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Transnational Negotiations and the Interplay
Between Chinese and Western Detective Fiction at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This project examines the multi-layered interactions between Chinese and Western detective fiction at the turn of the twentieth century. I analyze Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, the Chinese translations of Conan Doyle, and Cheng Xiaoqing's Huo Sang cases, using them as cultural lenses through which to read these interactions. Shaped by a variety of conflicting and indigenizing cultural elements, both Chinese and English detective discourses perform a profound identity crisis and a sense of haunting anxiety as they articulate interactive relationships between the Orient and the Occident. By constructing the Orient in his Holmes stories as a place of disease, contagion, disaster, barbarism, and chaos, Conan Doyle presents an imminent Oriental menacing force that threatens the superiority of the British Empire. But at the same time, ambiguities and textual tensions permeate Conan Doyle's Orientalist discourse that destabilize such modern conceptualizations as gender, race, identity, reason, science, and progress. Conan Doyle's desire to denationalize the discourse of Western modernity was

intercepted by a simultaneous process of nationalization, manifested in the fears and anxieties of the Empire as it faced an emerging Orient that rebelled against colonial exploitations and strove for modernization and independence. By contrast, I perceive in the interactions between Chinese translators and Western writers an almost contrary trajectory. Chinese translators of Western detective fiction were obsessed with nationalism, using modern detective fiction as an educational tool to bring enlightenment to Chinese society. This process of nationalization co-existed with their denationalizing project of adopting the Western model of modernity that they saw embodied in the Holmes stories. Despite their advocacy of Western-style modernization, however, Chinese translators and writers of detective fiction offered an active response to modern conceptualizations such as science and progress through a subtle and complicated process of indigenization. Based on my analyses of the strategies used in translating Holmes and the ambiguities presented in Cheng Xiaoqing's Huo Sang cases, I argue that these marginalized May Fourth intellectuals, whether consciously or not, applied native Chinese detective genre *gong-an* and traditional cultural values as powerful tools in negotiating cultural difference with the Holmes detective discourse.

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Introduction:
Detective Fiction, Modernity, and Transnational Negotiation

From the side, a whole range; from the end, a single peak;
Far, near, high, low, no two parts alike.
Why can't I tell the true shape of Lu-shan?
Because I myself am here in the mountain.

— Su Shi 苏轼 (1037-1101, Chinese Poet)¹

The Golden Age of Chinese detective fiction, which began at the turn of the twentieth century and lasted till the outbreak of World War Two, was a time marked by copious translations of Western detective stories and hybrid creations of modern Chinese detective fiction in response to the unprecedented clashes between old and new, traditional and modern, East and West.² In *Chinese Justice, the Fiction*, literary scholar Jeffrey C. Kinkley calls this golden era “the heyday of private, adversarial legal practice, though not of rule of law or of any fiction praising legal institutions.”³ Cheng Xiaoqing 程小青 (1893-1976) and Sun Liaohong 孙了红 (1897-1958) are regarded as the best known figures among the large group of Chinese detective writers of the Golden Age.

¹ Su Shi 苏轼, “Ti xilin bi” 题西林壁 (Written on the wall at west forest temple) in *Selected Poems of Su Tung-P'o*, trans. Burton Watson, (Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 1994), p. 108.

² In July 1937, Japan instigated the Marco Polo Bridge Incident 卢沟桥事变 to attack the Chinese troops in Peking. This event is widely used by historians to mark the beginning of Japan's full invasion of China and the outbreak of World War Two in Asia.

³ Kinkley, *Chinese Justice, the Fiction*, p. 170.

Cheng created his famous detective hero Huo Sang 霍桑 by following the narrative formula of Arthur Conan Doyle's (1859-1930) Sherlock Holmes stories; Sun created his gentleman-thief and anti-Huo Sang detective character Lu Ping 鲁平 by imitating French writer Maurice Leblanc's (1864-1941) anti-Holmes narratives. The tensions between these multi-layered rivalries added to the cultural complexity of the Chinese Golden Age detective discourse. However, despite their achievements in translating and writing detective fiction, Cheng and Sun are marginalized in the Chinese literary canon, and their works have seldom been selected as readings in government-issued school textbooks.

The Golden Age of Chinese detective fiction overlaps with the time span of Golden Age of detective fiction in the West, which typically refers to the years between 1920 and 1939. Interestingly, the Chinese Golden Age began almost twenty years earlier than the Western Golden Age, although they both ended around the same time due to World War Two. Another difference between the two is that the Chinese Golden Age featured intensive translation activity along with detective fiction writing, whereas the Western Golden Age was mainly embodied in the flourishing of classic detective fiction writing by authors such as Agatha Christie (1890-1976), Dorothy L. Sayers (1893-1957), John Dickson Carr (1906-1977) and Ellery Queen.⁴

Most importantly, the circumstances that led to the two phenomena and the historical contexts that they participated in were dramatically different. The translation

⁴ Ellery Queen is both a detective character and a pseudonym for co-writers Frederic Dannay (1905-1982) and Manfred Bennington Lee (1905-1971), two American cousins from Brooklyn, New York. Queen debuts in "The Roman Hat Mystery" (1929) and is introduced as the son of a New York City police inspector. An intellectual and writer of detective stories, Queen teams with his father to collect and analyze the clues and ultimately solves various types of baffling mysteries.

and writing of detective fiction in China were part of the May Fourth Movement and the New Culture Movement, which emphasized language reform, adoption of the modern vernacular, rejection of Confucian values, women's liberation, and the promotion of Chinese nationalism. To a large extent, Chinese Golden Age detective fiction was used as an educational tool to spread the scientific spirit in society and to advance China's modernization project. Western Golden Age detective fiction, on the other hand, was dominated by anxiety about genre stability and its legitimization. Edgar Allan Poe's (1809-1849) publication of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) was regarded as the birth of modern detective fiction. It centers on ratiocination by the detective using clues to solve the mystery and emphasizes detective procedures instead of thrilling events, thus encouraging the reader to join with the author and the detective in discovering the truth behind the mystery. Conan Doyle inherited the formula that Poe created and expanded its popularity with the success of his Sherlock Holmes series. By the early 1920s, this formula began to form a distinctive genre, as opposed to other kinds of popular fiction like romance, adventure, and mystery. A detective story started to be read as something similar to a crossword puzzle in which the clues lead ultimately to the solution.

With the flourishing of classic detective fiction in the West, a body of criticism was produced, which attempted to lay down the limits within which writers of detective stories should operate. Western scholar Julian Symons argues that this phenomenon was rooted in the assumption that the detective story is a game between the writer and the reader and took into consideration the concerns of the detective writers of that time about

the nature of the game and how it should be played.⁵ This attempt was further confirmed by S. S. Van Dine's (1888-1939) publication of "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories" in *American Magazine* in September, 1928, claiming that the rules were based partly on the practice of all the great detective stories and partly on the promptings of the honest author's inner conscience.⁶ Van Dine's theory is important for his own creation of the fictive detective Philo Vance as well as for the historical context of Western detective writers' concerns for the integrity of the genre itself.

These attempts to set rules and boundaries for Golden Age detective fiction in the West form a striking contrast to China's experimental spirit in detective story writing and its practice of literary utilitarianism. Chinese writers of detective fiction were also concerned about the legitimacy of the genre; their emphasis, however, was not to prescribe rules on how detective fiction should be written, but to raise its status in popular culture to the same level as serious literature so that its contribution to advancing China's modernization project could be recognized. Western detective fiction, in contrast, was experiencing a different kind of anxiety. As the popularity of the genre grew, writers began to feel a strong desire to legitimize its norms and its supremacy, and the need to establish authority through the (re-)enforcement of accepted forms of knowledge and the institutionalized construction of truth.⁷ Conan Doyle is not one of the Western Golden Age detective fiction writers, but his Holmes series laid the foundation for the flourishing

⁵ Symons, *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Story: A History* (New York: Viking, 1985), p. 93.

⁶ Originally published in *American Magazine* (September, 1928), and included in *Philo Vance Murder Cases* (1936) by S.S. Van Dine, pseudonym for Willard Huntington Wright.

⁷ This concept came from Foucault's *Power/Knowledge*, p. 131.

of classic detective fiction. In China, Conan Doyle was the first Western writer of detective stories who captured the interest of Chinese translators and writers at the turn of the twentieth century.

Controversy in May Fourth Literature

When Conan Doyle's Holmes stories were first introduced to Chinese readers in 1896, the elite class in China embraced them with enthusiasm and used them as an educational tool to bring enlightenment to Chinese society. As part of popular culture, the lowbrow status of detective fiction was perceived as a positive characteristic because of the genre's accessibility to a large readership. These elite intellectuals hoped to mobilize the public, especially the Chinese middle class *xiaoshimin* 小市民 (little city people)⁸, to participate in China's reform and modernization project. The traditional boundary set up for detective fiction as a popular genre was ambiguously renegotiated. To some extent, detective fiction was placed on the same level as highbrow literature because of the elite class's discovery of its high utility, albeit for a non-traditional audience.

Detective fiction blossomed and translation of Western detective stories reached its peak in the short time span of one decade. Soon its popularity led to the creation of a large number of imitative and derivative Chinese detective novels that flooded the fiction

⁸ *Xiaoshimin* includes small merchants, various kinds of clerks and secretaries, high school students, housewives and other modestly educated, marginally went-off urban dwellers.

scene in the 1910s and 1920s.⁹ With a large increase in the quantities of detective fiction on the market, however, some elite intellectuals began to be concerned about the low moral and literary quality of many of the works. The educational utility of detective fiction began to be scrutinized and the genre was devalued; an urge was felt to limit detective fiction to its traditional low literary status.

Literary scholar Eva Hung observes that “[detective fiction] was made to carry the burden of a not clearly defined education mission, thus creating tension and conflict as a result of the differing expectations of two polarizing forces.”¹⁰ The controversy surrounding the status of detective fiction took another turn during the May Fourth Movement. “May Fourth” refers not only to the day in 1919 when students in Peking protested against the Chinese government’s self-humiliating policies toward Japan, a protest that triggered a series of uprisings throughout the country; it also stands for the entire period in early twentieth-century China when Chinese people of different social classes, under the call for patriotism and nationalism, participated in reevaluating tradition in an effort to seek science and democracy by learning from the West in order to build a new and modernized nation.¹¹ Deriving its name from this period of time, May Fourth literature came to signify a reformed practice of writing that was based on Chinese vernacular language and took its inspiration from Western literary works and different

⁹ Wang Zuxian 王祖猷 and Yi Yaohua 裔耀华, “Yiji donglai, xueshu xihua” 译籍东来,学术西化 (Translations come eastward, and scholarship is Westernized) in *Zhongguo jindai wenxue yanjiu* 中国近代文学研究 (Studies on modern Chinese literature), no.1, (Shanghai: Baihuazhou chubanshe, 1991), pp. 277-278.

¹⁰ Hung, “Giving Texts a Context: Chinese Translations of Classical English Detective Stories 1896-1916” in *Translation and Creation*, trans. David Pollard, p. 160.

¹¹ Tse-tsung Chow, *The May 4th Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

streams of Western literary movements such as romanticism, naturalism, realism, and pragmatism.

The core value and belief of the May Fourth Movement was derived from a binary way of thinking: the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, and the East and the West. For example, one of its leading advocates, Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 (1879-1942), explains that the new China that he was hoping to create is “sincere, progressive, activist, free, egalitarian, creative, beautiful, good, peaceful, cooperative, industrious, prosperous for all,” in rejection of a traditional China that was “hypocritical, conservative, passive, constrained, classicist, imitative, ugly, evil, belligerent, disorderly, lazy, and prosperous only for the few.”¹²

As literary critic Rey Chow observes, this process of ostensibly iconoclastic political and cultural purification, was “instigated with the ‘West’ as ‘theory’ and technology.”¹³ By contrast, classic Chinese literature and culture was turned into some kind of primitive raw material that, being “decadent” and “cannibalistic,” needed to be saved by Western enlightenment.¹⁴ In order to remove the old and to embrace the new, another leading May Fourth advocate, Zheng Zhenduo 郑振铎 (1898-1958), called for Chinese writers to create “a literature of blood and tears,” referring to a people’s literature, a national literature, a realist literature and a social literature and a revolutionary literature. Zheng further condemned “cold-blooded” literature, “stately and

¹² Chen Duxiu, “Xin qingnian xuanyan” 新青年宣言 (*New Youth* manifesto), *Xin qingnian* 7, no. 1 (December 1919); reprinted in *Duxiu wencun* 独秀文存, (Shanghai: Shanghai yadong tushuguan, 1922), p. 366.

¹³ Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading between West and East*, p. 34.

¹⁴ Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

elegant” or “sing to the wind and moan to the moon”¹⁵ literature. He was referring indirectly to traditional Chinese love stories and other literary works in the old style, works that enjoyed popularity in pre-modern China.

Those writers who gathered together under the banner of “a literature of blood and tears” soon became the mainstream May Fourth intellectuals, and later formed The League of Left-wing Writers. After inventing their own brand of literature, these intellectuals began to reevaluate the political and social utility of detective fiction. They immediately took the approach of demonizing its entertaining and pleasure-seeking aspects and its lowbrow status as part of popular culture. In addition, they denied any elements of modernity in the construction of Golden Age detective stories and classified them in the category of traditional *gong-an* 公案 (court case fiction). *Gong-an* is a native genre of detective fiction that prospered from middle to late imperial dynasties in China, such as Northern Song 北宋 (960-1127) and Ming 明朝 (1368-1644). Its detective protagonist is usually a district magistrate appointed by the emperor, who conducts his investigations, redresses wrongs and punishes the crime perpetrators in the courtroom.

To a large extent, because of its association with *gong-an*, a genre that prospered in imperial China, detective fiction of the Golden Age was placed in opposition to left-wing revolutionary and nationalist literature. Among the mainstream May Fourth intellectuals, Zheng Zhenduo and Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881-1936) fired the fiercest attacks on detective fiction. Zheng rejected the translated Sherlock Holmes stories as low in quality,

¹⁵ Zheng Zhenduo, “A Literature of Blood and Tears” in *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*. Perry Link, trans. Volume 8, Issue 1, 1976, p. 20.

virtually useless, and claimed that the translators were merely wasting their valuable brains and efforts; Lu Xun declares that detective stories could be used only to scratch those itchy spots on fat bodies (implying the class of bourgeoisie) after their stomachs have been filled up with food and drinks.¹⁶ Because of these negative readings and responses, detective fiction was conveniently sacrificed and classified as a member of the literary school of “Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies,” a derisive label given by the May Fourth mainstream intellectuals to all types of the old-style Chinese entertainment literature that continued to enjoy popularity, such as love stories, knight-errant novels, fantasy novels and legendary novels. The embedded discourse of Western modernity in Conan Doyle’s Holmes stories, advocated by intellectual elites at the beginning of the importation, however, was ignored and neglected by the mainstream May Fourth intellectuals even though they themselves looked to the West and transplanted modernity into their own writings and thinking. Therefore, instead of receiving a critical evaluation of its literary aspects, detective fiction was politically sacrificed and used to construct a binary-thinking framework to attack the “old” China as traditional and outdated.

Represented by Cheng Xiaoqing, the writers of Golden Age detective fiction resisted being derogatively labeled as part of the “Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies” literary movement. Although he did not attack *Xin wenxue jie* 新文学界 (New culture circle), Cheng felt very bitter about the old-new binary construction behind the labeling.¹⁷ He criticized this political practice in his theoretical essays on detective fiction, most of

¹⁶ Guan Xin 关昕, “Fu-er-mo-si zai Zhongguo de kanke mingyun” 福尔摩斯在中国的坎坷命运 (The tough fate of Holmes in China) in *Yangzi Wanbao* 扬子晚报 (*Yangtze evening paper*). 07-18-2008.

¹⁷ *Xin wenxue jie* was a popular name for mainstream May Fourth intellectuals.

which were published in popular magazines like *Hong meigui* 红玫瑰 (Red roses) and *Shanhu* 珊瑚 (Coral). In the preface to one of his Huo Sang cases series, Cheng lamented:

As for detective fiction, it seems that it has no place in our “fortressed and enclosed” New Culture Circle. The new literary writers not only ignore its utility as an educational tool, but they also ignore its power of mobilizing the public to take action. They always blot its values at one stroke and treat it as a “low-quality” toy; therefore “masters” close their eyes to it, and those “apprentices” also ignore its existence.¹⁸

Despite being marginalized and excluded by the main literary circle, Cheng and many of his contemporary writers of Golden Age detective fiction continued to believe in the power of detective fiction as an educational tool, and to engage the genre as a discourse of modernity. Although elite May Fourth intellectuals rejected their detective stories as the old and the traditional in the early twentieth century, this politically constructed ideology immediately breaks down when these texts are analyzed closely. The stories’ detective discourse is part and parcel of the May Fourth ethos through their pioneering spirit in vernacular language reform, their desire to modernize China, their concern with the liberation of women, their pursuit of science and democracy and their experience of industrialized urban life. The marginalization of the Golden Age detective

¹⁸ Cheng Xiaoqing, “Huo Sang tan’an xiuzhen congshu: Yao xu” 霍桑探案袖珍丛书: 姚序 (Yao’s preface to the pocket book series of the Huo Sang cases) in *Cheng Xiaoqing Wenji*, p. 14. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Chinese are my own.

writers was closely related to the discursive power play performed by left-wing May Fourth writers who later became leading members of the Chinese Communist Party.

Research Questions and Literature Review

During the period of history when China started to look to the West for answers, the role that detective fiction played brings a new perspective to our understanding of China's modernization experience. Having first enjoyed a prominent position and then having been marginalized as a minority group during the May Fourth Movement, how did the translators and writers of Golden Age Chinese detective fiction actively engage in dialogue with the writers of Western detective fiction at the turn of the twentieth century? Under what circumstances did Chinese detective fiction enter the conversation with its Western counterpart? What cultural anxieties did each party feel in dealing with the relationship between the East and the West? What did the Chinese detective writers accept and reject during the negotiation in terms of science, knowledge, gender, justice and power politics? These questions pose unique challenges for scholars who turn to detective fiction, popular culture, and unofficial Chinese history.

The answers to these questions are still mysteries, although a number of scholars have made significant contributions in these directions. Ren Xiang is a representative scholar in Mainland China who has conducted research on Chinese and English detective fiction. Published in 2001, her book *Wenxue de lingyidao fengjing: Zhentan xiaoshuo shilun* 文学的另一道风景: 侦探小说史论 (Another view of detective fiction: On the history of detective fiction) is a historical review of the development of detective fiction

in world literature. In her studies, Ren traces the origins of detective fiction in order to explore the detective genre's different stages of development in various parts of the world, such as Western Europe, America, the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Japan and China. Interestingly, Ren makes a comparison between traditional Chinese *gong-an* stories and modern Western detective stories in terms of structure, function, investigation methods and narrative mode.¹⁹

Ren's work not only provides us a review of the varieties of detective fiction, but it also offers us a sense of the historical status of Chinese detective fiction in the context of world literature. Although detective fiction of the Golden Age is only briefly mentioned and introduced, Ren does discuss the writings of Cheng Xiaoqing. Her study of his works is based on a biographical approach, and the complicated interrelationships between Cheng and Conan Doyle are reduced to mere imitation. In addition, although Ren analyzes the textual tension between Chinese *gong-an* and modern Western detective fiction, she fails to study the role that Chinese translators and writers played in deciphering the code of Western detective discourse.

In the West, two scholars are worth mentioning for their contributions to studies of Golden Age Chinese detective fiction and its interactions with modern Western detective fiction. Annabella Weisl is one of the first Western scholars to do research comparing Cheng Xiaoqing and Conan Doyle. Published in Hamburg in 1998, her *Cheng Xiaoqing (1893-1976) and his Detective Stories in Modern Shanghai* analyzes the characteristics of the Huo Sang cases and the Holmes stories in two separate sections. At

¹⁹ Ren Xiang, *Wenxue de lingyidao fengjing: Zhentan xiaoshuo shilun* (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2000).

the end of her study, she also examines how the detective protagonist Huo Sang is associated with characters in Chinese *gong-an* and knight-errant stories.

Weisl's research places emphasis on disassembling Cheng's Huo Sang stories into individual elements and introduces the different factors that might have influenced Cheng's writing style. The inner structure and connections between various parts are thus destroyed. Most importantly, the approach that Weisl uses to deal with the interactions between Cheng and Conan Doyle is based on static observation. She treats the texts of detective fiction mainly as reflections of culture and social circumstances, not as mutually engaged discourses that shape each other's existence and participate in the construction of the colonial power relationships between the East and the West.

Published in 2000, Jeffrey C. Kinkley's *Chinese Justice, the Fiction: Law and Literature in Modern China* is another important example of Western scholarship on detective fiction. It provides a detailed historic survey of Chinese crime fiction, tracing the conceptions of law and justice from pre-modern China to the contemporary era. Kinkley devotes part of his research to Golden Age detective stories. Thinking along the same line as Weisl, he regards detective writers Cheng Xiaoqing and Sun Liaohong as shadows of their Western counterparts Conan Doyle and Maurice Leblanc. He emphasizes the "universalism" and "international ethos" in Cheng and Sun's detective stories.²⁰ In doing this, Kinkley reduces the agency and subjectivity of writers of Golden Age Chinese detective fiction in their participation in negotiating cultural differences and

²⁰ Kinkley, *Chinese Justice, the Fiction*.

dislocating the meanings of those key concepts that define modernity in Western detective fiction.

Critically, the research examined above does not address the crucial role that translation played in constructing the Chinese detective discourse at the turn of the twentieth century. This gap is partially filled by the publication of Eva Hung's article, "Giving Texts a Context: Chinese Translations of Classical English Detective Stories 1896-1916." Hung argues that the translation of Western detective fiction achieved immense popularity in China because of its association with modern life and its psychological appeal to justice and stability; she further analyzes the methodologies that translators employed in coping with the conflicts between traditional Chinese literary forms and modern Western detective narratives.²¹

Hung's work offers an important starting point for our research on the translation of detective fiction. She is interested in the constant intervention of Chinese traditional cultural norms during the encounter between *gong-an* and the Holmes stories. She argues that we should not treat the adaptations simply as mistakes. Yet Hung's analysis is based on a static observation of the differences between source language and target language. She does not explore the multi-layered relationships behind the translators' endeavors to manipulate cultural signs and how they actively assumed the role of cultural negotiators. The translators' knowledge structures and their desires for discursive power through the process of translating detective fiction remain largely unexamined.

²¹ Hung, *Translation and Creation*, trans. David Pollard, pp. 151-176.

King-fai Tam's article "The Detective Fiction of Ch'eng Hsiao-ch'ing" offers another interesting perspective that has not been discussed in previous research. Tam observes that Cheng Xiaoqing makes "conscious literary maneuvers" to "endow his characters with an ambiguous existence that crosses the boundary between reality and fabrication." He also proposes that the detective protagonist Huo Sang possesses a "scientific mind" whereas the detective's assistant Bao Lang is equipped with a "literary mind."²² Huo is a self-proclaimed scientist and his scientific knowledge and logical reasoning prove almost invariably successful; Bao, however, is often seen "struggling with the question of the morality of science, a task that, the stories suggest, should be reserved for adherents of the 'literary mind.'"²³ Tam's analysis offers us a glimpse of the instability and ambiguity that plays between the spaces of the seemingly formulized structure of Cheng's detective discourse. Yet Tam regards this instability mainly as the breakdown of the tensions within the Chinese text. The Chinese text's intertextual relationship with the English text of the Holmes stories is not considered, especially how these two discourses simultaneously disrupt and complement each other in their constructions of the Subject and the Object, the Self and the Other.

Besides these research works and articles, two English language theses related to Golden Age Chinese detective fiction include Clement Ho's 1996 thesis, "Journey to Modernity: The Ideology of Chinese Detective Fiction." Ho explores the ways in which the English detective character Holmes embodies the reason and order of Victorian

²² Tam, "The Detective Fiction of Ch'eng Hsiao-ch'ing" in *Asia Major*, third series, vol. v, 1992, pp. 113-132.

²³ Ibid.

Society and how Conan Doyle's narrative structure laid the foundation for the classic Western detective story that approaches a crime as a puzzle, minimizing the human dimension and the tragedy of any death. Then Ho argues that Cheng's detective character Huo Sang is the Chinese version of Sherlock Holmes. His argument is based on his analysis of the similarities between early Republican Chinese society and late-Victorian society in terms of the new urbanization, the growing middle class and the prosperity of trade and industry.²⁴ By taking this tack, Ho fails to analyze Cheng's active participation in negotiating the differences embedded in those seemingly universal concepts of science, modernity, crime, punishment and justice.

Wei Yan's dissertation, "The Rise and Development of Detective Fiction in China: 1900-1949," examines the history and significance of detective fiction in the formation of Chinese discourse of modernity. It explores how detective fiction directly documented some of the most significant events in the first half of the twentieth century, such as the transformation of the Chinese legal system and the nationwide obsession with science. At the end of her research, Wei analyzes the adaptation of ancient Chinese *gong-an* stories by the Dutch diplomat and writer Robert van Gulik (1910-1967) and shows how the notion of a noble and mysterious Oriental world is created.²⁵ To a certain extent, Wei's research has made a break from the previous studies by reading Chinese detective discourse as an engaging cultural force that participates in the national project of modernization. Yet Wei does not take into consideration how the detective discourse

²⁴ Ho, "Journey to Modernity: The Ideology of Chinese Detective Fiction." Master Thesis, 1996 (University of Alberta).

²⁵ Wei Yan, "The Rise and Development of Detective Fiction in China: 1900-1949." Ph.D. Dissertation, 2009 (Harvard University).

of the Holmes stories is constructed in the West, and how it shapes the readings of modern Chinese translators and detective writers. In addition, she fails to examine the permeating influences of traditional Chinese cultural discourse, and how they actively interrupt the unity of meaning during the processes of translation and detective fiction writing at the turn of the twentieth century. Last but not least, Wei's observation on the construction of a noble and mysterious Oriental world presents only one side of the West's Orientalism. The dark, barbaric, diseased and criminal side of the Orient in Western detective writings remains unexamined in Wei's readings.

Research Scope and Parameters

Our literature review shows that limited exploration has been done of the mysteries surrounding Golden Age detective fiction and its interaction with Western detective stories and China's modernization project. Three major aspects need to be addressed in order to examine the embedded readings of the Orient in the Holmes stories, and the role that translators and detective fiction writers of the Golden Age played in deciphering Western detective discourse and in constructing the Chinese detective discourse. First of all, it is essential to examine detective discourse from both the Chinese and the Western sides. The dialectical relationship between the two holds the key to our understanding of how modern concepts such as identity, science, justice, power and knowledge are constructed in detective stories and how they travel across both geographical and imaginary boundaries. Moreover, there is a lack of research on the role that Chinese translators played in indigenizing and manipulating the texts of the Holmes

stories. There needs to be an examination of how they negotiate on both global and local levels, and how their translation strategies shape the narratives of modern Chinese detective fiction. Lastly, more research needs to be done to explore the agency and subjectivity of writers of Golden Age detective fiction and how they, consciously or unconsciously, receive, question, or reject the discourse of modernity imported from the West. Last but not least, the various ways that traditional Chinese *gong-an* interferes with and disrupts the modern detective discourse is another interesting and illuminating subject that needs to be further studied. In the intricate relationships between different cultural forces, it is essential to examine how *gong-an* is politically sacrificed to form an imagined sense of history that progresses in a linear temporality.

To seek answers to these challenging questions, this dissertation studies the translations and the primary texts of Conan Doyle's Holmes stories and the original texts of the Huo Sang cases by the Golden Age Chinese detective writer Cheng Xiaoqing. These texts by no means present the whole picture of the complicated relationships between English detective fiction and Golden Age Chinese detective fiction at the turn of the twentieth century; however, despite possible limits, the scope of this research provides an important tool and offers a unique perspective on questions that have not yet been explored. The Holmes stories and the Huo Sang cases are two of the most indispensable players in the arenas of modern Chinese and Western detective fiction. They are essential for our understanding of how detective fiction as part of popular culture conducts its transnational negotiation on modernity and on how these stories

actively participate in the construction of colonial power relationships between China and Britain, the East and the West.

Conan Doyle is a key figure in modern detective fiction and his creation of the Holmes stories greatly expanded its readership. More importantly, Conan Doyle is part and parcel of the modern Chinese detective discourse. He was the first Western detective fiction writer to be introduced to China, and his work interrupted the tradition of Chinese *gong-an*. His Holmes stories were first translated into classic Chinese and then into vernacular Chinese. Last but not least, Conan Doyle inspired Cheng Xiaoqing and a number of other Golden Age Chinese writers to create their own detective stories. Cheng Xiaoqing, on the other hand, is known as the first writer of modern Chinese detective fiction. His encounter and interaction with Conan Doyle brings into play many historical, ethnic, national, political, and cultural factors. In addition, Cheng had engaged in many collective translation projects of the Holmes stories and wrote theoretical essays advocating the stature and utility of detective fiction in the 1920s and 1930s. His Huo Sang cases interact with both the Chinese *gong-an* tradition and modern Western detective fiction. Lastly, the tensions and uncertainties in Cheng's detective discourse invite us to question modernity and to examine the dynamic relationship between China and the West.

There are two issues that I would like to clarify further: the first is the ways the East and the West are located and defined in my discussions, and the second is the sense in which “negotiation” and “dialogue” are used in my analysis of the unbalanced power relationship between Chinese and Western detective fiction. At the turn of the twentieth

century, Britain and a number of other European powers had colonized part of China and many other regions in Asia. The geographical antithesis and confrontation between the East and the West had reached one of their peak periods in modern history. The ontological and epistemological distinction between “Orient” and “Occident” is thus key to our location of the East and the West as presented in Conan Doyle’s Holmes stories and to our understanding of how the globe is divided and imagined by European imperialistic and colonial powers.

The ideological construction of “the Orient,” in Edward Said’s terms, is a long tradition of romanticized images of Asia in Western culture that served as an implicit justification of European colonial and imperial ambitions.²⁶ In *The Awakening of the West*, Stephen Batchelor also emphasizes:

In the European Imagination, Asia came to stand for something both distant and unknown yet also to be feared. As the colonizing powers came to identify themselves with order, reason and power, so the colonized East became perceived as chaotic, irrational and weak. In psychological terms, the East became a cipher for the Western unconscious, the repository of all that is dark, unacknowledged, feminine, sensual, repressed and liable to eruption.²⁷

²⁶ Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

²⁷ Batchelor, *The Awakening of the West: The Encounter of Buddhism and Western Culture* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1994), p. 234.

In other words, Western knowledge about Asia was not based on facts or reality, but on preconceived stereotypes that envisioned all Asian/Eastern societies as fundamentally similar to one another and fundamentally dissimilar to European/Western societies.

In the eyes of the Western imperialists and colonizers, China was no longer an individual and distinctive entity but part of the conflated entity of “the Orient,” a place that was gradually identified with all non-European areas that include regions and states not only in Asia but also in Africa and America. Therefore, when locating “the Orient” in Conan Doyle’s Holmes stories, I will not only examine China and how it is constructed in Victorian crime detection, but I will also include its neighboring countries of India and Afghanistan and the islands and tropical areas in Southeast Asia. Although China is more closely associated with opium smoking, Afghanistan with cruel killing during war, and India and the tropical regions with diseases and poisoning, there are no contrasted differences in the menacing, threatening and dangerous characteristics that these places share in Western imperialistic conceptualizations of “the Orient.”

On the other hand, when the translators and writers of Golden Age Chinese detective fiction turned to the West for science and democracy, their conceptualizations of the West were also the result of a highly charged ideological construction of “the Occident.” This process was similar to how “the Orient” was constructed, but there were some essential differences, which I will discuss in detail when I compare Orientalism and Occidentalism. When these Chinese intellectuals were seeking modern ideologies in Conan Doyle’s Holmes stories, they treated it less as a specifically British discourse of modernity and more as a generalized Western discourse of modernity. In their

imaginings, Britain was the same as the West and the differences between various nations within “the Occident” were conveniently ignored. Therefore, the location of the West in modern Chinese detective fiction is also a discursive construct that conflates the different European/Western societies in a collective entity. All share the same rational, scientific, progressive and modern characteristics as well as some negative traits.

Last but not least, the terms “negotiation” and “dialogue” are used here in a restricted sense in the analysis of the dynamic power relationships between Conan Doyle, the Chinese translators and writer Cheng Xiaoqing. Conan Doyle created his Holmes detective stories at a time when Britain was the largest colonial power in Asia, and the West had overpowered the East in economic growth and military confrontations. For Conan Doyle, therefore, China and other Asian societies had no voices but represented a silent conflated Oriental entity that could be freely constructed. On this level of reading, not much negotiation was going on, as Conan Doyle had no desire to dialogue with the Orient in his detective writings.

The Chinese translators and writer Cheng Xiaoqing, on the other hand, were in a less politically privileged position when dealing with the West at a time when China was in deep national crisis. Yet these intellectuals did not just assume a passive role in responding to Conan Doyle’s Holmes stories; instead they chose to participate actively in re-constructing these stories, and also to a large extent, in misreading and manipulating them to serve their local purposes. They engaged in intensive dialogues and negotiations by redefining some of the modern ideological constructions in Conan Doyle’s writings. Agency and subjectivity play crucial roles in this process, and these negotiations make

us, the readers, reflect upon and question the universalism and modernity defined in the Holmes stories. It is on this level that “negotiation” and “dialogue” come into play in analyzing the relationship between Chinese detective fiction and Western detective fiction at the turn of the twentieth century.

The Structure of My Dissertation

The present work intends to take on these challenges and fill in some of the gaps existing in present scholarship. The chapters that follow will examine how the Chinese translators of detective fiction during the Golden Age and the writer Cheng Xiaoqing negotiated cultural differences with the British writer Arthur Conan Doyle at the turn of the twentieth century, a time when China fell into a deep national crisis and Britain rose to be the largest colonial empire in the world. The practice of Orientalism in the Sherlock Holmes stories and the suspicion of Occidentalism in the practice of the Chinese Golden Age translators of detective stories will be studied and analyzed in detail. I will also examine how the Chinese *gong-an* is weighed on the scale of modern temporality and how it intervenes and interrupts the translation of the Holmes stories and Cheng’s narration of his Huo Sang cases.

