Both imperialist Liberal splinter groups believed in creating a benign, improving role for England in imperial activities. Rosebery denounced greed-oriented acquisitive imperialism, favoring a policy that inspired "helpfulness."[12]

At the other end of the political spectrum lay the various socialist groups, who were by no means of one mind on the subject of imperialism. As Bernard Semmel points out, "the main-body of British socialism was not Marxist, but it was internationalist."[13] Such groups as the British Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party (ILP), and a number of the Fabians, rejected nationalist programs in favor of international worker solidarity. Others, most notably those Fabians who followed the lead of Beatrice and Sidney Webb, eventually came out on the side of imperial efforts, and even supported the Government during the Boer War.

So rested the official mind (or various minds) on the subject of imperialism in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The question remains: where does Conan Doyle fit in the imperial debate? On whose behalf did he attempt to persuade "the masses of the people?" Though undoubtedly he sold

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[11] Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 76f.

[12] Lord Rosebery quoted in Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 52.

[13] Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 10

record numbers of his books, having them translated into a dozen different languages, there is no proven method to discover the effect of Conan Doyle's ideas on the reader. Furthermore, Conan Doyle's ideas were not entirely stable and homogeneous. On the subject of empire they remained consistent in their paradox. Nevertheless, Conan Doyle's biographers (especially Dickson Carr) would argue that Conan Doyle's impact did indeed extend far beyond that of crowd-pleaser; his association with politics ensured that. But perhaps the greatest indication of Conan Doyle's impact comes from Conan Doyle himself. Concluding his comments to *Literary Digest* in 1895, Conan Doyle stated that his visionary novelist's "first order of business will be to interest. If he can't get his sugar right, people will refuse his pill."[14] Conan Doyle certainly provided the sugar, in vast quantities, and certainly some of the pill must have been swallowed with it.

[14] *Literary Digest*, 13.

## Chapter 2: Manliness, Sport, Military and Chivalric Empire

Arthur Conan Doyle's adventure tales—and most tell of adventure of some sort or another—reflect the ardor and nationalistic idealism that Disraeli talked of in 1872, when he called upon an England whose "sons, when they rise, will rise to paramount positions, and obtain not merely the esteem of their countrymen, but command the respect of the world."[15] While this ideology certainly comprised a significant element of Conan Doyle's stories, Arthur Conan Doyle, by his own political profession, was not a Tory flag-waver, he was a Liberal, a party whose traditions of individualism and imperial retrenchment opposed the expansionist motives of Disraeli's imperialism.[16]

Many literary scholars have traced the ideological content of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories to the stereotypical sentiments of Victorian idealism, finding in his work an idealism attributed to the 1850's and 1860's,[17] which came from nowhere if not from Conan Doyle himself. Conan Doyle was not a Victorian, however, but an Edwardian throughout his career as writer, and was aware of the traditions of that less idealistic, more jingoistic period. In the wake of Britain's declining international pre-eminence, the Liberal, moralizing and intellectual self-confidence of the mid-Victorian period had given way to more Conservative tendencies towards competitive, physical patriotism.[18] When modern critics like Dennis Porter claim that "it is difficult to imagine a public

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[15] Benjamin Disraeli quoted in James Morris, *Heaven's Command* (New York: Harvest/HBJ, 1973), 382

[16] Morris *Heaven's Command*, 383.

[17] Don Richard Cox, *Arthur Conan Doyle* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1985), 1.

[18] See Zara Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 154-170.

man who more completely embodied the values of his time,"[19] this is in part because Conan Doyle was at the center, essentially trying to balance the ideals of both eras. Furthermore, Conan Doyle was anything but passive when it came to expressing these ideals. In creating many of his middle class heroes, Conan Doyle was not only creating a stereotypical reflection of historic figures; consciously or not, Conan Doyle was creating projections of himself.

John Dickson Carr's comprehensive biography of Arthur Conan Conan Doyle paints a generous portrait of a man who remained humble and unassuming from his birth and throughout his great success. Born to highly literate parents (his father was a celebrated London caricaturist), Conan Doyle was infused early on with a sense of his aristocratic ancestry. Conan Doyle attended public school where he was exposed to and revelled in athletic pursuits and romantic history. He studied moderately hard to be a doctor in Edinburgh University, and spent long difficult years in apprenticeship to doctors in Sheffield, Shropshire, and Birmingham. Though relatively poor as a doctor, Conan Doyle still managed to maintain a private practice, a house in respectable Southsea, Portsmouth, and servants, which eventually, through earnings from writing turned into the large, comfortable family which marked the ideal of the time. Yet much of his work serves to undermine these qualities.

Perhaps the quality that strikes one most about Conan Doyle is his enthusiasm for tales of chivalry and glory, especially when that glory belonged to England; he proved himself to be a man who had a great love of history and of historical learning, which was romanticized and linked to his love of adventure. Dickson Carr (the only biographer of Conan Doyle to have had access to all his notes and journals) writes that his earliest "serious" literary influences were the

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[19] Dennis Porter, *Pursuit of the Crime* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 157.

historical writings of T.B. Macaulay, which he enjoyed for their juxtaposition of romance and fact.[20] Dickson Carr traces this love for the principles of chivalry to boyhood discussions by his mother's side, in which she taught him her creed:"Fearless to the strong, humble to the weak... Chivalry to all women, of high or low degree."[21] This tenet pervades most if not all of Conan Doyle's fiction, and most of his non-fiction as well. His predilection towards romantic history was no doubt also influenced by his mother's obsession with the Conan Doyle's aristocratic lineage (both matrilineal and patrilineal), which he was made to memorize at an early age. His mother also endlessly retold and read illustrious excerpts from Britain's history; Dickson Carr sees that, to the young Conan Doyle "the figure of Edward the Third must have grown inextricably mixed with Sir Dennis Pack (Conan Doyle's matrilineal ancestor)." In later years, Conan Doyle would turn his mother's interest into a literary obsession that would produce the thoroughly researched historical novels, *The White Company* and *Sir Nigel*. Carr goes so far as to claim that, prefacing his later conversion to Spiritualism, the chivalric code took the place of Conan Doyle's discarded Catholicism: "If he might not believe in any religion, he could believe in a creed, a code, a pattern of behavior...It could be expressed in two words: knightly honor."[22]

Conan Doyle also was a great enthusiast for sports and athleticism. He was ruggedly built and a big man, and displayed a natural talent for cricket, which he adored. His first step into society as a doctor in Southsea was to become the champion of the local cricket club. He also proved himself to be able

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[20] Carr, *Life of Conan Doyle* , 13.

[21] Carr, *Life of Conan Doyle*, 7.

[22] Carr, *Life of Conan Doyle*, 56.

in almost every sport he tried, from motor car racing and hunting to skiing (Conan Doyle actually introduced the sport to Switzerland[23]) and boxing. Evidently Conan Doyle saw all sports in a chivalric context. In his autobiography, Conan Doyle refers to boxing as "the finest single man sport" calling it "the noble old English sport of boxing."[24] Boxing was to have its effect on his literary career, as he devoted much of the description in *Rodney Stone* to details of fighting.

Unsurprisingly, Conan Doyle was also drawn to a love of the military as well as adventure. In his early years as a doctor, Conan Doyle made numerous attempts to sign on as a military doctor in the imperial armies, hoping to go off to India, or Afghanistan. This drive for adventure found early fruition in Conan Doyle's arctic whaling expedition for seven months in 1880, and an expedition to the Gold Coast of Africa in 1881-2. His chance finally came later in life when he, by chance, hooked up with the British force in Egypt in 1896 as a military journalist, and as a commanding officer in an army hospital during the Boer War. All these adventures and characteristics paint the portrait of a man who was throughout his life a romantic man of action, who longed for the life of popular Victorian soldiers of his time, like General Gordon and Sir Garnet Wolseley, if not for that of the knights of Edward III.

The rise of national enthusiasm for imperialism which coincided with Conan Doyle's literary career also accompanied a cult of manly, or vigorous imperialism, usually connected with Christian and/or boys movements. The ideal involved creating a race of rugged virile men adequately equipped to manage the empire. J.O. Springhall sees these movements as predominantly

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[23] Carr, *Life of Conan Doyle*, 81.

[24] Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* (London: Greenhill, 1983), 272-276

middle-class and conservative in nature, means of imposing a middle-class ethic of respectability and rejection of working-class culture. This manly imperialism employed the rising spirit of militarism and the "Victorian cult of the Christian Soldier as Hero"[25] to create a uniformity of purpose among young Britons that hoped to transcend class divisions. Leaders of Britain's youth movements promoted this ideal actively, like Lord Baden-Powell, originator of Britain's boy scouts movement:

> We must all be bricks in the wall of that great edifice—the British Empire—and we must be careful that we do not let our differences of opinion on politics or other questions grow so strong as to divide us, we must still stick shoulder to shoulder as Britons if we want to keep our present position among the nations.[26]

William Smith, the religious leader and founder of the Boy's Brigade movement, also noted that "no nation has ever yet attained greatness or influence without going through the training and discipline of war."[27] Victorians and Edwardians, however, started this training early on the playing fields of the British public schools.

Arthur Conan Doyle, as a product of the Victorian public school system (Conan Doyle attended the Jesuit Stonyhurst School in Lancashire), clearly saw the British involvement in empire as a manly enterprise. And certainly Conan Doyle glorified the image of manliness, militarism, sportsmanship, promoting the schoolboy ideal for adults as well. Physicality was a very important issue for Conan Doyle. In 1905, he wrote an introduction to fitness-enthusiast, Eugene Sandow's *The Construction and Reconstruction of the*

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[25] J.O. Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society: British Youth Movements, 1883-1940* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1977), 17.

[26] Springhall, *Youth,Empire*, 15-6.

[27] Springhall, *Youth, Empire*, 17.

*Human Body*. By this time worries of Britain's decline sparked concern for physical decrepitude among young men. Conan Doyle argued that "the man who can raise the standard of physique in any country has done something to raise all other standards as well."[28] For his heroes, Conan Doyle looked back to the mid-Victorian period to glorify the adventurer/soldier and imbue that image with a patriotic concept of Arthurian chivalry. He was a close friend of Baden-Powell's and was a member of the former general's Duty and Discipline Movement, whose ranks included eminent Edwardians from Lord Rosebery to Herbert Kitchner.

However, Conan Doyle' manly imperialist did not concentrate entirely on orderly discipline—the heroes of Conan Doyle's stories were rarely simply anonymous "bricks in the great edifice" of empire. Conan Doyle's manly imperialism depended mainly on individual independence—a singularly Liberal point of view—a maverick or roguish quality that allowed his heroes to emulate Victorian idols like General Gordon or Sir Garnet Wolseley.[29] For Conan Doyle, the amateur is idealized; characters like Sherlock Holmes and *The Lost World*'s Lord John Roxton exemplify the educated amateur who devotes himself to manly pursuit out of a passion rather than professional gain. Even within the ranks of professional soldiery, Conan Doyle often prefers the maverick, the individual who takes the longest to come to order, but who proves himself in the thick of the fight.

Sherlock Holmes embodies these characteristics, and as the most popular of Conan Doyle's creations, was, and still is, identified as an archetypal

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[28] Arthur Conan Doyle quoted in Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (London: Collins, 1986), 143.

[29] His endorsement of the Duty and Discipline Movement did not mean a rejection of Liberal tenets; many of the essays contained within the group's *Essays on Duty and Discipline* promote *self*-duty and *self*-discipline, rather than national youth movements. *Essays on Duty and Discipline* vol. III (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd.), 1913.

late-Victorian hero. He proves this again and again in acts of physical bravery, such as his pursuit of Jonathan Small in *The Sign of Four* or his dramatic "last" battle with Moriarty in "The Final Problem."[30] Holmes's adventures so matched the ideals of the time, that Dennis Porter claims the detective's adventures compare to the "the exploits of the heroes of the Empire itself, from Clive and Wolfe to Cecil Rhodes, General Gordon, and the Young Churchill."[31] Holmes prides himself on his "unique" status as the "only [consulting detective] in the world."[32] Holmes' role as the detective hero combines all the requisite skills of the professional academic and the professional strategist; yet, by necessity, Holmes must not actually *be* a professional in any one field. Conan Doyle's hero-worship embodies that old Victorian prejudice held by the aristocracy (and subsequently by the aspiring middle class) in favor of the "gentleman" over the "player."