In both the Holmes stories and the Huo Sang cases, the concept of modernity is projected and presented through the lenses of science, justice, gender roles, colonial and national visions. In addition to that, ethnic, cultural and national identities are imagined and perpetuated in relation to the power interplay between the East and the West. The similarities between the Huo Sang cases and the Holmes stories will be critically

examined in light of Homi K. Bhabha's discourse on mimicry. I will analyze how Cheng and his Huo Sang cases challenge Conan Doyle's epistemological, political and colonial construction of modernity by negotiating cultural differences and presenting ambivalence towards such modern ideologies in the Holmes stories as the supremacy of reason, the faith in science, the domestic role of women, state-executed justice, and the promotion of industrialization and urbanization. By studying these dialogues on multiple levels, I will indicate how Golden Age Chinese detective fiction resists its conventionally assumed role of passive imitation and how it forms a discursive construct that dynamically negotiates with the discourse of modernity embedded in Western detective fiction.

Chapter One is a prelude to the subsequent chapters that survey the forces and arguments surrounding detective fiction at the turn of the twentieth century. A voyage of the Chinese junk *Keying* to Britain and its appearance in the "Great Exhibition" in London foreshadows the unbalanced power confrontation between China and the British Empire. Waking up to its defeats, China began to gaze back at its Western counterpart for modernization. I will study how fiction rose to a high status and was used by Chinese intellectuals to educate the public and to bring enlightenment to society. I will also examine the different approaches taken by the late Qing and the May Fourth intellectuals in translating Western works and explore how the Holmes stories were received in China and Britain when they were first introduced to Chinese readers in 1896. At the end of the chapter I will introduce Cheng Xiaoqing, a prominent translator of the Holmes stories, an advocate for detective fiction and also the creator of the Huo Sang cases.

Chapter Two deals with the ways in which the Orient is perceived and constructed in Conan Doyle's Holmes stories. *A Study in Scarlet*, the first Holmes story, opens with Dr. Watson returning to London after suffering serious injuries in the Afghan War. The geographical distinction between Europe and Asia, the Occident and the Orient, is immediately mapped out on a global scale of political interactions and confrontations. The detective protagonist Holmes is introduced and presented as personifying the supreme power of reasoning, scientific progress and modernity. He is established as a symbol of the British Empire who protects Victorian society from the menacing and threatening forces of the Orient. Applying Edward Said's critique of Orientalism, I will explore through close readings of "The Sign of Four," "The Crooked Man," "The Speckled Band," "The Dying Detective" and "The Man with the Twisted Lip" how the Orient is imagined and constructed from various perspectives as a place of danger and crime.

Chapter Three focuses upon how the Chinese translators misread and manipulated the Holmes stories to serve their local needs. I will first introduce the origin, development, narrative structure and cultural features of Chinese *gong-an* and examine how it was sacrificed as traditional and outdated in China's desire to leap into modern times. Perceived as discourses of modernity, the Holmes stories captured the interest of Chinese translators as they hoped to use them to educate Chinese readers and to bring enlightenment to society. I will examine how the pioneering translators experimented with the narrative, manipulated reading structures, and misread cultural elements during their translations of the Holmes stories. Interestingly, the Chinese *gong-an* frequently

intervenes and interrupts the translation process and actively participates in the cultural negotiation. I will also take a close look at the recent debates on the Chinese translators' practice of Occidentalism in comparison to Conan Doyle's practice of Orientalism.

Chapter Four discusses the similarities between Cheng Xiaoqing's Huo Sang cases and Conan Doyle's Holmes stories in the light of Homi K. Bhabha's critique on mimicry. After having actively engaged in the translation of the Holmes stories, Cheng Xiaoqing was inspired to create his Huo Sang cases. I will examine how the names of the detective protagonist and his assistant are discursively constructed in relation to the desire for Western modernity and the invisible presence of Chinese *gong-an*. The similarities between the Huo Sang cases and the Holmes stories are studied from multiple perspectives: the background setting and the depiction of characters, the detective protagonist's knowledge structure, the mastery of disguise and the emphasis on using scientific methods to solve a case. I will critically assess the "imitation" arguments made by contemporary scholars like Lu Renxiang, Ren Xiang, Jeffrey Kinkley and Leo Ou-fan Lee. A critical re-reading of Bhabha's interpretation on mimicry is proposed to explore the cultural differences that Cheng negotiates with Conan Doyle in the "Third Space."

Chapter Five continues the argument in the fourth chapter and examines the negotiated cultural differences between the Huo Sang cases and the Holmes stories and Cheng Xiaoqing's ambivalence towards the discourse of Western modernity constructed by Conan Doyle. Cheng conducts cultural negotiations against his Western counterpart on many different levels, such as the purposes of detection, the role of women, the reform of the legal system, the execution of justice and the relationship between the urban and

the rural during the modernization process. At the same time, Cheng is ambivalent towards those modern conceptualizations upon which the Holmes stories are built: the progress of science, the promotion of rationalization, the application of Western knowledge and industrialization and urbanization. The essential unity established in the Western detective fiction is therefore disturbed and interrupted.

Chapter One

Cutting Across the Cultural Gaze

There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints.
Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual
under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his
own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance
over, and against, himself.

— Michel Foucault¹

To capture the interaction of modern Chinese detective fiction with Western detective fiction, we find ourselves first of all standing at the historical moment of cross-cultural reading between China and Britain around the mid-nineteenth century. The voyage of the Chinese junk *Keying* 耆英 to the British Empire and its exhibition at the London World Fair in 1851 allow us to perceive the flow of trade, commerce, politics, ideas and the imperial British gaze on China.² One hundred and sixty feet long and made of teakwood, the junk *Keying* sailed for the first time from Hong Kong to

¹ Foucault, “The Eye of Power” in *Power/Knowledge*, p. 153.

² In mandarin Chinese, it is pronounced *qiying*. The English name *Keying* is based on Cantonese pronunciation. The junk was named after the high Manchu official Qi Ying (1790-1858). He signed the “Treaty of Nanjing” in 1842 after Qing was defeated by the British troops in the first Opium War (1839-1842), which was the first unequal treaty in Chinese history. The official name for the fair is “The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations.” It took place in the temporary exhibition structure called the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, London, from May 1 to October 15, 1851. The Great Exhibition was organized by the Royal family and opened by Queen Victoria. Many notable figures of that time, such as Charles Darwin, Charlotte Bronte, and George Eliot, attended the fair.

England on December 6, 1846. A crew of thirty Chinese and twelve English men worked on the junk under the command of the British captain Charles Alfred Kellett. The junk was bought secretly by a group of British businessmen in violation of the Chinese ship sales law, issued by the Qing Emperor Kang Xi 康熙 (1654-1722) in 1717, a law that prohibited Chinese ship manufacturers and owners from selling ships to foreigners. Junk *Keying* sailed around the Cape of Good Hope, but then she was blown off course and ended up visiting New York and Boston first. She finally arrived in London on March 15, 1848 and moored in the Thames at Blackwall.

The circumstances of this symbolic voyage were of great political and cultural significance. China had just been defeated by Britain in the “First Opium War” (1839-1842) and had signed the “Nanjing tiaoyue” 南京条约 (Treaty of Nanjing), the first unequal and humiliating treaty in Chinese history.³ In *The India-China Opium Trade in the Nineteenth Century*, scholar Hunt Janin considers this event the beginning of modern Chinese history. The Chinese junk *Keying* immediately became a mysterious “oriental” cultural object, rapidly popularized as one of the most visited tourist attractions in London. In addition to curious crowds of common people every day, the Queen and the royal family also came to visit her. This spectacular viewing scene was vividly captured by the 1848 report of *The Illustrated London News*:

³ It is also called The First Anglo-Chinese War. It was fought between the United Kingdom and the Qing Dynasty of China over the conflicts in trade. The confiscation and burning of the opium from the British traders was the direct cause of the war. China was defeated and signed the “Treaty of Nanking” which granted an indemnity to Britain, the opening of five treaty ports and the cession of Hong Kong. It ended China’s self-closed trade policy.

During the limited period which the ROYAL CHINESE JUNK will remain in London, the charge for admission will be reduced to One Shilling. This most interesting Exhibition, which has been justly called ‘the greatest novelty in Europe,’ has been visited by her Majesty the Queen, all the Royal Family, and an immense number of persons, including nearly all the nobility and foreigners of distinction in London.⁴

The sensational exotic appearance of *Keying* strengthened and reinforced the British imagination about China and the mysterious Far East, which fell outside the cultural construction of “modernity.” Her uncivilized nature was conquered and tamed by the British captain, who commanded her to travel through the wilderness and reach the “Promised Land.” Junk *Keying* thus communicated a voice of the “other,” which was further magnified and stereotyped in the 1851 “Great Exhibition” in London’s Hyde Park, an international display of the industrial and scientific power of the British Empire. *Keying* was showcased as part of the Chinese collection, which served as the shadow of Britain’s colonial conquest. In his travelogue *Through China with a Camera*, Victorian photographer John Thomson described the ignorance and darkness of the Empire’s Chinese “other”: “Many of the unlettered natives have a notion that

⁴ It was excerpted from the July 29, 1848 issue of *The Illustrated London News*. During the 1851 Crystal Palace Great Exhibition, it followed the events closely and its circulation reached 130,000, a significant jump from its regular circulation of 60,000.

England is a small settlement on the borders of China, and that we as a people are wholly engaged in commerce with that Empire [...].”⁵

The journey of *Keying* gives us a new perspective on Edward Said’s critique of “Orientalism,” which he argues is based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and the Occident. For Said, Orientalism is a discourse in the sense that Michel Foucault used that term: “Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”⁶ In the European imaginative geography, Said continues, “A line is drawn between two continents. Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant... It is Europe that articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative, not of a puppet master, but of a genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries.”⁷

The British Empire’s imperialistic “Orientalist” gaze on China was politically framed by the British Victorian writer Charles Dickens (1812-1870) in his article “The Great Exhibition and the Little One.” He co-wrote it with Horne Richard and published it in the weekly journal *Household Words* in July 1851. Dickens referred to the Chinese exhibition as “the little one” and played with the ambiguous meaning of

⁵ Thomson, *Through China with a Camera*, p. 30.

⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 3.

⁷ Ibid, p. 57.

word “Junk” (junk). He constructed China in the form of “junk culture” which occupied a morbidly static dark corner with “stoppage” as her name. Edward Said observes, “as primitivity, as the age-old antetype of Europe, as a fecund night out of which European rationality developed, the Orient’s actuality receded inexorably into a kind of paradigmatic fossilization.”⁸ The foot-bridges, houses, pagodas, and little islands on the Chinese porcelain were mercilessly compared to the British railways, iron bridges, suspension-bridges, and the submarine stream-propellers. Dickens justified his “Orientalist” gaze through the lens of “interchange,” which included “internal communication and trade, and external communication and commerce, currency, and wages.”⁹ China’s backwardness was the result of the limitation of its trade: “the Celestial disdaining all trade and commerce with ‘outside people,’ except at certain sea-ports, which are so remote from the Emperor and his capital that their doings are scarcely known, and are not recognized as part and parcel of the transactions of the empire.”¹⁰

This “stoppage” of China’s trade interchange with the world, Dickens contended, symbolizes the stagnation and death of its cultural breathing. Therefore, starting in the mid-nineteenth century, China deteriorates into a medieval culture in the British political imaginary. This image was materialized through the repeated military defeats that China suffered in the next fifty years. Among them the Second Opium War (1856-

⁸ Said, “Orientalism Reconsidered,” in *Literature, Politics and Theory: Papers from the Essex Conference, 1976-84*, Francis Barker et al, ed., (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 215.

⁹ Charles Dickens and Richard Horne, “The Great Exhibition and the Little One” in *Household Words*, (Saturday July 5, 1851), pp. 356-60.

¹⁰ Ibid.

1860) and the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) are the two most devastating and humiliating wars in modern Chinese history. At the turn of the twentieth century, China was further semi-colonized by a band of Western powers. Britain had the largest “sphere of influence” in China and became the “center” of the European powers. In his “Modernity and its Critique,” Naoki Sakai pointed out that “until the late nineteenth century, history seemed to have moved linearly toward the further unification of the world. The entire globe was organized according to the singular framework which ultimately would allow for only one center [Europe].”¹¹ On May 4, 1898, Lord Salisbury, Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary of Britain at that time, addressed the Primrose League at the London Albert Hall about the “imbroglio” in China.¹² He boasts: “if we could merely count our colonies and our possessions and our growing enormous trade, we might, indeed, look forward to the future without disquietude.”¹³ Then he went on and roughly divided the nations of the world into the living and the dying.¹⁴ The spatial difference was rendered into temporal difference, and China was situated therefore within a progressive temporality in which Britain stood for the epitome of progress.

¹¹ Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, p. 164.

¹² The Primrose League was founded in 1883 and disbanded in 2004. It was an organization that supported and spread Conservative Principles in Great Britain. Its aims, published in the *Primrose League Gazette* in 1979, include clauses such as “uphold and support God, Queen, and Country, and the Conservative cause;” “to fight for free enterprise.” It refers to the rising of the Boxer Movement in China around that time. It lasted from 1898 to 1901. It was organized by *Yihetuan* 义和团 (The Righteous Harmony Society) to oppose Western imperialism and Christianity. It also rebelled against the Western “spheres of influence” and their partition of China.

¹³ “Lord Salisbury on the Nations” in *Marlborough Express*, Rorahi XXXIII, Putanga 142, 18 Pipiri 1898, p. 3.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Awakening Gaze and the Politics of Fiction

After successive defeats in two Opium Wars, China was perceived to be in deep crisis by a handful of reform-minded individuals. Its strong resistance to modernization began to crumble after it was repeatedly invaded, defeated, and exploited by the imperialist powers. As Japanese scholar Takeuchi Yoshimi argues, only when the Orient became an object for the West did it enter modern times; the truth of modernity for the non-West, therefore, is its reaction to the West.¹⁵ At that time, China suffered from internal economic and political deterioration on the one hand, and from imperialistic invasions of modernized European powers on the other. To respond to this crisis, the late Qing government was forced to carry out a series of reforms. It attempted half-heartedly to learn from the West and to develop its commerce and industry, but its ultimate aim was to improve Chinese military equipment and its fighting capability. The most famous slogan of that time was “zhongti xiyong” 中体西用 (Chinese learning as essence, Western learning for application). These reforms remained at the material level and did not change the political level of the power structure. The Qing government had no intention of fundamentally updating the system; it made only superficial reforms to appease the anger of the people and to maintain its status quo.

This illusion of reform, however, did not last long. It eventually collapsed on April 17, 1885, when China was defeated by Japan. The whole nation was shocked.

¹⁵ Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, p. 171.

Throughout history, China had regarded Japan as its respectful student and therefore as its less civilized “other.” Only after the Sino-Japanese War did China realize that Japan had successfully transformed itself through the Meiji Restoration into a modernized imperialist power.¹⁶ The Qing government had to sign the notoriously humiliating “Maguan tiaoyue” 马关条约 (Treaty of Shimonoseki), in which it recognized the independence of Korea and ceded Liaodong Peninsula, Taiwan and the Penghu islands to Japan “in perpetuity.” Although China and Japan both started to learn from the West and to reform their societies along Western lines, the results were completely different. China’s failure and Japan’s success convincingly proved that the secret to Japan’s power and aggression did not reside in its technological advances, such as weapons making, but in the ideas and institutions that lay behind these techniques. To modernize China, it would be crucial to reform the political structure and to promote new knowledge as Japan did, and thus to change the mentality of the nation. In the words of Lu Xun, it was the “soul of the Chinese people” that needed to be cured, not their bodily illnesses.¹⁷

Waking up from this humiliating nightmare, China started seriously to gaze back at its Western counterpart. Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873-1929), a prominent journalist and reformist, stands out as the single most influential person in late Qing political and

¹⁶ In 1868, a revolution broke out in Japan to overthrow the military ruler Shogun and restore the rule of the Meiji Emperor. The new Meiji government started a major translation of Japan by learning from the West. Japan rose up to be one of the major imperialist powers in Asia.

¹⁷ Lu Xun went to Japan in 1904 and studied medicine in Sendai Medical Institute. His original goal was to save the Chinese people from their bodily illnesses. In 1922, a short documentary film was shown to the class, in which a Chinese mob watched indifferently the beheading of a compatriot by Japanese soldiers. Furiously outraged, Lu Xun decided to quit studying medicine and turned to writing in order to save the soul of the Chinese people.

cultural spheres. Through his frequent contact and interaction with the West, Liang was convinced that “fiction” had greatly helped the modernization and political development of Western Europe, America, and Japan. In his words, “fiction is the spirit of the nation,” and it “possesses an astonishing potentiality to affect the way of man;”¹⁸ its popularity has revolutionary impact on the masses and the society. To rejuvenate and to modernize China, Liang thus called for *xiaoshuo geming* 小说革命 (revolution in fiction) and the formation of *xin xiaoshuo* 新小说 (new fiction). In traditional Chinese culture, *xiaoshuo* 小说, fiction, is literally translated as “trivial talk and gossip” and metaphorically as “the talk of back alleys and streets.” Fiction writing was not considered a serious enterprise, compared to *shi* 诗 (poetry) and *shi* 史 (history). The elite intellectuals looked down upon fiction as insignificant and trivial writing, read solely for leisure by the masses and containing nothing educational or important. By the 1890s, this traditional attitude towards fiction had changed dramatically. Influential Chinese politicians and intellectuals at that time, led by Liang Qichao, began to advocate the use of “fiction” to modernize the nation and to put out magazines devoted entirely to fiction writing. They perceived the importance of fiction in educating the nation at the grass-roots level. As Yan Fu put it in his 1897 article “The Beginning of Fiction”: “Fiction’s influence on men and its popularity far surpassed the classics and histories. It therefore has a hold on the thoughts and customs

¹⁸ Liang Qichao, “Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi” 论小说与群治之关系 (On the relationship between fiction and social order) in *Ershi shiji Zhongguo xiaoshuo shi*, p. 33.

of the people [...]. We have also heard that fiction had helped to civilize Europe, America and Japan.”¹⁹

Ling Qichao’s conception of fiction came from his admiration for the Japanese political novels of the mid-Meiji period. The acknowledged originator of political novels was politician Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881), once the leader of the Conservative Party, who served two terms as Prime Minister of England.²⁰ Five of Disraeli’s works were translated into Japanese and extolled as one of the high points in the early history of English translation. Liang Qichao’s discovery of *zhengzhi xiaoshuo* 政治小说 (political novels) started as early as November 1898, a month after Liang’s arrival in Japan. In the preface to his translation of a Japanese political novel, *Kajin no kigu* (A strange encounter with the beautiful women), Liang proclaimed the enormous power and influence fiction had on people. He exaggerated the importance of fiction and asserted that fiction had led in the West to a large-scale and organized campaign to propagate political causes. Liang’s perception of fiction comes mainly from its effects on “the way of man”; more specifically, Liang argues that reading fiction can affect

¹⁹ Yan Fu 严复 (1854-1921) was a Chinese scholar and translator, most famous for introducing Western ideas, including Darwin’s “natural selection,” to China in the late 19th century. The famous Western works he translated into Chinese include Thomas Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics*, Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty* and Herbert Spender’s *Study of Sociology*.

Yan Fu and Xia Zengyou 夏曾祐, “Xiaoshuo zhi yuanchi” 小说之源起 (The beginnings of fiction), *Tianjin Guowen News* 天津国闻报, reprinted in A Ying (ed.), *Late Qing Literature Series*, 1897.

²⁰ John Vincent, *Disraeli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 1-3.

one's perception and thinking, stimulate one's feelings and emotions, and make one identify with the characters and eventually enter a state of self-transformation.²¹

Liang was primarily a political figure, rather than a man-of-letters, and his enthusiasm for fiction writing had a strong political mission. As literary critic Eva Hung contends: "Fiction was chosen as that vehicle [for national salvation] not because of its historical status or literary merit, but because of its potential for mass appeal."²² Scholar Kirk A. Denton also comments: "He [Liang] does not really respect fiction, but he respects its power to influence and teach and thus recognizes its utility for the all-important goal of 'renewing' the nation."²³ "New fiction" was politically manipulated to distinguish it from the "traditional" Chinese fiction. The followers of Liang Qichao had little or no concern for Confucian moral didacticism. The proper Confucian moral conduct of officials was no longer the central issue of their works. Concern with good and bad in terms of Confucian values was shifted to concern with political-economic issues and the propagation of the alternative status quo.²⁴ Thus they were very explicit in advocating "what should be" for modernization. Fiction became the ideal instrument for them to diffuse their political views and to transform China into a powerful modern state.

²¹ Liang Qichao, "On the Relationship between Fiction and the Government of the People," in *Modern Chinese Literary Thought*, ed. Kirk A. Denton, pp. 76-8.

²² Hung, "Sherlock Holmes in Early Twentieth Century China (1896-1916) Popular Fiction as an Educational Tool" in *Translators' Strategies and Creativity* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamin B.V. 1998), p. 71.

²³ Denton, ed., *Modern Chinese Literary Thought*, p. 66.

²⁴ Hiroko Willcock, "Japanese Modernization and the Emergence of New Fiction in Early Twentieth Century China: A Study of Liang Qichao," in *Modern Asian Studies*, 29, 4(1995), p. 839.

The purpose of Liang Qichao and his followers was to express their political views through advocating new fiction writing and translation of political novels. They were not concerned with writing style and technique. For instance, Liang never discussed fictional form, nor did he say anything about the literary skills of the author.²⁵ The packaging of serious political thoughts within the form of fiction undermined the effects of political novels as a genre. Political treatises are informative, ideological and persuasive, whereas fiction had long been seen as leisure reading and entertainment. The “immense power” Liang perceived in fiction soon disappeared when fiction deteriorated into a mere vehicle for politics. Political novels thus died out quickly, but the growing interest Liang aroused in “new fiction” writing and the translation of foreign works attracted an increasing number of professional writers and translators to participate. In this way, Liang made a vital contribution in raising the literary and intellectual status of fiction; however, he never shook off his scorn for traditional Chinese fiction, which he saw as merely propagating sex and violence, harming the people and the country, and far inferior to foreign fiction. An unenlightened and traditional China was projected as the new fiction’s “other,” and became associated with “the metaphors of decadence, darkness, and death.”²⁶

²⁵ Pollard, *Translation and Creation*, p.110.

²⁶ Chow, “Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Toward a Rewriting of Modern Chinese Literary History.” Ph.D. dissertation, 1996 (Stanford University), p. 145.

Late Qing Generation and Its Ambiguous Play with the West

The urgent need to negotiate with more “advanced” Western cultures led to a radical increase in the number of translated works. The cultural pattern at the turn of the twentieth century could be described as putting “reception” and “imitation” before “creation.” Scholar Eva Hung emphasizes:

Once the advocacy for educating the people through fiction was accepted as a norm, it was necessary to supply the actual instruction material. Since the purpose of the education campaign was to instill in the populace modern knowledge, specifically knowledge current in the Western world, and since it was not quite possible to create the necessary mass of material from scratch within a short period of time, translation became the answer.²⁷

Despite the utilitarian manipulation of fiction, the variety and marketability of translated works gradually exceeded the political mission to modernize China. In *Wanqing xiaoshuo shi* 晚清小说史 (History of late Qing fiction), A Ying 阿英 catalogued a total of 1,007 fictional works, including 420 original works and 587 translated works.²⁸ According to another statistical survey of translated fiction, about 2,500 foreign works were translated during the second half of the nineteenth century

²⁷ Hung, *Translators' Strategies and Creativity*, p. 73.

²⁸ A Ying, *Wanqing xiaoshuo shi*, p. 274.

and the first two decades of the twentieth century.²⁹ The translation of British and American fiction predominated and constituted approximately seventy percent of the total number of translations, followed by French, Russian, Japanese, and German. These five made up about ninety-six percent all together. The translations of Japanese works were more numerous than those of Russian works before the 1911 Revolution, but this position was reversed after the revolution because of the popularity of Marxism and the communist success in the Soviet Union.³⁰ The Japanese were a generation ahead of the Chinese in translating Western literature, and had created a body of literature themselves along Western lines, which was also translated into Chinese. The other important reasons for the popularity of Japanese sources was the language advantage. Liang Qichao observed that Japanese was easier to understand than European languages because of its high incidence of Chinese characters, less complex grammar, and phonetic manageability.³¹ Seventy-seven foreign works of European and American origin were identified as retranslations from Japanese to Chinese, with forty-two derived from Anglo-American countries.

The underlying intention of various translation practices was to build a new national character and to modernize China economically, politically and culturally. The

²⁹ Tarumoto Teruo, "A Statistical Survey of Translated Fiction 1840-1920" in *Translation and Creation*, ed. David Pollard, pp. 37-42.

³⁰ The Xinhai Revolution 辛亥革命, also known as the 1911 Revolution or the Chinese Revolution, began with the Wuchang Uprising 武昌起义 on October 10, 1911 and ended with the abdication of Emperor Puyi 溥仪 on February 12, 1912. The primary parties to the conflict were the Imperial forces of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), and the revolutionary forces of the Tongmenghui 同盟会 (Chinese Revolutionary Alliance). The revolution is so named because 1911 is a Xinhai Year in the sexagenary cycle of the Chinese calendar.

³¹ Liang Qichao, "Bianfa tongyi sanzhiqi: yishu" 变法通议 (The Reforms Explained 3:7: Translation), *Shiwubao* 时务报, No.33(20.7.1897).

selection of certain foreign works for translation usually was not based on the popularity of the writer in his/her country of origin or the canonical status the works enjoyed that time. The translator's manipulation of the text revolved around the salvation of the Chinese nation and the construction of Chinese modernity. The values of independence, self-reliance, enterprise and daring, and unbending principles were privileged. As a result, stories of adventure and exploration, like Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, became immensely popular with Chinese translators. The translation of science fiction also gained momentum due to its focus on the search for knowledge and the power of its depictions of flying machines, flying warships and moon travel in novels such as those of Jules Verne.³²

Translation accuracy was not the primary concern for most translators, who freely gave themselves license to make additions and subtractions. Subjective misinterpretations of the original were especially common among the late Qing translators. They were known as the "first generation" Chinese intellectuals, a social group formed around the traumatic Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). Despite their "borrowing" from the West, this generation remained within the "traditional" socio-political and cultural orders. Chinese scholar Zhang Yuhong characterized them as

³² Jules Gabriel Verne (1828-1905) was a French author who pioneered the science-fiction genre. He is best known for his novels *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864), *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870), and *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873). Verne wrote about space, air and underwater travel before navigable aircraft and practical submarines were invented, and before any means of space travel had been devised. Verne, along with H. G. Wells, is often referred to as the "Father of Science Fiction".

“wohua” (我化) (I transform/appropriate [Western culture]).³³ Most of the translators had little knowledge of any given foreign language, yet they vigorously imposed a cultural censorship, consciously or not, over the foreign material they translated. Unexplained omissions, shifts, and slippages could be found throughout the translated works. The late Qing generation emphasized similarities between “traditional” Chinese culture and “modern” Western culture. They also adopted the orthodox *wenyan* 文言 (classical Chinese) for their translations. At that time, classical Chinese was the official language for political and cultural communications. These translators themselves belonged to the elite intellectual class who were educated in classical Chinese and had used it all their lives; Strategically, by using classic Chinese, they attempted to address their translations to their contemporary conservative elites who looked down upon the rest of the world, hoping to convince them of the superiority of Western culture. They showed little interest in the masses and the readers at grass-root level who had little literacy in classical Chinese.

May Fourth Generation and Its Unstable Cultural Identity

The May Fourth generation of the early twentieth century was the second influential intellectual group that constructed Chinese modernity through literary creation and translingual practice. This group became active around the 1919 May

³³ Zhang Yuhong 张玉红, “Xiandai sixiang de shentou yu xingbian” 现代思潮的渗透与形变 (The infiltration and transformation of modern thought) in *Xifang wenyi sichao yu ershi shiji Zhongguo wenxue* 西方文艺思潮与二十世纪中国文学 (Western literary thought and twentieth-century Chinese literature), eds. Yue Daiyun and Wang Ning, (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1990), p. 115.

Fourth Movement, an anti-imperialist, cultural and political movement in China's early modernization process.³⁴ Its members included many famous public intellectuals such as Lu Xun, Chen Duxiu, Hu Shi (胡适 (1891-1962), and Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978). In contrast to the late Qing generation, who stayed within the traditional cultural order, the May Fourth generation advocated anti-traditionalism and wholesale Westernization to break away completely from China's "tradition." Zhang Yuhong used "huawo" 化我 ([Western culture] transforms me) to characterize the cultural tendency of the May Fourth generation.³⁵ In this regard, David Wang also argues, the May Fourth cultural movement effectively silenced the multiple negotiations that the late Qing intellectuals conducted with the West.³⁶ To mark their difference from the late Qing conservatives, May Fourth iconoclasts launched severe attacks on them for all manner of evil.

The majority of May Fourth intellectuals were educated in Japan, America, and European countries. They had lost faith in traditional Chinese culture and looked up to the West for salvation. The famous slogan of "*nalai zhuyi*" 拿来主义 (grabbism), put forward by Lu Xun, for example, advocated an eclectic, confident borrowing from foreign powers without fear of enslavement to the borrowings. May Fourth's active

³⁴ May 4, 1919 marked the upsurge of Chinese nationalism and a re-evaluation of Chinese cultural institutions, such as Confucianism. The movement grew out of dissatisfaction with the Treaty of Versailles settlement, termed the Shandong Problem. China entered World War One on the side of the Allied Triple Entente in 1917 with the condition that all German spheres of influence, such as Shandong, would be returned to China. Instead of rewarding China for its contribution to the Allies' victory, the Versailles Treaty of April, 1919, awarded Shandong Province to Japan.

³⁵ Zhang Yuhong, *Xifang wenyi sichao yu ershi shiji Zhongguo wenxue*, p. 155.

³⁶ David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siecle Splendor: Repressed Maternities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849-1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

and enthusiastic translations of various Western works were utilized as a counter-discourse to traditional Chinese cultural power, and as a potent means to accelerate China's pace of modernization. In order to construct the "universality" of Western modernity and assault the "conservative" late Qing reformers, the May Fourth generation pushed forward a vigorous linear temporal mode of thinking. They imported the Hegelian timeline of a unitary World history and Western calendar to form a national consciousness of universally recognized modernity.

The linear temporal mode of thinking legitimized the May Fourth Movement's merciless attack on China's tradition. The Chinese lunar calendar was seen as cyclical and repudiated as repetitive and stagnant. China as a whole was framed as akin to the past of the "modern West," and receded into a kind of cultural fossilization. In this way, modern time became equated with Western modernity, universally accessible to those who were behind on the temporal trajectory and wanted to catch up in order to be part of the modern picture. The construction of a cosmopolitan subjectivity in the global context was completed at the price of demonizing "tradition." To many, the insurgence of the May Fourth Movement was proof that Confucianism and traditional Chinese culture had failed to make China strong, and that China's position in the world was second-class. Intellectuals in search of causes looked for ways to strengthen China, which was fragmented and had been exploited by foreign powers. Chen Duxiu was one of the key figures in starting the New Culture Movement in 1915, publishing a

journal called *Xin qingnian* 新青年 (New youth).³⁷ Following key concepts in Western modernity, Chen began to promote in China individual freedom, science, democracy and the emancipation of women.

Lu Xun was another leading May Fourth iconoclast who fought against tradition, especially Confucianism. The collapse of feudal society at the turn of the twentieth century left China in poverty and humiliation. After studying in Japan and getting to know more about Western civilization, Lu Xun turned to “democracy” and “science” for national salvation. He critically and painfully reflected on the doctrines of Confucianism, which had dominated Chinese culture for more than two thousand years. The traditional Confucian values of “virtue and morality,” Lu Xun observed, were no more than “cannibalism” and thus responsible for all the ills of the Chinese national character and social problems. In 1918, Lu Xun published his first vernacular short story “Kuangren riji” 狂人日记 (A madman’s diary), which soon became the most powerful weapon with which to attack Confucius. This story is composed of the transcripts of diary entries of a fictional madman. After his extensive study of the Confucian classics such as the “si shu” 四书 (four books), the madman summarizes

³⁷ The New Culture Movement was inaugurated by the creation of *New Youth*, established in 1915 by Peking University professor Chen Duxiu. Responding to the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and the failures of the new government of the Republic of China, the New Culture Movement was a movement of intellectuals blaming the cultural heritage of China for its many wrongs. This would also be the basis for the more widespread and politically-focused May Fourth Movement.

traditional Chinese culture into two words: “*chiren*” 吃人 (eat people).³⁸ At the end of his third diary entry, the madman starts trembling at Chinese tradition:

In ancient times, as I recollect, people often ate human beings, but I am rather hazy about it. I tried to look this up, but my history has no chronology, and scrawled all over each page are the words: “Virtue and Morality.” Since I could not sleep anyway, I read intently half the night, until I began to see words between the lines, the whole book being filled with the two words—“Eat people.”³⁹

As scholar Tang Xiaobing observes, in the madman’s intent reading, “a history without chronology—that is, the full book of totality—is that which is carefully perused, decoded, dismantled, and thereby forced to undergo an irreversible process of textualization.”⁴⁰ The space of signifiers in history is expanded, and this enables the meaning of history to become an open-ended process for rereading and reinterpreting. The release of meaning undermines and subverts the dominant Confucian value system that legitimizes repression and “cannibalism” in the name of virtue and morality. A modern sense of consciousness and objectivity is thus formed in the voice of the first-person

³⁸ The “Four Classics” include *Lunyu* 论语 (Analects), *Mengzi* 孟子 (Mencius), *Daxue* 大学 (The Great Learning) and *Zhongyong* 中庸 (The Golden Mean).

³⁹ Lu Xun, *Selected Stories of Lu Hsun*, trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang, p. 10.

⁴⁰ Tang Xiaobing, “Lu Xun’s ‘Diary of a Madman’ and a Chinese Modernism,” in *PMLA*, vol. 107, no. 5 (October, 1992), p. 1228.

narrator “I” and the given meaning of tradition challenged by a disruptive presence of truth through the madman’s narration, in the manner of totalistic iconoclasm.⁴¹

Translating the West Through Vernacular Chinese

The invention of a linear temporality was also carried out on the structural level of the Chinese language. Just as all the marks of the existing society became symbols of the old and outdated, classical Chinese unavoidably became the identifiable target of attack for the May Fourth intellectuals. Classical Chinese was usually used by the highly educated cultural elite as the written language that separated itself from the vernacular language spoken by the masses. In 1917, Hu Shi published in *New Youth* a provocative article titled “*Wenxue gailiang zouyi*” 文学改良邹议 (Preliminary proposal for the reform of literature). In this article, Hu forcefully advocated the adoption of *baihua wen* 白话文 (vernacular Chinese) as the new literary medium for the masses. It was essentially a rejection of traditional Chinese culture, represented by elitist literature in the classical language and form. In responding to Hu Shi’s call, Chen Hengzhe 陈衡哲, a young and little-known woman student at that time, published the first Chinese vernacular story, “Yiri” 一日 (One Day), in which she vividly described one day’s life in college. This language reform gained momentum with Lu Xun’s publication of “The Madman’s Diary” in *New Youth* in 1918. Almost everyone

⁴¹ Lin Yu-sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Antitraditionalism in the May Fourth Era* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), pp. 116-121.

active in the May Fourth period took up the vernacular, and they collectively voiced their bitter attacks on the “ornateness” and “decadence” of classic Chinese. Scholar Julia Kristeva’s argument that, to subvert the reigning authoritarian syntax signifies the subversion of the Law of the Father, complements the May Fourth determination to get rid of “Confucius and Sons.”⁴² Under the call of this revolutionary slogan, the superior sovereign status of Confucianism in Chinese society was overthrown. The vernacular was transformed quickly into a subversive force, undermining the hierarchy and authority of the traditional patriarchal discourse.

The vernacular language movement critically shaped the translation practice of the May Fourth intellectuals. It effectively empowered these translators to transform Chinese into a more “scientific” and “modern” language through the massive importation of Euro-Japanese syntax and semantics. In contrast to the late Qing translators who domesticated the “foreign” into the familiar “local” in classical Chinese, the May Fourth generation took the “foreignization” (or Westernization) approach and phonetically rendered many foreign words into vernacular Chinese. In *The Lure of the Modern*, literary critic Shu-mei Shih identifies some major aspects of the Westernization of Chinese vernacular: foreign words borrowed and used alongside Chinese, the radical transformation of the adjectival and adverbial auxiliaries and third

⁴² Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 67-77.

“Down with Confucius and Sons” was a revolutionary slogan of the May Fourth Movement. At the turn of the twentieth century, Chinese intellectuals began to blame Confucianism in large part after China suffered repeated military defeats at the hands of Western gunboat diplomacy. The persecution of Confucianism continued after the May Fourth era and reached its peak with the disastrous Cultural Revolution of 1966 to 1976.

person pronoun, and newly translated foreign terms, such as many of the terms in psychoanalysis, including *yishi* 意识 (consciousness), *wuyishi* 无意识 (the unconscious).⁴³ The heavy borrowing solved practical translation problems because there were no equivalent terms in Chinese language to match the modern Western inventions. Moreover, the establishment of a Westernized writing system gave Chinese language a “modern” look and disturbed the “traditional” meaning fixed in classic Chinese. “Modern Japan” played a prominent role in China’s vernacular revolution after it emerged as a powerful country through modernization reforms in the wake of the Meiji Restoration (1868). Many “Western” words were borrowed directly from the Chinese characters that appeared in the Japanese translations of European and American works. In this regard, the May Fourth intellectuals perceived Japan simultaneously as both an imperial power and a model of successful modernization (or Westernization). The institutional promotion of a national language was officially completed in 1920 when the Education Ministry of the Republic⁴⁴ issued orders that all the public schools in China should adopt the vernacular as their teaching language.

The standardization of the vernacular language was perceived as the foremost priority in constructing the subjectivity of the modern nation-state and the democratization of the society. It not only ended the prestige of writing practices associated with the traditional Chinese learning, and but also consolidated the temporal

⁴³ Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, p. 70.

⁴⁴ The establishment of The Republic of China was developed out of *Wuchang qiyi* 武昌起义 (Wuchang Uprisng) that fought against the Qing government on October 10, 1911. The Republic of China was established on January 1, 1912, with Dr. Sun Yat-sen as the provisional president.

divide between the past and present, tradition and modernity. “New language is new life,” advocated the *Genbun-itchi* Movement in Japan that began in the mid-1880s to remove the disjunction between the written language and the spoken language. On the other hand, the social-revolutionary potential and democratic implications of a standard national language play a vital role in the establishment of “linear temporality,” and the homogeneous and totalizing processes of modernity. In the global and local cross-cultural discursive context, the massive importation of Euro-Japanese syntax and semantics registered the eagerness of the May Fourth translators to include China in the modern community of the world, and to enforce a transnational and global consciousness of modernity. However, this national subjectivity was constructed through the particularization and subjugation of Chinese culture to the imaginary “universality” of Western modernity. Therefore, even though the May Fourth generation’s advocacy of total Westernization was motivated by nationalism, their local subjectivity had generated an equally subversive power of denationalization.

Sherlock Holmes Comes to China

In the context of translating Western modernity into Chinese culture, detective fiction became one of the most important genres. Chinese intellectuals admired the “scientific” method of detection in particular, and the detective protagonists’ daring devotion to justice and witty victory over the powerful establishment. At this special historical moment, Sherlock Holmes entered the scene. He was first introduced to China in 1896. This encounter happened in a fraught political atmosphere: that year,

Liang Qichao, the leading Chinese intellectual and reformer, began publishing his ten-day periodical *Shiwu bao* 时务报 (Current Political Affairs), in which he stressed the urgency of political reform.⁴⁵ Near the back of the periodical, in the section called “Translation from English Newspapers,” Liang introduced, interestingly enough, Western detective stories, including *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. This marked the beginning of Sherlock Holmes’s immense popularity in China.

The Sherlock Holmes stories serialized in Liang Qichao’s periodical included “The Naval Treaty” (1893), “The Crooked Man” (1893), “A Case of Identity” (1891) and “The Final Problem” (1893). Zhang Kunde was the translator of these works. He translated them into classical Chinese, the dominant form of written discourse before the vernacular language reform movement in the 1910s. We know little about Zhang except that he served as the English-Chinese translation expert for the journal. *Shiwu Bao* was founded by Liang to push his political agenda of reforming Chinese society and rejuvenating the nation. How did he become the pioneer in publishing detective fiction that seemingly had little relevance to politics? The answer does not lie in his passion for the genre itself, but in his using it as an educational tool. “Science” and “democracy” were perceived to be the two things most needed by China at that time. Detective fiction, a novelty from the West, was presented as educational. The suspense, tension, and thrill of the plots were ideal for arousing the interest of the masses; on the other hand, the rule of law and the application of logic and reasoning

⁴⁵ *Shiwu bao* was founded on August 9th, 1896 in Shanghai. It came out every ten days, three issues per month. It contributed a significant portion to translated foreign works; and it also started a column for editorials. The newspaper ceased publication in 1898.

were seen as necessary to bring enlightenment to China. Last but not least, Western technology and inventions, such as railways, the underground, and the telegraph, attracted the attention and fascination of the Chinese, who perceived them as manifestations of modern life.

The political and educational mission strongly colored succeeding translators' perceptions of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Liu Bannong 刘半农 (1891-1934), one of the well-known translators, unequivocally argued that Conan Doyle's purpose in writing these stories was to offer a do-it-yourself manual for learner-detectives.⁴⁶ In his translation of "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches" (1892), Yan Duhe 严独鹤 (1889-1968), one of Liu's contemporary translators, advocated the same view through the mouth of Sherlock Holmes by adding a line to the original English text: "Should my work be well-analyzed and presented to posterity, it would be a textbook for the self-taught detective."⁴⁷ Holmes's criticism of Watson's artistic coloring of the stories ("you have degraded what should have been a course of lectures into a series of tales")⁴⁸ was also twisted to fit into this framework and used as proof. Scholar Eva Hung points out, "Not only are the translations meant to serve the special needs of early twentieth century China, but the intention of the original author was brought in to reinforce the message."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Liu Bannong, "Colophon" in *Fu-er-mo-si zhentan'an quanji*, vol. 12, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Yan Duhe, *Fu-er-mo-si zhentan'an quanji*, case 14, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁸ Doyle, *The Adventures and Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (New York: The Modern Library, Random House INC, 2002), p. 304.

⁴⁹ Hung, *Translators' Strategies and Creativity*, p. 74.

The majority of Conan Doyle's detective stories were translated into classical Chinese in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In 1901, Huang Ding and Zhang Zaixin co-translated the Sherlock Holmes collection *Taixi shuobu congshu zhiyi* 泰西说部丛书之一 (Western fiction series No. 1). They included seven stories: "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892), "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" (1892), "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" (1891), "The Greek Interpreter" (1893), "The Red-Headed League" (1891), "The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor" (1892) and "The Reigate Puzzle" (1893). The main translator, Huang, was educated in Shanghai's St. John's University, which was founded in 1879 by Anglican bishops. In 1892 he was sent to study in America, and he returned in 1897. Therefore Huang's English proficiency surpassed that of most of his contemporaries, and in comparison his translation was more faithful to the original text. In *Xiaoshuo jingyanlu* 小说经眼录 (My notes on fiction), Gu Xieguang 顾燮光 (1875-1949) showed his admiration for Huang's translation of "The Speckled Band" in particular. He wrote, "Huang's expression vividly captured the plots of the story, and his translation brought the readers into the world of wonder, surprise and enjoyment."⁵⁰

Following these pioneering steps, dozens of publishing houses and at least thirty Chinese intellectuals engaged in translating either collections or single examples of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Among them, the best known ones include "The Sign of the Four" (1890) translated by Ji Changkang in 1904 and "The Hound of the Baskervilles"

⁵⁰ Guo Yanli 郭延礼, *Jindai xixue yu zhongguo wenxue* 近代西学与中国文学 (Modern western studies and Chinese literature), (Nanchang: Baihuazhou yishu chubanshe, 2008), p. 155.

(1902) translated by Lu Kanghua and Huang Dajun in 1905. The spontaneous following in China of Conan Doyle's publications was an interesting phenomenon that very few other contemporary Western writers could compete with. The immediate and immense popularity of detective stories reflects their appeal to a large readership across classes. New magazines were founded, devoted entirely to detective fiction and bearing names such as *Detective World* and *Detective Monthly*. Of all the detective stories written and translated, the Sherlock Holmes series became the best known and the most influential. During this short period of time, ninety-six of Conan Doyle's detective stories were translated into Chinese. In his book *Writers and Works from Overseas*, the father of modern Japanese detective fiction Edogawa Rampo (1894-1965) admitted, "Even though its own modern detective fiction developed much later in China than in Japan, its translation of Sherlock Holmes series was far ahead of us."⁵¹ Moreover, China was three years ahead of Japan in noticing Conan Doyle's works in the first place, which makes it highly significant for cross-cultural studies.

Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes in Britain

By contrast to the romance that the Chinese intellectuals and masses had with the Sherlock Holmes detective stories, Conan Doyle did not have great enthusiasm for his detective character when he first started. Conan Doyle was trained to be a medical

⁵¹ Edogawa Rampo was the pen name of Hirai Taro. He was a big admirer of Western detective writers, especially of Edgar Allan Poe. His pseudonym is a playful reading of Poe's name. Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories also influenced Rampo's works. His most well known stories featured the detective hero Kogoro Akechi, who later became the leader of a group of boy detectives known as "The Young Detective Team." Quoted from *Fu-er-mo-si zai Zhongguo* 福尔摩斯在中国 (Sherlock Holmes in China), vol. 2.

doctor. He started his private professional practice shortly after he received his Bachelor of Medicine degree from Edinburgh University in 1881. Yet he was not very successful in the medical business, and very few patients came to him for treatments. To take up his spare time and to fight boredom, in 1886 he engaged himself in writing the first detective story, "A Study in Scarlet." It was published in 1887 in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*. It featured the first appearance of Sherlock Holmes and his assistant and narrator, Dr. Watson. This work received moderate recognition from its readers and was reprinted as a separate work in 1888. Three years later, Doyle published his second Sherlock Holmes story, "The Sign of Four," in May 1890 in the American *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*. However, it was not until the *Strand Magazine* started to serialize the Sherlock Holmes stories that Conan Doyle became a household name and enjoyed a huge success with readers on the book market. Twelve more stories were subsequently published in 1891 and 1892 and collected into *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

From the very beginning, Conan Doyle despised detective fiction writing. Despite the immediate commercial success of the Sherlock Holmes stories, Conan Doyle's greatest passion continued to be historical fiction writing. He published a series of works such as *The White Company* (1891), a story set in Europe in the years 1366 and 1367 which centers on the adventures of young Alleyne Edricson as he leaves the abbey where he has been raised in order to see the world. As early as in November 1891, five years after its first appearance, Conan Doyle already planned to abandon the Sherlock Holmes series. He complained to his mother in a letter: "I think of slaying

Holmes...and winding him up for good and all. He takes my mind from better things.”⁵² On another occasion he bitterly confessed: “I have had such an overdose of [Sherlock Holmes] that I feel towards him as I do toward *pâté de foie gras*, of which I once ate too much, so that the name of it gives me a sickly feelings to this day.”⁵³ The “murder” of Sherlock Holmes was planned and finally carried out in December 1893. Conan Doyle devised his death in “The Final Problem,” in which Holmes and his long-time “evil” rival Professor Moriarty plunged to their deaths together down the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland.

Conan Doyle’s “murder” of Holmes, however, was beyond his personal and professional control. When the death news was publicized, tens of thousands of Holmes fans went on the street to express their disappointment by wearing mourning bands; and *Strand Magazine* lost 20,000 subscriptions in a short period of time. Under pressure from the large number of enthusiastic readers and the capitalistic drive for profit, Conan Doyle had no other option but to bring Holmes back to life and to continue the exploits of Holmes and Watson in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in 1902. The last of the Holmes series were published in 1927 and named *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*. Conan Doyle produced a total of fifty-six short stories and four novels that feature the detective protagonist Sherlock Holmes and his assistant Dr. Watson.

⁵² Quoted from *The Facts On File Companion to the British Novel: Beginnings Through the 20th Century*, Virginia Brackett and Victoria Gaydosik, (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2006), p. 113.

⁵³ Quoted from Kate Thomas’s “Alimentary: Arthur Conan Doyle and Isabella Beeton” in *Victorian Literature and Culture* 36, no. 2 (2008): 375-390.

In China, Sherlock Holmes stories were highly respected and massively translated and popularized. The leading Chinese intellectuals used them as important political vehicles for promoting enlightenment and national salvation. In contrast, Conan Doyle's detective fiction writing was looked down upon in Britain by the literary world and even by the author himself. It was regarded as pure entertainment and lowbrow popular culture. Excluded from highbrow literature, the Sherlock Holmes series was marginalized as the "outsider" that contributed little value to the field of canonical literary works. However, its social impact and cultural implications went far beyond its literary category.

The discourse of detection, paradoxically, participated both unconsciously and consciously in the "othering" processes of the Victorian British Empire. The context of economic wealth and colonial expansion made the British perceive themselves as the "power center" of the universe and the greatest empire that the world had ever known. In *Why Mystery and Detective Fiction was a Natural Outgrowth of the Victorian Period*, Sharon J. Kobritz describes the "on-top-of-the-world" psychological complex of the Victorians. She observes that Victorians took great satisfaction from the notion that crimes in literature could be attributed to a foreigner (especially an Indian or Chinaman) and not an Englishman.⁵⁴ This imperialist discourse underlies the construction of Victorian culture. In terms of inherent structure, the detective story interacts with and serves well the practice of "othering," for the genre itself needs to distinguish a criminal "other," to separate him/her from the community and non-

⁵⁴ Kobritz, *Why Mystery and Detective Fiction was a Natural Outgrowth of the Victorian Period*, p. 3.

criminals. Moreover, the abundance of the “other” cultures on the margin of the Empire provided ample writing materials for detective stories, and as a result, reinforced the central position of the British Empire; therefore, Conan Doyle and his Sherlock Holmes stories were the discursive production of Victorian imperialism, and they played a crucial role in exorcising shadows of the “other” through the practice of “criminal” detection.

Cheng Xiaoqing Across Cultural Boundaries

At the turn of the twentieth century, Cheng Xiaoqing stood among the pioneer intellectuals as the cultural negotiator and mediator between China and Britain, East and West. He was regarded as the father and “Grand Master” of modern Chinese detective fiction. He played an influential role in the translation of the Sherlock Holmes detective stories and in the creation of the Chinese version of “Sherlock Holmes.” Cheng first encountered Conan Doyle’s highly popular stories at the age of twelve through Liang Qichao’s political periodical *Shiwen bao*. He immediately became fascinated with detective stories and the structural tension within the genre. As he read more of the Sherlock Holmes stories, Cheng strongly desired to master the English language in order to understand the original works. However, he had to drop out of school and stop taking English classes when he was sixteen. He came from a poor family and could not afford the expense of formal education. To make a living, he had to find a job working as an apprentice at the Heng Dali Clock and Watch Store, a Western enterprise in Shanghai. Highly motivated, Cheng decided to learn English in

his spare time. Despite his long working hours in the daytime, he started to take English classes in the evening at a nearby school. Cheng's hard work paid off, and soon he acquired enough English to devour the English originals.

Achieving English proficiency was the first step of Cheng Xiaoqing's life-long learning from, and understanding of, the West. In order to dive deeply into Western traditions and cultures, he began to study a wide range of fields and subjects related to the genre of detective fiction. In 1924, Cheng enrolled in an American correspondence school, where he selected many classes in criminal psychology and legal investigation. He spent a lot of time and effort expanding his knowledge of Western criminology and legislation. He spent time in the library and read extensively in representative and influential works in related fields. For instance, he took great interest in the German criminologist Hans Gustav Adolf Gross (1847-1915), especially in his book *Criminal Psychology: A Manual for Judges, Practitioners and Students*. Published in 1893, this work marked the birth of the field of criminology, which applies science to the practices of crime investigation and law. In addition, Cheng also studied works by the French criminologist Alexandre Lacassagne (1843-1924), who was the principal founder of the fields of medical jurisprudence and criminal anthropology. Cheng was particularly fascinated by Lacassagne's detailed analyses of toxicology, bloodstain patterns, and bullet markings, all of which appeared frequently in Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories.

Apart from his deep interest in English detective fiction, Cheng Xiaoqing also studied and researched other genres of Western fiction available in China. For instance,

he read and admired the works of two French writers popular at that time, Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893) and Alexandre Dumas, fils (1824-1895). Both writers' works had been translated extensively into literary Chinese by the late Qing generation of intellectuals. *The Lady of the Camellias* (1848) was one of Cheng's favorite works, first translated by Lin Shu 林纾 (1852-1924) in 1895, which immediately created a political sensation.⁵⁵ The miserable suffering that Lady Marguerite Gautier went through in her short life resonated with the pain and struggle shared by Cheng and his contemporary Chinese intellectuals.

Cheng Xiaoqing's cultural identity was interactive and fluid, moving between East and West. His dedicated pursuit of Western learning coexisted with his sophisticated study of Chinese classics and traditional fictional works. Cheng actively engaged in deciphering *Guwen guanzhi* 古文观止 (The anthology of classic Chinese essays), which was first published during the Qing Dynasty in 1695. It was composed of more than two hundred well-known works of narrative and expository prose collected from the Warring States Period (476 BC- 221 BC) to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Other major works on Cheng Xiaoqing's bookshelves included China's Four Great Classical Novels: *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Journey to the West*, *Outlaws of the Marsh* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*.⁵⁶ At the turn of the twentieth

⁵⁵ Lin Shu was one of the most important late Qing translators. Even though he did not know any foreign languages, he worked with a few oral interpreters and translated more than 180 Western literary works into classical Chinese. However, Lin lost favor with the May Fourth generation because he refused to join the vernacular language reform movement.

⁵⁶ Cheng Xiaoqing was a self-taught scholar in both Chinese and Western literatures and social sciences. He studied diligently whenever he had time away from work. He was born into an economically disadvantaged family and had to support himself from an early age. As a

century, these works did not enjoy the canonical status that they do now and were not recognized by the elite class. They were marginalized because they belonged to the inferior genre of fiction (popularly called “gossip”), written in a mixture of literary and classic Chinese to appeal to lower class readers. Cheng’s high regard for these “outsider” works captures his fluidity in crossing the literary boundaries of highbrow and lowbrow.

Cheng Xiaoqing’s study and research of Western criminology and medical jurisprudence dialectically interacted with his fascination with, and appreciation of, traditional Chinese forensic science and criminal investigation. While exploring Western crime detection, Cheng discovered the work *xiyuan jilu* 洗冤集录 (Collected cases of injustice rectified), written by Song Ci 宋慈 (1186-1249) in 1247 of the Song Dynasty (960-1276). Song Ci served as a presiding judge in the Chinese high courts for many terms and recorded many historical cases of forensic science from his own experiences. There were fifty-three chapters in total, divided into five volumes. The first volume presented the imperial laws issued by the Song Dynasty rulers on the inspection of bodies and injuries; the second volume comprehensively covered the notes and methods of postmortem examinations practiced by Song Ci; the third, fourth, and fifth volumes recorded in detail the appearances of corpses that resulted from various causes of death such as poisoning, drowning and sickle stabbing. Cheng Xiaoqing was enchanted by this piece of work and studied it along the line of detective

teenager, he made a living by playing for music bands and working as an apprentice in a clock shop; in his early twenties, he started to depend partly on remunerations from publishing stories and translating English works; at the age of twenty-three, he was hired to teach Chinese in a women’s normal college in Suzhou 苏州, which provided him with more stable income.

fiction. The trans-historical construction of forensic knowledge laid down another important paving stone on Cheng's trans-cultural path bridging the East and the West.

Mediating Between the Masses and Translations

Cheng Xiaoqing played a crucial role in translating and popularizing Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories in China. He was one of the few early twentieth-century Chinese intellectuals who engaged in continuous cultural dialogue with the masses. As a self-taught scholar who came from an economically and socially disadvantaged family background, Cheng had direct contact with the general population and possessed first-hand experiences of their lives and needs. In May 1916, together with about ten contemporaries, Cheng translated *The Complete Collection of Sherlock Holmes Detective Stories*, which was published by *Zhonghua shuju* 中华书局 (Zhonghua Book Company)⁵⁷ in twelve volumes. This collection included forty-four Sherlock Holmes short stories and four novels. It was considered complete at that time but could not have included Conan Doyle's works from his later years such as *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, which was not published in Britain until 1921.

Cheng Xiaoqing was only twenty-three years old when he first participated in this collective project of standardizing and (re-)translating all the existing Sherlock Holmes stories. Although a considerable number of Holmes stories had been translated before

⁵⁷ *Zhonghua shuju* was established in Shanghai in January 1912. Its founder was Lu Feikui 陆费逵 (1886-1941), a well-known educational thinker and publisher. During the May Fourth Movement, to answer the call of "Enlightening the People," the *Zhonghua* Book Company was actively involved in editing and publishing popular cultural readings and contributed considerably to the spread of science and culture and the promotion of modern education. Now its headquarters are located in Beijing.

this group endeavor, the quality varied from one story to another and often they were published in fragments; this 1916 collection served as the most comprehensive and the most up-to-date version among all those available. Another distinguishing feature of this collective translation was that it used easy and simple literary Chinese instead of the difficult lexicon of sophisticated literary Chinese, typical of most previous translations, which excluded a large readership. This collective translation project's attempt to simplify language played an important role in advancing the transition from classical Chinese to vernacular Chinese: it anticipated the coming of the full-scale language reform movement.

Three years later, Cheng Xiaoqing witnessed the May Fourth Movement. The urge to switch completely to vernacular Chinese grew stronger. Cheng perceived the subversive power of vernacular Chinese, which could make detective stories accessible to readers of all classes. Literary critic Walter Benjamin's reading of mass culture sheds some light on our understanding of Cheng's dynamic practice:

The Mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses toward art. The reactionary attitude toward a Picasso painting changes into the progressive reaction toward a Chaplin movie. The progressive reaction is characterized by the direct,

intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment with the orientation of the expert.⁵⁸

Cheng Xiaoqing perceived a strong engaging power in the narrative of detective fiction similar to that of the creation and presentation of art and visual images. To lead the masses to a direct and intimate reading experience, Cheng carried out another massive project, starting in October 1926: re-translating the Sherlock Holmes series.

Cheng collected almost every single piece of Conan Doyle's work that was available. This anthology was later published by *Shijie shuju* 世界书局 (The World Book Company), one of the most well known presses in Shanghai.⁵⁹ For the first time, the Sherlock Holmes stories were translated into vernacular Chinese. Moreover, Cheng added modern punctuation marks to the Chinese texts that were newly imported from the West. This might seem to be a small experiment, but in fact it had a revolutionary impact on re-interpreting Chinese traditional culture. Classical Chinese did not use punctuation marks. The learned class learned how to divide and read sentences through education whereas the uneducated classes did not. The use of punctuation makes made it

⁵⁸ Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations* (London: Fontana 1973), p. 219.

⁵⁹ *Shijie Shuju* was founded by Shen Zhifang 沈知方 (1882-1839) in Shanghai in 1917. It suffered successive bombings during the Japanese invasion in 1937 and 1938. In the first few decades of the twentieth century, its primary publications were works of popular culture, including the whole series of Sherlock Holmes and later Cheng Xiaoqing's *Huo Sang* detective stories.

possible for the masses with little literary education to access written texts. To push this transformative power further, Cheng inserted simple illustrations into his translation to engage readers more directly through visual images. Thus Cheng culturally produced and packaged the Sherlock Holmes stories through multiple layers of media communication. He understood that the meaning of popular texts comes from the interface between people's everyday life and the consumption of cultural products.⁶⁰

Cheng Xiaoqing's Experiment with Early Films

Cheng Xiaoqing's active intertextual negotiation between written texts and visual images led him to pioneering experiments with early films. He emphasized the audience's active negotiations with media texts and technologies as empowering in the context of their everyday lives. According to historical records, in June 1896, China screened the first film, a foreign film imported from the West. The situation that all films were foreign continued until November 1905, when China finally produced its first short silent film "Dingjun Mountain" 定军山.⁶¹ The storyline was based on the well-known Peking opera of the same title. Tan Xinpei 谭鑫培 (1847-1917), a

⁶⁰ John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 6.

⁶¹ Dingjun Mountain 定军山, located in Shaanxi Province 陕西 of Northwestern China, is famous for the battle that took place there during the Three Kingdoms period 三国时期. Zhuge Liang 诸葛亮, the much admired Prime Minister of Shu 蜀 defeated its powerful enemy of Wei 魏 because of his outstanding intelligence and resourcefulness. There is some controversy about whether "Dingjun Mountain" was the first film made in China. In *Zhongguo dianying fazhan shi* 中国电影发展史 (History of the development of Chinese films), film historian Cheng Jihua 程季华 (1921-) holds an affirmative view. However, other scholars have disputed his conclusion.

celebrity opera singer and performer at that time, acted in it and made his debut appearance in film. The producer of this film was Ren Qingtai 任庆泰 (1850-1932), the owner of the Fengtai 丰泰 Photography Shop in Beijing and a long-time friend of Tan's. Upon Tan's sixtieth birthday, Ren came up with the inspiration to celebrate it in the form of a short film. Ren might have been surprised that it was this film that marked the beginning of the modern Chinese filmmaking industry.

Since he was a little boy, Cheng Xiaoqing had been fascinated by the power of visual images and the social impact of films on society. In 1926, Cheng enthusiastically adapted his own novel, *Mu zhi xin* 母之心 (The heart of a mother), as a film script and made it into a film. After that, his interest in films became deeper and stronger. He devoted a large amount of time to writing and editing film scripts. In a short period of time from 1926 to 1941, Cheng successfully adapted more than thirty films. Among them was a series of films based on his detective stories, such as “Chuangshang renyin” 窗上人影 (The shadow in the window), “Wunu xie” 舞女血 (Blood of the dancing girl), “Cimu 慈母 (The kindhearted mother), “Xianhui de furen” 贤惠的妇人 (Virtuous wife), “Keai de choudi” 可爱的仇敌 (Loveable enemy), and “guohun de fuhuo” 国魂的复活 (The reincarnation of the nation's soul).

While working for the big filmmaking companies in the metropolitan city of Shanghai, Cheng Xiaoqing was concerned about the *dianying shamo* 电影沙漠 (film

desert)⁶² in the less-developed neighboring town Suzhou. There were no public film theaters or domestic films except for a small number of foreign films brought in by Western missionaries. These imported films could be shown only temporarily inside the Christian churches. To make visual images accessible to the large spectatorship in Suzhou, Cheng persuaded two of his friends in 1927 to raise funds together to build the first “Park Movie Theater” inside the Wuzhoulu 五洲路 Park. On top of that, for the first time in Chinese film history, Cheng installed electricity-generating equipment for the theater. The opening ceremony was sensational and among the top stories in the local news. The debut film was titled “Fengliu shaonainai” 风流少奶奶 (The talented young mistress), and the leading actress was a native-born Suzhou girl named Han Yunzhen 韩云珍. Cheng’s acquaintance with Western film screening practice provided him options for experimenting with Chinese film premieres. He invited actress Han from Shanghai and held a release premiere for the film. It was an immediate success, and Cheng was again a pioneer in mixing Eastern and Western cultures.

Cheng Xiaoqing constantly negotiated the boundaries between the East and the West, a trans-cultural practice that makes his cultural identity fluid and unfixed. His grasp of the subversive power of popular culture made him constantly experiment and interact with both written texts and visual images. Thus various discourses were made available to the masses for new “interpretation” and “meaning.” In the words of Timothy C. Wong, the well-regarded Cheng studies scholar, “Even though he [Cheng

⁶² In Chinese, *dianying shamo* is a very popular expression that describes the shortage of film showings and theatre facilities. Another similar related expression is *wenhua shamo* 文化沙漠 (cultural desert), which implies the lack of culture.

Xiaoqing] never lived abroad, throughout his life Cheng had... ‘an abiding curiosity in ‘look out’—locating oneself as a cultural mediator in the intersection between China and the world.”⁶³

⁶³ Wong, “Cheng Xiaoqing” in *Chinese Fiction Writers, 1900-1949*, ed. Thomas Moran, p. 51.

Chapter Two

Passing the Orient in Sherlock Holmes

Passing is about identities: their creation or imposition, their adoption or rejection, their accompanying rewards or penalties. Passing is also about the boundaries established between identity categories and about the individual and cultural anxieties induced by boundary crossing. Finally, passing is about specularity: the visible and the invisible, the seen and the unseen.

— Elaine K. Ginsberg¹

Europe and Asia, the Occident and the Orient, are two entities that depend on each other for geographical distinction and recognition. The universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is "ours" and an unfamiliar space beyond "ours" which is "theirs" is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary.² In the nineteenth century, the Orient became a disadvantaged, unfavorable, inferior entity in its relationship with the Occident as a result of the unstoppable European expansion in search of markets, consumers, resources, and colonies. The continuing and expanding European exploration of the Orient made both the actual and the imaginative geography shrink. In the discourse of imperialism, the Orient was transformed into a collective entity that reduced the large number of

¹ Ginsberg, *Passing and the Fictions of Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 2.

² Said, *Orientalism*, p. 54.

differences among individual areas of Asia into a manageable and treatable geographical identity that existed mainly in the imagination. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said writes:

To the West, Asia had once represented silent distance and alienation [...]. To overcome such redoubtable constants the Orient needed first to be known, then invaded and possessed, then re-created by scholars, soldiers, and judges who disinterred forgotten languages, histories, races, and cultures in order to posit them—beyond the modern Oriental's ken—as the true classical Orient that could be used to judge and rule the modern Orient.³

The discourse of modern Orientalism thus distorted the truth of the Orient's past and facilitated and justified the European colonization of the Orient.

A Study in Scarlet (1886), the first Sherlock Holmes story, opens with Dr. Watson returning to London after suffering serious injuries in the Afghan war. The geographical distinction between Europe and Asia, Occident and Orient is immediately mapped out on a global scale of political interactions. Said contends that, “the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony [...]”⁴ Watson, an educated white British male, received his medical degree from the University of London, which stood symbolically in the heart of the Victorian Empire. Upon completing his studies,

³ Ibid, pp. 91-2.

⁴ Ibid, p. 5.

Watson is “duly attached” to the army regiment stationed in India, later dispatched to fight in the Second Anglo-Afghan war.⁵ Through Watson’s first-person narration, Britain’s military conquest and colonial presence in the Orient becomes a proper mission naturally justified.

By the end of the mid-nineteenth century, the expansion of the Victorian Empire had reached territories across the entire continent of Asia, from the Near East to the Far East. In his 1875 book *The Tireless Traveler*, Anthony Trollope boasts that wherever the British flag flies, the English race has a responsibility to export the light of civilization, thus “illuminating the supposedly dark places of the world.”⁶ Watson’s description of his injury in the Afghan war holds special significance for our understanding of Britain’s imperialistic perspective on its Oriental counterpart. Watson recalls that the war brought him “nothing but misfortune and disaster.”⁷ In the fatal battle of Maiwand, he is struck on the shoulder by a Jezail bullet. His description of this incident encapsulates the nature of the encounter of the Occident with the Orient: “I should have fallen into the hands of the *murderous* (italics mine) Ghazis had it not been for the *devotion and courage* (italics mine) shown by Murray, my orderly, who threw me across a pack-horse, and succeeded in bringing me safely to the British lines.”⁸

⁵ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 15.

The Second Anglo-Afghan War, triggered by Afghanistan’s refusal to accept a mission dispatched by Britain, was fought between Britain and Afghanistan from 1878 to 1880. After Britain forces occupied much of the country, Afghanistan signed the Treaty of Gandamak with Britain in May 1879; This treaty granted Britain permission to control Afghanistan’s foreign policy.

⁶ Quoted from *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, Patrick Brantlinger, p. 8.

⁷ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 15.

⁸ Ibid.