In his role as social arbiter and civic protagonist, Holmes embodies the theory of the "Great Man" solution to conflicts: that a superior male iconic figure, through force of intellect and will, rights wrongs and brings peace. Necessarily, therefore, he must be free from ties to the institutions of civic control, like police or government—in short he must be an independent actor. Furthermore, the social disruptions which the detective hero rectifies do not affect only the British internal social order. These social disruptions can be applied to the larger imperial system, representing those problems in foreign

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[30] Conan Doyle eventually reconsidered and resurrected his hero in 1894 due to pressure from both his public and publishers

[31] Porter, *The Pursuit of the Crime*, 157.

[32] Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, in *The Complete Novels and Stories, Volume 1* (New York: Bantam, 1986), 23. I have used both volumes of this collection exclusively for my Sherlock Holmes references. Therefore, in future references I shall refer to the collected by *Sherlock Holmes*, followed by volume number and page reference.

lands which, according to the British sense of world-mission, could only be solved by some superior Anglo-Saxon gentleman. In this sense, the detective hero can be viewed as brother-in-substance to the adventure hero of the late nineteenth century. This vision of "Great Man-as-Hero" certainly would not coincide with socialist philosophy, or indeed any political sentiment that concerned itself with working-class struggle or improvement. Nor does it coincide with Victorian aristocratic paternalism as a solution to social problems. Like so many other Conan Doyle heroes, Holmes belongs to a Liberal, individualistic ideology which allows him to operate freely within the system to meet society's needs.

In *Dreams of Empire, Deeds of Adventure* , Martin Green traces the evolution of the adventure story, seeing the progression from Defoe through Kipling as reflective of caste struggles in England. This struggle involves mainly the mercantile caste who, along with the Brahmin or scholar caste, asserted themselves over the old aristomilitary caste by 1700. Consequently, the outcome of this struggle, and the role of the aristomilitary caste in England at any given time affects the character of England's imperial and adventure heroes. Green sees that Robinson Crusoe, "so inventive, so busy, so unerotic, and the character of his adventures both derive from his serving—as imaginative representation—the merchant caste," which Green sees as dominant in this period. However, Green continues, "by 1900 Kipling's heroes have very little of the merchant in them.... because the empire felt dangerously great, and the aristomilitary caste felt in need of the crudest energies of self-assertion." Here Green uses Kipling's adventure stories as archetype for the stories of the period.[33]

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[33] Martin Green, *Dreams of Empire, Deeds of Adventure* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1979), 20.

However, it is also evident that Conan Doyle does not simply write for the military caste. Keeping Green's model in mind, Conan Doyle's heroes mostly are those merchants and scholars who become subsumed into the aristomilitary ideal. Conan Doyle would not find this relationship as unnatural as Green, who sees that in the conquering of India "the military impulse and military pride were sanctified and subdued to other caste values." [34] In fact, Green would place Conan Doyle among such famous romance writers as Kipling and G.A. Henty, whose books he feels have abandoned Defoe's virtues of "obedience, duty and piety," in favor of "dash, pluck, and lion-heartedness."[35] Green also distinguishes here between the adventure, which he sees as mercantile and modern, and the romance, which is military and not useful in the modern system. Yet Conan Doyle's heroes are not always from the nobility, nor are they even soldiers, although a few of these do appear. For the most part, Conan Doyle's heroes are men of intellect, who happen to be endowed with sufficient physical rigor to meet the challenge of romantic adventure. The Conan Doyle hero possesses the "tools and techniques" of the "modernist" or mercantile adventurer (Green uses Crusoe to be the archetype of both terms):

> By tools I mean guns or compasses, and scientific knowledge... By techniques I mean things like keeping a diary and keeping accounts and the Puritan examination of conscience and the conviction of righteousness; but also any rationalized and systematized and demystifyed habits of thought.[36]

Professor Challenger, Sherlock Holmes, and a host of other Conan Doyle heroes, though undeniably romantic in their appeal, exhibit qualities of the

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[34] Green, *Dreams of Empire,* 210.

[35] Green, *Dreams of Empire*, 220

[36] Green, *Dreams of Empire,* 23.

mercantile/Brahmin caste, and cannot be construed as simply reflecting the assertion of the military caste on fiction.

In his Seventeenth Century romance, *Micah Clarke*, for example, Conan Doyle ultimately denounces the character of Cromwell's soldiers as belonging to "fanatic saracens", and simultaneously praises their non-military virtues: "Yet they have great merit, that their own lives were for the most part clean and commendable, for they rigidly adhered themselves to those laws which they would gladly have forced at the sword's point upon others."[37] These soldiers are to be admired more for their integrity and restraint than for their physical prowess. Thus they find as much material reward for their virtues as Clive did for his exertion:

> after the disbanding of the army of the Commonwealth, the old soldiers flocked into trade throughout the country and made their mark wherever they went by their industry and worth. There is many a wealthy business house now in England which can trace its rise the the thrift and honesty of some simple pikeman of Ireton or Cromwell.[38]

The title character's father, a former Cromwellian soldier, is reticent to take action, and, though he possesses almost inhuman strength, he uses it only when provoked beyond a reasonable point of restraint. Conan Doyle's political and imperial allegory here is quite clear, supporting the liberal-imperialist philosophy that the respectable Englishman—at home or abroad—acts with restraint and discretion, embroiling himself in battle only when forced. In imperial terms this description would suggest concordance with Robinson and Gallagher's view of Late Victorian imperialism as a series of crises which drew

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[37] Arthur Conan Doyle, *Micah Clarke* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1894), 7

[38] Conan Doyle, *Micah Clarke*, 7.

Britain in to maintain strategic stability, rather than the previously more popular concept of a direct official plan to acquire more territory.[39]

Conan Doyle's Holmes further typifies this intellectual-man-of-action. In the intellectual arena Holmes takes on a professorial air, as the leading man in his field—"The Science of Deduction." As we learn along with Watson in the first pages of *A Study in Scarlet* , Holmes is a master of chemistry, and various branches of physical science. But the "Science of Deduction" proves to be more than merely a practical application of science for crime detection. Rather Holmes is professor and philosopher who sees life as "a great chain," wherein one might infer the oceans from "a drop of water."[40] Thus Holmes proves that his interest in criminology is more a cerebral starting point than a practical end in itself, and thereby he sets himself apart from the rank and file of the police.

Watson's criticism that Holmes's theory "is evidently the theory of some armchair lounger who evolves all these neat little paradoxes in the seclusion of his own study,"[41] is a criticism of the detachment of academia in general, pumping out theories that have no basis in fact. Holmes, however, exonerates himself by demonstrating that he is indeed a man of action, and not an "armchair lounger," by applying his theories. Lord Rosebery, who would become the leader of the Liberal-Imperialist party, similarly pointed out that Gladstone's statesmanship lent validity to his predilection for bookishness.[42]

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[39] John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," in John Gallagher *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 7.

[40] Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Volume I*, 14.

[41] Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Volume 1*, 15.

[42] Lord Rosebery, *Appreciations and Addresses* (New York: John Lane, 1899), 151.

Professor Challenger is another of Conan Doyle's characters who justifies academia by action. Again, though Challenger proves himself to be a man of phenomenal physicality, his theories are proven correct by the end of the adventure, and his reputation vindicated in the Royal Zoological Society. In fact, *The Lost World* as a whole recalls the Victorian cult of the adventurer/manly imperialism, with Conan Doyle's own emphasis on intellectualism serving to balance physicality. Written in 1912, when tension began to mount in Europe, and Britain's predominance seemed imminently threatened by rival empires, *The Lost World* seems to re-assert British manliness defiantly against all challengers. In the first chapter, Conan Doyle bluntly lays out the motivation for the story's narrator, Edward Malone, to join the expedition. Gladys, the woman Malone loves, spells out her qualifications for the ideal man:

> "[My ideal man] would be a harder, sterner man, not so ready to adapt himself to a silly girl's whim. But above all he must be a man who could do, who could act, who could look death in the face and have no fear of him—a man of great deeds and strange experiences. It is never a man I should love but the glories he had won, for they would be reflected upon me. Think of Richard Burton! When I read his wife's life of him I could so understand her love. And Lady Stanley! Did you ever read the wonderful last chapter of that book about her husband? These are the sort of men a that a woman could worship with all her soul and yet be the greater, not the less, on account of her love, honoured by all the world as the inspirer of noble deeds...[43]

In response to Malone's (and perhaps complacent society's) plea that in 1912, the world offers little opportunity for heroic adventure, Gladys exclaims that "there are heroisms all round us waiting to be done...."[44] This argument of course has an almost immediate effect, and suddenly Malone is dreaming of "Clive—just a clerk, and he conquered India." A similar exchange is given between Alleyne

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[43] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Lost World* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1990), 4.

[44] Conan Doyle, *Lost World*, 4.

Edricson and Lady Maude Loring in Conan Doyle's famous chivalric romance,*The White Company* written in 1898. Here, Maude, infatuated with Alleyne, who is only the younger brother of the Socman of Minstead, sees war and adventure as the only way to rectify their unequal stations: "Win my father's love and all may follow. It is when the brave soldier hath done his devoir that he hopes for his reward."[45] Though in both cases adventure is the only way to win a woman, Conan Doyle presents it rather as an end to itself, from which love, almost as a spoil, will logically follow. The same can be seen in James Stephen's development into "manhood" in *The Tragedy of the Korosko* (1892), wherein the sheltered Manchester clerk develops into a passionate, heroic being in the face of adversity and conflict in the Nubian desert.

Though sexual goals provoke these men to action, for the most part Conan Doyle's adventure stories exist in a state of asexuality where men commit heroic deeds among and for the appreciation of other men, and where strong female characters are most often, notably absent. Until his conversion to Spiritualism, women rarely appear in primary roles in Conan Doyle's stories. In fact, though Conan Doyle was reformist in his work for the Divorce Reform Union, his attitude towards women's roles in society looked backwards into the Victorian era rather than forwards. By 1912, he was still opposed to women's Suffragism, according to Dickson Carr, because it encouraged ill-fitting behavior tantamount to role-reversal.[46] Conan Doyle therefore looked to the predominantly single-sex world of the Victorian adventurer, like the public school and the military, where camaraderie and mutual respect are built upon the rules of physical prowess and individual will. Men called each other by their surnames and the sexually disaffected bachelor by nature made the best leader.

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[45] Conan Doyle, *The White Company*, 141.

[46] Carr, *Life of Conan Doyle*, 229.

As in Holmes' case, the predominant lack of interest in women is never even questioned. Though, undoubtedly, Conan Doyle changed the characterization of Holmes repeatedly over the course of the stories, we are meant to understand that a delicate lady would have no place with any single incarnation of the man, at least not during an adventure. Watson's first description in *A Study in Scarlet* of Holmes' irregular hours, his fits of distraction and excitement, his chemical-stained hands, reveal a life apparently inhospitable to all the qualities embodied by the Victorian lady. As for G.B. Shaw's Henry Higgins, women would only serve as an unwanted distraction and disruption. Yet while Shaw uses this convention to satirize the cult of the bachelor, Conan Doyle romanticizes it. Even in stories such as the *Tragedy of the Korosko* the male relationships are established along these lines. When women do enter the plot, they mostly exist either as a goal, as in *The Lost World* or *The White Company* , or as a commodity to be protected, as Mary Morstan in the *Sign of Four* or the Boston ladies in *The Tragedy of the Korosko* ; but women rarely contribute, even when they are tied to the action of men.[47]

Perhaps the single greatest example of Conan Doyle's re-hashing of the Victorian cult of the hero is *The Lost World* 's Lord John Roxton. From the first, Malone describes Lord Roxton's lifestyle in the same manner as Holmes' in its disorderly eccentricity and in exotic manliness:

> I had a general impression of extraordinary comfort and elegance compared with an atmosphere of masculine virility. Everywhere there were mingled the luxury of the wealthy man of taste and the careless untidiness of the bachelor. Rich furs and strange iridescent mats from some Oriental bazaar were scattered upon the floor. pictures and prints which even my unpractised eyes could recognise as being of great price hung thick upon the walls...