The “murderous” nature attributed to the Ghazis (referring to native Muslim warriors in Afghanistan) is contrasted with the “devotion and courage” demonstrated by the British orderly in the battlefield: “The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal.’”⁹ After Watson is removed from the frontline, he is taken to a base hospital for treatment in Peshawar, India. There he is struck by “enteric fever,” “that curse of our Indian possessions.”¹⁰ The Orient is once again depicted as hostile, dangerous and full of contamination, posing a serious threat to the mission of the English race.

Sherlock Holmes and the Irrational Orient in Detection

Watson is discharged from the army, and he returns home after a medical board determines that not a day should be lost in sending him back to England. Looking at London, the metropolis of the Empire, through the cultural lenses of Victorian England, Watson sees it as being threatened and contaminated by the chaos, inhumanity, and disease, which he has painfully encountered in Oriental warfare. The damage the Orient has done to Watson involves not only physical degeneration but also mental and spiritual trauma. When looking for a lodging partner, Watson laments, “I should prefer a man of studious and quiet habits. I am not strong enough yet to stand much noise and excitement. I had enough of both in Afghanistan to last me for the remainder of my existence.”¹¹

⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 40.

¹⁰ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 15.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 16.

Despite the contamination and chaos that the peripheral world brought to the “center” of London, Watson perceives the power of the Empire as containing, rationalizing and civilizing the uncanny “others.” Sherlock Holmes steps in at this moment and is introduced to Watson as the rational personification of British superiority. A scientific aura begins to be constructed around this highly symbolic figure. The first meeting between Watson and Holmes takes place in a special *mise-en-scène*. Conan Doyle’s representation of this space proceeds like a camera that captures and builds up the tension in a close panoramic tracking shot of the room. We see a lofty chamber, “lined and littered with countless bottles.” Then we are told that, “broad, low tables were scattered about, which bristled with retorts, test-tubes, and little Bunsen lamps, with their blue flickering flames.”¹² The public space of science and reason created by the furnishings of a chemical laboratory destabilizes and intrudes upon the domestic space of the apartment bedroom. Equipment for distillation, heating, sterilization and combustion is put on stage suggesting and speaking reason and truth. The Bunsen lamp was an innovation of the Victorian period, created by contemporary German chemist Robert Wilhelm Eberhard Bunsen (1811-1899), who is regarded as a pioneer in spectrum analysis and co-discovered the elements caesium and rubidium. The presence in Holmes’s laboratory of the latest scientific inventions is intended to associate him with the immediacy of progress and enlightenment.

¹² Ibid.

In the middle of this enclosed space, “one student,” Sherlock Holmes, is “bending over a distant table absorbed in his work.”¹³ He forms part of the *mise-en-scène* and creates the lingering image of scientific experimentation in progress. Finally the frame introduces the movement of the characters, who seem to have been forgotten by the camera until this moment, and the whole scene moves toward its climax. “At the sound of our steps he [Sherlock Holmes] glanced round and sprang to his feet with a cry of pleasure. ‘I’ve found it! I’ve found it.’”¹⁴ This outbreak of joy at a laboratory discovery resonates with the historical interjection of “Eureka! Eureka!” uttered by Archimedes of Syracuse (*ca.* 287 BC–*ca.* 212 BC), the ancient Greek mathematician and physicist. The scientific advances that Archimedes achieved made him one of the founding fathers of modern Western science. This off-screen intertextual reference places Holmes in the “center” position, and he becomes visible and present as the symbol of logic and reasoning. This closing shot focuses on scientific power, one of the foundation stones that the British Empire used to construct its superiority. Holmes functions as the imperialistic force that detects contamination and disorder so as to eliminate the threat posed by the other.

For Watson, Holmes becomes the healing therapist in the metropolis of London. Upon seeing him, Holmes can immediately diagnose that Watson has been in Afghanistan, a recognition that Watson is seeking, the starting point of the healing process. Later, after they move in to share the apartment together, Holmes explains how he knew that Watson had just come back from the Orient:

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Here is a gentleman of a medical type, but with the air of a military man. Clearly an army doctor, then. He has just come from the tropics, for his face is dark, and that is not the natural tint of his skin, for his wrists are fair. He has undergone hardship and sickness, as his haggard face says clearly. His left arm has been injured. He holds it in a stiff and unnatural manner. Where in the tropics could an English army doctor have seen much hardship and got his arm wounded? Clearly in Afghanistan.¹⁵

Holmes's knowledge of the Oriental tropics empowers him to culturally detect the contamination and deterioration that it has inflicted on Watson's body and mind. His face is dark and has lost the natural tint of the skin; he suffers from hardship and sickness. All these dark corrosive forces of distortion and contagion are portrayed as inherent in the Orient itself, which threatens the healthiness of the "English race." Holmes bases his reasoning and deductive power on the assumption that only the tropical Orient is capable of injuring Watson in such ways. Said observes that, in the eyes of the imperialists, "the Oriental lived in a different but thoroughly organized world of his own, a world with its own national, cultural, and epistemological boundaries and principles of internal coherence."¹⁶ The Orient is thus seen as a fossilized and enclosed space that separates itself from British civilization. Yet it can

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 24.

¹⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 40.

be managed and identified by the British Empire, symbolized by the persona of Holmes. Said stresses that, “to have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it.”¹⁷ Holmes’s detection and criminalization of the Orient rely on his reading of the tropics as a space that can be deciphered exclusively by the scientific mind of the British.

The foundation and the superiority of the Victorian Empire were built on the power of reason derived from the progress and advances of science. Holmes, the symbol of the Empire, is presented in such a way as to personify the immense capability of scientific deduction and analysis. One good illustration of this is through a study of Holmes’s knowledge structure, which is very practical but very one-sided. He is profound in chemistry, accurate but unsystematic in anatomy, immense in sensational literature, and has a good practical knowledge of British law. Of contemporary literature, philosophy and politics, he appears to know next to nothing.¹⁸ On many occasions, Watson calls Holmes “an automaton-calculating machine” and considers him inhuman. Holmes always defends himself by saying that “emotional qualities are antagonistic to clear reasoning;” “whatever is emotional is opposed to that true cold reason which I place above all things.”¹⁹ In *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: Detecting Social Order*, scholar Rosemary Jann observes that the combination of Holmes and science is an act that performs the illusion of rationalism and logic during the *fin de siècle* moment. She further explains that that moment is

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 32.

¹⁸ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 96 and p. 157, respectively.

overshadowed by fears of cultural decadence and increasing fragmentation.²⁰ The construction of the certainty of science establishes legitimacy for Holmes to act as a guardian of the Empire, who contains dangers, restores order, and reaffirms values. Scientific logic and reasoning play the role of articulating the “logos” of the Empire and defining its boundary of meaning. They lay the foundation for the existence of imperialism and justify its domination and exploitation of the Orient. The hierarchical dichotomy of science over the arts, and reason over emotion form the core philosophy of the British imperialistic power. This sense of superiority is politically intertwined with the industrial and the scientific advances that Britain has achieved, which contrast with the relatively undeveloped Orient: agricultural, primitive and uncivilized in the imagination of the British.

The Indian Mutiny and Its Threat to the British Identity

The Afghan war that Watson experienced is merely the tip of the iceberg in alienating Asia and constructing the image of the Oriental contamination that threatens the autonomous existence of the British Empire. The Indian Mutiny of 1857-58 stands out as a historical crisis that “had shaken the British power in India to its foundation.”²¹ The psychological trauma that this Oriental war left on the Victorians becomes one of the dominant motifs that Conan Doyle explores in the Sherlock Holmes stories. The Mutiny started with violence on May 10, 1857 when sepoys (“sepoy” is the term for

²⁰ Jann, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: Detecting Social Order*, p. 6.

²¹ Hope Grant and Henry Knollys, *Incidents in the Sepoy War, 1857-58* (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1873), p. 334.

native soldiers) in the Bengal army were issued the new Enfield rifles, whose cartridges, which could only be loaded by biting off one end, were greased with beef and pork fat. Such a situation posed a grave religious assault on the taboos for Hindus and Muslims, respectively. The sepoy attacked and seized nearby Delhi, where massacres of British men, women and children took place the next day. The British started to seek revenge against the sepoys, whom they referred to as “niggers.” A. N. Wilson reported, “From the very first, the British decided to meet cruelty with redoubled cruelty, terror with terror, blood with blood.”²² Horrible atrocities were committed on both sides. In the end, after a lengthy siege of Lucknow, British troops retook the city and brought the hostilities to an end. Peace was declared on July 8, 1858.

The Victorians at that time treated the Indian Mutiny as the supreme trauma of the age. It was depicted as “[a] great crisis in our national history,”²³ “our greatest and most fearful disaster,”²⁴ an “overwhelming tide of disaster,” and an “ocean of blood and tears.”²⁵ Repressing the fact that inhumanity and cruelty came from both sides, Victorian imperialists epistemologically constructed the mutiny as a primitive dark force exclusively native to the Orient, a force that was eroding British superiority. In 1875, the ninth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* mapped out the crisis as a clash of cultures, leading to an institutionalized manipulation of knowledge about the

²² Leslie S. Klinger ed., *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, Conan Doyle, p. 607.

²³ John William Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857-58*, 3 vols. (London: Allen, 1877), p. 654.

²⁴ Henry Kingsley, *Stretton: A Novel*, 3 vols. (London: Tinsley, 1869).

²⁵ R. Montgomery Martin, *The Indian Empire*. Vol. 2: *The Mutiny of the Bengal Army* (London: London Printing and Publishing Company, n.d. 1861), p. 431.

Orient.²⁶ The entry says, “The truth seems to be that *native* opinion throughout India was in a *ferment*, *predisposing* men to believe the *wildest* stories, and to act *precipitately* upon their fears...Repeated annexations, the spread of education, the appearance of the steam engine and the telegraph wire, all alike revealed a consistent determination to *substitute* an English for an Indian civilization”(italics mine).²⁷ Here dangerous and animal-like characteristics are collectively attributed by the *Encyclopedia Britannica* to the Indian savages, framing the Orient as equivalent to the dark medieval past of modern European civilization. As Said emphasizes, “the Orient, in short, existed as a set of values attached, not to its modern realities, but to a series of valorized contacts it had had with a distant European past.”²⁸ On the other hand, the beginning of industrial modernization and the growing of national awareness in India were viewed as potential threats to the British Empire and its identity. So India is put in a kind of double bind. It is rendered threatening no matter what.

Apart from the geographical, ethnic, cultural and political dimensions in the reading of British identity, its construction as the center is based on the gender superiority of the white British male and the exclusion of women, which can be perceived through a study of the characterization of Holmes, Watson and other representative white male figures. In the Sherlock Holmes series, the process of

²⁶ The famous ninth edition (1875-1889) of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* is widely known as the “Scholar’s Edition” for its high intellectual standards. Its chief editor was William Robertson Smith (1846-1894), a Scottish Orientalist and minister of religion. Because a number of distinguished Victorian scholars such as scientist Thomas Henry Huxley and poem critic Charles Algernon Swinburne contributed articles to this edition, it was a critical success and about 8,500 sets were sold in Britain.

²⁷ Klinger ed., *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, p. 607.

²⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 85.

Orientalizing the Indian Mutiny is realized through the contamination that it had inflicted on a group of British war veterans like Watson. In “The Sign of the Four,” Jonathan Small, a white British male soldier who fought during the Indian Mutiny, returns to London with a wooden leg, a dark secret, and a criminal case about the Agra treasure. It is Holmes, representing the reason and truth of the British Empire, who detects the deterioration of Small’s British identity, which has been contaminated by the Orientals. Holmes uses his construction of the exotic Orient as the source of clues for solving the mystery. At the age of eighteen, Small had taken the Queen’s shilling and joined the army that was just starting for India. Shortly after he arrived in India, he went swimming in the Ganges River, the symbol of the Oriental culture. Immediately upon his encounter with the river, Small’s physical health is attacked: “A crocodile took me just as I was halfway across and nipped off my right leg as clean as a surgeon could have done it, just above the knee.”²⁹ The dangerous nature of the Orient thus makes its first mark on Small’s British identity. His body is crippled and weakened. Small has to carry with him a wooden leg, crafted in the Orient. As the story unfolds, the leg becomes the unique Oriental feature that leads Holmes to identify Small as the criminal in the mystery.

The cruelty of the Indian Mutiny is perceived as the dark force that has invaded Small’s Britishness, both physically and spiritually. When he is guarding the old fort of Agra, Small works together with two native Sikh troopers.³⁰ Through the imperialist

²⁹ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 145.

³⁰ A Sikh is a follower of Sikhism, a religion founded in the Punjab region of South Asia by Guru Nanak in the fifteenth century. Sikhs emphasize the importance of doing good actions

lenses of Small, “they [native Sikh soldiers] were tall, fierce-looking chaps [...]. They could talk English pretty well, but I could get little out of them. They preferred to stand together, and *jabber* all night in their *queer* Sikh lingo”³¹(italics mine). This is part of the important motif that, as Said points out, Orientals are alien, abnormal, and dangerous: “Western rationality is undermined by Eastern excesses, those mysteriously attractive opposites to what seem to be normal values.”³² The most threatening contamination comes when the two Sikhs betray Small and hold a knife at his throat to let in the merchant Achmet, a servant of a rich rajah who has entrusted him with a treasure box of precious diamonds and pearls. Then these two Sikhs together with a Muslim mutineer seduce Small to join them to form a gang of four. Driven by greed, they murder Achmet and loot his treasure box. At this point, Small’s British identity has been completely contaminated and eroded by the otherness of the Orientals. When he inscribes his name on the sign of the four at the bottom of the treasure box, he has deteriorated into one of the Oriental criminals who has blood on his hands, and he has gone through a moral degeneration.

In “The Sign of Four,” Small is not the only white English male who is detected by Holmes to have had his moral values corrupted by the Indian Mutiny and the Orientals. Captain Morstan and Major Sholto, the two British officers who fight in India, are also seduced by the fallen Small and his Sikh and Muslim gang members to

rather than merely carrying out rituals. They believe that the way to live a good life is to be honest and work hard, treat everyone equally, be generous to the less fortunate, serve others, and keep God in heart and mind at all times. There are five physical symbols of faith worn by Sikhs: uncut hair, a steel bracelet, a wooden comb, cotton underwear, and a steel sword.

³¹ Ibid, p. 147.

³² Said, *Orientalism*, p. 57.

share the loot of the Agra treasure. Major Sholto turns into a villain when he returns to England secretly and steals the treasure box for his sole possession. His betrayal of Small causes him to suffer from a paranoid fear of men with wooden legs: “On one occasion he actually fired his revolver at a wooden-legged man, who proved to be a harmless tradesman canvassing for orders.”³³ The fear of being avenged by “The Sign of Four” in India directly caused Sholto’s death. Upon seeing a shadow of Small’s face outside the window, Sholto yells in horror: “Keep him out! For Christ’s sake keep him out!”³⁴ He immediately dies on the spot. This is the moment when Sholto’s British identity is dismantled and devoured by the threatening forces of the Orient.

Captain Morstan dies in a similar way. He returns to London as a war veteran from India and goes straight to Sholto’s place to claim his share of the Agra treasure. During an argument, he “sprung out of his chair in a paroxysm of anger” and “fell backward, cutting his head against the corner of the treasure-chest.”³⁵ The cause and the position of his death are intertwined with the possession of the Oriental treasure box, which has been demonized into a Pandora’s box, full of an evil power able to dismantle British identity. The criminalization and moral degeneration of the British men caused by the treasure box thus further point out to the potential threat of the Orient to Western civilization. In addition, the Agra treasure symbolizes the old civilization of the Orient, the wealth and prosperity in its glorious past. That the

³³ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 102.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

treasure box turns out to be empty at the end of the story signifies the emptiness of the Orient in modern times.

In “The Crooked Man,” the distortion of British identity happens to two other war veterans who fought for the Victorian Empire during the Indian Mutiny. While in India, Colonel Barclay, “started as a full private, was raised to commissioned rank for his bravery at the time of the Mutiny, and so lived to command the regiment in which he had once carried a musket.”³⁶ However, upon his return to England from the Oriental battlefield, he dies a mysterious death in a locked room with a contorted face that expresses the most dreadful fear and horror. Holmes’s investigation of the case tracks down the evil past of the Colonel and reveals that he has betrayed Henry Wood, his rival in love, during the Mutiny. When the regiment is besieged in Bhurtee, Wood volunteers to go out and get help. In order to remove his rival for the love of Nancy, Barclay maliciously draws up a deadly route that sends Wood directly to the rebels instead of leading him through the rebel lines. Wood thus falls into the hands of the “Orientals” where he suffers repeated torture. He is severely deformed into a dreadful-looking creature with bent back and bent knees. He describes himself as “living and crawling with a stick like a chimpanzee.”³⁷ Like Small’s wooden leg, Wood’s deformed body becomes an identifying mark that he has received from the Orient and a key clue for Holmes in solving the mystery. Frightened to death by the appearance of Wood’s deformed figure, the Colonel is under the curse of the moral degeneration attributed to the Indian Mutiny.

³⁶ Doyle, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, vol. 1, p. 585.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 603.

This collective group of white British male military combatants, Watson, Small and Wood, return to England injured, traumatized, crippled, deformed or with moral deterioration after they have served the Victorian Empire by fighting wars in the Orient. Christopher Keep and Don Randall read these deformed figures as grotesque bodies in relation to Bakhtin's interpretation of the grotesque.³⁸ They point out the open, protruding, irregular and changing aspects of the grotesque body in contrast to the classical body with its symmetrical form. Yet it is less convincing for Keep and Randall to argue that Holmes is forced to abandon the traditional categories of analysis that assume a normative body. These grotesque bodies might have made Holmes question his typical classification of bodies; however, Holmes never abandons his imperial knowledge structure; he subjugates the grotesque to the normative system and eliminates the influences of the grotesque on the British Empire.

Holmes's rationality and detection attribute these disfiguring marks of identity to the irrational, inhumane, fallen, diseased, dangerous and chaotic nature of the Orient. In this Orientalizing discourse, the Orient has no voice to articulate itself, and it has to be articulated and detected by the West. Said observes that, "the West is the actor, the Orient a passive reactor. The West is the spectator, the judge and jury, of every facet of Oriental behavior."³⁹ British identity is perceived as facing serious threats during its military contact with the Orient, which contaminate both the physical and moral integrity of the soldiers. Holmes's successful detection of deformity in figure and in

³⁸ Christopher Keep and Don Randall, "Addiction, Empire, and Narrative in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of the Four*" in *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*. Vol. 32, No. 2 (Spring 1999), p. 215.

³⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 109.

character plays an important role in maintaining and reinforcing the superiority of the reasoning and truth of the Empire. It also provides a healing therapy, upon their return to England, for the trauma that war veterans experienced in the Oriental battlefield. War is the most direct confrontation that determines the power relationship between the Orient and the Occident. In many cases it is also the first step that the imperialists take to conquer the Orient in search of markets, resources, labor and colonies. Moreover, war is also the most obvious and threatening means of distorting and destroying an individual's identity. Therefore, the interface between the white male imperial combatants and the Oriental battlefield becomes a recurring motif that Conan Doyle explores from political, ontological and epistemological perspectives.

Training and Residing in the Orient

Military confrontation with the Orient is presented as a visible cause of contamination and deformation. Yet there are also invisible ways for the Orient to threaten the autonomy of British identity. In "The Adventure of the Speckled Band," Dr. Grimesby Roylott, Helen Stoner's stepfather, is the last survivor of one of the oldest Saxon families in England, the Roylotts of Stoke Moran. The tracing of Roylott's ancestral lineage at the beginning of the narrative immediately establishes the legitimacy, authenticity, and originality of the protagonist's British identity. This aristocratic family declines after a few generations due to the dissolute and wasteful dispositions of the inheritors. To seek a way out of poverty, Roylott decides to go to Calcutta, India, to take a medical degree. Roylott's self-dislocation to the Orient

corresponds with the capitalistic expansion of the nineteenth century British Empire, which aggressively sought markets, raw materials, and consumers to accelerate its industrial revolution. After Roylott completes his studies, he establishes a large medical practice in India “by his professional skill and his force of character.”⁴⁰ There is an aura of superiority constructed around his British identity, manifested by his professional capability and powerful personal traits. “In a fit of anger, however, caused by some robberies which had been perpetrated in the house, he [Roylott] beat his native butler to death, and narrowly escaped a capital sentence.”⁴¹ Roylott’s instinctive suspicion of his native butler for stealing, betrayal, and disloyalty reveals his epistemological stereotyping of Orientals. Said observes that one element preparing the way for modern Orientalist structures is the whole impulse to classify nature and “man” into types: “Orientals are inveterate liars, they are ‘lethargic and suspicious,’ and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race.”⁴² As a result, undesirable moral characteristics are attributed to the natives in India. They are considered to be untrustworthy and criminal by nature.

This criminal case causes Roylott to suffer a long term of imprisonment in India. His imprisonment symbolizes the potential threat that the Orient poses to the stability of British identity. Roylott’s transformation begins, and the consequence is that “afterwards [Roylott] returned to England a morose and disappointed man.”⁴³ Roylott’s medical training, professional practice, and prison life in the Orient have

⁴⁰ Doyle, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, p. 232.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Said, *Orientalism*, p. 39.

⁴³ Doyle, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, p. 232.

corrupted his British character and turned him into a vicious man who threatens law and order in British society. “Violence of temper approaching to mania has been hereditary in the men of the family, and in my stepfather’s case it had, I believe, been intensified by his long residence in the tropics.”⁴⁴ The Oriental tropics are blamed for stirring up and intensifying the genes of violence in Roylott. As a result, he deteriorates into the irrational and fallen savagery typical of the natives of the Orient. He has degenerated into a man of immense strength but absolutely uncontrollable anger. The superior reasoning and rational power imbedded in his British identity have been eroded, and thus he has become a source of disorder to normal Victorian values. “A series of disgraceful brawls took place, two of which ended in the police-court, until at last he [Roylott] became the terror of the village.”⁴⁵ Moreover, Roylott begins to live a life like that of the Orientals. His only friends are the wandering gypsies, uncivilized, and immoral outsiders excluded by the British Empire; “and he would give these vagabonds leave to encamp upon the few acres of bramble-covered land which represent the family estate, and would accept in return the hospitality of their tents, wandering away with them sometimes for weeks on end.”⁴⁶ Roylott has become Orientalized and has lost all the normal Victorian family values such as being responsible and staying at home to take care of loved ones. Lastly, “he has a passion also for India animals, which are sent over to him by a correspondent, and he has at this moment a cheetah and a baboon, which wander freely over his grounds, and are feared

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 234.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

by the villagers almost as much as their master.’⁴⁷ Raising, keeping, and living with frightening Oriental animals symbolically dehumanize Roylott into a dangerous and animal-like creature, who has lost all the essential identifying traits of modern Western civilization.

Poison and Disease from the Oriental Tropics

Helen Stoner’s description of her stepfather and the Orient in her narration of the family’s history and Roylott’s daily life is very powerful. She brings Holmes the mysterious case of her sister Julia’s death and the horror and fear she suffers in the house. Holmes interrupts the discourse and discovers the more subtle and dangerous Oriental elements that have dismantled the identity of Roylott. Logic and reasoning begin to play a key role in deciphering Roylott’s irrational and criminal murdering of his stepdaughters’ marriage and happiness. Holmes immediately relates the death of Julia to poison when Helen Stoner tells him that her sister has died in the locked room without any mark of violence upon her. To solve the mystery, Holmes comes to investigate the house and stays the night in Helen’s room. He successfully confirms his initial deduction and reveals the most vicious power of Oriental poison. “ ‘It is a swamp adder!’” cried Holmes—‘the deadliest snake in India.’ ”⁴⁸ The presence of the poisonous Indian snake signifies another threat that the Orient poses to Victorian culture and the British identity. The deadly phallic snake threatens and destroys

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 256-7.

innocent lives such as Julia's and Helen's. It not only devours the life of Roylott, but of the women upon whom the reproduction of Empire depends.

Holmes explains to Watson how his knowledge of Oriental poison gives him reasoning power and authority in solving the mystery: "The idea of a snake instantly occurred to me, and when I coupled it with my knowledge that the Doctor was furnished with a supply of creatures from India, I felt that I was probably on the right track."⁴⁹ Holmes thus legitimately attributes poison to the Orient: "The idea of using a form of poison which could not possibly be discovered by any chemical test was just such a one as would occur to a clever and ruthless man who had had an Eastern training."⁵⁰ Oriental poison, an invisible deadly threat, difficult for science to detect, becomes a serious source of anxiety to the Empire during its encounter with the Orient.

Poison is a recurring motif that Conan Doyle uses to stereotype and demonize Orientals. In "The Sign of Four," Bartholomew Sholto is murdered with no mark of violence except the long dark thorn stuck in the skin just above the ear. Holmes's knowledge and reasoning power again lead him to the deduction that the thorn is poisoned, and more importantly, it cannot be an English/Western thorn. His rationalization thus allows only one explanation — that the deadly poison is from the Orient; only the Orientals are prone to use powerful vegetable alkaloid to threaten the existence of the British race. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Jefferson Hope also uses the poison alkaloid to take revenge on two of his enemies. Although the poison is extracted from South American arrow poison, this indirectly demonstrates that the poison can only

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 258.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

come from colonized places peripheral to the British Empire, just like the Orient. Thus poison becomes a metaphor for the physical, moral, and cultural contamination that Britain fears as its Empire brings it into closer contact with peoples and cultures under its colonization.

In “The Adventure of the Dying Detective,” Oriental poison and disease are connected and combined by Conan Doyle to construct a sense of the contagion with which the Orient threatens the West. Holmes, the detective, appears to be dying from fever, with a gaunt and wasted face. He diagnoses himself to be suffering from a coolie disease from Sumatra: “It is infallibly deadly, and it is horribly contagious.”⁵¹ Then Holmes starts to lecture Watson on other Oriental diseases such as Tapanuli fever and the “black Formosa corruption.” He contends that, “There are many problems of disease, many strange pathological possibilities, in the East, Watson.”⁵² Many of these diseases, according to Holmes’s recent research, have “a medico-criminal aspect.”⁵³ Therefore, the Oriental disease causes not only physical and psychological deficiencies but also character corruption and moral degeneration, the root of criminal behaviors. For a nineteenth century author, “disease” would be categorized as a moral issue. The contagious and diseased Orient is a signifier for moral decay, contamination and alienation.

Holmes arranges for Culverton Smith to perform on the stage in order to reveal the truth of the mystery. The detective uses Smith to demonstrate that Oriental disease

⁵¹ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 933.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 934.

⁵³ *Ibid*.

leads to the collapse of the moral values of Victorian culture. Smith is a well-known resident of Sumatra who has returned to London, similarly to Royslott in “The Adventure of the Speckled Band”. An outbreak of disease upon his plantation in Sumatra leads him to study Oriental contagion. Upon his return, he becomes an expert on Eastern diseases. To confuse Smith’s judgment, Holmes claims that he has contracted an Eastern disease by “working among the Chinese sailors down in the docks.”⁵⁴ The contagious effects of the Oriental disease are thus intensified as it has already invaded and contaminated London through the migration of Oriental natives. The talented acting of Holmes and his knowledge about Oriental disease successfully deceives Smith and entices him to confess the crime that he has committed. The mystery revealed is that Smith has poisoned his nephew Victor Savage and made it appear that he has contracted “an out-of-the-way Asiatic disease in the heart of London”.⁵⁵ Smith intends to murder Holmes in the same way by sending him a poisonous Oriental ivory box. However, Holmes’s knowledge of Oriental poison and diseases enables him to outwit Smith and trap him into revealing his own murderous acts.

Smith, like Royslott, has resided in the Oriental tropics for a long time and experienced moral deterioration after being contaminated by the Orient. The co-application and juxtaposition of Asiatic poison and disease make the dark Oriental threat more dangerous and more contagious. Tropical disease is no longer confined to the Orient geographically. It has already become part of London and can be spread by

⁵⁴ Doyle, p. 937.

⁵⁵ Doyle, p. 939.

Oriental visitors and settlers. Smith's destructive return to England illustrates the instability of British identity when confronted by contamination from the Orient. It reflects the Victorian Empire's anxiety about the potential deterioration of the British race, using the metaphor of Oriental diseases that bring contagion and disaster to the metropole. The Oriental threat exists more in the imagination of the imperialists than in reality, perpetrating its harm either through direct confrontation in war or through training or living in the Orient. It is perceived to be an uncontrollable force invading, penetrating and displacing the Victorian value system.

The Uncanny Face of the Orient

In addition to white British males returning to England injured, crippled, deformed, mad, evil and murderous, Oriental visitors to England become the source of another serious anxiety felt by the Empire. In the eyes of the Victorians, these "uncanny" faces from the Orient, bring with them evil practices and contagious diseases that threaten the existence of the British race. Sigmund Freud calls "the uncanny" "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar."⁵⁶ Edward Said argues, "For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (The Orient, the East, 'them')."⁵⁷ The hierarchical

⁵⁶ Freud, "The Uncanny" in *Standard Edition*, trans. James Strachey, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), p. 220.

⁵⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 43.

binary distinction between the familiar and the strange forms a dehumanizing and criminalizing force in the Empire's reading of the Oriental visitors.

In "The Sign of Four," Tonga, the little Andaman Islander, stands out as a prime example of the uncanny face feared and demonized by the Empire. At the beginning of his investigation, Holmes studies the footprints of two suspects who have the motivation to murder Bartholomew Sholto. One set identified by Holmes belongs to Jonathan Small, the wooden-legged man. The other set is described as "round-well-defined muddy discs," not considered human footmarks.⁵⁸ This strange set of animal-like prints immediately draws Holmes to deduce that this creature comes from the Orient. This savage, according to Holmes, has "diminutive footmarks, toes never fettered by boots, naked feet, stone-headed wooden mace, great agility, small poisoned darts."⁵⁹ The physical, mental, and moral features of otherness are interpreted by Holmes as inherent and unique to the aborigines of the Andaman Islands, located 340 miles to the north of Sumatra, in the Bay of Bengal. First published in London in 1890, *The Criminal* by Havelock Ellis claims that, "criminals present a far larger proportion of anatomical abnormalities than the ordinary European population."⁶⁰ Therefore Tonga cannot escape from the fate of being treated and colonized as a criminal, on the basis of his being a foreigner with abnormal physical characteristics.

The gazetteer Holmes relies on for his investigation establishes a more institutionalized statement of Victorian society's view of the uncanny faces of the

⁵⁸ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 110.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 127.

⁶⁰ Havelock Ellis, *The Criminal*, reprinted on the 1914 edition, (Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1973), p. 258.

Orient. It gives an authoritative account of the physiological and moral characteristics of the native Andaman islanders:

They are *naturally* hideous, having large, misshapen heads, small fierce eyes, and distorted features. Their feet and hands, however, are remarkably small. So intractable and fierce 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* feast⁶¹ (italics mine).

The bodily, moral, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of each individual aboriginal islander are collectively transformed from “mere spectacle to the precise measurement of characteristic elements.”⁶² During the Victorian period, there was a strong tendency to dramatize general features of the Empire’s outsiders and to reduce a vast variety of objects into types with orderable and describable features. In the government gazette, all the native islanders are generalized into one type: distorted, exotic, hideous, poisonous and cannibalistic. They act, speak and think in a manner totally opposite from the way that Europeans act, think, and speak. The evidence cited is that the aboriginals refused the efforts of British officials to subjugate them for the

⁶¹ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 128.

⁶² Said, *Orientalism*, p. 119.

service of the Empire. The Empire thus is entitled to demonize these Orientals as savages who refuse to adopt the practices of Western modernity and civilization.

Tonga, the symbol of all Oriental aboriginals, has no voice throughout the discourse. His identity is first narrated by Holmes, and then by Jonathan Small, who brings Tonga to London to exact revenge on Major Sholto. Even though Tonga once saved Small's life in the Orient, Tonga still becomes an object for exhibition and display by Small in London. Small reconstructs the scene for Holmes: "We earned a living at this time by exhibiting poor Tonga at fairs and other such places as the black cannibal. He would eat raw meat and dance his war-dance: so we always had a hatful of pennies after a day's work."⁶³ This exhibition of Tonga as the black cannibal dehumanizes him, placing him into the same category as an animal, with no intelligence or rationality. This scene resonates with the exhibition of the Indian mongoose in "The Crooked Man." Wood makes a living in London by having the Oriental mongoose perform around the canteens after nightfall. There is no distinction between Tonga and the mongoose in this respect. They are merely showpieces and objects of laughter for Victorian spectators.

In addition to his dehumanization of Tonga as an object of exhibition, Small also uses him as a scapegoat and accuses him of murdering Bartholomew Sholto. Small is the mastermind in the theft of the treasure box from Sholto. He brings Tonga out with a long rope wound around his waist and sends him to climb down like a cat through the trapdoor in the roof. There is no description of the scene inside the room, but Small

⁶³ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 156.

claims that Tonga killed Sholto with his poisoned thorns after they got the treasure box. Small insists on his innocence in the death of Sholto and attributes the crime to the cannibalistic and murderous nature of Tonga. Although he himself is a fallen Englishman who plans revenge, Small, the white British male, cannot be the one responsible for the murder. It must be Tonga, the Oriental aboriginal, who carries out the killing of a white British man.

Tonga's fate is racially and culturally predestined, and he must be eliminated because his existence threatens the survival of the British race. Holmes and Watson simultaneously shoot Tonga to death. Both of them are undertaking the role of watchdogs and executioners for the Empire. The place where Tonga dies is highly symbolic. Watson recalls, "As we steamed slowly upstream again, we flashed our searchlight in every direction, but there was no sign of the Islander. Somewhere in the dark ooze at the bottom of the Thames lie the bones of that *strange visitor* to our shores" (italics mine).⁶⁴ Tonga, the strange visitor, is an uncanny other who lives on the margins of the Empire and now below its surface. The poisonous thorns and darts he uses are perceived as the manifestation of his hideous and cannibalistic nature. This racial distinction is highly hierarchical and problematic. Despite the fact that Tonga's actions are similar to those of the deformed and dangerous white British men who have been corrupted by the Orient, Conan Doyle, through Holmes, shows sympathy and compassion for these white British men of physical and moral deterioration, but mercilessly eliminates Tonga without giving him any trial or justice. The killing of

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 139.

Tonga is told in a way that seems as natural as killing a dangerous wild animal that is alien to modern Western civilization.