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[47] Enid Challenger, in *The Land of Mist*, is a strong exception to this; however this may be due to the unique history of the Spiritualist movement which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The opulent, rather dissolute lifestyle is the mark of the Conan Doyle hero, whose interests lie far beyond the banalities of finance and interior decorating, from Roxton's "Louis Quinze table, a lovely antique, now sacrilegiously desecrated with marks of glasses and the scars of cigar-stumps," to Watson's image in the "Musgrave Ritual" of an ultimately disorderly Holmes:

> The rough-and-tumble work in Afghanistan, coming on the top of natural Bohemianism of disposition, has made me rather more lax than befits a medical man. But with me there is a limit, and when I find a man who keeps his cigars in the coal-scuttle, his tobacco in the toe end of Persian slipper, and his unanswered correspondence transfixed by a jack-knife into the very centre of his wooden mantle-piece, then I begin to give myself virtuous airs. I have always held, too, that pistol-practice should be distinctly and open-air pastime...[48]

Characters like Holmes, Roxton and Nigel Loring of *The White Company* share a carelessness—stemming from higher preoccupations—with precious objects, like Roxton's table, Holmes' mantelpiece or Sir Nigel's absent-minded tendency to give away all his money to the first beggar he sees. Furthermore, if Holmes is distractedly anti-feminine, then Roxton is more pointedly so. His entire existence, not to mention his mentality revolves around travel, shooting and danger, all things that would prevent any companionship, or even contact, with women. His culture is limited to the purpose of sport and conquest, calling Gordon "the poet of the horse and the gun, and the man who handles both."[49]

Another standard character in the Conan Doyle adventure is the man who must prove himself, who must attain the desired level of manliness. Characters like Roxton, Holmes and Nigel Loring do not evolve in the course of a story or even a novel. They remain static in their characters, because they

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[48] Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Musgrave Ritual" in *Sherlock Holmes Volume 1*, 527-8.

[49] Conan Doyle, *The Lost World*, 55.

represent Victorian heroic archetypes—one could just as easily expect a character evolution of Hercules in a typical Greek myth. But Conan Doyle also believed in men who could be made, or make themselves, into heroes, as well as in men who seem to be heroic by virtue of their existence. Characters like Malone in the *Lost World* and especially Alleyne in *The White Company* must reject a sheltered past existence in favor of a harder and life-threatening existence in order to justify themselves.

The initial reasons for embarking on the adventure quickly fade away in the face of stronger motives for staying with it. Once on the quest, Malone loses his thoughts of winning Gladys (aside from naming a lake after her), and turns to the more exhilarating and apparently more rewarding joys of fighting alongside a man like Roxton: "If it were not for our fears as to the fate of our companions,, it would have been a positive joy to throw myself with such a man into such an affair."[50] Malone finds himself realizing the dream of every Victorian hero-worshipper. Malone's ultimate conversion to the manly life takes place when, at the end of the adventure, with his Gladys gone, Malone throws his fate in with Roxton for another attempt on the plateau of the dinosaurs. This scene has significance also in that the diamonds found on the journey only go to finance another trek, perhaps showing that the only reward of adventure is further adventure, and not the settled life of connubial cohabitation.

Another remarkable transformation takes place in *The Tragedy of the Korosko*. Here Conan Doyle shows the growth of the stolid, emotionally repressed Manchester solicitor, James Stephens. Stephens spends the early part of the story meticulously pouring over his Baedeker's and making small contact with the young belle of the party in the form of business-like memos. Hopelessly

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[50] Conan Doyle, *Lost World*, 157.

inept at social relations, Stephens metamorphoses after the Muslim "dervishes" take the party hostage. As he comforts the ladies on their trek away from their civilization, Stephens senses a new awakening of a man that he had been repressing:

> the old, old fire was burning in his heart, and a curious joy was inextricably mixed with all his misfortunes, so that he would have found it hard to say if this adventure had been the greatest evil or the greatest blessing of his life.[51]

The peril breaks through Stephens' shell of quiet, desperate propriety and insecurity, and brings out a confidence which Conan Doyle paints as nothing less than noble. By the most desperate moment, when the men are about to be executed, Stephens has become a new man: "In his whole life of struggle and success he had never felt such a glow of quiet contentment as suffused him at that instant when the grip of death was closing upon him."[52] The extremes of circumstance open Stephens to extreme emotions, love, self-confidence, contentment. It can truly be surmised that Stephens has not lived until the moment the party was abducted, until he was forced to prove himself against a threatening situation.

Manliness manifests itself in those with what may be called "fighting spirit," or an innate proclivity to greatness. In Conan Doyle's stories, we see this spirit inspired either by other men or by adverse situations. However, it is evident that Conan Doyle believes that all men may have this potential to become Robert Clives or Henry Stanleys, but that it depends on personal predisposition. The inverse of Stephens' or Alleyne's transformations can be seen in Conan Doyle's short story, "That Little Square Box", in which a

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[51] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Tragedy of the Korosko* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1898), 141.

[52] Conan Doyle, *Korosko*, 220

self-proclaimed coward sees conspiracy in what turns out to be merely a pigeon race. The story is comic but it has a serious point. Conan Doyle's heroes all possess a kind of passion, but they also have the faculty of collected coolness under pressure. A volatile temper may be acceptable in a hero, as long as he is capable of calm rationality. A nervous presentiment, therefore, precludes a character from acting heroically, and, in fact, may lead him not only to appear foolish, but also dangerous. The narrator of the story, Hammond, upon his discovery of a supposed plot to blow up the ship on which he is travelling, cannot bring himself to action because his "quiet retiring habits had fostered a nervous dread of doing anything remarkable or making [himself] conspicuous, which exceeded, if possible, [his] dread of personal peril."[53] Though Hammond is reassured time and again by his public school friend—who happens to resemble the typical sturdy character Conan Doyle chooses as his heroes—he still makes a spectacle of himself when the suspected box turns out to be a cage for homing pigeons, not a bomb. Such characters evidently deserve the shame they feel at their cowardice and irrationality; they do not serve the public good when they take to action in place of "manly men."

An essential element of these adventure stories is the treatment of sporting, and its relationship to war and manliness. Victorians and Edwardians believed sports in the British public schools would produce successive generations of boys trained to discipline and physical rigor necessary for military service and maintaining the empire. Furthermore, sports in general were often compared to war, and both activities were spoken of using similar terminology. What the system achieved by making games into battles and war into a game was essentially de-horrifying war; military service became, in concept, fun and

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[53] Arthur Conan Doyle, "That Little Square Box" in *The Works of Arthur Conan Doyle* (New York: Walter J. Black Inc., no publishing date), 407.

something to look forward to with enthusiasm. Certainly Conan Doyle blurred the distinction between sports and military conflict, as reflected in his preface to his collection of short stories, *The Green Flag* (1900), which "concern themselves with war and sport—a fact which may commend them to the temper of the times..."[54] On a personal level, too, Conan Doyle believed in the value of sports and sportsmanlike conduct in war; his early remembrances of World War I show him anxiously awaiting action, and disappointed at the prospect of missing it. As mentioned above, throughout his life Conan Doyle repeatedly excelled at sports and tested his limits, whether in skiing in Switzerland, or staking his place in the Southsea community by commanding the local cricket club.

Conan Doyle's fictional heroes demonstrate these links between war and sport. Holmes balances out his intellectualism with a rugged athleticism. Although described by Watson as "excessively lean,"[55] he is a pre-eminent boxer ("The Yellow Face"), and deceptively strong, able to bend steel pokers with minimal degrees of effort ("The Speckled Band"). Nor was his approach to the pursuit of truth is not entirely intellectual. Although he expounds endlessly on the science of detection and the use of the brain in a perfectly ordered and objective manner, Holmes' famous cry, "The game's afoot!" lends itself more to the thrill of the hunt than to a detached intellectual pursuit. Indeed, as Carlo Ginsburg points out in his "Clues and Scientific Method," Holmes' skills in detection, making retrospective predictions, are more closely related to the primitive, non-intellectual skills of the hunter/tracker.[56]

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54 Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Green Flag and Other Stories of War and Sport* (New York: McClure, Phillips and Co., 1900)

55 Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Volume 1*, 10.

56 Ginsburg, Carlo. "Clues and Scientific Method," *History Workshop Journal, (*1980): 12-14.

The process of detection also resembles the science of military tactics. Furthermore, Holmes' collection of odd habits and character quirks liken him to the popularized military heroes of the day. In Holmes' intensity, his drive, his confidence, his absolute detestation of idleness, his apparent lack of interest in women[57], and his exhilaration while on the hunt remind the reader of descriptions of popular Victorian heroes. Compare, for example, Holmes with Charles Rathbone Low's 1878 sketch of Sir Garnet Wolseley:

> Sir Garnet Wolseley carries self-reliance almost to a fault, if that is possible, though the absolute confidence he inspires in his staff, who rally around him as he passes from one triumph to another, willing tools in the hands of a master workman, shows that it is founded on just appreciation for his own powers. Swift to form his plans, he executes them with unfaltering tenacity of will, and the correctness of his judgements amounts almost to instinct....[58]

This description of Wolseley could possibly be about Holmes.

While the Holmes stories demonstrate the sporting nature of the "science of deduction," Conan Doyle's stories involving war and conflict almost never fail to put such conflict in a sporting context. In *The Lost World* , at the height of battle, Malone describes Roxton's unreal environment for battle:

> As danger thickened his jaunty manner would increase, his speech become more racy, his cold eyes glitter into ardent life, and his Don Quixote mustache bristle with joyous excitement. His love of danger, his intense appreciation of the drama of an adventure—all the more intense for being tightly held in—his consistent view that every peril in life is a form of sport, a fierce game betwixt you and Fate, with Death as a forfeit, made him a wonderful companion at such hours.[59]

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[57] A lone exception perhaps is in "A Scandal in Bohemia."

[58] Charles Rathbone Low, *A Memoir of Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet J. Wolseley* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1878), ix. Rathbone also insists that Wolseley's career (which was by no means over in 1878) demonstrates that "the age of chivalry... is not yet over, but will last as long as there are brave hearts to illustrate the page of our history, and generous instincts to applaud them."

[59] Conan Doyle, *The Lost World*, 158.

Roxton's view removes all the horror and tragedy from war, all that would keep rational people from desiring war and bloodshed. But then, according to Zara Steiner in *Britain and the Origins of the First World War*, there was a "passion for war stories" which delighted in stories based on the "assumption that war was a splendid thing."[60] Similarly, in *The White Company*, when Conan Doyle describes the Hampshire countryside girding itself for war, it is a cheerful exuberant exercise:

> And now there came a time of stir and bustle, of furbishing of arms and clang of hammer from all the southland counties. Fast spread the tidings, from thorpe to thorpe and from castle to castle, that the old game was afoot once more, and the lions and lilies to be in the field with the early spring.... From Orwell to Dart there was no port which did not send forth its little fleet, gay with streamer and bunting, as for a joyous festival.[61]

Most likely, it is no accident that Conan Doyle used the phrase "the old game was afoot," in describing impending war. Not only does it suggest the lighthearted view of war, but it also recalls the (mostly) safe intellectual pursuits of Holmes; as Steiner comments, "the terminology of sport became the vocabulary of war."[62]

For Conan Doyle, manliness encompassed a much wider range of characteristics than Baden-Powell's standards of physical excellence and obedience.[63] Conan Doyle's heroes reflect the need to redefine the Tory military

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[60] Zara Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 156.