China in the Orient and Opium Smoking

In the eyes of Victorian imperialists, China, along with Afghanistan, India, Sumatra, and the Andaman Islands, belonged to the collective modern geographical identity of the Orient. It shared all the generalized Asiatic characteristics that Europe attributed distinctively to Orientals. Yet China also possessed stereotypical characteristics unique to the specific geographical area that it occupies on the vast map of the Orient. In the popular imagination of nineteenth-century England, China and opium were inexorably linked and dramatized economically, politically, racially, and culturally. China became the classic example of the decadent, stagnant East against which the modern, active West was contrasted, and the image of the Chinaman is not complete without his opium pipe.⁶⁵ Opium was part of the danger associated with the Orient, especially China. It was a threat to the British men who traveled there, and the possibility of its spread to England and the appearance of the opium den in its capital metropolis, London, caused serious anxiety to the Victorian Empire.

The opium den is a place for people to come to buy and smoke opium. Although the dens could be well-appointed places for a respectable clientele to socialize, most were not, and the bad reputation of opium smoking was connected in part to the bad

⁶⁵ Baumlér, *Modern China and Opium: A Reader*, p. 28.

reputation of the opium dens where it was consumed.⁶⁶ In “The Man with the Twisted Lip,” Watson vividly describes the dark and dirty scene inside the opium den: “through the gloom one could dimly catch a glimpse of bodies lying in strange fantastic poses, bowed shoulders, bent knees, heads thrown back, and chins pointing upwards, with here and there a dark, lack-lustre eye turned upon the newcomer.”⁶⁷ The deformed figures, the lack of energy and self-control as a result of opium smoking transform the opium den into an evil place that has damaged the health of Victorian society. Holmes condemns the negative effects that the opium den has on London: “We should be rich men if we had a thousand pounds for every poor devil who has been done to death in that den. It is the vilest murder-trap on the whole riverside [...]”⁶⁸ Thus, the opium den is associated with the evil, crime, and murder that threaten the superiority of British identity.

In *Opium and the People*, scholar Virginia Berridge emphasizes that, “the ‘menace’ of opium smoking lay not just in its effect on Chinese smokers in East London, but in the possibility of contamination of English people by such practices.”⁶⁹ In “The Man with the Twisted Lip,” the fear of contamination through opium smoking extends into a belief that opium smoking is spreading among white middle-class British men. The establishment of such a practice is perceived to be a symptom of racial degeneracy. Conan Doyle uses Isa Whitney as a typical example to illustrate the harm and pollution that opium smoking does to the physical health and moral values of the

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 99.

⁶⁷ Doyle, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, p. 163.

⁶⁸ Doyle, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, p. 168.

⁶⁹ Berridge, *Opium and the People*, p. 199.

British race. The story starts with the late night visit by Whitney's wife Kate to Watson and his wife. Kate informs Watson that her husband Isa Whitney has not been home for two days, and she is sure that he has made use of an opium den in East London. Watson immediately imagines that Whitney is lying in the den, "doubtless among the dregs of the docks, breathing in the poison or sleeping off the effects."⁷⁰

Watson promises Kate to bring her husband home from the opium den; he is Whitney's medical adviser, and as such he has influence over him. Watson recalls that Whitney is seen in the den "with yellow, pasty face, drooping lids and pin-point pupils, all huddled in a chair, the wreck and ruin of a noble man."⁷¹ The color yellow belongs to the modern category of racial terms that relate to the unhealthy and evil Chinaman in the Orient. Whitney's yellow face implies that his Englishness has begun to be eroded by his prolonged contact with the Chinese. Similar descriptions of the contagious racial effects of opium can be found in many other middle and late Victorian writers. In *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), Charles Dickens opens the first chapter with a scene of fallen womanhood in the opium den; Princess Puffer "has opium-smoked herself into a strange likeness of the Chinaman. His form of cheek, eye, and temple, and his colour, are repeated in her."⁷²

Dickens started the tradition of depicting the opium den as a haunt of evil, portraying the degrading and demonizing effects that opium has on women, a marginalized group in Victorian society. In the popular imagination, it was not difficult

⁷⁰ Doyle, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, p. 161.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 159.

⁷² Dickens, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, p. 5.

for a Chinaman to seduce and enslave white women, who were among the first group of people in Victorian writing to be depicted as vulnerable and addicted to opium smoking. Women were perceived as emotional beings without strong wills, inferior to men in reasoning power. Dickens' description of the appearance of the fallen opium-smoking British woman was similar to depictions of Chinese opium smokers, who were dirty, unhygienic, and physically and morally inferior. Such similarities reduce her to the same status as an object colonized by the Empire.

The gender dimension in opium smoking constituted another source of serious anxiety for the Empire. Central to the family, the Victorian woman was perceived as passive in the home and in the private realm, dependent and submissive to men. As "the Angel in the House," her primary role was that of wife and mother.⁷³ In *Imperial White: Race, Diaspora, and the British Empire*, scholar Radhika Mohanram gives a critical analysis of the desire to confine women to the private sphere:

The confining of women within an ascriptive domestic space is a confining of the formation and specificity of the middle class and whiteness, of class and race. It is an attempt to construct space that is free of the incursions of history. For only in so doing can the *naturalizing* of gender, race, and class constructions occur. Gender thus becomes a metaphor for class or for race, domestic ideology is a substitute signifier

⁷³ Coventry Patmore, "The Angel in the House," in *Poems* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1906).

of white hegemony, of middle-class dominance; it becomes the code for rereading the underpinning of British imperialism.⁷⁴

In this process of gender construction, how to control women's sexuality was a matter of tremendous concern for the Empire because of women's role as the reproducer of the ethnic/racial group. The physical and possible sexual contacts of white women with Chinamen in the opium den thus became the source of serious anxiety, for such contacts could dilute the purity of the British race. "At the very moment the British woman played the role of the essential and constitutive of Britishness, she undermined it by showing her potential/ability to contaminate it."⁷⁵

In "The Man with the Twisted Lip," Conan Doyle shifts the gender of opium addicts from white women to white middle-class Englishmen, stirring up horror and serious anxiety that the diseased and infectious "Chineseness" is eating away the very identity of the British people. Apart from his physiological degeneracy, Isa Whitney is shown abandoning his responsibilities to his wife and family by not returning home for two days as a result of opium smoking. Obviously, he has also abandoned his work ethic by ignoring his job and thus not producing any wealth for society. More seriously, he has lost the reasoning and power of judgment that define the essence of a Victorian man. Therefore Dr. Watson laments that Whitney has deteriorated from a noble man to a wrecked and ruined man; in other words, his superior British identity has been destroyed. Around the same time as Conan Doyle, Oscar Wilde presents a

⁷⁴ Mohanram, *Imperial White*, p. 35.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 34.

similar motif of a middle-class Englishman ruined by opium smoking in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Dorian Gray, a man with many vicious crimes to his name, including murder, lives a second and secret life in which he frequently passes through the opium dens in East End London.⁷⁶ By the end of the nineteenth century, the link between opium smoking and “Chineseness” had produced the horror of the yellow peril, which can enter the Englishman’s body, permanently altering his British genes and destroying his British identity.

Opium Smoking as a Moral Disease

In “The Man with the Twisted Lip,” Dr. Watson’s narration of how Isa Whitney becomes addicted to opium gives us a glimpse of the complications of opium use in Britain. Watson first establishes Whitney’s middle-class family background and social status. Whitney is introduced as the brother of the late Elias Whitney, D.D., Principle of the Theological College of St. George’s. The prominent and sacred position of the brother gives readers good reasons to conclude that Whitney is well educated with good and noble virtues. Then Watson explains Whitney’s opium addiction: “The habit grew upon him, as I understand, from some foolish freak when he was at college, for having read De Quincey’s description of his dreams and sensations, he had drenched his tobacco with laudanum in an attempt to produce the same effect.”⁷⁷ The reference to Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859) evokes the attitude that people in Britain held in the early days of opium smoking. First published in 1821, De Quincey’s *Confessions of an*

⁷⁶ Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, chapters 15 and 16.

⁷⁷ Doyle, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, p. 159.

English Opium Eater reflects, and at the same time shapes, the attitude towards opium in the first half of the nineteenth century. It defends the practice of opium eating and drinking both as a painkiller and a stimulant. De Quincey not only cites medical evidence to support his defense, he also celebrates opium's power as a spiritual restorative. He argues that, unlike wine, which is an agent of disorder, opium restores mental order, legislation, and harmony. Wine brings out man's baser, animal instincts, but opium enhances the divine part of human nature.⁷⁸

The innocent pleasure and spiritual stimulation in De Quincey's *Confessions* echo the fantasy world that Samuel Taylor Coleridge depicts in his poem "Kubla Khan" (1816), composed, he claims, under the influence of an opium dream. Before the mid-nineteenth century, opium, in a variety of forms, was sold legally. As well as laudanum (opium mixed with distilled water and alcohol), opium pills, lozenges and powders were cheaply available.⁷⁹ The drug was applied at all levels of society as a painkiller and sedative in much the same way as aspirin is sold over the counter today. Besides its popular medical uses, opium was also used recreationally as a stimulant, mostly among literary writers, the Bohemian community, and people in the middle and upper class.

The Oriental dimension of opium smoking and its link with the Chinese in particular did not become well established until around the mid-nineteenth century. Britain had just fought and won two Opium Wars against China, in 1839-42 and 1856-

⁷⁸ Julian North, "The Opium-eater as Criminal in Victorian Writing" in *Writing and Victorianism*, ed. J. B. Bullen, (London and New York: Longman, 1997), p. 126.

⁷⁹ Berridge, *Opium and the People*, p. 24.

58, respectively. These wars, a development of commercial imperialism, were an attempt to force China to open treaty ports and to enable the British to import opium to China without restraint. The British East India Company maintained a virtual monopoly on cultivating opium in India and selling it in China with lucrative profits in return. The Company's guiding policy was "to acquire the maximum of revenue by the exportation of the opium [to China]."⁸⁰ Statistics show that the duties from exporting opium made up about fifteen percent of the Company's total revenues. The consequence for China, as observed by Keith McMahon, was that Chinese peasants and workers were smoking opium on a massive scale by the 1870s.⁸¹ According to an official British report, the estimated number of opium smokers in China around that time was three to four million; "The distribution of smokers was uneven, being relatively high in big cities along the coast and low to nonexistent in the hinterland, which made up most of China."⁸²

It was around this time that the image of the Chinaman with an opium pipe began to circulate widely in British society. The succeeding heated discussions about the moral right and wrong of opium use re-involved and recalibrated medical ideology about drug addiction. At the same time, the anti-opium movement gained momentum and supporters in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. It questioned Britain's trading policy of forcing opium on China and the immorality of such a practice; it also publicized the harmful physical and mental effects that opium had on the Chinese

⁸⁰ E. S. Turner, *British Opium Policy and its Results to India and China* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington), p. 57.

⁸¹ McMahon, *The Fall of the God of Money*, p. 39.

⁸² Janin, *The India-China Opium Trade in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 52.

smokers. However, more importantly, it was concerned with the undesirable commercial prospects in the long run. “The poor Chinese were unwilling to buy British manufactured goods because of the odium associated with Britain’s involvement in the opium trade—or unable to do so because of the poverty to which smoking the drug had reduced them.”⁸³ Although economic self-interest was one important motivation in pushing forward anti-opium propaganda, opium was no longer seen as an innocent painkiller and tranquillizer or an innocent way to stimulate pleasure.

The anti-opium debate created a climate of opinion that began to relate destructive and harmful Oriental opium use with the domestic English experience. New medical ideology started to explain opium addiction through theories of disease and moral vice, which belonged to the modern category of Victorian creations. Opium use did not simply cause physical deterioration but was also a symptom of disease and of lapsed moral sense. This view of disease was part of late Victorian political construction, supporting the moral condemnation of opium on the basis of scientific medical elaborations. A group of notable doctors throughout Western Europe, such as Dr. Norman Kerr, participated in the project of re-defining opium smoking as a disease in modern medical practice. Disease was constructed as deviation from the normal, and opium addiction fell conveniently into that category. Naturally, opium smokers were perceived as suffering from paralyzed control and disease of the will. As Berridge points out, “The moral weakness of the patient was an important element in causation;

⁸³ Berridge, *Opium and the People*, pp. 178-9.

the disease was defined in terms of ‘moral bankruptcy’, ‘a form of moral insanity’, terms deriving from similar formulations in insanity.’⁸⁴

In “The Man with the Twisted Lip,” Dr. Watson presents the moral weakness and loss of self-control as the root cause of Isa Whitney’s opium addiction. “For many years he [Whitney] continued to be a slave to the drug, an object of mingled horror and pity to his friends and relatives.”⁸⁵ The social and economic aspects of opium use are arbitrarily excluded as causes, and personal moral defect is favored as an explanation for this contagious disease. Along with Oriental opium smoking, other narcotics like morphine and cocaine went through similar ideological shifts in the late nineteenth century. Besides studying their harmful effects on the body, medical professionals raised questions about possible internal pathological changes they might cause. Although the link of morphine and cocaine with the Orient was not as strong as was that of opium, they were also considered contaminating forces that could potentially invade the British identity. In “The Sign of Four,” Holmes’s addiction to these drugs is presented in an interesting dialogue between Watson and him. Perceiving it as a means of innocent mental stimulation when there are no intricate problems to solve, Holmes tells Watson that injecting cocaine is “transcendently stimulating and clarifying to the mind,” and he abhors “the dull routine of existence,” and craves “mental exaltation.”⁸⁶ Watson as a doctor disagrees and shows his medical concern about Holmes’s drug addition: “Your brain may, as you say, be roused and excited, but it is a pathological

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 155.

⁸⁵ Doyle, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, p. 159.

⁸⁶ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, pp. 89-90.

and morbid process which involves increased tissue-change and may at least leave a permanent weakness.”⁸⁷ Conan Doyle constructs a kind of paradoxical relationship in this argument, which brings the discussion of drug abuse to its climax: the depiction of Holmes’s drug addiction is employed as a narrative strategy to endorse the excellence and superiority of his mind and reasoning power; yet simultaneously, Watson’s objection qualifies Holmes’s practice, and functions to continue the theme of how drug addiction poses a potentially contaminating threat to British identity, even to that of Holmes, who possesses extraordinary deductive ability and uses relatively innocent drugs such as morphine and cocaine.

Opium Den and Anxiety About the Chinese

The establishment of the link between opium smoking and disease soon drew the attention of the Victorians to opium dens in the East End of London. The den as a place of Oriental evil and the vicious and cunning Chinaman wreathed in opium fumes became repeated public images in the popular imagination. The East End Chinese, like their counterparts in the Orient, had transformed opium dens into homes of ruinous indulgence. Opium smoking was also blamed for the lack of enthusiasm for Christianity among the Chinese in London. In 1877, one missionary correspondent complained that, “The dirt, smoke, repulsive characters and sometimes the semblance of religion assumed to cover fraud and abominable sin, make the heart sick and the head ache; I often feel how difficult it is to launch the life-boat in such a dangerous

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 89.

sea.”⁸⁸ The association of the Orient and the image of the dangerous Chinaman and his opium pipe became gradually solidified towards the end of nineteenth century and became a powerful stereotype for many decades to come.

The menace of opium dens did not just lie in their ill effects on Chinese smokers in East London, but in the possibility of contamination of British identity by such practices. In *Pleasures and Pains: Opium and the Orient in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Barry Milligan observes that the physical consumption of opium comes to represent the consumption of Oriental products and culture, and that both kinds of consumption threaten to dissolve and destabilize British identity. He further points out that this anxiety about bilateral cultural exchange is inextricable from matters relating to the British territorial expansion and the very definition of “Britishness.”⁸⁹ In *Opium and the People: Opiate Use and Drug Control Policy in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England*, Virginia Berridge similarly concludes that, “The fear of pollution through opium smoking extended into a belief that opium smoking was spreading among the white middle-class population. The establishment of such a practice was thought to be an illustration of racial degeneracy.”⁹⁰ This reading contributes to our understanding of why Conan Doyle created the character of Isa Whitney, the white middle-class Englishman, as the primary victim of opium dens, contaminated by the evil Chinaman from the Orient. This popular imagining of racial contagion, however, coexisted with, and was deeply rooted in, the anxiety of the

⁸⁸ “Opium Smoking in London” in *Friend of China*, 3 (1877), pp. 19-20.

⁸⁹ Milligan, *Pleasures and Pains*, p. 15.

⁹⁰ Berridge, *Opium and the People*, p. 199.

Empire about the growing Chinese community in London who competed with Englishmen for job opportunities and about China's moving toward reform and revolution at the turn of the twentieth century.

The number of Chinese immigrants in London increased quite rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century. According to statistics in *Opium and the People*, in 1861, there were an estimated 147 Chinese in the whole country, by 1881, 665. In 1891, 302 Chinese-born aliens out of a total of 582 were resident in London. Most of them lived in the East End, in the two boroughs named Stepney and Poplar. The condemnation and Orientalization of opium dens in Britain corresponded with the increase of Chinese immigration to the country. To some extent, opium smoking was used as an excuse and a scapegoat by the Victorians to suppress their racial anxiety about the growing Chinese aliens. Moreover, this racial paranoia also came from Britain's growing concern about China's plan to modernize and to strengthen its global presence. After suffering repeated defeats by the imperial powers, China started to import science and democracy from the West and push forward reforms in all sections of society.

Last but not least, the Boxer uprisings in 1900 killed hundreds of British officials in China; this seriously shook Britain's confidence in its colonial control in China. The slogan of the Boxer rebels was "Preserve the Dynasty; destroy the foreigners," a fierce defense of China's native cultural traditions against Western economic and religious

interference.⁹¹ In 1911, the Manchu dynasty was put to an end, and Dr. Sun Yat-sen founded the Republic of China in the following year. China's strong resistance and its steps towards modernization started to dismantle the image of a stagnant China in the British imagination and caused increasing anxiety in the Empire. Racial paranoia about the Chinese intensified and the fear of the Yellow Peril haunted the dreams of Victorians. *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu* series created by Sax Rohmer (1883-1959) in 1913 grasped and exaggerated the racial tensions and anxieties of the time, and as a result, further shaped and strengthened Britain's Oriental reading of China as being premodern, barbaric, and anti-Western. Dr. Fu-Manchu, an evil Chinese mastermind who has infiltrated modern London, plans to take over the Western world and establish a Yellow Empire.⁹² The Oriental villainy in the Chinaman is imagined as an evil power that invades and pollutes the modern Western world.

Ambiguity and Textual Tension in Conan Doyle's Orientalist Discourse

Abstract space permeates the discourse of Orientalism that can only be grasped by a thought that, according to Henri Lefebvre, "is prepared to *separate* logic from the dialectic, to *reduce* contradictions to a false coherence, and to *confuse* the residua of that reduction."⁹³ However, this homogeneous space cannot prevent signifying elements from breaking in, which create meaning beyond the control of the author.

⁹¹ Urmila Seshagiri, "Modernity's (Yellow) Perils: Dr. Fu-Manchu and English Race Paranoia" in *Cultural Critique*, no. 62 (Winter, 2006), p. 169.

⁹² Ibid, p. 164.

⁹³ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p. 307.

Although Conan Doyle degrades and demonizes the Orient into a place of chaos, danger, disease, poison, and addictive opium smoking, he fails to quarantine the Oriental elements in the asylum of madness and prevent them from participating in the intertextual dialogue. The Oriental contamination of British identity and the criminalized Oriental bodies contribute exotic and intriguing source material for the detection of Sherlock Holmes. The appearance of uncanny faces from the Orient and the deformed British bodies from the Oriental battlefields become conveniently criminalized in the Sherlock Holmes stories, whose mission is to separate the criminal other from the “normal” community. Michel Foucault observes that, “Throughout the whole second half of the century there developed a ‘literature of criminality’ [...]. The collective fear of crime, the obsession with this danger which seems to be an inseparable part of the society itself, are thus perpetually inscribed in each individual consciousness.”⁹⁴ The instability and tension between the East and the West create a collective fear, which shapes and facilitates the flourishing of Victorian crime writing that Orientalizes the foreign other. Dialectically, the Orientalist discourse in detective stories further creates and stereotypes the Orient that exists mainly in the British popular imagination.

Apart from constructing crimes in the Sherlock Holmes stories, different layers of Oriental elements penetrate the text in various ways, whether or not Conan Doyle was conscious of them at the time of his writing. They create tensions in the structuring of

⁹⁴ Foucault, “About the Concept of the ‘Dangerous Individual’ in 19th-Century Legal Psychiatry” in *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, trans. Alain Baudot and Jane Couchman, 1(1978), p. 12.

Orientalism, undermine the autonomy of the discourse and expand the space of meaning for the readers. In “The Sign of Four,” the apartment of Englishmen Thaddeus Sholto is furnished and decorated in an “Oriental style”: “The richest and glossiest of curtains and tapestries draped the walls, looped back here and there to expose some richly mounted painting or Oriental vase.”⁹⁵ These art objects from the Orient seem to have been naturalized and glorified when they decorate a British home. Even though they are placed in the passive position of being gazed upon, they actively participate in creating an atmosphere of Oriental cultural tastes and aesthetics. Thus they have become a domesticating force that shapes the essence of British identity in an ironic way. For the carpet used in the apartment, Dr. Watson writes, “Two great tiger-skins thrown athwart it increased the suggestion of Eastern luxury, as did a huge hookah which stood upon a mat in the corner.”⁹⁶ We can read “Eastern luxury” as a suggestion of decadence, yet it plays the golden time of the Orient against the Victorian construction of Oriental backwardness.

In “The Sign of the Four,” another textual tension is introduced by the Oriental loyalty, which shines through the dark depiction of the Indian Mutiny and the Andaman Islands. Abdullah Khan, Dost Akbar and Mahomet Singh, two Sikhs and one Muslim, are the three South Asians who, together with Englishman Jonathan Small, sign the oath to guard the Agra Treasure. They swear that they shall stand by each other and be true to the secret, and each shall always act for all. Throughout all the hardship and

⁹⁵ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 100.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

imprisonment, these indigenes stay loyal to the oath and show great courage and nobility in acting for each other. Similarly, despite his being depicted as a monster, Tonga, the aboriginal from the Andaman Islands, shows gratitude for Small's rescue of his life and demonstrates tremendous loyalty in helping Small to escape and carry out his revenge plan in London. Even the government gazetteer admits, "They are a fierce, morose, and intractable people, though capable of forming most devoted friendship when their confidence has once been gained."⁹⁷ These favorable characteristics are imbedded in the Orientalist discourse, and they form a counter current that disturbs the univocality of Conan Doyle's construction of Oriental natives and their uncivilized, dangerous, and menacing traits.

Finally, in "The Man with the Twisted Lip," as Isa Whitney is being victimized and ruined by the opium den, there is another white middle-class Englishman who makes a good living through residing in the opium den. Neville St. Clair, who used to work as a reporter on an evening paper in London, decides to quit his job and disguise himself as a beggar with a twisted lip after he finds out that he can make more money that way. He rents a room in the opium den and makes it into his dressing room, "where I could every morning emerge as a squalid beggar, and in the evening transform myself into a well-dressed man about town."⁹⁸ This double identity that St. Clair assumes in the opium den allows the reader to relate it intertextually to Whitney's racial degeneracy caused by the evil of Oriental opium smoking. St. Clair's employment of the den as part of his money-generating practice, to some extent, plays an ambiguous

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 128.

⁹⁸ Doyle, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, p. 192.

role in Conan Doyle's construction of the Orientalist discourse. It also serves as a sharp criticism of the economy. If one can make more money begging than being a journalist, something is wrong with Victorian society. Furthermore, Sherlock Holmes's disguise of himself as an opium smoker in the den in order to solve the mystery further contributes to the motif of double identity, which partially dismantles the reading of the opium den as a vicious place that threatens the superiority of the British race. These narrative traces can be read as forms of cultural-blending, in which the Oriental elements introduced into the Victorian culture have become part of that culture. The imaginary of rigidly divided cultures gives way to a new, double subjectivity, combining apparent antinomies in the same person.

Chapter Three

Translating Modernity Through Detective Fiction

Symbolic power – as a power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself, an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic), by virtue of the specific effect of mobilization – is a power that can be exercised only if it is *recognized*, that is, misrecognized as arbitrary.

— Pierre Bourdieu¹

When Conan Doyle and his Sherlock Holmes detective series were first introduced to China in 1896, China already had a long history of literary writing on crime, punishment and justice. The earliest writing about crime detection can be traced back to a story titled “Tai Jia” 太甲, which appeared in *Shangshu* 尚书 (Book of documents), a historical classic compiled during the Spring and Autumn Period 春秋时期 (771-476 BC).² Tai Jia was the fourth ruler of Shang 商 (1600-1046 BC), the second dynasty in Chinese history. In this short story, Tai Jia commits crimes against

¹ Bourdieu, “On Symbolic Power” in *Language and Symbolic Power*, p. 170.

² Ren Xiang, *Wenxue de Lingyidao Fengjingxian*, p. 6.

his people by violating the rule of law and disobeying the code of ethics. Yi Yin 伊尹, the prime minister of Shang, functions as a judge detective to investigate these crimes and eventually punishes Tai Jia by removing him from his position and sending him into exile for three years. After the appearance of this story, crime case writing took various forms in different periods of history; for example, during the rule of Kingdoms Wei 魏 (220-265) and Jin 晋 (265-420), it became intimately associated with *zhiguai xiaoshuo* 志怪小说 (supernatural stories). After over a millennium of development, crime writing gradually separated itself from history and other literary categories. It was not until the middle of the Northern Song Dynasty 北宋 (960-1127) that it became an independent genre in Chinese literature.

The dominant form of the genre was called *gong-an* or “court-case” stories; its flourishing around the eleventh century closely corresponded to new political, economic, and cultural developments of the Song Dynasty. Deeply concerned that military officials had too much power to be effectively controlled by the central government, Zhao Kuangyin 赵匡胤 (927-976), the first emperor of Song, adopted the policy “Zhongwen qingwu” 重文轻武 (emphasize civil administration and belittle the military) and established a vast autocratic bureaucratic system employing scholar-officials. Consequently, a large number of able scholars were needed to fulfill administrative duties throughout the empire. Seeing the disadvantages of selecting candidates on a small scale, Zhao reformed the *keju* 科举 (civil service examination)

and expanded it to allow equal access to the ladder of official career of any worthy male adult, regardless of his wealth or social status.³

The newly established relatively objective and fair examination system brought a phenomenal increase of exam candidates; it greatly motivated people, especially those of lower social classes, to change their fate by actively seeking education and studying for the exams.⁴ To satisfy the needs for books of exam-takers, numbering in the tens of thousands, commercial and private printing businesses sprang up to print and sell a range of examination preparation materials, including cheat books.⁵ In addition, the printing industry expanded its prosperity by targeting many other groups of potential customers such as merchants and artists. As historians Lucille Chia and Hilde De Weerdts point out, the Song Dynasty was a time “marked by the expansion of commercial printing, the diversification of the kinds of texts in print, and experimentation with new printing technologies such as movable-type and multi-color printing.”⁶

³ Established in 605 during the Sui Dynasty 隋朝 (589-618), *keju* was an examination system used by the imperial government of China to select the best administrative officials. However, before the reform of the Song Dynasty, it was used only on a small scale; for instance, the Tang Dynasty (618-907) used a recommendation system that limited its access to only those candidates promoted by older officials. *Keju* lasted for over 1,300 years till its abolition in 1905 under the Qing Dynasty.

⁴ The fate of a person of humble origin could be dramatically transformed by passing the exams, as demonstrated in the populating saying “zhao wei tianshelang, mo deng tianzitang” 朝为田舍郎, 暮登天子堂 (In the morning I was still working on the farm; but in the evening I was already standing in the emperor’s palace). The lure of wealth and prestige of a government position created tragic stories of many scholars who attempted the exams all their lives and failed.

⁵ Chia, Lucille and Hilde De Weerdts, *Knowledge and Text Production in an Age of Print: 900-1400*, p. 37.

⁶ Ibid, p. 13. The movable type printing is one of the four great inventions of ancient China, created by Bi Sheng (990-1051) around 1040 A.D. during the Northern Song Dynasty. The

As one of the most prosperous, sophisticated, and advanced economies in the medieval world, the Song government promoted private entrepreneurship and increased the intensity of trade activities.⁷ Because of these economic incentives, cities started to grow bigger, the number of towns increased dramatically, and the urban population skyrocketed. In *Jianming Songshi* 简明宋史 (A brief history of the Song Dynasty), scholars Zhou Baozhu and Chen Zhen state that more and more cities began to enjoy a population of more than one hundred thousand; some metropolitan cities like the capital city Bianliang 汴梁 (today's Kaifeng 开封) increased their populations to several million.⁸ Therefore, the expansion of the civil service examination system, the arrival of the age of publication, and the explosion of city populations all contributed to an increasing number of people who were newly semi-literate or literate. These factors enlarged the market for entertainment and storytelling considerably and created a large and solid educated audience for the flourishing of the literary genre *gong-an*. Two of the sub-streams of *gong-an* stories distinguished themselves in meeting the leisure needs of urban consumers: one was the courtroom drama that exploits the theatrical potential of the courtroom scene; the other was fiction that has its roots in the oral storytelling tradition. In the latter part of the Ming Dynasty 明朝 (1368-1644), the

story was recorded in *Mengxi bitan* 梦溪笔谈 (Writings beside the Meng River) by Chinese scholar and scientist Shen Kuo 沈括 (1031-1095).

⁷ The most notable advance in the Song economy was the establishment of the world's first government-issued paper-printed money, popularly known as *Jiaozi* 交子. See Patricia Buckley Ebrey's *East Asia: A Cultural, Social, and Political History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), p. 156.

⁸ Zhou Baozhu and Chen Zhen, *Jianming Songshi* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1985).

popularity of the *gong-an* genre reached its zenith and then continued into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

A typical *gong-an* story features the protagonist, a judge who acts as a master detective. Its formula is intimately tied to the discourse of the Chinese legal system. The name *gong-an* originally refers to the administration desk used by the judge in the courtroom for the purpose of delivering verdicts. The majority of *gong-an* stories follow a similar pattern: first a criminal is introduced, and he or she commits a crime that is discovered or reported; then an official arrives to investigate and to seek out the real criminal; finally the criminal is severely punished and the victim is compensated.⁹ The most unusual characteristic of the *gong-an* story is that readers already know who the criminal is and why he or she commits the crime at the very beginning. Therefore the main concern of *gong-an* stories is not to identify the perpetrator who commits the crime but to focus on the relationship between the criminal deed and its consequences.¹⁰

The judge or the master-detective, usually a district magistrate who acts as an agent of the emperor, is at the center of the legal process. He heads the administration of the local government, implements imperial orders, and maintains social order and the law. R. H. van Gulik observes that, “since he [the district magistrate] has practically full authority over all phases of the life of the people entrusted to his care, he is often

⁹ Gilbert Fong Chee Fun, “Time in Nine Murders: Western Influence and Domestic Tradition” in *The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century*, ed. Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 124-125.

¹⁰ Yau-Woon Ma, “Themes and Characterization in the *Lung-t’u kung-an*” in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 35 (1975), p. 200.

referred to as *mu*, the ‘pastor’ of the people, or *fu-mu-kan*, ‘father-and-mother official’.”¹¹ Of all the magistrate detectives, the most well-known and the most popularly recognized in *gong-an* stories is Judge Bao. Scholar Jeffrey Kinkley states that Judge Bao is as seminal and evocative a figure in Chinese literature as Hamlet in English literature.¹² Despite the fact that Bao was an actual figure in Chinese history and Hamlet is only a fictional character created by William Shakespeare (1564-1616), Kinkley’s statement holds true in regard to the far-reaching influence that each figure has within his own specific culture and tradition; however, the images and feelings that these two figures evoke in people’s minds are dramatically different.

The character of Judge Bao is based on the Northern Song Dynasty official Bao Zheng 包拯 (999-1062), who served as political censor and magistrate during the reign of emperor Ren Zong 仁宗 (1010-1063). Whereas Hamlet is known for his delay, indecision, and hesitation, Bao is famous for his legendary wisdom, uprightness, incorruptibility, and his dedication to public service. The best-known collection of the Judge Bao cases is *Longtu gong-an* 龙图公案, which is preserved in many different editions. In these stories, Bao uses his sharp intellect to detect truth and to fight against measures taken by the criminal to hide his or her crime. He displays extraordinary powers of observation, reading people’s minds and analyzing their characters. Because of Bao’s exceptional virtue and wisdom, in some later editions, Bao is assisted by

¹¹ van Gulik, *T’ang-yin Pi-shih: “Parallel Cases from under the Pear Tree”: A 13th Century Manual of Jurisprudence and Detection* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1956), p. 51.

¹² Kinkley, “Judge Bao, Detective” in *Armchair Detective: A Quarterly Journal Devoted to the Appreciation of Mystery, Detective, and Suspense Fiction*. 21 (Winter, 1988): 41.

mythical knight-errant figures, who perform martial arts to help solve difficult cases. In addition, ghosts of the murdered victims are drawn to communicate directly with Bao, and sometimes they come to him in dreams to reveal the solution to the mystery. In *Crime and Punishment in Medieval Chinese Drama*, George A. Hayden proposes that Bao has been constructed as a transcendent human and a terrestrial agent who executes divine justice.¹³ This view is not entirely reliable unless one considers *tian* 天 (heaven) to be virtuous and having a direct interest in such matters. The power that Bao possesses is external to him and is linked with his internal *de* 德 (virtue); he is not the agent who performs those supernatural acts, but rather the recipient who attracts the spirits of the wronged party to come to assist him in solving complicated cases.

Although they belong to the category of extraordinary phenomena, prophetic dreams and the appearance of ghosts cannot be interpreted as simply superstition. To explore the connotative meaning of these supernatural elements, it is necessary to read them intertextually with historical and cultural aspects of Chinese philosophy and in relationship to the structure and purpose of the genre itself. The origin and development of Chinese dream culture and ghost culture can be traced back to the pre-Qin period (221-207 BC). In Confucian thought, the ability to have wisdom and enlightenment drawn to one's dreams is an important manifestation and indication of one's high achievement of virtue. If those dreams cease to come, one should become genuinely worried about one's possible misconduct and loss of virtue. For instance, the Master Confucius (551-479 BC) once questioned himself in anxiety, "How I have gone

¹³ Hayden, *Crime and Punishment in Medieval Chinese Drama*, p. 10.

downhill! It has been such a long time since I dreamt of the Duke of Chou.”¹⁴ An outstanding statesman, strategist, and philosopher of the West Zhou Dynasty (1046-771 BC), the Duke of Chou/Zhou 周公, was one of Confucius’ most admired sages from ancient times, a personification and embodiment of wisdom and virtue. In addition, the Taoist Master Zhuang Zi (369-286 BC) dreamt his famous butterfly dream, a striking example of a philosophical dream that obscures the difference between dream and reality.¹⁵ These intertextual readings of dreams in Confucianism and Daoism can shed more light on our understanding and exploration of the inclusion of the dream phenomenon in *gong-an* stories.

Dreams and ghosts have been integral to the formation of Chinese philosophy and beliefs through the practices of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, the three main schools of religion. The ghost culture, in particular, has become attached to the concepts of sin, karma and reincarnation ever since Buddhism was introduced to China in the East Han Dynasty (25-220). The possibility of mutual transformation between man and ghost builds a long chain of births and deaths, which plays an important role in the sphere of morality and justice.¹⁶ When we consider these different layers of cultural discourse, the appearance of ghosts in *gong-an* stories cannot be regarded as

¹⁴ Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. D. C. Lau, (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1992), p. 57.

¹⁵ Zhuang Zi once dreamt of himself transforming into a butterfly. When he woke up, he was not sure whether it was Zhuang Zi who had dreamt that he was a butterfly or it was the butterfly who had dreamt that it was Zhuang Zi. See *Zhuang-zi* 庄子, ed. Ma Li, (Xi’an: Shaanxi lüyou chubanshe, 2004), p. 49.

¹⁶ Stephen F Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*, p. 211.

superstitious; rather it communicates to us a cultural force that shapes and has been shaped by its history.

Last but not least, structurally, dreams and ghosts also assume a perfectly natural place in *gong-an* stories, which focus not on the problem of who perpetrated the crime or why but on how the crime will be solved. The ethical and moral aspects of the crime case are far more important than the intellectual aspect of tracking down the criminal. This urgency of redressing wrongs is especially deeply rooted in the philosophies of Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism, which believe that human society is a delicately balanced organism governed by the laws of Heaven. According to Hayden, an axiom of this view is that, “as every cause has its effect, so every action results in its appropriate reaction, leading in time to a new equilibrium.”¹⁷ This means that any grievance must be urgently redressed; otherwise it would disturb the order of society and cause humanity to suffer because of this disequilibrium. By uncovering the crime and punishing the criminals the judge detective reestablishes harmony on earth and thus brings the state back to the order of Heaven. In this context, supernatural intercessions in the detection and solution of crimes presuppose and reinforce the spiritual and moral dimension of *gong-an* stories.

Leaping into Modern Time

An examination of the history of Chinese detective fiction before the arrival of the Sherlock Holmes stories offers us not only a perspective, but also a discourse, that

¹⁷ Hayden, *Crime and Punishment in Medieval Chinese Drama*, p. 11.

opens dialogues among the past, present, and future. At the turn of the twentieth century, a deep national crisis in China led intellectuals to take a controversial approach in reading *gong-an* and Chinese culture in general. Since the First Opium War in 1839, the Qing government (1644-1911) had not been able to hold off the West, either by force or conciliation, and was forced to sign a series of humiliating treaties. China's repeated defeats during military confrontations with European imperial powers evoked among Chinese intellectuals a strong sense of a political mission to build a modern nation state and to rejuvenate the nation by learning from the West.

The model of a modern nation-state was a concept defined by the West. To follow the trajectory of modernity presupposed by the West, time, rather than space, became the crucial category in the thinking of Chinese intellectuals. They felt an urgent need to build a global consciousness of modern time so that China could follow in the steps of Western modernization. To achieve this goal, China's cyclical and dynastic mode of time was repudiated as repetitive and stagnant; the Western linear development of measurable time was embraced as progressive and modern.¹⁸ The temporality of the modern, in Benedict Anderson's well-known characterization, was thus transformed into standardized, unified, homogenous units of clock and calendar time; moreover, it forms a narrative that separates the present from the past and shifts progress from the past toward the future. Under this projection, a linear conception of

¹⁸ Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, pp. 49-50.

time could be shared by a multitude of people across a wide geographical space. This allows them to imagine that they can join and become part of the modern community.¹⁹

The desire to leap into modern times occupied the thoughts of Chinese intellectuals at the historical moment when they began to translate Western works in search of new ideas. Arthur Conan Doyle and his Holmes series captured the interest of translators because they perceived in these stories values of high utility in the education of Chinese readers. In order to show the superiority of Western literature, a demarcation line was drawn to distinguish the Holmes detective stories from Chinese *gong-an* stories. Not surprisingly, Chinese *gong-an* was placed on the inferior side of the binary opposition, negated as traditional and outdated, and excluded from the sphere of modernity. In addition, the historical association of *gong-an* stories' development with China's feudal imperial society was exaggerated and rigidly framed within the medieval period of Chinese history. As a result, the discourse of *gong-an* was isolated and its transcendence in moral, ethical, and social aspects was devalued.

For instance, Cheng Xiaoqing stated that *gong-an* could not be classified as a legitimate detective fiction genre even though it contains all the basic elements of detection. The reason proposed is that *gong-an* does not have the same reasoning and rationalization process as in the Western detective stories and that it includes superstitions such as martial arts, dreams, and ghosts.²⁰ Cheng's use of Western detective fiction as a universal criterion for assessing the value of Chinese *gong-an* was

¹⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 22-36.

²⁰ Cheng Xiaoqing, "Lun zhentanxiaoshuo" 论侦探小说 (On detective stories) in *Shenmi de zhentan shijie*, ed. Lu Runxiang, pp. 159-160.

controversial for a group of late Qing intellectuals, who argued that *gong-an* should share at least an equal status as, if not a superior status to, its Western counterpart. It is problematic for Cheng to criticize *gong-an* by isolating its supernatural phenomena from interactive readings with other Chinese cultural discourses. To some extent, *gong-an* was sacrificed to the Chinese project of modernization and victimized as the scapegoat for China's defeat in the world arena.

In *The Lure of the Modern*, Shu-mei Shih laments that, "a temporal notion of modernity...became the justification for determining the 'inferiority' of Chinese culture."²¹ In his article "In Search of Modernity," Leo Ou-fan Lee also argues that the notion of "newness" is at the center of modernity thinking in the May Fourth discourse, defined in a unilinear sense of time and history that was itself derived from the Chinese reception of a Western Darwinian concept of intellectual evolution:

In this new temporal scheme, *jin* 今 (present) and *gu* 古 (past) became polarized as contrasting values, and the obvious emphasis was placed on the present moment "as the pivotal point marking a rupture with the past and forming a progressive continuum toward a glorious future."²²

²¹ Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, p. 55.

²² Lee, "In Search of Modernity: Reflections on a New Mode of Consciousness in Modern Chinese Literature and Thought" in *Ideas across Cultures: Essays in Honor of Benjamin Schwartz*, ed. Cohen and Goldman (Cambridge: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 1990), pp. 110-111.

The consequence of this cultural ideology was that extremists such as Wu Zhihui 吴稚晖 (1865-1953) called for complete Westernization.²³ It also caused certain groups of people to worship blindly all things imported from the West.

Known for his pseudonym “Zhongguo lao shaonian” 中国老少年 (China’s old young man), late Qing writer Wu Jianren 吴趼人 (1866-1910) was among the minority group of intellectuals who disagreed with this negative reading of Chinese *gong-an* and its cultural tradition. In his 1906 preface to *Biji xiaoshuo: Zhongguo zhentan an* 笔记小说: 中国侦探案 (Literary sketches: Chinese detective cases), Wu defended native Chinese detectives stories. Although they were not necessarily inferior to Western detective stories, because of the China-West dichotomy propagated by the majority of intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century, Wu bitterly wrote, “people who worship the West...regard even Western servants as Gods, and they even belittle wise Chinese masters as fools [...]. All Chinese classics and canonical works are despised whereas translated works from the West are treated as universal standards for measuring literature.”²⁴ This kind of dissenting opinions such as Wu’s did not last long, and it soon disappeared with the arrival of the May Fourth Movement in 1919, which set up an even stronger enlightenment agenda of antitraditionalism and cosmopolitanism.

²³ Luo Rongqu 罗荣渠, ed., *Cong xihua dao xiandaihua* 从西化到现代化 (From Westernization to modernization), (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1990), p. 365.

²⁴ Wu Jianren, *Biji xiaoshuo: Zhongguo zhentan an*, ed. Lu Shudu and Wang Junnian, (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1989), p. 89.

Translating Sherlock Holmes

After its legitimacy was established in China, the Holmes detective series was translated into Chinese with great enthusiasm. Despite the fact that Chinese *gong-an* was regarded as outdated and inferior, translators had no way to escape from engaging with its discourse, which often served as a point of departure during the translation practice. More specifically, there were three major considerations that shaped the role of *gong-an* and its participation in cross-cultural communication. First, native Chinese detective stories had become an integral part of the translators' knowledge system, with or without their acknowledgment. The majority of translators grew up reading *gong-an* stories, especially the Judge Bao crime cases; they had been immersed in classic Chinese culture even though many of them studied overseas in Europe, America, and Japan. Secondly, the readers that the Holmes translation targeted were people who were used to *gong-an* and Chinese detective story norms. Most of them had no contact with Western literary traditions; therefore, translators had to consider the tastes of potential readers in order to build a smooth transition between *gong-an* and the Holmes stories. Last but not least, in translating between two cultures as diverse as English and Chinese, there are always elements that cannot be transplanted directly from one universe of reference to the other. Mediation and negotiation between the two cultural discourses are inevitable; it means that native Chinese detective stories had to be present during the translation dialogue.

Because of the interactions between different layers of discourse, translators of the Holmes stories assumed the role of subjects in transit. Naoki Sakai suggests that,

“the translator must be internally split and multiple, and devoid of a stable positionality.”²⁵ He further argues that, “translation is the practice of creating continuity at that singular point of discontinuity.”²⁶ At the turn of the twentieth century when the Holmes detective stories first encountered and clashed with native Chinese detective stories, the instability of translators’ subjectivity and the continuity in discontinuity in translations were two of the most salient characteristics of that particular historical age of cultural dialogue.²⁷

Experimenting with the Narrative

The first and foremost challenge that pioneering translators confronted in translating the Holmes stories was how to cope with the method of narration. Contemporary Chinese scholar Chen Pingyuan observes:

For the new fiction [translated from the West], the most difficult and essential transformation was not of themes, plots or subjects, but of the mode of narration. The first three aspects concern “what,” and the last one is about “how.” The differences in “what” are easily detected and they can be fixed by imitation. However, the differences in “how” are hard to

²⁵ Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, p. 13.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The following study on translation strategies is partly indebted to scholar Eva Hung’s research in “Giving Texts a Context” in *Translation and Creation*, ed. David Pollard.

master, and it was almost impossible to guarantee that they would not be deformed even if done by imitation.²⁸

Borrowing from his predecessor Edgar Allan Poe, who created the detective protagonist Dupin and an anonymous assistant, Conan Doyle deployed Dr. Watson as the first person narrator who works by the side of Holmes and presents the mystery to readers. This type of narration, however, was totally new to Chinese and translators and readers alike. In *gong-an* detective stories and other varieties of Chinese fiction, the narrative is, as a rule of thumb, linear and presented by a third person omniscient narrator. Therefore the main concern in translating the Holmes stories was how to overcome the possible sense of confusion and chaos that would arise due to an unfamiliar narrative technique.

Various attempts were made by translators to mediate the gap between the two different modes of narration. “The Naval Treaty,” “The Crooked Man,” and “The Final Problem” were the three earliest translations of the Holmes series, published in Liang Qichao’s 1896 periodical *Shiwen bao* and translated by Zhang Kunde. An examination of these translated works shows that Zhang found it extremely difficult to explain the English stories’ narrative angle. Conan Doyle’s name does not appear in the credit lines; instead, the author’s name is replaced with words like: “Translating the Notes of Sherlock Holmes” (in “The Naval Treaty”), “Translating the Notes of Sherlock Holmes and This Book is Written by Watson” (in “The Crooked Man”) and “Translating

²⁸ Chen Pingyuan, *Ershi shiji zhongguo xiaoshuoshi*, pp. 12-13.

Watson's Notes" (in "The Final Problem"). Considering the fact that these stories were selected from *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* and narrated by Dr. Watson, Zhang faced a serious dilemma, and he attempted to tailor the narrative in this particular way to meet the expectation of Chinese readers who could not imagine at that time that the "note"-taker was not the author.

Apart from omitting the author's name and replacing it with the narrator's, Zhang Kunde employed many other techniques to transform the first person narration into the omniscient narrative that readers were familiar with. For instance, when translating "The Naval Treaty," Zhang deleted the introductory paragraph in which Watson tells readers how, out of the three memorable cases of interest that happened immediately after his marriage, he decided to make this particular story public. Zhang then made a series of extractions and reinsertions of material amounting to a total of three pages in the original to change Watson's role as the narrator. The first-person narration that contains long sections of flashbacks in the form of dialogue was restructured into a linear chronological mode of narrative. As a result, the whole story was told in the voice of an omniscient third person narrator, and Watson appeared in the story only as one of the characters.

In this first Holmes story translated into Chinese, Zhang chose not to create a direct conflict with the narrative used by *gong-an* stories and adapted the text in such a way that it almost appeared to be another *gong-an*, but one with exotic names and places. However, in the second translated Holmes story, "The Crooked Man," Zhang adjusted his approach and experimented with a different way of manipulating the

narrative. He first wrote in the preface a short note that “Watson again records the adventures of Holmes as follows,” and then he replaced all the first-person pronouns “I” with Watson’s name without deleting any paragraphs or twisting the story into a linear narrative development. This is the intermediary step that Zhang took in the process of bringing Chinese *gong-an* into contact with the Holmes stories. Eva Hung points out that, by doing this, Zhang was taking advantage of the Chinese cultural practice of referring to oneself by one’s own name, and thus for the Chinese readers the story still flows like a native Chinese literary narrative.²⁹

Finally, Zhang experimented with another approach in telling the narrative when translating the third story, “The Final Problem,” in which Conan Doyle had Holmes fall to his death at Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland in a fight to the finish with his arch nemesis, Professor Moriarty. He decided to use the Chinese first person singular pronoun “*yu*” 余 to replace the English “I.” Scholars consider this moment a break from the Chinese *gong-an* narrative and a modern departure from the dominant omniscient mode of narration. The first person “I” has been read as one of the most paradigmatic signifiers of modern subjectivity. In linguist Emile Benveniste’s words, “each *I* has its own referent and corresponds each time to a unique being who is set up as such [...]. *I* is the individual who utters the present instance of discourse containing the linguistic instance *I*.”³⁰ This narrative leap to “I” was one of the three experiments that China’s first Holmes translator Zhang Kunde conducted; in this experiment, he

²⁹ Hung, *Translation and Creation*, ed. David Pollard, p. 162.

³⁰ Emile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek, (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1971), p. 218.

negotiated with the narrative of *gong-an* and tested the parameters of a possible mediation. One of the most important considerations that he had in mind was the reaction and flexibility of readers in accepting a new way of detective story telling.

Although there were a number of other translators who also took the approach of deleting paragraphs and rewriting the story from the third person point of view, the first-person narrative was soon established, and its particular value in composing detective stories began to be articulated. In the early 1920s, detective story critic Cheng Xiaoqing affirmed that, “the first person narrator, a character in the story, has the first-hand experience of participating in solving the mystery and what he records is close and real and therefore more interesting (compared to the story narrated from the third person point of view).”³¹ In addition, Cheng asserts that first person narration also has the structural advantage of seducing readers to take detours and make mistakes when they are competing with the detective protagonist to find out the truth. Moreover, the first person narrator can set up a maze in which to trap readers by offering false clues and observations and analyses that appear logical but actually are not sound.³²

Cheng’s positive response at that time legitimized the use of first person narration in the Holmes stories and justified translators’ practice of bringing it directly into the Chinese texts. The observation that Cheng makes about the advantages of the new mode of narration is sharp and to the point. However, his overly negative attitude towards the third-person narrative in *gong-an* stories seems to be part of the traditional-

³¹ Cheng Xiaoqing, “Zhentan xiaoshuo de duofangmian” 侦探小说的多方面 (On the various aspects of detective stories) in *Yihai tanyou*, ed. Yuan Jing, p. 227.

³² Ibid, p. 228.

modern dichotomy that Chinese intellectuals used in distinguishing China and the West. The omniscient narration in *gong-an* might not be as powerful as the limited first person narration in setting up suspense by planting false clues to mislead readers, yet it has the advantage of bringing the readers' attention and focus quickly to the courtroom where the criminal is sentenced and punished. The third person narrative technique thus corresponds to the structural needs of *gong-an*, which emphasizes the dynamic interpersonal relationships between the judge, the criminal and the wronged. Considering the integrity of each approach within its specific cultural context, it is questionable to use the narrative norm of the Western detective stories to measure the structural value of Chinese *gong-an*.

Manipulating Reading Structures

Besides experimenting with the narrative, pioneering translators of the Holmes stories also manipulated the discourse by adding prefaces and postscripts to the original texts. The most representative examples are the three prefaces and one postscript attached to *The Complete Stories of Sherlock Holmes* translated and published in 1916. The main purpose of these prefaces and postscripts is to interact with the readers and lead them to believe that the Holmes stories provide solutions to China's social problems. The social and educational mission shouldered by translators is an indication of how contemporary Chinese issues are mirrored in the fiction translation movement.³³ Furthermore, as a political strategy to legitimize their call for Chinese readers to learn

³³ Hung, *Translation and Creation*, ed. David Pollard, p. 168.

from detective Sherlock Holmes and his scientific mind and reasoning, translators attributed this educational agenda to the author, Conan Doyle. For instance, Liu Bannong (1891-1934) claimed unequivocally in the postscript that, “[the Holmes detective stories] are top necessities for society and the world [...]. The deep and subtle learning and knowledge in these stories...can help to achieve our goal of bringing enlightenment to people [...]. That is exactly what Conan Doyle wanted when he first created these stories [...].”³⁴

Apart from misrepresenting Conan Doyle’s original purpose of killing spare time through writing the Holmes stories, Chinese translators also employed another strategy to justify their educational goals by connecting characters in the detective stories with well-known events and figures in Chinese history. In his 1908 preface to Liu Shu’s translation of *A Study in Scarlet*, Chen Xiji compared Jefferson Hope, the avenger in Conan Doyle’s story, to Goujian (reigned 496-465 BC), the King of Yue in ancient China, who for twenty years endured unbearable hardships and humiliations in order to bring about the final annihilation of his enemy. Chen further asserts that, “If every man in our country follows the example of Jefferson Hope who is persistent and steadfast in his cause and never gives up after encountering hundreds of defeats, then nothing cannot be accomplished and there will be no more humiliation that we need to worry about.”³⁵

³⁴ Liu Bannong, “Fu’ermosi zhenntan’an quanji ba” 福尔摩斯侦探案全集跋 (Postscript to The complete stories of Sherlock Holmes) in *Zhongguo jindai wenxue daxi*, ed. Shi Zhacun, p. 992.

³⁵ Chen Xiji 陈熙绩, “Xieluoke qi’an kaichang xu” 歇洛克奇案开场序 (Preface to *A Study in Scarlet*) in *Ershi shiji Zhongguo xiaoshuo lilun ziliao* 二十世纪中国小说理论资料 (Theories

Although translators were answering the call by Liang Qichao to reform society through fiction, the didactic messages attached to the Chinese translation of the Holmes stories might have also been shaped by the practice of adding educational words at the end of the *gong-an* story that usually eulogize the wisdom of the judge and warn readers not to fall into the same fate as the criminal. Furthermore, the utilitarian attitude towards literature also has its origin in the preaching and practice of Confucianism that proposes that literature should shoulder a moral mission in educating its readers (known in Chinese as *wen yi zaidao* 文以载道). In *Lunyu* 论语 (Analects), Confucius (551-479 BC) had already sounded the defining tone for the political and social function of poetry, a tone that had influenced the discourses about many other types of literature in Chinese history:

The Odes serve to stimulate the mind. They may be used for self-contemplation. They teach the art of sociability. They show how to regulate feelings of resentment. From them you learn the more immediate duty of serving one's father, and the remoter one of serving one's prince.³⁶

This intertextual reading of *gong-an* and Confucian cultural discourse sheds more light on our understanding of the structural adaptations that translators deliberately made to the Holmes stories. The manipulation and fabrication of Conan Doyle's purpose in

of Twentieth Century Chinese Fiction), ed. Chen Pingyuan and Xia Xiaohong, (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1997), p. 350.

³⁶ Quoted from the English translation of *Analects* by James Legge in *The Chinese Classics*, (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc. 1991), p. 323.

bringing enlightenment to the world is an indication of the negotiation that translators made between the English and the Chinese texts in order to serve their deeply naturalized political mission of educating readers in the localized national space. It is important to note that this strong sense of social responsibility is not just to answer the leading Chinese intellectual Liang Qichao's call but an ancient one that would resonate fully throughout history.

Last but not least, another important structural intervention and alteration of the Holmes stories is carried out in the detective story titles. The discourse of Chinese *gong-an* interrupts the English texts directly and participates as a key player in the translation process. During the earliest wave of translation of the Holmes series, a large number of translators changed the original story titles to different ones in the Chinese texts.³⁷ For example, the English title, "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle," is changed into "The Gemstone Swallowed by a Goose" in the Chinese text; "A Case of Identity" is adapted into "The Woman Swindled by her Stepfather" in the Chinese story; "The Man with the Twisted Lip" is transformed into "The Fake Beggar" in the Chinese title line. The interesting phenomenon is that, whereas all the English original titles create a sense of suspense and mystery intended to capture the interest of readers, all their equivalent titles in Chinese reveal the mysteries and give away the answers even before the stories start.

³⁷ The details about the story title statistics can be found in the appendix attached to Eva Hung's article "Giving Texts a Context: Chinese Translations of Classical English Detective Stories 1896-1916" in *Translation and Creation*, ed. David Pollard, pp. 174-176.

The reason for the translators' adaptation of the English titles lies in the cultural intervention of the Chinese *gong-an* stories in which the question "whodunit" is not the main focus and the answer is already known at the beginning; instead, the central emphasis of the mystery is on "how does the judge solve it" and "how is the criminal punished." Therefore, it is a common practice of *gong-an* to tell readers in the title the identity of the culprit and the answer to the mystery. The adoption of this particular literary convention by translators of the Holmes stories shows the penetrating presence of *gong-an* despite the fact that it has been discursively politicized as the inferior in its binary opposition to "modern" Western detective stories. The sources of *gong-an*'s power of negotiation are not fixed. Its porousness allows the native Chinese detective culture and tradition to permeate the entire translation process, including the domestication approach taken by pioneering translators and their considerations of responses from potential readers. *Gong-an* constituted a cultural force that had become an integral part of the translators' knowledge system.

Localizing the Cultural Discourse

Not only did translators delete, add, fabricate and manipulate the narrative and reading structures, but they also interfered with the content details of the Holmes stories when there were clashes with the construction of Chinese culture and national history. One of the best-known examples is the intensive cultural negotiation in the description of the appearance of women in "The Naval Treaty." In the original English text, Conan Doyle introduces Ann Harrison, the protagonist's fiancée, in the following way: "She

was a striking-looking woman, a little short and thick for symmetry, but with a beautiful olive complexion, large, dark, Italian eyes, and a wealth of deep black hair.”³⁸ However, as translation scholar Hung observes, “the southern European kind of beauty found so often in English popular fiction becomes extremely unattractive in Chinese terms.”³⁹ Facing the direct cultural conflict between two different standards for the external beauty of women, translators of the 1916 edition of *The Complete Stories of Sherlock Holmes* decided to rewrite this part completely in the Chinese version. When re-translated into English, it reads:

Quite beautiful, with a snow-white complexion, soft and dewy like congealed lard, and shiny black eyes, which look Italian. Her gentle glance bespeaks charm and her luxuriant black curly hair which covers her forehead is particularly appealing.⁴⁰

After the cultural cosmetic surgery, Anna Harrison is presented in the form of a Chinese woman who bears the basic characteristics of beauty required by readers. Her olive complexion has disappeared and is replaced by a snow-white complexion, regarded as the ideal skin color according to Chinese standards of beauty; her short and thick body build is omitted from the translation and is transformed into a gentle and

³⁸ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 449.

³⁹ Hung, *Translation and Creation*, ed. David Pollard, p. 165.

⁴⁰ Quoted from *Fu-er-mo-si Zhantanan Quanzi*, English translation by Eva Hung, vol. 7, p. 56.

delicate figure, a necessity for beauty in a Chinese cultural construction.⁴¹ During this round of cultural negotiation, the translators' sensitivity and concern about the standards for women's beauty is striking, and it might be closely connected to the women's liberation movement that was just beginning in China. A patriarchal desire to frame and confine women in their past might be one of the considerations during the translation process.

Another intervention and misreading that translators deliberately make is about Holmes's dependence on cocaine and morphine. At the turn of the twentieth century, the abuse of drugs, especially opium, was condemned and considered to be at the root of China's ills. It had not only been associated with the two mid-nineteenth century Opium Wars in which China was defeated and humiliated by Britain, but it had also been blamed for bringing poverty to China because of the heavy loss of gold and silver that people spent on purchasing various types of opium products. Moreover, drug abuse and addiction had been regarded as the evil of all evils that had destroyed not only the physical health but also the mental health of Chinese people. Therefore, when translating the Holmes stories, especially "The Sign of Four" in which there is a lengthy discussion about Holmes's addiction to cocaine and morphine, Chinese translators faced an extremely difficult political and cultural dilemma as they considered how to present this subject to Chinese readers.

⁴¹ The Chinese standards of beauty are based on the concept of absence, even though the specific requirements vary in different periods of history. For example, Chinese women usually have darker skin, but the criterion for beauty is a "snow-white" complexion; they also usually have narrow and long eyes with sing-fold eyelids, but the criterion for beauty is to have large, round eyes with double-fold eyelids.

More importantly, given the consideration that translators intended to use Sherlock Holmes as a role model in logical reasoning and as an educational tool to bring reform, enlightenment and modernization to China, Holmes's addiction to drugs for the purpose of mental stimulation and fighting against the dull routine of existence was, as one would expect, treated as a fundamental defect in character and an intolerable blemish on his scientific mind. One easy solution for translators to the dilemma was to delete the passages on Holmes's drug abuse, for deletion had been a common strategy in other translated works. However, in the representative 1916 translation of "The Sign of Four," translators did not delete the texts on Holmes's abuse of drugs. Hung suggests that this is because there are five drug incidents mentioned in the original English text that are hard for translators to ignore due to considerations about length.⁴² If all of those paragraphs on drug abuse were deleted, the length of the story would be significantly affected. Readers who had minimal English proficiency might easily notice the Chinese adaptations, a situation which translators preferred to avoid. Although they manipulated the original texts on both large and small scales, one of the criteria that Chinese translators had in mind was to perform the operation as skillfully as possible in order to create or fabricate a natural flow to the story. This would cause readers to focus more on the coherence of the plot and to have little doubt about authenticity. In addition, they would raise few questions about the qualifications of the translator and be more inclined to continue consuming his/her works in the future.

⁴² Hung, "Sherlock Holmes in Early Twentieth Century China (1896-1916)" in *Translators' Strategies and Creativity*, ed. Ann Beylard-Ozeroff, p. 76.

This may be one of the reasons translators chose to confront the sensitive issue of Holmes's drug abuse, instead of avoiding talking about the subject. Yet there may be a more important reason to explain translators' reaction. In Conan Doyle's text, the English Holmes offers cocaine to Watson and asks him to try it, but Watson answers negatively: "My constitution has not got over the Afghan campaign yet. I cannot afford to throw any extra strain upon it."⁴³ Holmes then smiles and speaks for his own case: "I find it, however, so transcendently stimulating and clarifying to the mind that its secondary action is a matter of small moment."⁴⁴ Interestingly, when translators translated this dialogue into Chinese, the relationship between Holmes's drug abuse and stimulation and excitement is replaced by a totally different line of reasoning: when the Chinese Holmes offers cocaine to Watson, the latter replies that because of his good health he does not need such a substance; whereupon Holmes explains that had his own health been better and his own nerves not so much on edge, he would not have resorted to drug dependence.⁴⁵ Here translators deliberately changed the English texts that describe Holmes's using drugs as stimulants, and they manipulated the discourse in such a way as to emphasize the positive effects of using moderate and appropriate amounts of drugs for curing health problems. By doing this, translators not only avoided discussing the subject of Holmes's addiction to drugs, which they believed would corrupt his image as their advocate for science and modernity; but also took advantage of this opportunity to educate readers through the mouth of Holmes, warning

⁴³ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 89.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ An interpretation based on the Chinese translation of "The Sing of Four" in *Fu-er-mo-si Zhentan'an Quanji*, English re-translation by Eva Hung, vol. 2, p. 2.

them not to abuse drugs but to use them appropriately only when they are necessary for recovering their health.

Questioning Occidentalism

In *The Poetics of Space*, French philosopher Gaston Bachelard observes: “space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor.”⁴⁶ At the turn of the twentieth century, Chinese translators showed great enthusiasm for translating the Holmes stories and introducing the detective protagonist to readers in China. They perceived the utility of the scientific spirit and its emphasis on the analytical observation of the external world in the Holmes series as the main tools to reform the country and save China from its national crisis. For instance, Feng Guifen (1809-1874), an early promoter of reform, advocated language training, translation, and the study of mathematics and sciences as the only possible sources of the fundamental principles from which the Western imperial power obtained modernization.⁴⁷

To join the modern community, Chinese intellectuals who participated actively in the translation process adopted a linear temporality of history in which the West was presented as the present and China as its medieval past. The Holmes detective stories, therefore, became one of the manifestations of the Western scientific learning and modernity, legitimized by translators as having superior status over the native Chinese

⁴⁶ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. xxxvi.

⁴⁷ Feng Guifen, “On the Adoption of Western Knowledge” in *China’s Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839-1923*, ed. Ssu-yu Teng and John K. Fairbank, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 51.

gong-an stories. Interestingly, Conan Doyle's extensive Orientalization of China and its neighboring countries and his imperialistic attitude towards Oriental culture were ignored and deemphasized; the classification of China as the Oriental Other that poses danger and potential threat to the British Empire was not of concern to translators. On the contrary, Chinese intellectuals and translators unconsciously participated in the imperial project of universalizing the West's central position and particularizing China's peripheral position by establishing the West as the authoritative source of truth and the applicable standard for measuring China's progress. Naoki Sakai points out that, "although the modernization process may be envisioned as a move toward the concretization of values at some abstract level, it is always imagined as a concrete transfer from one point to another on a world map."⁴⁸

As the modern and the new, the Holmes series was juxtaposed to its counterpart *gong-an* and native Chinese cultural discourse. Although being suppressed as traditional and outdated, *gong-an* and ancient Chinese culture made their presence felt in the pioneering translators' attempts to tailor the narrative, educate readers, and manipulate their readings. In their translation practices, translators faced various structural and cultural dilemmas and challenges for which they had to seek solutions through cultural mediations and negotiations. To make the Holmes stories serve their vision of China's national project of modernization, translators used deliberate deletions, omissions, additions, adaptations, and fabrications to alter the original English texts. They did so in the service of making these stories accessible to the

⁴⁸ Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, p. 157.

largest possible number of readers, bringing them enlightenment and exposure to scientific methods of reasoning, and reinforcing desirable cultural norms on issues such as gender and health. Conan Doyle's authorship and authority over his writings were not the Chinese translators' concern when they made changes to the original English texts of the Holmes series, which underwent constant manipulations and adaptations during their first round of cultural contact with China.

Scholars have been heatedly discussing the issue of the Chinese translators' subjectivity and how it subverted the Western signs of meaning. Lydia Liu argues that Chinese translators should be treated as equals to the Westerners who misread and manipulated the Orient to serve the interests of imperialism, because they also engaged in "productive distortions" or "parodic imitations" of Western discourses based on the local needs and purposes, just as the Westerners did.⁴⁹ Following the same line of reasoning, Xiaomei Chen classifies this type of subversive translation practice as a discourse of Occidentalism. She proposes that Occidentalism in China works the same way as Orientalism in the West because of its deliberate manipulation and "misunderstanding" of the Occidental Other for the empowering of China.⁵⁰

Challenging both views, Shu-mei Shih points out that Liu and Chen fail to examine the different and often mutually contradictory constitutions of power within the two overlapping contexts of the global and the local. The main reason that Chinese Occidentalism cannot be posited as the reversal of the Western Orientalism, Shih

⁴⁹ Liu, "Introduction: The Problem of Language in Cross-Cultural Studies" in *Translingual Practice*, pp. 1-42.

⁵⁰ Chen Xiaomei, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*.

argues, is that translators never competed for global discursive power but willingly accepted the unilinear travel narrative of Western modernity.⁵¹ I agree with Shih that the Occidentalism of Chinese translators of the Holmes stories is fundamentally different from the Orientalism that Conan Doyle institutionalized in his writing of the detective stories. As analyzed in Chapter 2, although there are ambiguities and textual tensions in the Holmes stories that reveal the positive values of the Orient such as loyalty, courage, and bravery, Conan Doyle constructed a dark, barbaric, uncivilized, diseased, contagious, dangerous, vicious, and evil image of the Oriental and Chinese Other that threatens the intactness of the British Empire and forms a criminal force that corrupts the healthiness of Victorian values and culture. In contrast, although the Chinese translators made serious and deliberate distortions of the Western discourse during their translation of the Holmes stories, they did not Occidentalize the West as the inferior Other of China that poses a subversive and corrosive force that threatens Chinese society. On the contrary, they loved the Holmes series, the Occidental Other, and used it as a role model for China's modernization project; then they adopted a Westernized linear conception of world history by negating Chinese culture and civilization as traditional and outdated. Therefore, not only were Chinese translators not practicing Occidentalism, they were, to some extent, practicing self-Orientalism, for they categorized China as the medieval past of Western modernity.