[61] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The White Company* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1928), 128.

[62] Steiner, *Britain and the Origins,* 158

[63] See Michael Rosenthal's *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (London: Collins, 1986), 3 ff.

hero along Liberal lines. Conan Doyle tried to find a balance between intellectualism and physical prowess, courage and pragmatism, morality and character. He also realized that physical form, though important, could not reveal all the necessary traits for heroism. He debunked the Victorian soldier myth in *The Tragedy of the Korosko* in revealing that the staunch Colonel Cochrane actually wears stays in an act of vanity to protect the image of "the military carriage which has always been dear to [him]."[139] The Colonel also has his bottle of hair-dye which accompanied him even "if the Colonel had only to ride a hundred yards in the desert." This is mild reproof, yet Conan Doyle allows that "the old soldier had a young man's heart and a young man's spirit—so that if he wished to keep a young man's colour also it was not very unreasonable after all."[261 Manliness here is presented as fallible and ultimately human, reflecting the conflicts which Conan Doyle and society were trying to reconcile.

## Chapter 3: Racialism and Conan Doyle's Empire.

Just as Conan Doyle had found himself at odds with various concepts of manliness in association with empire, so too was he at the center of a multi-layered conflict of contemporary racial and Social-Darwinist hypotheses. During his life, one strand of British imperialist thought asserted a dual world view. First, as Douglas Lorimer writes in *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, most Europeans in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century harbored feelings of racial superiority to blacks and colored peoples all over the globe. Some Britons—generally those in the Liberal-Imperialist parties as well as the Fabian Socialists[64]—felt that it was their mission as white Europeans to bring civilization to the colored races. This group included almost every non-European "race" such as Indians (both American and Asian), Africans, and Arabs, and sometimes far-east Asians. In this context of racial superiority, there was a hierarchy of races with Europeans unsurprisingly at the top of the ladder, and sub-Saharan Africans usually occupying the bottom position. There also was a second racialist phenomenon in this period which typed races within the European community. In this hierarchy, British social Darwinists like Benjamin Kidd and Karl Pearson saw the British as the best example of the Teutonic race, which was the "fittest" of the Europeans.[65]

These reactions came mostly from the contact with other nations over imperial conflicts. The contact with colored races occurred both at home and abroad, and therefore affected Britons world view as well as their internal social hierarchy. For Conan Doyle, this racial association was three tiered: first

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[64] See Semmel's *Imperialism and Social Reform*, Chapter 3 and *passim*.

[65] Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, pg. 23.

as a white set against black colonial (and domestic) populations; second, as a Briton against the inferior European races; and third, as an Irishman in the midst of English society. Despite the Liberal tenets of self-improvement, and despite his vocal attacks on racial prejudice, Arthur Conan Doyle exhibited the tension in his works produced by all the conflicting racialism and xenophobia that existed within Britain, Europe and the imperial world.

Conan Doyle's life encompasses a great shifting in middle-class attitudes towards race. This shift coincided and was shaped by the advance and application of evolutionary and eugenic theory which exploded in the second half of the century. The latter Nineteenth Century saw an extreme shift in philosophical tendencies in intellectual and political arenae concerning the advent of Darwin's theories of evolution. Abroad, this shift from early-Victorian empiricism and rationalism indicated the unworthiness of British philosophy. German academics saw British social-Darwinism as "evidence of the shallow and purely mechanical character of the British."[66] But inside Britain the advent of evolutionism represented a revolution in thought to many onlookers: "Evolution has become not merely a conception by which to understand the universe, but a guide to direct us how to order our lives."[67] Early social and political application of Darwin's findings reflected the work of Herbert Spencer, who left his mark by applying Darwin's anthropological theories to economic pre-conceptions of the times. What emerged was a combination of Darwinian 'natural selection' with Malthusian economic principles to justify Liberal theories of individual competition and thereby refute the rising trend of international socialism.[68]

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[66] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism*. pp. 112-3.

[67] David G. Ritchie, *Darwinism and Politics* (London: Swan, Sonnenschein & Co., 1889), 2.

[68] Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 18.

In *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, Douglas Lorimer traces the progression towards late-Victorian scientific racism from Eighteenth Century benign, paternalistic ethnocentrism. According to Lorimer, the initial ethnocentrism of Victorian England was little more than a holdover from the previous century which saw black men in the same light as the underprivileged classes in England, and had no trouble accepting the notion of an educated black gentleman. If there was racism, it was mostly individual and not systematic. As the Nineteenth Century progressed, however, a wave of abolitionism swept over England, and with it philanthropic societies which perpetuated a stereotyped image of the humble black in chains. This image was adopted by the popular media in the form of minstrel shows and plays portraying blacks in comic caricatures. Lorimer insists that the rise of racism has more to do with the British evaluation of the American plantation slave and of its own class structure than from any knowledge of the empire. Thus, when the Victorian middle-class began to rise into gentility, "...the striving for social status intensified...[and]...men became more anxious to achieve acceptance and more concerned to exclude those of questionable status... Victorians most feared ...the social stratum in which they most frequently encountered blacks in England."[69]

For most social-Darwinists, the question of white/black racial interaction was one of academic and marginal importance. The last decades of the Nineteenth Century was a period of intense intra-European competition, and therein lay the application of social-Darwinism: not white against black, but white against white in the expanded model of Herbert Spencer's theory of individual competition: the "survival of the fittest."[70] Yet for politicians, the

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[69] Douglas Lorimer, *Colour, Class, and the Victorians* (Leicester University Press, 1978), 111-2.

[70] Lorimer, *Colour, Class*, 18 ff.

issues of racism and racial propriety were very important to the imperialists in garnering support for empire in general and imperial wars specifically.

Racism occurred both at home and in official policy abroad. Physically, England, and specifically London, had undergone a series of significant changes as the East filtered into England's ports. Africans and West Indians had been in England since the beginning of the slave trade. By the end of the Nineteenth Century, the reports of men like Henry Mayhew and Charles Booth revealed to Victorians the extent of urban poverty in England. These reports and censuses also revealed that a very high number of "coloured" people, mostly sailors, were connected to the crime and immorality of the London underground.[71] Furthermore, Lorimer cites one estimate of the number of colored sailors in the British Merchant Service as exceeding 20,000. Other reports established the connection between colored sailors with the London prostitutes and opium dens.[72] Henry Mayhew's landmark report on *London Labour and London Poor* reinforced these connections between black sailors and the London "underground." His report also showed the presence of Hindu and Asiatic beggars who, because of their apparent proclivity to truthlessness, showed a natural talent in conning respectable women out of their money.[73] Although it is difficult to find exactly how many colored people were at large in England, the census of 1871 counted the number of Indian or colonial born at over 70,000.[74]

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[71] "To members of the respectable classes, anyone with a dark skin was classed as a 'black'. His origin might be African, Arab, East Indian, Chinese, or Polynesian." —Lorimer, *Colour, Class, and the Victorians* pg. 40.

[72] Lorimer, *Color, Class*, 40-41. A good example of the race bias in the opium dens is De Quincey's opium induced dreams about Asia in *Confessions of an Opium Eater*.

[73] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and London Poor* (London: 1862) vol. IV, 277.

[74] Lorimer, *Colour, Class*, 214.

It should come as little surprise, therefore, to find stereotypically sinister black/Asian figures in the gothic underworld of Holmes' London. In the *Sign of Four*, we see the loss of individuality of the average non-European; these races are typified by racial classes in reference books. The key criminal in the story, Jonathan Small, has a Friday-like companion, Tonga, who wields the main weapon, a poison blow gun; therefore Small is responsible for unleashing this savage creature on London. Tonga is described as pure savage, and, according to the scientific racism of the age, Holmes types him by race, by looking up his race in the encyclopedia:

> "The aborigines of the Andaman Islands may perhaps claim the distinction of being the smallest race upon this earth.... They are a fierce, morose, and intractable people, though capable of forming most devoted friendships when their confidence has once been gained....
> "They are naturally hideous, having large, misshapen heads, small, fierce eyes, and distorted features...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 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."[75]

Thus, Tonga is barely recognizable as human, condemned racially before Holmes can confront him. This concept of race-typing is an important theme in Edward Said's controversial thesis on 'Orientalism.' Pointing to the popularity of philology in the Nineteenth Century, Said claims that so-called "racial knowledge" becomes another weapon in the west's arsenal: to *know* a race is

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[75] Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes Volume 1*, 162.

therefore to have power over it.[76] When Holmes finally confronts Jonathan Small, he admits that even he, who had Tonga's confidence, could not control his bloodthirstiness; Tonga's guilt is genetically pre-determined.

In direct contrast to this scenario, the story "The Yellow Face" has Holmes unable to come to a correct conclusion because the answer involves the product of a mixed marriage. Holmes evidently is unable to fathom the possibility of an interracial marriage, thus refuting his own famous deductive method that states "once you eliminate every wrong answer, the remainder, however improbable, is the solution."[77] Apparently, the mulatto child is a solution *too* improbable even for Holmes. The fact that Holmes is completely wrong in his findings demonstrates the limitations of his "science" of deduction; the power of knowledge is bounded by the parameters of personal bias.

In foreign contexts the subject of race becomes less a question of social integration and more a question of mission. On this point Liberal-Imperialists, Conservatives, Unionists and even a few Socialist groups achieved a tenuous consensus: that Britain's role in dealing with "coloured" races should be one of paternalism, spreading British civilization and enlightenment, as well as capital and trade. Unsurprisingly, therefore, British characters are far more in control and perhaps even more comfortable in interracial situations outside of Britain than within the rigid social order of the mother-country. This feeling of security no doubt stems from the fact that, for Victorians, there was no doubt who was master in any extra-European context. Regardless of class or rank at home, the Englishman in underdeveloped nations saw himself as the intellectual, moral and physical superior to the "native" populations. As Hobsbawm points out in *Age of Empire*:

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[76] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 40-3.

[77] Possibly apocryphal.

> "The sense of superiority which thus united the western whites, rich, middle-class and poor, did so not only because all of them enjoyed the privileges of ruler, especially when actually in the colonies. In Dakar or Mombasa the most modest clerk was a master, and accepted as a 'gentleman' by people who would not even have noticed his existence in Paris or London; the white worker was a commander of blacks."[78]

Hobsbawm sees this virtue of imperialism as the main one which endeared it to European populations and especially European politicians. White workers in European industrial countries, no matter how hard their lot, could feel superior to the "subject races" of empire. According to Hobsbawm, working classes did indeed enjoy empire to some extent.[79]

Conan Doyle's treatment of race in *The Lost World* demonstrates many, if not all of these points. Racial themes in *The Lost World* operate on two levels, each with its own internal conflicting elements, and both, ultimately, interconnecting. The first level is a real conflict between men of "pure" stock in conflict with "half-breeds" or men of mixed stock. The former group is represented by the Indian guides and the curious character of Zambo, the party's black (negro) servant. These men are considered trustworthy and prove their worth through their loyalty to the white strangers, loyalty being the most desirable quality these Europeans look for in non-Europeans, as opposed to intelligence or capacity for independent thought. Zambo, affectionately referred to as "our negro" is throughout compared to an animal, described as, "faithful as a dog,"[80] and earlier, "a Black Hercules, as willing as any horse, and about as

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[78] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 71.

[79] Hobsbawm, *Age of Empire*, 70. The issue of empire's popularity among the working classes remains one of grave dispute, and Hobsbawm's opinion remains somewhat controversial, though it is supported by personal accounts such as Robert Roberts' *The Classic Slum*. For opposing viewpoints see Henry Pelling, "British Labour and British Imperialism," in *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain*; and Richard Price *An Imperial War and the British Working Class*.

intelligent."[81] Zambo also evidently has inherently, "all the hatred his race bears to the half-breeds." This hatred is not evidently unrequited. The half-breeds in *The Lost World* are entirely unscrupulous and inherently as worthy of distrust as the Indians and Zambo are worthy of it. Their sole mission in the book is to gain revenge on Roxton, who was renowned in Latin America for his role in breaking up the white-slave trade, which was entirely run by men of mixed parentage. Conan Doyle's animosity towards "half-breeds" recalls some of the scientific paranoia of racial mixing mentioned above as in "The Yellow Face." And Conan Doyle's racial typing throughout the novel, and throughout his works, recalls Darwin's emphasis on inherited traits—theoretically enlarged to encompass entire races.[82]

The second thematic level in *The Lost World* is the allegorical battle between the Indians on the plateau and their semi-human enemies. Professor Professor Challenger and company enter into the millenia-long conflict only to rescue one of their own party. Ultimately, they decide to end the war with the race of "savages" once and for all. The Indians on the plateau cannot advance culturally because they are at eternal war, not with the monstrous dinosaurs that roam their environment, but their own savage ancestry, literally. That the Indians should worship the party as their leaders in this struggle comes as no surprise to Challenger: "Strange how correct are the instincts of natural man."[83] In a curious display, the two intellectual adventurers, Professors Challenger and

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[80] Conan Doyle, *The Lost World*, 70.

[81] Conan Doyle, *Lost World*, 62.

[82] Ritchie, *Darwinism and Politics*, 57.

[83] Conan Doyle, *The Lost World*, 173.

Summerlee, abandon all of their previously heightened scientific interest and join Roxton's view of the situation:

> ...for my part I have score to settle with these monkey-people, and if it means wiping them off the face of the earth I don't see that the earth need fret about it. I'm goin' with our little red pals and I mean to see them through the scrap.[84]

Challenger acquiesces without a second thought, and the only scientific reservation comes from Summerlee who asserts that the party has "[drifted] very far from the object of the expedition." The extermination campaign "seems a most questionable step," but he throws his lot in with everyone else's, perhaps indicating that scientific goals play inferior roles to the necessity for European comradeship in the face of savagery. The final "moral" of the story seems to suggest that, with European help and indeed leadership, races with potential for civilization can eliminate their savage impediments.

This attitude towards the "subject races" of empire certainly agreed with the philosophy espoused by some of Conan Doyle's famous contemporaries in Parliament and abroad. In the Nineteenth Century, scholars had decided that the eastern peoples were in some way "degenerate" in comparison to their classical heritage. This theme was taken up by men such as Lord Balfour and Evelyn Baring (later Lord Cromer), both of whom had spent great part of their careers developing Britain's relationship with eastern countries. In a speaking to Parliament on the Egyptian question in 1910, Balfour, while bowing to Egypt's history of civilization, asserted that "Egyptian civilisation had passed its prime," while England's "petty span of ...history" was non existent. According to Balfour, then, owing to this situation, the West had a moral imperative to impart

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[84] Conan Doyle, *The Lost World*, 174.

the western gift of self-government.[85] Cromer, did not share Balfour's knack for sugar-coating his political beliefs. According to Cromer, speaking from a career spent managing Egypt, Orientals simply did not know what was good for them: "Egyptians should only govern themselves as Europeans think they ought to be governed."[86]

Furthermore, the Unionist Government felt it had an imperative to preserve the history of places like Egypt. When Balfour talks of the necessity for the British to manage Egypt's government:

> I think that experience shows that they [the people of Egypt] have got under it far better government than in the whole history of the world they ever had it before, and which not only is a benefit to them, but is undoubtedly a benefit to the whole of the civilised West... we are in Egypt not merely for the sake of the Egyptians, though we re there for their sake; we are there for the sake of Europe at large...[87]

he also means the preservation of Egypt's history alongside economic recovery. Balfour sees a Britain saving Egypt's past from its present. Conan Doyle echoes this sentiment almost exactly in the *Tragedy of the Korosko*, when Cochrane, the old army officer, envisages an Egypt without British protection:

> There is no iconoclast in the world like an extreme Mohammedan. Last time they overran this country they burned the Alexandrian Library. You know that all representations of the human features are against the letter of the Koran. A statue is an irreligious object in their eyes. What do these fellows care for the sentiment of Europe? The more they could offend it, the more delighted they would be. Down would go the Sphinx, the Colossi, the Statues of

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[85] Said, *Orientalism*, 32. I draw heavily here on Said's analysis. Though his arguments are somewhat controversial, any Marxist attitudes are more than balanced by Conan Doyle's views, and the facts are truthfully represented.

[86] "Baring, Evelyn, Lord Cromer," *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1908-9)

[87] Said, *Orientalism*, 33.

> Abou-Simbel - as the saints went down before Cromwell's troopers.[88]

This comparison of the Mohammedan fanatics to Cromwell's soldiery recalls a similar, though reversed, comparison in *Micah Clarke*.[89] The image of the Cromwellian soldier was in Conan Doyle's time a standard symbol for the Tory party. And Conan Doyle is as critical of Tory jingoism here as he is of Mohammedan extremism. Only the English qualities of thriftiness and steady virtue redeem Cromwellian soldier in the eyes of the narrator—qualities not shared by the Muslim 'dervishes'. Therefore, as Balfour and Conan Doyle's Cochrane argue, the British by necessity inherited the custody of Egyptian history and monuments, and thus subsume them into Europe's history, to be safeguarded against the modern inhabitants of the area.

Conan Doyle, however, does not only speak to these issues indirectly in his works of fiction. Being an extremely active and vocal man, Conan Doyle involved himself in many of the conflicts that arose at the fringe of Britain's new empire in Africa. He served as an army doctor in the conflict which remains perhaps the greatest test of Britain's late Nineteenth Century imperial expansion: the South African Boer War. The war came at a time when imperial fervor and scientific racism were at a zenith in Europe, and threatened to destroy both. Conan Doyle's defense of Britain's role in the conflict came in response to overwhelming international condemnation, which was taken up by the "pro-Boers" at home. *The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct* is not merely a sixty-thousand word example of patriotic jingoism, it is a defense (or a

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[88] Conan Doyle, *Korosko*, 38.

[89] Conan Doyle, *Micah Clarke*, 6.

desperate self-justification) of British intentions and paternalistic good-will abroad.

According to Conan Doyle, the War was not a result of British greed for new lands, or a military insurance to the security of lands occupied by Dutch-descended Boers. Rather it was a response to the "ungentlemanly" conduct of the Boers, especially their treatment of black "natives."[90] Here Conan Doyle summarizes up the Liberal-Unionist view of a beneficent empire, whose mission is not only to civilize, but to protect:

> The Imperial Government has always taken an honourable and philanthropic view of the rights of the native and the claim which he has to the protection of the law. We hold rightly that British Justice, if not blind should be at least colour blind...[91]

Conan Doyle describes this task as one Britain has undertaken because of duty and moral rectitude, and in spite of local and international unpopularity:

> The British Government in South Africa has always played the unpopular part of the friend and the protector of the native servants... A brave race can forget the victims of the field of battle, but never those of the scaffold.[92]

Conan Doyle's description seems to suggest that Britain's role in the region is all the more noble because of its unpopularity. The statement also seems to suggest that Britain alone among the European powers felt this particular need to befriend the hapless natives of Southern Africa. Conan Doyle connects traces the

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[90] Though Conan Doyle does claim that the lands belonged to Britain by right of conquest and treaty.

[91] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct*, 11.

[92] Conan Doyle, *War in South Africa*, 12.

roots of this sentiment (and policy) back to the abolitionist movements of the early Victorian periods:

> With many a grumble the good British Householder drew his purse from his fob and paid for what he thought to be right... We spent our money, we ruined our West Indian colonies, and we started a disaffection in South Africa, the end of which we have not seen.[93]

Part of the cost of this empire, according to Conan Doyle, must be sacrifice on the part of humanitarian ends. As proof of the British Government's sacrifice in ending slavery, Conan Doyle lists the evil effects this payment had on the empire, in spite of which, Britain continued to uphold some kind of chivalric noblesse oblige notion of honor over simple profit. And yet, though the native Africans deserve the benefits of British justice and "protection" Conan Doyle certainly does not grant them equal justice in his approximation of their character. To Conan Doyle, though justice should be "colour-blind" evidently the historian need not be: "A Zulu warrior had swept over this land and left it untenanted, save by the dwarf bushmen, the hideous aborigines, lowest of the human race."[94] This attack reveals the tension within a simultaneously racist and philanthropic empire. As indicated by this kind of statement (which was by no means uncommon) black peoples may be ripe for "betterment," but they will paradoxically never be treated as fully human.

This just mission, moreover, was perpetually bringing Britain into intimate contact, if not conflict, with other European powers. According to the unique social-Darwinism of the time, each nation was felt to have its own distinct national racial characteristics. The English were not felt to be merely a geo-politically affiliated group, but a racially distinct people, as were the French, the

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[93] Conan Doyle, *War in South Africa*, 12-3.

[94] Conan Doyle, *War in South Africa*, 13.

Germans, the Italians *et cetera*. According to this philosophy, though each European country might achieve certain national goals, domestically and imperially, each one could only achieve so much according to the potential of its national racial characteristics. In short, some countries were believed to be more genetically suited to empire; exactly which ones depended on which national chauvinist one asked.

Aided by its military, economic and geographic (i.e. the sheer size of its empire) supremacy, many Britons felt the English race, to be best suited to empire, which was empirically proven by their success rate. Semmel finds that ideas of racial bonds and mission found concurrence from all sectors of the political geography of imperialism, from Cecil Rhodes, Liberal-Imperialist Lord Alfred Milner, Radical Unionist Joseph Chamberlain and the Social-Darwinist Karl Pearson.[95] Though individuals differed on the precise reasons behind this genetic compatibility with empire, most attributed this to the English combination of strength and compassion, economic aggressiveness tempered with a penchant for justice. In reality these characteristics more opposed than complemented each other, but other countries could not, in the leading social-Darwinists' opinion, make the same boasts: in the words of imperialist and imperial standard-bearer, Viscount Milner "the British race... stands for something distinctive and priceless in the onward march of humanity."[96]

The "Scramble for Africa" and especially the Boer War brought forth unique interactions between Europeans in the region; never before had so many European powers aggressively colonized one region simultaneously. This proximity added to the competition and criticism between each of the powers,

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[95] Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 172.

[96] Alfred Milner, "The Two Nations," quoted in Semmel *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 172.

and in the end, these inter-European racial distinctions became as important, if not more important, than distinctions between white and black. In the latter relationship, the European position of superiority was unquestioned by Europeans. But between European powers, with a more equal distribution of intellectual and technological resources, the delineation of superiority was less clear.

To a certain degree, inter-European relations were seen in a Social-Darwinist racial frame. The ancient enmity with France, for example, was thus transformed into the incompatibility between Anglo and Gallic world perspectives. However, France was a power in decline, or at least in a stable second-place.[97] More important to British imperialists was the rising threat of Germany and the Germanic or Teutonic peoples of central Europe. The Teutonic race comprised most of the northern European peoples, including the English, though Anglo-Saxonism was felt to have its unique place in the European and world schemes.[98] It is a curious inconsistency that allowed social-Darwinists to simultaneously demarck broad international racial ties and national racial purity. Social-Imperialist Benjamin Kidd saw typical Teutonic traits as determination, efficiency and productivity.[99] It was therefore possible to see the Anglo-Boer conflict as a Social-Darwinian struggle, while simultaneously ignoring the rise of Germany and pan-Germanism because of Anglo-German racial and cultural ties.

There were plenty of opportunities to prove this concept. Conan Doyle is quite clear on how he feels about the "Teutonic" Boers. Conan Doyle's

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[97] See Zara Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 155.

[98] Kennedy, *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism*, 114.