On the other hand, Shih's negation of the subjectivity and agency of the Chinese translators in the global arena is questionable. The global and the local subjectivities of

⁵¹ Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, pp. 11-16, 128-148.

the translators are interconnected, and they are two sides of the same coin. Her assertion that they never competed for global discursive power ignores the long-term goal of these translators — to bring China back as a powerful or even an imperialist player on the world stage while at the same time manipulating Western discourse for local needs and purposes. I also have reservations about Takeuchi's view that modernity for the Orient means the state of being deprived of its own subjectivity, a view that resonates with Shih's denial of the agency of Chinese translators.⁵² It is true that these translators played a rather passive role when they decided to follow the trajectory of Western modernity for the purpose of building a modern nation similar to Western imperialist powers. However, they had actively engaged in mediation and negotiation with Chinese *gong-an* and various layers of Chinese cultural discourse, and in their translation practice showed initiative in altering and manipulating Western discourse. These Chinese intellectuals possessed a fragmented, unstable, and evolving subjectivity, which empowered them with flexibility in blending, bending, and adapting different cultural elements from both China and the West for their local needs. To a certain extent, this process of translation generated a subversive symbolic power that permeated the heavy enclosures of Western signs of meaning embedded in the Holmes stories.

⁵² Quoted from *Translation and Subjectivity* by Sakai, p. 173.

Chapter Four

Imagining the Nation in Huo Sang Cases

In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.

— Benedict Anderson¹

After having actively engaged in the translation of the Holmes series, a number of Chinese translators were inspired to write what they called “modern detective fiction” following Conan Doyle’s narrative formula. Their purpose was to use detective fiction as an educational tool to further China’s national cause for reform and to bring enlightenment to Chinese readers. The idea of being modern is problematic. It suggests a certain kind of change and the emergence of something new, a temporal break or rupture. The detective fiction created around this time was classified as modern largely because it was seen as representing a departure and a break from the Chinese *gong-an* tradition; in addition to that, its birth had a direct relationship with Western detective stories that had been interpreted by Chinese intellectuals as a discourse of modernity.

¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6.

Cheng Xiaoqing, one of the main translators of the Holmes stories, was the most influential and the best known creator of Chinese detective stories in early twentieth century China. He is highly regarded as the father of modern Chinese detective fiction and the first detective writer in modern Chinese history. Cheng had participated in a series of collective translation projects of the Holmes stories before he tried his hand in writing his own version of detective stories. In 1914, he took part in a writing competition held by the literary supplement *Kuaihuo lin* 快活林 (Happy forest) and submitted a detective story titled “Dengguang renying” 灯光人影 (The human shadow in the light of the lamp). Cheng won the contest and his story was published. Originally the detective protagonist in this story was named “Huo Sen” 霍森, but due to either a mistake of the editor or the typesetter, the name was changed to “Huo Sang” 霍桑 when the story came out. Interestingly, Cheng decided to keep the new name and he used it in all the succeeding series of Huo Sang cases.

The Huo Sang series quickly gained popularity in China. Many contemporary readers asked Cheng why he chose Huo Sang as the detective’s name, and whether it is related to one of its semi-homophones “Xiashang” 吓伤 (so scared that it hurts) or has a connection to another “Huo Sang” 霍桑, the phonetic name that Chinese people use for American writer Nathaniel Hawthorne. To the first question, Cheng Xiaoqing replied in a playful tone: “At the time, Huo Sen did not want to go through the trouble of posting a correction notice in the newspaper, so he allowed the mistake to stand, and

came to acknowledge Huo Sang as his name.”² In regard to the second question, Cheng did not directly address the issue of lexical and cultural associations; instead, he stated that he created this rare and unique name because he was hoping to introduce to Chinese readers a new image of the modern detective who possesses the power of scientific thinking and who stands for truth and justice. Therefore, he further explained, the name had to be distinct from common Chinese names, such as Zhang Jinbiao 张金标 and Li Defu 李得福, which have the negative connotations of “competing for gold/money” and “acquiring wealth and affluence,” respectively. These two names also suggest unfortunate images of a detective with a protruding belly who wears his hat sideways, images that were often associated in native Chinese culture with greed, corruption and arrogance.³

Cheng’s discussion of the detective’s name “Huo Sang” had deep meaning in the cultural discourse of the early twentieth century, when China was seeking reform and modernization. In Chinese history, names played an active and important role in shaping the patriarchal system of society and in interacting with various aspects of Chinese culture. Chinese people attached great importance to their names, and the ruling class used names as a tool to define the identity of the individual and his/her relationship with the community. People put their surnames before their given name to indicate their biological and social inheritance from the paternal side of the family, to

² Cheng Xiaoqing, “Zhentan xiaoshuo de duofangmian” 侦探小说的多方面 (On various aspects of the detective fiction) in *Huo Sang tan'an* 霍桑探案 (Huo Sang cases), vol. 2 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua he yishu chubanshe, 1933), English quote translated by Annabella Weisl, p. 76.

³ Ibid.

show respect for ancestors, and to acknowledge the authority of the father. A person's name, including both the surname and the given name, was regarded as sacred and holy and thus could not be changed without the imperial order of the emperor and the state government. This belief was so strong that it had been deeply carved in the stone of Chinese culture. For instance, one saying goes, “sheng bu gengming, si bu gaixing” 生不更名, 死不改姓 (when alive, one cannot change his/her name; even if facing death, one cannot be forced to change his/her surname). Therefore, Cheng Xiaoqing's playful and unconcerned attitude towards the name change from “Huo Sen” to “Huo Sang” and his not bothering to correct the printing mistake of the character's name can be read as signs of a fundamental rebellion against the patriarchal order of society and its authority over the individual.

Cheng's selection of the character for the detective's family name also demonstrates the distance that the author deliberately kept from traditional Chinese patriarchal culture. Even though no particular meanings are attached to family names because they are inherited, the character “Huo” shares the same or similar pronunciations with characters like “Huo” 祸 (trouble, disaster) and “Huo” 火 (fire), Chinese words that have negative or potentially unpleasant connotations. Moreover, unlike the family names “Li” and “Zhang” that enjoy the greatest popularity, the detective's surname “Huo” 霍 is much less popular, adopted by a significantly smaller percentage of the population. “Huo” is not among the first four most prestigious family names listed at the beginning of *Baijia xing* 百家姓 (The hundred family surnames), a

classic Chinese book composed of common surnames in ancient China.⁴ Rather, it is placed at 160 on this list.

Until the latter part of the nineteenth century, together with *Sanzi jing* 三字经 (The three character classic) and *Qianzi wen* 千字文 (The thousand character classic), *Baijia xing* served as the canonical enlightenment textbook taught to children when they first began their education.⁵ These three classics embodied the elementary but foundational Confucian values of human nature, family, relationships, and etiquette. With the short and simple verses arranged for easy memorization, children not only learned many common characters and grammatical structures but also acquired in this process the basis of Confucian morality and elements of Chinese history and culture. Therefore, Cheng's assignment to his detective protagonist the less popular family name "Huo" as listed in *Baijia xing* shows his detachment from, and to a certain extent, his protest against the classic teachings of Confucianism.

In addition, most names of the Han Chinese were composed of three characters. Cheng's choice of a name with only two characters can be seen as another indication of

⁴ Compiled in the early Song Dynasty, the book originally included 411 family names and then later was expanded to 504. Of these surnames, there are 444 that are single-character, and 60 with double characters. The first four Zhao 赵, Qian 钱, Sun 孙, and Li 李 represented the most important families in the Song Empire; in particular, Zhao was the family name of the Song emperors.

⁵ *Sanzi jing* was composed in the thirteenth century during the Song Dynasty. The text is written in triplets of characters for easy reciting. The first four verses on human nature are most well known and represent some of the core values of Confucianism as developed by Mencius.

A Chinese poem composed of exactly one thousand unique characters, *Qianzi wen* was most popularly used in imperial China as the standard textbook to teach children Chinese character writing. Its author is said to be Zhou Xingsi 周兴嗣 (470-521), commissioned by the Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty 梁朝 (502-557) to assist the prince to practice calligraphy.

his attempt to break away from Chinese cultural conventions. Furthermore, the detective's name "Huo Sang" sounded more like a phonetic translation of a Westerner's name, exotic and unfamiliar to most Chinese people at that time. The ambiguity of the name's geographical origin and its Western implications might be other methods that Cheng employed in his construction of modernity in Huo Sang cases.

Last but not least, meaning had been an integral part of Chinese people's given names. The characters were chosen based on a variety of considerations, such as astrological principles, the array of five elements (metal, wood, water, fire and earth) or wishes for money and power. By contrast, the meaning of the modern detective's name, "Huo Sang," does not derive from the conventional methods for selecting Chinese characters; it suggests a stark comparison with the meanings of typical Chinese names like "Zhang Jinbiao" and "Li Defu," names that Cheng suggests bear implications of material gains. In terms of symbolic meaning, the given name "Sang" 桑 is rather neutral. It usually refers to the mulberry tree, which does not carry any positive or negative implications. The separation of meaning from its linguistic signs is in some way similar to the system of Western given names, which does not rely on meaning. At other times this character is used after the Chinese character "cang" 沧 to form the word "cang sang" 沧桑, which symbolizes a melancholy state of mind, and a feeling of alienation and loneliness after one has experienced the ups and downs of life for many years. In this case, the meaning of "Huo Sang" defies the tradition of assigning to names only characters with positive meanings. From these seemingly insignificant instances of a mistake in printing a name and the selection of unconventional characters

for a name, we gain a first insight into the serious efforts that Cheng made in destabilizing the structure of meaning and in breaking with Chinese cultural conventions in order to seek the modern and the new. The Western mode of narrative was brought into the dialogue as a force of intervention as Cheng attempted to dislocate the meaning of traditional Chinese names.

Similarly, the detective's assistant's name, "Bao Lang" 包朗, is of particular interest and has multi-layered meanings. Also composed of only two Chinese characters, the name shares with "Huo Sang" a similar modern symbolic power in creating the new and breaking away from the old. However, the essential difference between the two is that the name "Bao Lang" has intricate intertextual relationships with Chinese *gong-an*. His last name, "Bao" 包, is the same character as that of Judge "Bao," the best-known district magistrate detective character in *gong-an* stories. In addition, the given name "Lang" resonates with "Qingtian" 青天, the popularly conferred and recognized title of Judge Bao. Both names mean "clear sky" in Chinese, a metaphor for righteousness and justice. "Tian" 天 (sky) is a key term in Confucianism that refers to the conditions and regularities of nature, which are held in awe and beyond human control.⁶ Therefore, despite the fact that Cheng did not publicly mention the name "Bao Lang" in his answer to readers' question, its strong semantic and cultural associations with Judge Bao are demonstrations of the active engagement of Chinese *gong-an* in Cheng's modern construction of the Huo Sang cases.

⁶ Kong Qiu 孔丘 (Confucius), *Lun Yu* 论语 (The analects), (Xi'an: Shaanxi Lüyou chubanshe, 2004), pp. 86-87, 180, 192.

After adopting the discursive modern Chinese names “Huo Sang” and “Bao Lang” for his detective characters, Cheng began to publish a series of Huo Sang cases in *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 小说月报 (Short story monthly). In October 1919, in his foreword to “Wodao ji” 倭刀记 (The story of the Japanese knife), Cheng called his detective Huo Sang “Dongfang Fu-er-mo-si” 东方福尔摩斯 (Sherlock Holmes of the East); in the story itself Huo Sang calls his assistant Bao Lang “Dongfang de Huasheng” 东方的华生 (Dr. Watson of the East).⁷ Cheng’s eagerness to associate his newly created Huo Sang cases with the well-established and widely popular Holmes stories leads us to explore its multiple meanings and interpretations. One likely and the most obvious explanation is that Cheng used the association as an effective marketing strategy to increase the readership of his stories and to promote the reputation of his brand name, “Huo Sang.”

More importantly, however, Cheng was making a cultural statement by moving towards the West and the modern in the dichotomy, rather than towards the East and the traditional. As discussed in Chapter 3, since the first introduction of the Holmes series into China in 1896, Chinese translators and intellectuals had been reading it as a discourse of Western modernity and had used it as a tool to educate readers and to bring enlightenment to society. As one of the most influential creators of Chinese detective fiction, Cheng sees himself together with his contemporaries as shouldering the mission to take steps toward modernization and to save China from its national crisis. To a

⁷ Annabella Weisl, *Cheng Xiaoqing (1893-1976) and His Detective Stories in Modern Shanghai* (Hamburg: GRIN Verlag, 1998) p. 18.

large extent, Cheng's subordination of his Huo Sang cases to the framework of the Holmes stories is intended to demonstrate to readers that he is taking the same modern trajectory as Conan Doyle, and therefore his Huo Sang discourse should be treated as part of the construction of modernity in the same way that the Holmes series is read by Chinese intellectuals. By doing this, Cheng is essentially institutionalizing a cultural practice of universalizing the West by using the Holmes stories to measure the value of his Huo Sang cases, despite the fact that he intends to take advantage of this universalism to serve the particular interests of China and to promote its modernization project. About this type of seemingly complementary but simultaneously contradictory interrelationship, Naoki Sakai observes, "universalism and particularism endorse each other's defect in order to conceal their own; they are intimately tied to each other in their complicity."⁸

Lastly, Cheng's calling his detective character Huo Sang "Sherlock Holmes of the East" instead of "Sherlock Holmes of China" is also an interesting subject for research and it has been closely examined by Jeffrey C. Kinkley in his book, *Chinese Justice, the Fiction*. Kinkley poses the question whether "Dongfang" 东方 (the East) articulated by Cheng reflects the kind of attitude toward the "Oriental" decried by Edward Said. Rather than giving a straight answer, Kinkley examines the circumstances and the historical contingency of the concept of "Oriental" in early twentieth century China. He observes that the discourse of Henri Bergson and Bertrand Russell concerning a pacifist "Orient" (China and India) that would redeem the warlike

⁸ Sakai, "Modernity and Its Critique: The Problem of Universalism and Particularism" in *Translation and Subjectivity*, p. 163.

“West” had heavily shaped the Chinese perception of the “East.” Kinkley concludes that the usage of “Dongfang” returned Japan, which was then ahead of China in modernization, to junior status, because claiming to be “Sherlock Holmes of the East” was a declaration that Huo Sang was to be the master detective of all East Asia.⁹

Kinkley’s observation provides an important perspective that leads us to explore the intricate relationships between China, Britain, and the West, and Japan and the East. He is suggesting that including Japan along with China in “Dongfang” diminishes what was then Japan’s higher status as a producer of anything modern, because China was much slower in adapting to anything in the twentieth-century world.¹⁰ After the defeat of the Qing government in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Japan was no longer seen as state inferior to China; instead it was perceived as a modern state because of its successful Meiji Restoration, and it became a role model for China to follow to facilitate the leap into modernity. Thus Japan’s modernization/Westernization had elevated its status almost to that of the West in the Chinese imagination. “[...] Japanese cultural products and mediated presentations of Western culture were valued and deemed necessary for China to understand the West and ‘Asianize’ it for Chinese use. More than a model, Japan was the medium and the shortcut to Westernization.”¹¹ In this process, a particular triangular relationship was formed among China, Japan, and the West at the turn of the twentieth century. Japan assumed an unstable and split

⁹ Kinkley, *Chinese Justice, the Fiction*, p. 176.

¹⁰ Scholar Timothy C. Wong contributed to my understanding of Kinkley’s statement through our email discussions in June 2012. I am also indebted to scholar Michelle Bloom for her critical observations.

¹¹ Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, pp. 17-18.

identity that is classified as simultaneously within and outside of Asia, and also simultaneously outside of and within the West.

To a certain extent, however, Kinkley overstated the connotation of “Dongfang;” Cheng’s point of reference is more likely based on the “East-West” dichotomy than the “China-Japan” relationship. It was improbable that Cheng *intentionally* returned Japan to junior status by calling his detective hero Huo Sang “Sherlock Holmes of the East.” The usage of the broad term “Dongfang” when Cheng actually refers to China is similar to the cultural practice of referring to Britain as “Xifang” 西方 (the West), cover terms that have been both problematic and controversial since the births of the concepts themselves. Based on these observations, Cheng’s location of “Dongfang” is probably not intended to relegate Japan to junior status in its relationship to China; it seeks instead to place the Chinese detective stories within the “East-West” dichotomy from which crucial connotations of the concept of modernity are constructed.

In the early 1920s, Cheng’s creation of the Huo Sang cases had already proved to be a great success among readers. Serialized originally in different magazines, these stories were soon and repeatedly reprinted in many collections. For instance, Shanghai *Shijie shuju* 世界书局 (The world publishing house) collected and printed thirty Huo Sang cases in a series of booklets titled *Huo Sang tan’an xiuzhen congkan* 霍桑探案袖

珍丛刊 (Pocket collection of the Huo Sang cases).¹² By late 1930s, Cheng had become one of the best known and most popular detective fiction writers in China.

Similarities Between Huo Sang and Holmes

In his Huo Sang cases, Cheng Xiaoqing adopted the narrative structure employed by Conan Doyle in his Holmes stories. Many layers of similarities can be detected between the two discourses and the two detective protagonists, Huo Sang and Holmes. First of all, the two detective series resemble each other in background, setting, and the depiction of characters. Holmes is a private detective in the metropolis of London and he resides at 221 Baker Street, whereas Huo Sang is a private detective in the metropolis of Shanghai and he resides at 77 Aiwen 爱文 (loving knowledge) Road. Holmes is introduced to Watson by a mutual friend and they share the same flat after Watson returns from the Afghan war and seeks a place to recover his health; Watson is a doctor by profession and he assists Holmes during the investigations and serves as the first-person narrator of the stories. Similarly, Huo lives with Bao Lang, who is his old classmate and long-time friend; Bao is a professional writer and works as his assistant during investigations of mysteries.¹³ He also records the cases for readers from his

¹² Zheng Yimei, “Zhentan xiaoshuo jia Cheng Xiaoqing” 侦探小说家程小青 (The detective novelist Cheng Xiaoqing) in *Dacheng* 大成 (Panorama Magazine), vol. 133, (January 1984), p. 52.

¹³ In the two stories “Huo Sang de tongnian” 霍桑的童年 (Huo Sang’s childhood) and “Jiangnan yan” 江南燕 (The South China swallow), we are told that Huo Sang and Bao Lang have known each other since middle school and they went to Zhonghua University 中华大学 together.

point of view. Another interesting similarity is that both Huo and Holmes live a life of celibacy, whereas Bao and Watson get married later in their lives.

Secondly, both Huo and Holmes share a similar knowledge structure and some idiosyncratic habits. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson describes how Holmes practices utilitarianism in learning, claiming that “he [Holmes] would acquire no knowledge which did not bear upon his object.”¹⁴ To serve his interests as a detective, Holmes possesses a profound knowledge of chemistry, an accurate knowledge of anatomy, some practical knowledge of geology and botany and a good knowledge of British law; however, on the subjects of literature, philosophy and astronomy, Holmes has no knowledge and he shows no interest in learning. In a similar way, Chinese detective Huo, as described by Bao in “Huo Sang de tongnian” 霍桑的童年 (Huo Sang’s childhood), is only interested in learning subjects that he regards as “modern and practical” such as philosophy, psychology, chemistry and physics.¹⁵ In another story “Jiangnan yan” 江南燕 (The South-China swallow), more details are given about Huo’s knowledge structure. He is a science major during his studies at Zhonghua University. Besides the subjects we have mentioned above, Huo takes classes in mathematics, biology, law, sociology and economy. Moreover, he shows a strong interest in experimental and abnormal psychology.¹⁶ Huo therefore shares the same fascination with applicable science as Holmes, and they both focus primarily on the

¹⁴ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 21.

¹⁵ Cheng Xiaoqing. “Huo Sang de tongnian” in *Cheng Xiaoqing daibiaozuo* 程小青代表作, p. 350.

¹⁶ Cheng Xiaoqing. “Jiangnan yan” in *Huo Sang tan'an ji* 霍桑探案集 (Collection of Huo Sang cases), (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 1986), vol. 2, p. 1.

utility of knowledge in helping them solve cases. However, like Holmes, Huo does not show much interest in subjects like literature, which has traditionally been the main focus of Chinese education for more than two thousand years. But Huo has a slightly broader scope of interest in different fields of knowledge than Holmes. Although Huo is inclined to acquire modern Western knowledge, his interest in philosophy allows the possibility for Chinese traditional epistemology to permeate his value system, making it valuable and accessible to his processes of investigation.

Besides science, Huo and Holmes also share the same passion for music. Both of them play the violin very well, despite the fact that violin is a Western musical instrument; and they even share a similar idiosyncratic habit of playing different styles of tunes that correspond to different stages of an investigation, a habit used by both assistants to detect how much progress has been made in solving the mystery. Their smoking habits are also somewhat similar. Holmes enjoys smoking tobacco in pipes, although occasionally he smokes a cigarette or cigar; Huo almost exclusively smokes the Baijinlong 白金龙 (the white golden dragon) cigarette, a domestic brand of cigarette that was very popular in Shanghai around that time, and he smokes a cigar only when he needs to disguise himself as a wealthy merchant during the process of investigation.¹⁷ Not only is Holmes a heavy smoker, he is also addicted to cocaine and

¹⁷ Baijinlong was a popular domestic cigarette brand in China at the turn of the twentieth century. Its sales went up rapidly after the May 30th Tragedy 五卅惨案 that took place in 1925 in Shanghai. British soldiers fired on striking Chinese workers, killing thirteen and wounding several dozens. This historical event evoked a national campaign to boycott foreign products and to use domestic brands as an expression of patriotism.

morphine; Huo, however, only smokes and does not share Holmes's bohemian characteristic of drug dependence.

Third, Huo and Holmes are both masters of disguise and they use this strategy to their best advantage. They are highly skilled in assuming different types of identities for the purpose of acquiring information that cannot be obtained otherwise. One of the best-known examples of Holmes's disguise takes place in the story "The Man with the Twisted Lip." Holmes appears as an old man who smokes in one of London's most notorious opium dens: "[...] he sat now as absorbed as ever, very thin, very wrinkled, bent with age, an opium pipe clanging down from between his knees, as though it has dropped in sheer lassitude from his fingers."¹⁸ Huo possesses a similar set of skills at disguise and he is especially good at changing his facial characteristics. For example, in "Huangpujiang zhong" 黄浦江中 (On the Huangpu River), when disguising himself as an upper-class merchant, Huo makes particular efforts to extend his square face by sticking "a wisp of dark whiskers on his chin," and he also takes the extra step of covering his piercing eyes by putting on a pair of dark glasses.¹⁹ The flexibility of both detectives in assuming different identities during investigations poses an interesting contrast with the rather rigid norms that they follow in solving mysteries and also with the general flatness of their characters.

Last but not least, both Huo and Holmes emphasize using scientific methods to solve a case, and their frequent discussions about logical reasoning and the process of rationalization evoke an aura of science that surrounds the two discourses at all times.

¹⁸ Doyle, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, p. 164.

¹⁹ Cheng Xiaoqing, *Sherlock in Shanghai*, trans. Timothy C. Wong, p. 132.

Holmes uses his apartment on Baker Street as a chemistry laboratory to conduct scientific experiments. For example, in *A Study of Scarlet*, after having attempted a number of chemical experiments, Holmes invents “an infallible test” to determine whether the brownish stains on a man’s linen or clothes are blood stains.²⁰ Similarly, Huo builds a personal chemistry laboratory in his apartment on Aiwen Road; in “Xue shouyin” 血手印 (A bloody hand print), Huo applies a scientifically prepared chemical to the old stain on the knife to determine whether it is dried human blood or dried fruit juice. In addition, Holmes possesses a strong facility for observing and distinguishing subtle differences in many areas, such as the ashes of various tobaccos, the tracing of footsteps and the influence of a trade upon the form of the hand; Holmes also boasts that he is a master in applying the scientific methods of induction and deduction in solving cases, and central to his approach is the concern with the empirical verification of his conjectures.²¹ Resembling his Western counterpart, Huo is also an expert in deriving clues from “little trifles” during investigations, sometimes with the help of imported modern Western gadgets like microscopes, watches and magnifying glasses. One of the most representative examples is when, based on his sharp observation and analyses of Bao’s hairstyle, facial expression, and subtle traces left on his clothes, Huo accurately detects that Bao has gone boating in the Huangtiandang 黄天荡 River.²² Not surprisingly, Huo also shares Holmes’s deep faith in science and in applying

²⁰ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 18.

²¹ Marcello Truzzi and Scott Morris, “Sherlock Holmes as a social scientist” in *Psychology Today*, vol. 5, no. 7, (December 1971), p. 61.

²² Cheng Xiaoqing, “Jiangnan yan” in *Huo Sang tan’an ji* 霍桑探案集, vol. 2, pp. 2-3.

methods such as deduction, induction, and inference during logical and empirical reasoning alike.

Discussion of Imitation and Subjectivity

There have been many heated discussions about these striking similarities between Huo and Holmes on both the structural and narrative levels of the two discourses. In *Shenmi de zhentan shijie* 神秘的侦探世界 (The mysterious world of detection), Lu Renxiang claims that Cheng Xiaoqing was the first Chinese detective writer who imported the writing methods of Western detective fiction into China. He further states that Huo is constructed as the shadow of Holmes and that the only detectable difference between the Chinese and the English discourse is that Cheng has substituted scenes of daily life in Shanghai for the background of London.²³ In *Wenxue de lingyidao fengjing: Zhentan xiaoshuo shilun* 文学的另一道风景: 侦探小说史论 (Another view of literature: On the history of detective fiction), Ren Xiang shares Lu's view, and she further emphasizes that, as a whole, Cheng's Huo Sang cases are the result of imitation of Conan Doyle's Holmes stories, even though Cheng shows creativity to a certain extent. Ren also argues that Huo's strong interest in science is essentially the projection of Western scientific knowledge on the historical environment of China at that time.²⁴ In addition, in *Chinese Justice, the Fiction*, Jeffrey Kinkley proposes that Cheng's works "celebrate a lofty internationalist ethos of universal scientific principles," and they depict the Chinese as "Western," as being as scientific,

²³ Lu Renxiang, *Shenmi de zhentan shijie*, pp. 20-21.

²⁴ Ren Xiang, *Wenxue de lingyidao fengjing: Zhentan xiaoshuo shilun*, pp. 168, 176.

precise, technically advanced, and intellectual as the modern detective [Sherlock Holmes], who is individualistic and adversarial in spirit. In the end, Kinkley concludes that Cheng was “forever measuring Chinese detective stories by the standards of the Western classics, and to China’s disadvantage.”²⁵

The strongest criticism of Cheng’s Huo Sang cases comes from contemporary scholar Leo Ou-fan Lee. In his article “Fu-er-mo-si zai Zhongguo” 福尔摩斯在中国 (Sherlock Holmes in China), Lee holds that an assessment of the traces of imitation of the Holmes stories demonstrates that the creation of the Chinese detective Huo Sang is a cultural practice of “mimicry,” as the term is used by Homi Bhabha. In his interpretation, Cheng/Huo, as the colonized, mimics his master—the colonizer, Conan Doyle/Holmes. Although the external appearances of the two are almost the same, Lee argues that Cheng/Huo lacks the “skin color” and that Cheng has lost his subjectivity in the process of imitation. Lee suggests that the unique Chinese characteristics that Huo Sang displays in the stories are just illusions that Cheng deliberately constructs for readers, and thus they constitute merely another way of imitating Holmes.²⁶

Lee’s reading of the maps of London and Paris in Cheng’s stories, “Zuanshi xiangquan” 钻石项圈 (The diamond necklace) and “Qianting tu” 潜艇图 (Drawings of a submarine) is particularly interesting. These two unique stories were known as “fake Sherlock Holmes stories” parodied by Cheng in the name of Conan Doyle. Cheng explains in the foreword that his purpose is to voice his disagreement with French

²⁵ Kinkley, *Chinese Justice, the Fiction*, pp. 171, 176-177.

²⁶ Lee, “Fu-er-mo-si zai Zhongguo” 福尔摩斯在中国 (Sherlock Holmes in China) in *Dangdai Zuoia Pinglun* 当代作家评论 (Contemporary writers review), (February 2004), pp. 8-15.

writer Maurice Leblanc's (1864-1941) unfair depictions of Holmes in the Arsène Lupin series. Cheng argues that, because they are rivals, if Lupin claims that he is a living dragon, Sherlock Holmes should at least be regarded as a living tiger; however, he complains, in Leblanc's writings Holmes is transformed into a "dead" tiger, whose intelligence is relegated to that of a stupid swine.²⁷

In his observation of the two "fake-authorship" Holmes stories, Lee points out that the map of Paris in "Zuanshi xiangquan" is strikingly simple. Holmes and Watson take a ferry to Paris and then they return to the ferry after a short stay in a nameless two-story apartment; on the other hand, the map of London in "Qianting tu" is exceptionally detailed. In this story, Cheng depicts accurate routes for Holmes's chase of the gentleman thief Lupin, and Cheng even makes up a number of hotel names, such as Paddington, Regent Hotel, and Mason House. The reason behind this contrast, Lee proposes, is that Cheng is unfamiliar with the geography and layout of the city of Paris, whereas he spent a considerable amount of time studying the map of London although he had never been there. Based on this comparison, Lee concludes that Cheng's mind has been colonized by the British Empire and its imperialistic rule.²⁸

To assess to what degree, if at all, that Cheng and his Huo Sang cases have been "shadowed" and "colonized" by Conan Doyle and his Holmes series, it is crucial that we see this dynamic and interactive relationship from multiple perspectives. In the first few decades of the twentieth century, Cheng had been intimately engaged in reading

²⁷ Cheng Xiaoqing, "Long hu dou" 龙虎斗 (The fight between a dragon and a tiger) in *Yuanyang Hudie* 鸳鸯蝴蝶 (Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies), vol. 1, ed. Fan Boqun, p. 283.

²⁸ Lee, "Fu-er-mo-si zai Zhongguo" in *Dangdai zuojia Pinglun*, pp. 11-13.

and interpreting the Holmes stories before and during the creation of his Huo Sang cases. In order to answer the call for language reform in “Xinwenhua yundong” 新文化运动 (The new culture movement), Cheng, working with a group of writers, translated the complete collection of the Holmes series first into classic Chinese and then into vernacular Chinese.²⁹ Apart from translating, on many occasions Cheng spoke highly of Conan Doyle and his Holmes series in his essays on detective fiction. For instance, he once positively commented:

Since the publication of his first story *A Study in Scarlet* in 1887, he [Conan Doyle] has created more than sixty Holmes stories in a span of forty years. Not only has the name of Sherlock Holmes been spread all over the world, but detective fiction as a genre is also becoming more popularly recognized and established. Therefore one is justified to call Conan Doyle the master of all matters in detective writing.³⁰

In his preface to “Long hu dou” 龙虎斗 (The fight between a dragon and a tiger), Cheng also showed his admiration for Conan Doyle’s Holmes stories. He asserted, “There is ‘no precedent in history’ in terms of the depiction of Holmes’s love for

²⁹ “Xin wenhua yundong” lasted from mid 1910s to the early 1930s. Chinese intellectuals had become disillusioned with traditional Chinese culture and they began to revolt against Confucianism and the classical writing system. The vernacular language reform was an important component of this movement.

³⁰ Cheng Xiaoqing, “Zhentan xiaoshuo de duofangmian” 侦探小说的多方面 in *Yihai Tanyou*, ed. Yuan Jin.

science, his emphasis on reasoning, his strong will, his rich imagination, and his sharp talent in psychological analysis, as well as the depiction of Watson's loyalty, honesty and pedantry."³¹

In addition, as we have discussed, Cheng publicly calls his detective protagonist, Huo Sang, "Sherlock Holmes of the East" and Huo's assistant, Bao Lang, "Dr. Watson of the East." Because of the high frequency of close contacts and interactions, the structural and narrative similarities that Cheng's writings share with Conan Doyle's stories can be read as a form of "imitation" and "mimicry." From this point of view, scholars Lu, Ren, Kinkley and Lee are justified in criticizing Cheng's elements of imitation and in classifying his detective protagonist Huo as the shadow and projection of his Western counterpart Holmes.

This reading becomes problematic, however, when we examine Cheng's performance of imitation from a different standpoint. In their interpretations, Lu, Ren, and Kinkley all admit that Cheng is alert to cultural differences and shows creativity in his detective writing, even though these scholars treat these factors as minor considerations in comparison to Cheng's considerable use of imitation. In particular, Lee takes the most negative attitude towards Cheng's Huo Sang cases based on his application of Homi Bhabha's theories of mimicry. A study of Bhabha's original theoretical articulation suggests that Lee has a tendency to simplify the complicated multiple-directional relationships performed through mimicry, turning it into a one-way relationship. That is, he perceives Cheng's imitation of Conan Doyle's Holmes stories

³¹ Cheng Xiaoqing. "Long hu dou" in *Yuanyang Hudie*, vol. 1, ed. Fan Boqun, p. 283.

as an act in which the colonized is essentially assuming the role of its Western colonizer in objectifying the colonized and in universalizing the truth constructed by imperialism. By following this line of reasoning, it is no surprise that Lee laments that Cheng loses his subjectivity by imitating Holmes and that Cheng's concern about China and its modernization project is merely an illusion purposefully constructed and displayed for Chinese readers.

In Bhabha's interpretation, however, there exists what he calls "in-between spaces" in cultural discourse when two seemingly opposing groups clash and articulate their differences from each other. As "the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge," mimicry is of great appeal to the colonizer, who desires to produce a fixed reality of the colonized.³² Yet at the same time mimicry also contains a subversive power that can threaten the desired order of hierarchy, as Bhabha points out:

The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing. For in 'normalizing' the colonial state or subject, the dream of post-Enlightenment civility alienates its own language of liberty and produces another knowledge of its norms [...]. The menace of mimicry is its double vision, which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority.³³

³² Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 85.

³³ Ibid, pp. 86, 88.