[99] Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 23.

statements concerning the friendship between Britain and the African natives were not only meant to illustrate Britain's good-intentions in the region, but also to point out the Boers' transgressions. Like Milner, he cites the resistance of the Boer's to adapt their behavior towards the natives as a primary reason for the necessity of the conflict.[100] The protection that Conan Doyle claimed the British government was ensuring for black South Africans was protection from Boer aggression and persecution.: "But to change the inhabitants of the most conservative of the Teutonic races was a dangerous venture.."[101] Certainly, there were simple, strategic motivations behind the war; ever-present in the minds of contemporary thinkers was the threat to naval superiority, upon which the strength of the empire relied, as Conan Doyle illustrates in describing the early battles of the conflict:

> It was, in a way, a momentous episode this little skirmish of soldiers and immigrants, for it was the heading off of the Boer from the sea and the confinement of his ambition to the land. Had it gone the other way, a new and possibly formidable flag would have ben added to the maritime nations.[102]

But just as Conan Doyle found rivalry with the Americans mitigated by ties of kinship,[103] so did he find the Teutonic rivalry all the more threatening by its rejection of that kinship.

An inverse treatment of Anglo-Teutonic racial contention arises again in Conan Doyle's pamphlet *Great Britain and the Next War* (1913), a response to German General von Bernhardi's *Germany and the Next War*, in which von Bernhardi called for the necessity of attacking Britain in the event of a

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[100] Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 171

[101] Conan Doyle, *The War in South Africa..*, 11.

[102] Conan Doyle, *The War in South Africa*, 15.

[103] Carr, *Life of Conan Doyle*, 80.

continental conflict. Instead of pointing out the racial differences, Conan Doyle here maintains that he has been a member of the "Anglo-German Society for the improvement of relations between the two countries."[104] Whereas in the *Boer War* commentary, Conan Doyle had focused on the racial differences within the Teutonic races, here he cites the Teutonic commonality between Germany and Britain: "the various claims, racial, religious and historical which unite the two countries"[105] to dispel von Bernhardi's claims of the necessity for Anglo-German conflict. Conan Doyle's comments in both his 1913 pamphlet and 1914 treatise belie a sustained disbelief in and a desire to explain the German rejection of the ties which had seemed so strongly ratified in the early days of united Germany's existence:

> Britain, through her maritime power and the energy of her merchants and people, had become a great world power when Germany was still unformed. Thus, when she had grown to her full stature she found that the choice places of the world and those most fitted for the spread of a transplanted European race were already filled up.[106]

Again, Conan Doyle suggests that, despite the Teutonic ties between Britain and Germany, Germany is its own racial unit, that must find its place in the European community. This kind of racial causality smacks of tribal territory designation, explaining Germany's aggression in terms of racial development and territory, domestic and imperial, necessary for a budding European race.

> the strong, deep Germany of old, the Germany of music and philosophy, against this modern aberration, the Germany of blood

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[104] Arthur Conan Doyle, *Great Britain and the Next War* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1914), 7.

[105] Conan Doyle, *Great Britain and the Next War*, 23.

[106] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Great War*, 10.

> and iron, the Germany from which, instead of the old things of beauty, there come to us only the rant of scolding professors with their final reckonings, their Welt-politik, and their Godless theories of the Superman who stands above all morality and to whom all humanity shall be subservient.[107]

Conan Doyle's works reflect his affiliation with Europeans against "coloured" races, and with the British amongst the varied races of Europe. But even within the society of England, which he called his own, he was, in one sense, an outsider. Since he was an Irishman at a time when his kinsman across the Irish sea were clamoring for independence, Conan Doyle's chosen role as an Englishman, and indeed as a model Englishman of his time, was fraught with tensions, if not outright paradox. Nevertheless, Conan Doyle did indeed believe himself to be an Englishman. In the opening of his pamphlet, *Great Britain and the Next War*, Conan Doyle claims, "I have found myself alone in a company of educated Englishmen in the opinion that [the German menace] is overrated."[108] Statements such as this suggest an intellectual and cultural affiliation, and this occurs after Conan Doyle accepted Home Rule. Dickson Carr explains away this paradox in Conan Doyle's political affiliation with the Liberal-Unionists despite his Irish heritage. "He simply regarded Ireland as part of England (or Britain, if you will) in the sense that Scotland now was. To hear of Irishmen drilling with pikes for freedom seemed as nonsensical as though you were to imagine Scottish rebels whetting their claymores in Edinburgh's Grassmarket."[109] However, as outlined below, Conan Doyle's constant delineation between "Celtic" and "English" nature and behavior, not to mention the conflict between Ireland and

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[107] Conan Doyle, *The Great War*, 24.

[108] Conan Doyle, *Great Britain and the Next War*, 7.

[109] Carr, *Life of Conan Doyle*, 48.

England, erodes this explanation; Conan Doyle could not see himself as an "Englishman" and a "Celt," without feeling some tension.

Perhaps the best example of Conan Doyle's treatment of Irish traits in fiction is the recurring character of Edward Malone from the Challenger series. Malone is an extremely sympathetic character whose Irishness serves him as an asset, though usually in spots where deception and temper are required. In his first encounter with the explosive Professor Challenger he relies on his "Irish wits" to avoid the inevitable outbreak of violence. In *The Land of Mist*, an older Malone points out the difference between English sense and Irish passion: "If you want to know if a man is of the true Irish blood there is one infallible test. Put him in front of swing door with Push or Pull printed upon it. The Englishman will obey like a sensible man. The Irishman, with less sense but more individuality, will at once and with vehemence do the opposite."[110] Again, Conan Doyle here romanticizes rather than criticizes Malone's Irish obstinacy.

Conan Doyle's most romantic treatment of this "Irish spirit" is in his short tragedy, the title story from his collection, *The Green Flag*. Here Conan Doyle creates a tight little drama around an Irish company in the Imperial Army, C Company of the Royal Mallows, stationed in Nubia. The soldiers, epitomized in the character of Dennis Conolly, are not in the army for their love of Britain, or their wish to preserve her empire. Rather, the company is comprised of "disaffected" men whom Conan Doyle describes as mostly desperate men, the product of the Irish tenant land struggle against their British land-owners, and therefore only paradoxically in service to the British Government: "Their entire experience of the British Government had been an inexorable landlord, and a constabulary who seemed to them to be always on the side of the rent-

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[110] Conan Doyle *When the World Screamed*, 75.

collector."[111] At first, Conan Doyle seems to find great sympathy with these "disaffected men" even though they might "have at a distance looked upon the foe (meaning here the Army's enemies, not the British) as a friend."[112] Therefore, when the call to attack the Nubian band comes, the Royal Mallows unsurprisingly asks why they should fight for England. The officer's response is pure jingoism: "'You are not fighting for England. You are fighting for Ireland and the empire of which it is part." This stirring remark draws a string of curses from the crowd of insubordinate soldiers: "May me hand stiffen before I draw thrigger for [the Impire (sic)]." It is only upon sight of the enemy that turns the sentiments of the Mallows:

> ...through the narrow gap surged a stream of naked savages, mad with battle, drunk with slaughter, spotted and splashed with blood—blood dripping from their spears, their arms, their faces. Their yells, their bounds, their crouching, darting figures, the horrid energy of their spear thrusts, made them look like a blast of fiends from the pit. And were these the Allies of Ireland? Were these the men who were to strike for her against her enemies? Conolly's soul rose up in loathing at the thought.

As in the *Tragedy of the Korosko*, the bestiality of the "savage" enemy dissolves barriers between the Europeans, even those with such long-standing enmity as England and Ireland. Indeed, as seen previously Conan Doyle's description of the Arabs leaves them bearing little humanity at all. The Irish do not give up their individuality; in the end, the Mallows fights, not necessarily for England, but rather against the common "savage" foe. This is the unifying theme which Conan Doyle hopes to justify the Union of England and Ireland in the empire.

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[111] Conan Doyle "The Green Flag," in *The Green Flag*, 4.

[112] Conan Doyle, *The Green Flag*, 5.

It is this indomitability of spirit and individuality which Conan Doyle admired in many of Britain's heroes. In fact, like Malone or Dennis Conolly many of Conan Doyle's English characters display this kind of Celtic obstinacy. For example, Sherlock Holmes does not always follow the "push or pull" signs in pursuit of his goals; in fact the sleuth's career and odd mannerisms perpetually tear at convention. Adrian Conan Doyle's insistence that his father based the Holmes character on himself is partly reinforced by the fact that he gave his detective a decidedly Irish name. Adrian Conan Doyle also points out that the inspiration for his father's fiction came as a result of this Celtic awareness: "When my father wrote [*The Hound of the Baskervilles*], his Celtic nature was reacting strongly to the legend of the phantom hound that his friend Fletcher Robinson had mentioned to him during their homeward voyage from the Boer War..."[113] Though Conan Doyle may praise Englishness in stories like *The White Company*, it is evident that a certain degree of Celticness adds to the heroism of a character.

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[113] Adrian Conan Doyle, Introduction to Conan Doyle, *A Treasury of Sherlock Holmes* (Garden City, New York: International Collectors Library, 1955).

**Chapter 4: Christianity, Spiritualism, and Empire.**

The notions of "Manly Imperialism" and "Chivalric Empire," were closely associated with Christian ethics and precepts. The whole concept of a Chivalric empire, which the jingoists and myth-builders tried to promote, included strong Christian undercurrents, especially Anglicanism, just as the scientific imperialists and racial theorists invoked the "science" of social-Darwinism as a base justification for empire. Christian influences on empire, therefore, served two very important purposes. They created a strong bond and provided a mass identification with the people of England, who had experienced the religious revival of the Victorian period. Christianity also justified Britain's sense of "world-mission," whose efforts to civilize underdeveloped nations were attached to the impetus to Christianize the "heathen savage." The fight was justified with God on Britain's side. In fact, this latter precept of Christian empire, extended back to the mid-Victorian abolitionist movements which had originated out of Britain's churches and had religious like Grenville Sharpe figures as its leaders.

But for all intents and purposes, the Christian empire meant a decidedly Protestant, and specifically Anglican empire. Conan Doyle was Catholic by birth and upbringing, though Dickson Carr sees the young Doyle rejecting Catholicism after his stay at the Jesuit Stonyhurst School due to its inflexibility on the subject of eternal perdition: "It haunted him to think of all the men he had read about, learned men and soldiers and statesmen, all writhing in flames."[114] By the time he returned from his African sailing adventure he was a confirmed agnostic.[115] So Doyle became a materialist, which became evident in

[114] Carr, *Life of Conan Doyle*, 16.

his early, pre-Spiritualist writing. Yet, while throughout his works he speaks of Christian morality, he never converted to Protestantism; his doubts over Catholicism play a strong, supporting role in his fiction, and the Catholic Church remained very much connected to Conan Doyle's concept of Irishness. In the same way that Conan Doyle's refusal to completely reject his Irish heritage set him apart from his idealized 'Englishness', his connection with Catholicism, ultimately neither upheld nor severed, kept him apart from what Kennedy calls the "Anglican primacy" perpetuated by the religious restrictions of the top universities and public schools. "...the upper branches of the bureaucracy, of Parliament and of 'society' in general were overwhelmingly Protestant."[116]

Conan Doyle's religious uncertainty actually would have estranged him from almost all sides of his own party. His materialism and Catholic sympathy (for the people if not the dogma) would have served as a wedge between himself and the figure of Gladstone, the grand old man of Victorian Liberalism. Gladstone's efforts in support of the Christian Bulgars in the Eastern Question Crisis of 1876 indicated the degree to which he believed morality and Christianity co-mingled with the interests of the state in foreign affairs.[117] Moreover, the Home Rule crisis of 1886 created some difficult decisions for many

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[115] Indeed Carr recreates a scene between Doyle and his aristocratic aunt and uncle, in which they try to persuade him to become a Catholic physician, with the prospect of a large and wealthy clientele waiting for him. Doyle refused asserting his agnosticism, and it is very possible that this moment decided his future as a writer.

[116] Paul Kennedy *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 104. Though opposition to religious dogma does not necessarily translate into religious ambivalence or uncertainty, in Conan Doyle's case, this seems to have been the effect. Some might claim that he merely rejected Catholic piety in favor of Weberian Protestantism, but for Conan Doyle such an identification would likely have been unconscious if at all. Conan Doyle's connection to Catholicism remained part of his identification to his Irish roots. And as seen in his texts, until his conversion to spiritualism, Conan Doyle rejected religious dogmatism on every level of Christianity, in High Anglicanism, Catholicism and even Non-conformism equally.

[117] Peter Stansky Gladstone: *A Progress in Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979), 123.

British Catholics like Conan Doyle operating within the Liberal Party. Many Liberal Catholics found that Gladstone's vehement anti-Catholicism was reflected in his foreign and education policies, resulting in what G.I.T. Machin sees as a general drift of Catholics to Conservatism in the 1880's.[118] However, Catholics looking at the alternatives to Gladstone's Liberalism, and especially those who did not agree with Home Rule, found little comfort. Joseph Chamberlain's main argument against Home Rule election played on Protestant fears of Catholic repression in Northern Ireland, a contingency for which Gladstone had prepared by including a measure against the establishment of a Church by the Home Rule government.[119] The net result of this battle was the estrangement of British Catholics from the Liberal Party in general. But Machin insists that many Catholics sided with the Liberal Imperialists and Unionists despite general anti-Catholicism, and Conan Doyle, who was not concerned with the expansion of the Church, would certainly choose Unionism over Home Rule.[120]

*The White Company* illustrates Conan Doyle's earlier efforts (pre-World War I) to keep Christianity kept on the sidelines, if only as justification for action. Yet rather than serving as ratification for the Tory concept of muscular Christianity of the Church Lads Brigade or Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts, Conan Doyle's point again is a promotion of individuality, wherein Christian ethics are applied to individual, manly pursuits. In the opening scenes of the book, the two

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[118] G.I.T. Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain, 1869-1921* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 114-115; Kennedy, *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism*, 104-5. Machin notes Catholic fears over the encroachment of Russia threatening the power of the Church, an issue which Gladstone's 'weakness' on foreign policy would certainly make Catholics uneasy. Also Machin writes that Liberalism aimed at the secularization of education, against which both Conservatives and Catholics were united. Kennedy notes that one of the foundations of Anglo-German 'cultural' kinship lay in both countries' dedication in the struggle against papal infallibility, and the Catholic Church in general.

[119] Machin, *Politics and the Churches*, 171-2.

[120] Machin, *Politics and the Churches*, 115ff.

monastic neophytes leave the order: Hordle John for his excessive worldliness; and Alleyne for his lack thereof. Hordle John sets out to dispel Alleyne's notions of the sanctity of the monastery and its tenants:

> Holy men? Holy Cabbages! Holy bean-pods! What do they do but live and suck in sustenance and grow fat? If that be holiness, I could show you hogs in this forest who are fit to head the Calendar. Think you it was for such a life that this good arm was fixed upon my shoulder, or that head placed upon your neck? There is work in the world, man, and it is not by hiding behind stone walls that we shall do it.[121]

Alleyne at first is skeptical of John's assessment, but, later, having joined Sir Nigel Loring as a squire, in a real-world manly pursuit, he comes to the realization that Hordle John, for all his bluster, was indeed correct in his assessment,

> that the men with whom he was thrown in contact, rough-tongued, fierce, and quarrelsome as they were, were yet of deeper nature and of more service in the world than the ox-eyed brethren who rose and ate and slept from year's end to year's end in their own narrow stagnant circle of existence.[122]

Such sentiments reflect Conan Doyle's contempt for isolation; here the monastic cloisters seem like James Stephens' description of his accounting office in *The Tragedy of the Korosko*—a place entirely shut out from the real world—a place where men cannot develop to their full potential. More important, the use of the monastery as a hindrance to growth indicates Conan Doyle's feelings that material concerns deserve more attention than purely spiritual matters; typically, Conan Doyle tries to compromise between the two.

Religion and Conan Doyle's religious uncertainty play a greater role in *Micah Clarke* (1894), Conan Doyle's novel centering on Monmouth's

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[121] Conan Doyle, *The White Company*, 39-40.

[122] Conan Doyle, *The White Company*, 131.

rebellion against King James in 1685. Micah tells the tale as an old man in 1735, beginning with a disclaimer to his grandchildren, explaining that the fight was over religious differences which no longer exist in England: "We realize now that there are no more useful or loyal citizens in the state than our Catholic brethren, and Mr. Alexander Pope or any other living Papist is no more looked down upon for his religion than was Mr. William Penn for his Quakerism in the reign of King James."[123] The story raises questions over the validity of religion as cause for conflict. Also Conan Doyle criticizes the fanaticism and narrow view of Cromwellian soldiers, whom Nineteenth Century Conservatives saw as the progenitors of their Liberal opponents. Conan Doyle presents a very political view of religion and the Anglican/Catholic conflict in Britain's history: "The narrow Protestantism of England was less a religious sentiment than a patriotic reply to the aggressive bigotry of her enemies. Our Catholic countrymen were unpopular not so much because they believed in transubstantiation as because they were unjustly suspected of sympathizing with the emperor or with the king of France."[124] Yet, as a central figure, Micah reveals Conan Doyle's own uncertainty as his character is barraged endlessly with indecision over which side is right; these doubts are never truly resolved.

Micah's decision to join in the fight at all takes him through fifty pages of uncertainty, through which he is assaulted by recommenders and detractors from all sides. Foremost in his mind is his religious ambivalence: "I was no keen religious zealot. Papistry, Church, Dissent, I believed that there was God in all of them, but that not one was worth the spilling of human blood."[125]

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[123] Conan Doyle, *Micah Clarke*, 12.

[124] Conan Doyle, *Micah Clarke*, 13.

[125] Conan Doyle, *Micah Clarke*, 51.

His father had urged him to join Monmouth to revive the earlier Cromwellian campaign against papistry. But Micah's heart does not agree with his father, whom he sees as "so tied down by his iron doctrines, and should imagine his creator to be so niggard of his mercy as to withhold it from nine-and-ninety in the hundred."[126] Micah also doubts Monmouth's claims to the throne: "James might be a perjurer and a villain, but he was, as far as I could see, the rightful king of England, and no tales of secret marriages or black boxes could alter the fact that his rival was apparently an illegitimate son, and as such ineligible to the throne."[127] Furthermore, the rebel army is comprised of some decidedly less than righteous people. Decimus Saxon, whom Micah's father trusted implicitly reveals himself to be a slightly less scrupulous version of the bawdy archer, Aylward, in *The White Company*. For Saxon, religion is flexible, like telling the truth, which in conflict may be used at will to his advantage, in telling a story of how he escaped punishment by the Turks he claims "there was no pretence. I became a Mussulman."[128]

The lack of righteousness in Micah's companions is heightened by his discovery of the true nature of his new enemy. Micah discovers that the soldiers of the King's army, so often disparaged by Micah's father, would have passed as "mild-mannered men": "My father's prejudices had led me to believe that a king's officer was ever a compound of the coxcomb and the bully, but I found on testing it that his idea, like most others which a man takes upon trust, had very little foundation on truth...."[129] Therefore, Micah's ambivalence

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[126] Conan Doyle, *Micah Clarke*, 18.

[127] Conan Doyle, *Micah Clarke*, 51.

[128] Conan Doyle, *Micah Clarke*, 67.

[129] Conan Doyle, *Micah Clarke*, 87.

towards the respective armies of the conflict becomes an extension of his religious ambivalence. Though his parents and others around him are convinced of the moral necessity of Monmouth's rebellion, Micah cannot decide for himself for what exactly he is fighting, and whether or not he has chosen correctly between the dual threats of popery or treason.

The conclusion of the story does not provide a resolution to the conflict. Though Monmouth was decisively defeated and executed, he showed, in Micah's words, "some traces of that spirit which spurted up now and again from his feeble nature."[130] Micah, was convinced that the rebellion was a "brave and a noble failure," mostly because it was "before our time."[131] Dismissing his praise for prominent Catholics, Micah's conclusion is firmly Protestant-oriented, mostly against "James and his poisonous brood." He predicts the unification of the Dissenters and the Anglicans reflected by the long happy marriage of his father and mother, representing each side in that debate. Rather than sort out which side or what creed actually emerged victorious from this conflict, Micah avoids the question entirely by paraphrasing his intellectual mentor, Zachariah Palmer, in wishing that "deeds are everything in this world, and dogma is nothing."[132] But ultimately Micah, even in his dotage, remains an uneasy figure, unable to represent any side more than marginally, sitting somewhere between all of them. He stands then for religious freedom, but mostly because of his religious ambivalence and his allegiance to materialism.

In *The Tragedy of the Korosko*, however, Conan Doyle places himself more fully as a Catholic apologist, but mostly as a 'pan-Christian,' and perhaps a

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[130] Conan Doyle, *Micah Clarke*, 458.

[131] Conan Doyle, *Micah Clarke*, 457.

[132] Conan Doyle, *Micah Clarke*, 462.

proto-spiritualist. The 'tragedy' which the title describes afflicts the tourists on board the *Korosko* on both a physical and spiritual level, and arises in reaction to contact with an extreme external influence, Islam, against which, the Christians must find common bonds to defeat. They are subjected to hardships and mental cruelty, but their greatest affliction comes from the choice they must make, which is the center of the plot. They must choose death or conversion to Islam. The tragedy itself brings out a spiritual awareness in the passengers whose vision before had been limited to political and material matters. Just as Conan Doyle asserts that adversity and strife brings out the best physically and emotionally in people, so too he asserts that it inspires a sort of spiritual awakening, as seen first in the Reverend Stuart from Birmingham's transformation from an ineffectual member of the party to one now "purified, spiritualized, exalted." And except for Cecil Brown, the atheist Oxonian, all "even Fardet, the Frenchman, were touched and strengthened" by Stuart's prayers.[133]

Despite this respect for spiritual awakening, Conan Doyle still is uneasy with individual dogma. He criticizes the evangelising impulses of the elder Miss Adams, who would transform "Khartoum, and [turn] Omdurman into a little well-drained broad avenued replica of a New England town."[134] Furthermore the atheism of Fardet and the Oxonian, Brown, seems to bother his sensibilities. But Conan Doyle makes an unusual defense of Catholicism. The two Catholics of the party are a married couple from Dublin. In fact, throughout the story, it is the Belmont's Catholicism which brings out the spiritualism of the

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[133] Conan Doyle, *Korosko*, 105.

[134] Conan Doyle, *Korosko*, 110.

group, a spiritualism which Conan Doyle sees as the basis for all Christian religion:

> [Mrs. Belmont] was a devout Roman Catholic, and it is a creed which forms an excellent prop in hours of danger. To her, to the Anglican Colonel, to the Non-conformist minister, to the Presbyterian American, even to the two Pagan black riflemen, religion in its various forms was fulfilling the same beneficent office—whispering always that the worst which the world can do is a small thing, and that, however harsh the ways of Providence may seem, it is, on the whole, the wisest and best thing for us that we should go cheerfully whither the Great Hand guides us. They had not a dogma in common, these fellows in misfortune, but they held the intimate, deep-lying spirit, the calm essential fatalism which is the world-old framework of religion, with fresh crops of dogma growing like ephemeral lichens upon its granite surface.[135]

This 'world-old framework,' however, lies dormant, discernible only by its 'fresh crops of dogma.' Conan Doyle prophesies that an awakening will occur when staid Christianity comes to face fanatical Mohammedanism, which might "be the besom with which Providence may sweep the rotten, decadent, impossible, half-hearted south of Europe, as it did a thousand years ago, until it makes room for a sounder stock." Certainly this statement implies religious biases against Southern European Catholicism, but the use of the word "stock" suggests racial theories of the division between Northern and Southern Europe, as though religion were a reflection of genetic disposition.[136]

It is this clash that brings out what Conan Doyle sees as the best in Christianity. When the Emir of the dervishes puts the question of conversion before the group, each refuses for his or her own reasons. The two Roman Catholics only contemplate death: there is no consideration that a choice even

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[135] Conan Doyle, *Korosko*, 131.

[136] Conan Doyle, *Korosko*, 134.

exists. The practical colonel looks beyond the conversion to his life as a slave in Khartoum, and rejects the offer because of that prospect. The Frenchman, despite his agnosticism, rejects the offer because "it is not possible for the honour of a Frenchman that he should be converted in this fashion."[137] Only the impressionable young Smith graduate finds the prospect of salvation appealing, and her aunt disabuses her of the idea. Conan Doyle finds heroism in this small resistance.

As a ploy, Cochrane devises a scheme wherein they ask the Moolah to explain the Muslim faith to them before they convert. The self-serving dragoman, who had acted as tour-leader, has by this point converted from Christianity, saying that he might yet convert back someday. He defends his actions by insisting that he will "serve the Lord as long as what he asks is reasonable; but this is very otherwise."[138] So, all hide their faith under a half-lie to ensure their protection, but when signs of imminent rescue inspire hope in the travellers, the Belmonts' Catholicism causes their ruse to fail. At first, Cochrane and Fardet scream at the Irish Catholics to stand up before the Moolah notices "this public testimony to the failure of his missionary efforts."[139] But, in the end, for the same respective reasons they refused to convert before, all join the husband and wife in prayer: Cochrane pragmatically, with a hint of irony—"it is stupid to pray all your life and not to pray now when we have nothing to hope for..."—and Fardet again with more concern for honor than piety.[140]

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[137] Conan Doyle, *Korosko*, 150-1

[138] Conan Doyle, *Korosko*, 155.

[139] Conan Doyle, *Korosko*, 205.

[140] Conan Doyle, *Korosko*, 206-7.

Though clearly the Belmonts' Catholicism is to blame for the ensuing retribution exacted upon the party, Conan Doyle seems to find some tragically romantic heroism in this shattering of the illusion. Unlike the vacillating dragoman, the European party cannot persist in a sham of religious indifference; they must be true to themselves. And this self-honesty comes as a result of the stringent religiosity of the Irish Catholics. Conan Doyle is not vindicating Catholicism here, nor indeed any branch of Christian faith over another. He is merely vindicating human spirituality. This experience, as a whole has its effect on the members of the party, and by the end, even Fardet the agnostic is singing the praises not only of England but of Christianity as well: "*Vivent la croix les Chretiens?*"[141] Fardet even has become an evangelist, sorry that "the cursed Moolah" had been shot, because, "I believe that I could have persuaded him to be a Christian."[142]

If throughout his life Conan Doyle was trying to find a place for himself amongst the various dogmatic strains of Christianity, he ultimately found peace in a new form of the religion entirely—Spiritualism. Conan Doyle dates his conversion to the belief in Spiritualism at 1916, and from that moment on, it was to become his single greatest pursuit, "infinitely the most important thing in the world."[143] Conan Doyle wrote a two-volume *History of Spiritualism* in 1926, in which he cites 1848 as the beginning of the modern British movement of belief in "appearances of external intelligent power of a higher or lower type impinging upon the affairs of men."[144] Also in 1926, in a contributory letter to

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[141] Conan Doyle, *Korosko*, 258.

[142] Conan Doyle, *Korosko*, 259.

[143] Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Psychic Question as I See It," in Carl Murchison (ed.), *The Case For and Against Psychical Belief* (Worcester, Mass.: Clark University, 1927), 15.

*The Case For and Against Psychical Belief*, Conan Doyle explains that one of the reasons for his gradual conversion was that spiritualism "gave strength and comfort to others,"[145] much in the way he described Catholicism in *The Tragedy of the Korosko*. The Spiritualist movement in Britain, standing always slightly on the edge of public acceptance, gained momentary popularity at the end of the First World War. Conan Doyle's involvement at this time is no coincidence; like many Britons at the end of the bloodiest and costliest war in the nation's history, Conan Doyle turned to psychic belief as a way of coping with the great loss of life and kin brought about by the War.[146] As a result, however, Conan Doyle rejected almost all of his other pursuits in favor of his new-found enlightenment. In essence, Spiritualism replaced his love of history, chivalry and indeed empire. Similar to his efforts to infuse the public with his earlier ideas, he now dedicated himself to the dissemination of Spiritualist ideas.[147]

Part of the reason for Conan Doyle's rejection of his previous interests involves the unique social and religious aspects of the Spiritualist movement itself. Though Spiritualism might have replaced imperialism for Conan Doyle, it shared none of its characteristics. It was characteristically non-aggressive, even passive in form, introspective, and boasted a large female participation. Moreover, it had a very egalitarian undercurrent. In fact, Conan Doyle reminds his readers that the foundation of the Spiritualist movement

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144 Arthur Conan Doyle *The History of Spiritualism* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1926) vol. 1, 11.

145 Arthur Conan Doyle "The Psychic Question As I See It." in *The Case For and Against Spritualism* (Worcester, Mass.: Clark University, 1927), 15.

146 Jean Conan Doyle, his second wife, lost her brother in Mons, 1916, and she subsequently turned to spiritualism. Conan Doyle himself eventually lost both his brother, Innes, and his son, Kingsley, to wounds received in the War. The fact that Conan Doyle's first spiritual experience took place in 1916—in the midst of the War and the same time as the horror of the Easter massacre in Ireland—is highly significant.

147 Ruth Brandon claims that Conan Doyle's conversion to Spiritualism awakened messianic tendencies: *The Spiritualists* (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books,1984), 219.

owed much to the roles of women: "Psychic power and psychic knowledge are as great in one sex as in another."[148] The egalitarianism of the Spiritualist movement crosses not only the gender boundaries but class and social bounds as well. Conan Doyle provides evidence for this by describing the lowly birth of "The Prophet of the New Revelation," Andrew Jackson Davis, whose "mother was an uneducated woman, with a visionary turn which was allied to vulgar superstition, while his father was a lowly worker in leather."[149]

In fact, Doyle saw the movement as a new kind of Christianity, taking in those of humble origin, yet inevitably attractive to the 'respectable' classes: an inversion of old Whig notions of self-improvement through education, spreading from the lower classes upwards through the social strata. *The Land of Mist*, also written in 1926, reflects this change of perspective. It is ostensibly a Professor Challenger story, and though Edward Malone, Lord John Roxton, and even the ghost of Professor Summerlee appear, it is a very different type of adventure than *The Lost World*—in that the plot never takes anyone outside of England and France. The lack of exotic locale is the least of the differences, however. Most noticeably, as Malone notes, the type of people who are receptive to Spiritualism are completely different from Conan Doyle's standard imperial enthusiasts:

> The hall was crammed, and as one looked down one saw line after line of upturned faces, curiously alike in type, women predominating, but men running them close. That type was not distinguished nor intellectual. But it was undeniably healthy, honest, and sane.[150]

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[148] Conan Doyle *History of Spiritualism*, 147. For more on women and their roles in the history of Spiritualism, see Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: A history of Women.* For more on the connections between Spiritualism and Suffragism in the United States see Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 3ff.

[149] Conan Doyle, *History of Spiritualism*, 42.

These "small tradesfolk, male and female shopwalkers, better class artisans, etc." share neither of the dual impulses towards intellect nor manliness that Conan Doyle required of his earlier heroes. By the end of the novel, Conan Doyle brings down the volcanic temper of Professor Challenger in the face of Spiritual awakening, making him a "gentler, humbler, more spiritual man," as well as rejecting the scientific principles, which Challenger had championed, as "a formidable obstruction to the advance of the human soul through the jungle of the unknown."[151] All the virtues of Conan Doyle's imperialist heroes—manliness, intellect, military tactical skill—had created a war so devastating it had destroyed 'the flower of England.' As a result, Conan Doyle eliminated those qualities from his fictional heroes, in order to promote a new ethic that would preserve peace.

Perhaps empire suited the younger man in the Edwardian period, but Spiritualism was a resort to which a member of that generation could turn when death seemed closer and less was to be gained from physical and worldly success. Furthermore, by 1926, the empire was certainly no longer what it used to be, and neither was armed combat. World War I could very well have beaten most of the adventure out of Conan Doyle. He retired the frenetic Holmes to a quiet life of bee-keeping in the country,[152] and humbled the bombastic Professor Challenger. Britain could no longer afford imperial expansion, nor did it desire a any continuation of its earlier role as an international police force. In Conan Doyle's words, the *world* had indeed *screamed*, and Conan Doyle, with his losses,

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[150] Arthur Conan Doyle *Land of Mist* in *When the World Screamed and Other Stories* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1990), 54.

[151] Conan Doyle, *When the World Screamed*, 224.

[152] In "The Last Bow."

shrank back with many from the horrible power that "knowledge and so-called civilisation" had brought. The Conan Doyle who had gloried in noble battle disappears in the last passage of the *Land of Mist*, to be replaced by a philosophical Conan Doyle whose apocalyptic vision sees that war has exceeded chivalry's power to ennoble it:

> Look how everything has been turned to evil. We got the knowledge of airships. We bomb cities with them. We learn how to steam under the sea. We murder seamen with our new knowledge. We gain command over chemicals. We turn them into explosives or poison gasses. It goes from worse to worse. At the present moment every nation upon earth is plotting secretly how it can best poison the others. Did God create the planet for this end, and is it likely that He will allow it to go on from bad to worse? [153]

The voice of Malone clearly has Conan Doyle behind it. Spiritualism, therefore not only resolves Conan Doyle's internal conflict over religion, it actually solves all his questions of imperialism—by eradicating them.

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[153] Conan Doyle, *When the World Screamed*, 226.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Conan Doyle died quietly on July 8, 1930. He was buried in his garden at his home, Windlesham. On his oaken headstone read the last words which Conan Doyle would leave the world; they are four simple, declarative worlds that sum up an extremely complex life led through extremely complex times: "Steel True, Blade Straight."[154] How are we to read this last statement from the man? For about fifteen years before his death, Conan Doyle had rejected the arts of war and the love of muscular chivalry for the spiritual pleasures of the psychical world. "Steel True, Blade Straight" may be a last-minute return to earlier precepts Conan Doyle held, when Britons could still delight in the making of war—could believe in its naturalness and even purity. But more than this, perhaps this epitaph serves as a metaphor for Conan Doyle's unending quest to simplify the complex and contradictory issues surrounding imperialism to a single ethos.

In effect, Conan Doyle lived through the apices of the two movements which dominated his life. The British Empire was in a state of contraction following World War I. Never again could the British government or people claim to command the sheer amount of economic, human, and material resources that their imperial possessions gave them in 1914. But more important, the ideas that predominated the late Victorian and Edwardian periods had met their final end on the battlefields of Europe in World War I. Both British imperialism and Liberalism would suffer ignominious declines; the former mostly as a result of the horrors of the War, the latter as a result of its own inability to hold a national support in the face of a consolidated Conservative

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154 Carr, *Life of Conan Doyle*, 283.

Party and an ascendant Labour Party.[155] Especially with the consolidation of organized labor behind the Labour Party, Liberalism could no longer speak to working-class interests, nor could it pretend to be the sole voice of reform for lower-class problems. The revolution in Russia marked a new beginning for socialism and the definite end of hope for laissez-faire European policy. In essence, Conan Doyle tried to reconcile two Nineteenth-Century British ideologies each of which was becoming increasingly untenable.

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155 The decline of Liberalism in the Twentieth Century is an issue still under serious debate. George Dangerfield's controversial thesis [*The Strange Death of Liberal England* (New York: Perigree, 1980)], first published in 1935, that the combined forces of Irish nationalism, female suffragism, and labor movement caused liberalism's demise sparked a debate that continues today.

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