The colonizer, in seeing the colonized mimic him, sees himself but also not-himself, a “double vision,” in which the colonizer is not only the Subject but also the Object. As a result, the binary between the colonizer and the colonized breaks down, creating a “Third Space” where the two sides negotiate their cultural differences and reevaluate their assumptions about colonial identity. The ambivalence inherent in colonial discourse has thus produced a culture that is hybrid, from which emerges the interstitial agency that refuses the binary representation of colonial antagonism.³⁴

Therefore, based on a more comprehensive reading of Bhabha’s articulation of mimicry, we arrive at a different interpretation of Cheng’s imitation of Conan Doyle’s detective writing that casts doubt on Lee’s one-dimensional conclusion, a conclusion that fails to take into consideration the dialectic and transformative relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. It is true to a certain extent that Cheng, as the colonized, has universalized the supremacy and purity of the imperial discourse of Conan Doyle by adopting the narrative structure of his Holmes series and using it as the standard for assessing the quality of his own Huo Sang cases. On the other hand, Cheng’s mimicry has also created the kind of cultural hybridity that challenges the authority of the imperialistic discourse of the Holmes stories and trespasses the boundaries between the Subject and the Object, and between Self and Other. Within the “Third Space,” Cheng is constantly negotiating with cultural differences and his reading of the signs of colonial identity is marked by ambivalences, uncertainties and instabilities. We will closely examine these negotiated cultural differences and

³⁴ Ibid, p. 212.

Cheng's ambivalences toward modernity in his Huo Sang cases in the following chapter.

Chapter Five

Negotiating Cultural Difference and Modern Ambivalence

Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation.

— Homi K. Bhabha¹

In Cheng Xiaoqing's Huo Sang cases, although the Chinese detective Huo shares with his Western counterpart Holmes an interest and faith in science and in solving mysteries by using scientific methods of reasoning, their purposes in working as private detectives in the metropolises of Shanghai and London are strikingly different. As discussed in Chapter 2, the English detective character Holmes is constructed as the Subject of Victorian imperial discourse, endowed with the supreme rational powers characteristic of modernity. In Conan Doyle's Orientalizing of China and its neighboring states, Holmes plays the role of a guardian who protects the British Empire from being threatened and contaminated by the Other, the dark and inferior culture of

¹ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 2.

the Orient and its natives, who are uncivilized, dangerous, diseased and criminal-like. In order for Holmes to carry out his imperialistic mission, Conan Doyle constructs him as an intact image of colonial identity, a reasoning automaton, and a calculating machine who solves the cases with the accuracy and precision of modern clockwork and who continuously attempts to exclude any potential ambivalences, uncertainties, and disturbances, especially the complications caused by human factors. In “The Sign of Four,” Holmes states that “detection is, or ought to be, an exact science and should be treated in the same cold and unemotional manner.”² When Miss Morstan comes to him for help, Holmes emphasizes to Watson, “a client is to me a mere unit, a factor in a problem. The emotional qualities are antagonistic to clear reasoning.”³ This single-minded method of pure ratiocination that Holmes applies sets up a clear-cut boundary between reason and emotion. Not surprisingly, when Holmes has no “human” cases to solve, he has no choice but to rely on drugs such as cocaine and morphine to sustain his existence.

In contrast to the exclusive and imperialistic approach of Western culture taken by Conan Doyle in presenting Holmes’s powers of reasoning, Cheng, in his creation of the Huo Sang cases, takes an inclusive and nationalistic approach that places Huo and his faith in science and logical reasoning in an intimate interrelationship with society and individuals. Cheng believes that detective fiction has the power to transform average readers into people with superior abilities of observation and inference. He laments that Chinese society lacks the investigative spirit and willingness to question

² Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 90.

³ Ibid, p. 96.

knowledge once obtained, two qualities that Cheng regards as indispensable for scientific research and discoveries. Cheng especially highlights the importance of curiosity in seeking advances in science and technology, one of the essential areas in which China was left behind in modern history.

In his essay on the utility of detective fiction, Cheng bitterly writes, “Despite the fact that curiosity is a natural talent, family education, traditional superstition and the influence of the society simultaneously attack any kind of effort to encourage curiosity, and these factors often repress the curious spirit to such an extent, that it does not develop.”⁴ This concern about the development of curiosity has formed an integral part of the discourse in many of the Huo Sang cases. For example, in “Lunxia xue” 轮下血 (Blood under the wheel), during an overnight train ride, when the conversations of a group of fellow travelers portray Huo as a superman, Huo’s assistant Bao bemoans the public’s low level of scientific curiosity in questioning truth. Huo is imagined to be capable of “leaping over thirty feet” and “disappearing within a split second,”⁵ mythical descriptions that usually appear in Chinese martial arts stories.

In the essay where he argues in defense of detective fiction, Cheng states that it is a “popular science textbook in disguise.”⁶ He further emphasizes that the plots of detective fiction always unfold around a serious, important question, which can guide readers to ask more questions such as “what,” “why” and “how.” In this way, the

⁴ Cheng Xiaoqing, “The utility of detective novel” in *Cheng Xiaoqing (1893-1976) and his Detective Stories in Modern Shanghai*, Annabella Weisl, p. v.

⁵ Cheng Xiaoqing, *Cheng Xiaoqing wenji*, p. 3.

⁶ Cheng Xiaoqing, “Lun zhentan ziaoshuo” 论侦探小说 (On detective fiction), quoted from King-fai Tam’s “The Detective Fiction of Ch’eng Hsiao-ch’ing” in *Asia Major*, vol. v, part 1, p. 131.

quality of curiosity has the opportunity to develop and expand.⁷ Based on these readings, the Chinese detective Huo's exceptional skill at reasoning and investigation is not created for the purpose of establishing the supremacy of rational thought as in the Holmes stories, but to serve as a guiding discourse in cultivating readers' scientific and investigative spirit.

In comparison to Holmes's cold and inhuman manner in the process of his scientific reasoning, Huo does not exclude human and social factors from his methods of ratiocination. For Huo, the value of his strong analytical thinking ability exists only when he uses it in solving problems for others and in reforming and modernizing the nation. In the story "An zhong an" 案中案 (Case within a case), when Huo and his assistant Bao are taking a walk outside one day in late fall, a strong gust of wind blows, and yellow-colored tree leaves fall to the ground. At that moment, Bao feels a sense of sadness about the passage of time and the shortness of life; Huo immediately asks Bao whether it is his *qiu gan* 秋感 (fall complex).⁸ Astonished, Bao questions Huo, "Is your brain of science so mechanical that you do not feel anything about the season of fall?"⁹ Deep in thought, Huo responds:

⁷ Cheng Xiaoqing, "The utility of detective novel" in *Cheng Xiaoqing (1893-1976) and his Detective Stories in Modern Shanghai*, Annabella Weisl, p. vi.

⁸ *Qiu gan* is a known Chinese cultural and philosophical practice. In the long history of China, poets in particular are very sensitive about the changes in the fall when trees lose leaves and many other plants start to die. They have written many poems bemoaning the passage of time and the shortness of life. Thus this feeling of sadness becomes closely associated with the season of fall.

⁹ Cheng Xiaoqing, *Zhongguo zhentan xiaoshuo zongjiang—Cheng Xiaoqing*, ed. Fan Boqun, p. 27.

Feeling about fall? Yes, of course I have it. But it is different from yours [...]. What you feel is a kind of sadness about the dying of life. However, I do not feel that way. I only feel that fall is the season of harvest and it makes me reflect about my achievements [...]. There is nothing sad about death! From the perspective of interrelationships between people, if you cannot do anything meaningful for others or use your power of creation endowed by heaven [...]. That is a real sadness—sadness beyond remedy!¹⁰

This is a philosophical dialogue between the cold and mechanical side of science and the complications of human factors. Holmes and Huo give different answers about how to resolve the potential clash and conflict. Holmes chooses to exclude human factors and to pursue the purity and supremacy of scientific reasoning, whereas Huo recognizes the dialectic relationship between the two and attempts to negotiate the cultural differences in what Bhabha calls the “Third Space.” In a subtle way, Holmes’s exclusive approach to scientific reasoning is transformed into merely one of the many participating factors in the scheme and interplay between reason and human factors.

One of the key human factors in the world of detection is the role of women. Modern detective fiction is defined as one of the most masculine genres in literature since Edgar Allan Poe established the norms in the 1840s. In Poe’s original three Dupin detective stories, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841), “The Mystery of

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 27-28.

Marie Roget” (1842-43), and “The Purloined Letter” (1844), all of the victims are women; the Queen is threatened by the scandal of the purloined letter and the other three women are brutally murdered in mysterious ways. Victims Madame L’Espanaye and her daughter live invisible and marginalized lives, the pretty perfume girl Marie Roget appears as a monster with respect to her sexuality, and the Queen is also portrayed as a demon, especially in the eyes of the Minister, who blackmails her in order to minimize her political power for his own political advantage.

Besides its almost universal selection of a male as the detective protagonist, the masculinity of detective fiction is also embedded in its patriarchal drive to know, to quest, and to conquer, with the male detective functioning as the very epitome of ratiocinative logic. Detection is perceived as a highly intellectual game that involves reason, knowledge, science and technology for the “so-called” maintenance of social law and order. The male detective is the guardian of the status quo, and the genre relegates the female body and its gender identity to their proper places. Women, therefore, are rendered as personifications of constructs that can be controlled and gazed at, as passive objects. They are stereotyped in these detective stories either as victims if they live up to the feminine ideal or as villains if they do not.¹¹ The patriarchal detective world ordering sets up a too-easy and too-absolute binary model of gender. Women are “dark, disruptive, inexplicable presences who either require male protection or pose threats in the male detective world.”¹²

¹¹ Warren Chernaik, Martin Swales and Robert Vilain, *The Art of Detective Fiction* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, INC. 2000), p. 139.

¹² Martin Priestman, *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, p. 193.

Conan Doyle stands out among writers of detective fiction who have actively participated in the binary construction of women. His detective protagonist Holmes chooses to exclude any romantic involvement with women from his personal life in order to preserve the supremacy of his reasoning power. “Love is an emotional thing, and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true cold reason which I place above all things.”¹³ “Women have seldom been an attraction to me, for my brain has always governed my heart [...]”¹⁴ Therefore, in Holmes’s map of scientific reasoning, women have been reduced to a sign of emotion that is the opposite of reason and logic. “Their [women’s] trivial action may mean volumes, or their most extraordinary conduct may depend upon a hairpin or a curling tongs.”¹⁵

One of the best-known examples is the portrayal of Helen Stoner who comes to Holmes for help with the investigation of the mysterious death of her twin sister Julia in “The Adventure of the Speckled Band.” As Hennessey and Mohan put it, “... [Helen’s] feeble rational powers set apart from Holmes... [for] Helen’s mind makes her only able to entertain ‘vague fears and suspicions’ in contrast to Holmes’s enlightened rapid deductions, ‘as swift as intuitions, and yet always founded on a logical basis’.”¹⁶ There is a strong textual tension that works to marginalize, contain, and control women within the patriarchal order of the Victorian society. In contrast to Holmes’s central position of presence and power of articulation in defining the meaning of truth, the

¹³ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 157.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 1088.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 657.

¹⁶ Rosemary Hennessey and Rajeswari Mohan, “‘The Speckled Band’: The Construction of Women in a Popular Test of Empire” in *Sherlock Holmes: The Major Stories with Contemporary Critical Essays* (Boston: Bedford of St. Martin, 1994), p. 400.

female characters are absent, silent, sensuous, domestic, and inferior. As Catherine Belsey observes, “[...] these stories, whose overt project is total explicitness, total verisimilitude in the interest of a plea for scientificity, are haunted by shadowy, mysterious, and often silent women.”¹⁷

As an example of an exception to this treatment of women, however, the female character Irene Adler in “A Scandal in Bohemia” has been popularly cited as proof that Conan Doyle does not necessarily present women as emotional beings who are incapable of reasoning. It is true that Adler is allowed at the end of this story to defeat Holmes’s plans for obtaining the scandalous photograph for the King of Bohemia. Instead of acquiring the right photograph at the bell-pull on the basis of his logical deductions, Holmes pulls out an irrelevant photograph and a letter left by Adler, which explains how she has outsmarted him by finding out about his plan in advance. However, if we analyze in detail how Adler outwits the detective hero, we find that it is the experience with male costumes that she acquires during her years of training as an actress, rather than her logical thinking, that enables her to see through Holmes’s disguise as an old clergyman. In addition to that, although Holmes requests the King to allow him to keep the photograph of Adler in evening dress and always refers her as “the” woman, the narrator Watson immediately assures us that, “it was not that he [Holmes] felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind.”¹⁸ Thus,

¹⁷ Belsey, “Deconstructing the Text: Sherlock Holmes” in *ibid*, p. 385.

¹⁸ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 161.

at the end of the confrontation, Irene Adler is still safely locked up in the attic where she remains excluded from Holmes's world of reason.

In comparison to Conan Doyle's containing women in the domestic sphere and preventing them from interacting with the symbolic quest for truth and meaning, Cheng takes a rather different approach in constructing the images of women in Huo Sang cases, even though it also features a male detective protagonist marked by his extraordinary reasoning power. First of all, the difference lies in the attitude taken by the detective hero Huo towards women, love, and marriage, an attitude that contrasts with that of Holmes. Although Huo also chooses to stay celibate, nowhere in the discourse does he claim that his purpose is to stay away from any romantic involvement with women in order to preserve the purity of his reasoning power. Instead, he is an active supporter of marriage and love, and he allows women to enter his world of reasoning and to participate in the seeking of truth.

In the story "Xian hunyin" 险婚姻 (Marriage in danger), Huo engages himself in the preparation of Bao's upcoming wedding with Gao Peiqin. To ensure that his friend and assistant Bao has a smooth wedding ceremony, he even decides to put aside his detective work and to devote himself entirely to the wedding arrangements. He assures Bao with a smile: "This is my good friend's happiness; no matter what, I have already declined clients in order to take a vacation. I will make sure that no outside factors interrupt your wedding in the next five days."¹⁹ Besides endorsing Bao's marriage and helping with the wedding, Huo devotes all his time and effort to finding out where the

¹⁹ Cheng Xiaoqing, *Cheng Xiaoqing daibiao zuo*, p. 3.

bride is after she disappears. In this story we perceive the interactive relationships that Huo enjoys in celebrating Bao's love and marriage. This contrasts with Holmes's cold and impersonal reaction when Watson informs Holmes that he is going to marry Miss Morstan: "He [Holmes] gave a most dismal groan. 'I feared as much,' said he. 'I really cannot congratulate you'." ²⁰

In another story, "Bai shajin" 白纱巾 (The white handkerchief), the female character Tao Xiaodong is presented as a parallel detective investigator working with Huo from different but overlapping angles in solving the mystery surrounding the businessman Jia Chunpu. She disguises herself as the close friend of Jia's wife, but actually is a government agent who works for the "National Society to Save the Country." She shows extraordinary scientific reasoning power and even discovers the truth of the case slightly ahead of the detective hero Huo. Tao demonstrates a strong capability for logical thinking and business negotiation skills, an image construction that differs from the portrayal of Irene Adler's using wit largely based on her empirical experience. In particular, unlike Holmes, who sets up a boundary between himself and Adler, Huo recognizes Tao's reasoning and willingly assumes a place in the shadow of Tao's success. He publicly addresses Tao in a humble tone: "Now I would like to invite Ms. Tao to inform us about the motivation and the detailed investigation process, so that we could obtain some proofs and supplementary information for our deductions." ²¹

²⁰ Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 157.

²¹ Cheng Xiaoqing, *Cheng xiaoqing wenji*, p. 204.

The heroine Tao Xiaodong is constructed by Cheng as a *xin nǚxing* 新女性 (New Woman), a type that emerged at a time of changing roles for women in China in the early twentieth century. The image of the New Woman included signifiers such as short hair and stylish, modern clothes, and an attention to modern technologies such as hygiene and nutrition. Scholar Sarah E. Stevens observes that, the New Woman is also recognizable for “her revolutionary nature, her devotion to the larger cause of nationalism, and the fact that her search to find self-identity is inevitably bracketed within the larger nationalistic struggle.”²² In Cheng’s story, Tao is portrayed as possessing the typical physical and social characteristics of the New Woman: she wears a short hair cut and is clothed in a modern thin, white lace dress; she first works for the “National Society to Save the Country” to eliminate corrupt and greedy businessmen who profit from illegal transactions, and then she expands her service for the nation and joins the army to fight on the frontline; in the end she dies of diseases caused by overworking.

After hearing the news of Tao’s death, the detective assistant Bao says in admiration: “when I think of this patriotic and righteous woman hero who could make most men feel ashamed, I always feel that it is a loss!”²³ Thus Tao is recognized for her active role in the public sphere and her contribution to China’s national cause and its quest for modernity. She is placed in a position equal to, and to some extent, even higher than the male detective hero Huo in terms of scientific reasoning power and

²² Stevens, “Figuring Modernity: The New Woman and the Modern Girl in Republican China” in *NWSA Journal*, vol. 15, no. 3, (Fall, 2003), pp. 86-87.

²³ Cheng Xiaoqing, *Cheng Xiaoqing wenji*, p. 208.

service to the country. This represents one of the most notable breaks that Cheng makes from the binary gender construction of Conan Doyle. Tao successfully breaks from the traditional role assigned to women, and she trespasses into a world that used to be solely occupied by men. Her actions make her not a villain but a national hero in China's search for modernization.

Besides creating the character of the New Woman, Cheng has constructed various other types of female characters in the Huo Sang cases. For example, one of the most popular images is a modern girl who rebels against her parents in order to pursue a freely chosen marriage. In addition, women dancers are another group that captures Cheng's particular interest. The exploitation of these dancers and depictions of their disillusionment with the decadence of cosmopolitan life are two frequently repeated themes. In comparison, women opera singers and movie stars are portrayed from a very different perspective. For example, in "Guai dianhua" 怪电话 (The strange phone call), opera singer Ba Yulan is made to appear radiant with glamour in the journals, magazines, newspapers, and books that are published widely and cheaply to meet the leisure needs of urban consumers. Interestingly, she is also portrayed as a rebellious modern girl with a sharp tongue as she confronts the local police chief who is questioning her about a kidnapping case, and she dominates the argument. In a word, although many female characters in the Huo Sang cases are marginalized as silent domestic figures like those in the Holmes stories, the emergence of the New Woman and modern girls in Cheng's detective writing present more interactive relations between gender roles. Through this process, more open space is created for women to

act in the public sphere in Cheng's detective stories; this forms a contrast to the secluded domestic space that Conan Doyle constructed for his Victorian female characters.

In writing the Huo Sang cases, another important agenda that Cheng has in mind is to use Huo's scientific investigative procedures to educate Chinese law enforcement personnel and to reform the corrupted legal system in China. The judiciary, Cheng observed, was dominated by corruption, incompetence and disrespect for human life:

If a murder happens somewhere, the degree of urgency in this case often depends and is decided on the rank of the victim. If the victim is an ordinary person without money and power, it is not a question whether the case would be solved or not. At the beginning of the investigation they handle the case casually in a perfunctory manner. After a few days the case will vanish as a matter of course. If the victim is someone with power, then the case is easy to solve as well. The detectives in charge only have to catch a John Doe and count him as the killer in the case.²⁴

Under this type of simplistic process of legal prosecution, Cheng lamented that no scientific methods were taken and no justice was executed.

In the Holmes stories, Scotland Yard is also depicted as inferior in its ability to conduct scientific reasoning and as notorious for its ineffectiveness in solving

²⁴ Cheng Xiaoqing, "The Utility of the Detective Novel" in *Cheng Xiaoqing (1893-1976) and his Detective Stories in Modern Shanghai*, Annabella Weisl, p. vi.

complicated cases. However, this negative portrayal is a strategy that Conan Doyle employed to serve his purpose of constructing the supremacy of Holmes's reasoning power and rational thought, for he believes that this characteristic is the foundation of the British Empire, the means by which it sustains its hegemony over the Orient and its imperial discourse around the world. In comparison, Cheng's exposure of the dark side of the Chinese judicial system and the ineffectiveness of its legal investigators is not just a narrative strategy that mimics Conan Doyle. More importantly, it is an educational tool that Cheng uses to reform the legal system and to advance China's modernization project.

For instance, in "Yizhi xie" 一只鞋 (The shoe), we are introduced to Lieutenant Fan, "a half-cocked functionary with a narrow mind and prone to jealousy—in other words, a run-of-the-mill government bureaucrat."²⁵ The Lieutenant's full name is Fan Tong 范通, with "Fan" 范 his last name and "Tong" 通 his given name, which translated literally means "going through" or "smooth." Interestingly, it shares almost the same pinyin pronunciation²⁶ with a commonly used derogatory two-character Chinese phrase "fan tong" 饭桶, which refers to people who are incapable and inferior in reasoning and solving problems. This most certainly is not just a coincidence. Cheng is taking advantage of the ambiguity of the Chinese language to ridicule the simplistic methods that Lieutenant Fan uses during his investigation. In the story, Ding Fangzhu, a young married woman, is murdered in her bedroom in the middle of the

²⁵ Cheng Xiaoqing, *Sherlock in Shanghai*, trans. Timothy C. Wong, p. 2.

²⁶ The only difference is in the tones for the character "tong." In the name "Fang Tong" 范通, the "tong" 通 is the first tone; but in the word "fan tong" 饭桶, the "tong" 桶 is the third tone.

night with a man's shoe (not her husband's) lying by the side of her dead body. Using the shoe as the only proof and without considering any other circumstances, Lieutenant Fan immediately jumps to the conclusion that Ding is a promiscuous woman; the shoe must have been left by her extramarital lover in his hurry to escape from the crime scene after murdering her. The Lieutenant then closes his mind and refuses to consider any other possible crime scenarios in spite of the fact that detective Huo suggests that the shoe might have been deliberately left by the murderer as a smokescreen to dupe the investigators into thinking that it was a case of adultery.²⁷ In this skillfully constructed narrative, the Lieutenant's ignorance, arrogance, narrow-mindedness and inferiority in reasoning are exposed to readers from different dimensions. Cheng hoped by this means to provoke the public to take action to fix China's malfunctioning legal system.

Finally, another striking difference between Huo and Holmes lies in their ways of executing justice after a case has been solved. Holmes's involvement in the investigation ends once the mystery is revealed and he leaves the remaining issues to Scotland Yard and the British judiciary. He shows no interest in overseeing how justice is done and how the perpetrator of the crime is prosecuted in court. For instance, in "The Sign of Four," at the end of the story, Jonathan Small confesses that he did not murder Major Sholto and Bartholomew with his own hands. Sholto had betrayed Small in the Orient by secretly smuggling the Agra treasure back to Britain and taking it into his sole possession. He is frightened to death when he sees the shadow of Small on his bedroom window. His son Bartholomew is murdered when he is poisoned by Small's

²⁷ Cheng Xiaoqing, *Sherlock in Shanghai*, trans. Timothy C. Wong, p. 21.

helper Tonga, a native of the Andaman Islands. When listening to Small's account of the details, Holmes is most interested in whether his deductions have been verified and proven to be correct; he is not concerned about whether Small is guilty and how he is sentenced by the court.

In contrast, Huo's participation in crime detection goes far beyond where Holmes stops. After finding out the truth of the mystery, Huo takes great interest in upholding justice and in carrying on the mission of helping the oppressed righteously. In "Bai shajin" 白纱巾 (The white handkerchief), Huo decides not to hand over Tao Xiaodong to the judiciary for trial after he finds out that Tao was the criminal who had shot Jia Chunpu to death. Jia is a newly rich businessman who is involved in illegal profiteering from grain sales that threaten to destabilize the price of rice. Huo covers up the murder case for Tao and reassures her: "We [Huo and Bao] are not bound by law at all. We observe laws of our own: righteousness and justice. You eliminated a bad citizen for the state and a thief for society, you really deserve a glorious salutation."²⁸ Clearly, Huo follows a code of justice that exists beyond the boundary of state-issued laws.

On one hand, Huo shows a deep distrust of the Chinese judiciary system's ability to execute justice; on the other hand, he perceives that there is an "in-between" space that the law, because of its lack of flexibility, cannot reach to protect those who have committed crimes in the legal sense but do not deserve to be punished in terms of justice. In this view, when the law fails, the individual is endowed with the power to

²⁸ Cheng Xiaoqing, *Cheng Xiaoqing wenji*, p. 207.

pass beyond the nation state and to eliminate criminals for the purpose of preserving justice. This forms a sharp contrast to Holmes's relative absence of concern about justice in Conan Doyle's detective stories and his profound trust of the state and its judicial system in enforcing justice.

The concern for justice in the Huo Sang cases may remind us of our discussions of the plot structure of Chinese *gong-an* at the beginning of Chapter 3. Although justice is not at the center of the detection in Cheng's fiction, Cheng's writing about justice at the end of each case can be read as a continuation of the tradition of *gong-an*, which is deeply rooted in and derived from the complex of Chinese cultural discourse. Ironically, in spite of that fact that Cheng made every effort possible to stay away from *gong-an*, an "outdated" form as he called it, he could not escape from this "anxiety of influence." Whether Cheng acknowledged it or not, the *gong-an* tradition kept coming back to him, its cultural elements deeply naturalized and valued.

Some scholars have criticized Cheng's construction of his detective protagonist Huo as merely an educational tool to further China's reform and modernization projects,²⁹ according to these scholars, Huo does not share the purity and supremacy of Holmes's reasoning power. This reading is problematic for it simplistically reduces Huo to a concept and a sign that preaches didactically for the good of society and state. First of all, this argument falls into the binary-opposition framework that universalizes the truth and superiority of Western detective fiction and uses it as the standard for

²⁹ Lee makes one of the strongest criticisms in his article "Fu-er-mo-si zai Zhongguo" 福尔摩斯在中国 (Sherlock Holmes in China), published in *Dangdai zuojia pinglun* 当代作家评论 (Contemporary writers' review) in the February issue of 2004. He states that Cheng has created a flat detective character and Huo Sang is purely a patriot who advocates for reform.

measuring Cheng's Chinese detective story writing. Secondly, it fails to consider the imperialistic ethos behind Conan Doyle's construction of Holmes as a pure modern reasoning machine that works precisely and accurately in order to exclude the Other from threatening the culture and values of Victorian society.

The criticism that Cheng uses Huo and his symbolic scientific reasoning power to advocate for his nationalist agenda is, to a certain extent, justified. Cheng emphasizes the utility of detective fiction in bringing enlightenment and in promoting "De Xiansheng" 德先生 (Mr. Democracy) and "Sai Xiansheng" 赛先生 (Mr. Science) to accelerate China's modernization. However, if we consider Conan Doyle's cultural practice and Cheng's as a whole, it does not take long to notice that they are in fact two sides of the same coin, and inseparable from each other, for together they create a colonial discourse and offer fragments of colonial identity.

Lastly, even though Cheng, like Conan Doyle, is constructing colonial relationships, their writings are different. In the Holmes stories, Conan Doyle takes the approach of ruthlessly excluding and eliminating all potentially contaminating factors in the periphery of the British Empire that might threaten and subvert the white male-dominated order of imperialism. He refuses, when he is able, to negotiate cultural differences in the "Third Space," and continuously attempts to contain the Orient and to transform it into a fixed object subject to the gaze of Western imperial powers. In comparison, in the Huo Sang Cases, Cheng takes a more inclusive and interactive approach in constructing the relationships between China and the West. Although he makes efforts to break away from the format of Chinese *gong-an* and its cultural

discourse and to mimic the narrative structure of the Holmes stories, he constantly negotiates the cultural difference in interstices by building interactions and associations around his detective hero Huo and his scientific reasoning power that challenge the stability of the boundaries between the Subject and the Object, Self and Other, in the cross-cultural dialogue between the East and the West.

Ambivalence Towards Science, Knowledge, and Modernity

Cheng's participation, consciously or not, in negotiating cultural differences and in constructing dialectical relationships within colonial discourse gives rise to his ambivalent attitude from time to time towards the progress of science and the pursuit of modernity, although he was one of the strongest advocates for these agendas among the May Fourth intellectuals. His play of ambivalence shows up in a number of places. First of all, In "Xue shouyin" 血手印 (A bloody hand print), Jing, a woman who newly immigrated to Shanghai, murders her husband in a well-designed plot. Later we learn that it was an illegal and forced marriage against Jing's will, and she had been repeatedly raped and beaten by the man who claimed to be her husband. When Jing reveals to Huo that she is a devoted reader of his crime cases and admires the detective's reasoning power, Huo reflects that the publication of his cases may have empowered her to design such a perfect murder, even though he is full of sympathy for her sufferings and believes that her "husband" deserved to be punished. Huo has a deep faith in science and uses his cases as an educational tool to bring a scientific spirit to society. However, at that moment, he hesitates: "on one hand, science can bring

civilization and wealth to the human society, but at the same time, there are people who are using science as a tool to murder other people.”³⁰ Huo’s ambivalence towards the spread of science and his concern about its potential harm is captured and emphasized. We also note that Huo is not blaming science itself for posing threats to society, but rather he is concerned with how people abuse science once they have acquired the knowledge.

Ambivalence also permeates Cheng’s narrative construction of science, created by the tensions existing in his binary cultural readings. As discussed in Chapter 3, Cheng places Chinese *gong-an* in an inferior position in comparison to the modern Holmes detective stories and categorizes it as traditional and outdated because it contains elements of superstition such as ghosts, dreams, knights-errant and martial arts. To construct modernity in the Huo Sang cases, Cheng consciously keeps a distance from *gong-an* and those supernatural happenings by emphasizing that there is a scientific explanation behind every phenomenon no matter how unrealistic it is. The supernatural is thus framed on the opposite side of science in Cheng’s perception of the modern.

For instance, in “Bieshu zhi guai” 别墅之怪 (The ghost in the villa), a business manager in Shanghai has just newly built a villa in the countryside for his summer vacation. But before he moves in, he receives reports that there are ghosts inside. During the night, fireballs are seen burning at the window and low sobbing flute music emanates from the villa. Even though there are witnesses to these paranormal activities, detective Huo deduces that it must be some criminals using people’s

³⁰ Cheng Xiaoqing, *Cheng Xiaoqing daibiaozuo*, p. 91.

superstition to take possession of the villa. At the end of the story, Huo's deduction is validated, for gangsters from northeast China have migrated to Shanghai badly in need of a headquarters in a secret location like that of the villa.

In another story "Guai fangke" 怪房客 (The odd tenant), the confrontation between science and superstition is further dramatized. Landlord Ma comes to detective Huo's door and asks him to help investigate Ye, an odd tenant of hers. Ma suspects that Ye has committed the crime of murder after she finds that the kitchen knife is gone and drops of blood are leaking through the wood floor from the Ye's room upstairs. However, based on his scientific investigation, Huo deduces that Ye is most likely a fortune-teller who has fallen victim to superstitions. In the end, it is confirmed that Ye has just followed the instructions in a fortune book and killed a white rooster to get a lucky hand in a lottery drawing.

Despite the fact that he sets up a clear-cut boundary between science and what he perceives as superstitions like ghosts and fortunetelling, Cheng shows an ambivalent attitude when it comes to supernatural phenomena like knights-errant and martial arts. One of the most recognizable images in the Huo Sang cases is the portrayal of an anonymous knight-errant given the nickname "Jiangnan yan" 江南燕 (The South-China swallow) because his character is constructed by following the model of martial arts heroes. He is a mysterious figure with special power. He is never physically present, but the presence of his actions is felt everywhere. He operates outside the law and society to help the oppressed and to enforce a personal sense of honor and justice.

Reminiscent of Robin Hood in the West, the South-China Swallow recognizes detective Huo's work and sometimes secretly offers assistance in dangerous situations.

For example, in "Huangpujiang zhong" 黄浦江中 (On the Huangpu River), Huo goes on board a ship to rescue two kidnapped children from *Wufu dang* 五福党 (Wufu gangsters), known for their cruelty and mercilessness. The South-China Swallow first warns Huo to act with caution, and then he fights together with Huo during the gun battle although he never shows his face publicly. Acting as he usually does, he steals the gangsters' money on the ship and disappears again. All these magical ways of fighting gangsters and taking money away without anyone's notice are commonly found in the actions of Chinese martial arts heroes who possess supernatural powers that enable them to establish justice when the official authorities fail to do so.

In the story "Shen long" 神龙 (The magic dragon), Cheng introduces to us another magical and mysterious figure, Ju Gongxia. The Chinese characters "Gongxia" 公侠 in Ju's given name mean "martial arts hero." After witnessing a seventeen year old girl drown herself in the river because of shame and depression, Ju decides to uphold justice by killing Mo Rongjin who has directly caused the tragedy by seducing the girl and abandoning her after she became pregnant. Although Ju has the power to escape without the police's noticing, he goes to court and confesses his crime when he hears that an innocent young man has been wrongly charged. Consequently, Ju is sentenced to life imprisonment in spite of detective Huo's efforts to defend his case. Magically, however, Ju breaks out of prison, escapes on a stormy night and is never found again.

Cheng calls his martial arts hero “the magic dragon,” and that is also the source of the title. Dragons are deeply rooted in Chinese culture and Chinese people often consider themselves “descendants of the dragon”; on the other hand, the dragon is popularly used in the discourse of martial arts novels to describe a knight-errant with supernatural powers. A popular saying, “shenlong jianshou bu jianwei” 神龙见首不见尾 (The magic dragon shows its head but you will never see its tail), portrays the mysterious nature of martial arts heroes. Cheng’s ambivalent attitude towards the relationship between science and martial arts is thought provoking, especially when it is compared to the relationship he constructed between science and ghosts and fortunetelling. The following narrative from the story “Shen long” will bring us a new understanding of the tensions in Cheng’s discourse on martial arts. Nostalgia and yearning for the romantic and heroic in the age of science and modernization is clearly evident as Bao writes:

The romantic complex of the Chinese people was always strong. However, I thought that these beautiful and warm romantic feelings had been taken away by the influence of modern material civilization, which rationalizes everything and has made life boring and plain with no wonders. But I am wrong. These noble and warm feelings about righteousness still remain in the blood of the Chinese race.³¹

³¹ Cheng Xiaoqing, *Yuanyang Hudie pai wenxue ziliao*, ed. Rui Heshi, p. 496.

Secondly, Cheng also acts ambivalently in reading the progressiveness of Western learning and knowledge and the possible effects of modernity on Chinese society. One of the most noticeable characteristics in the narrative is Cheng's ambivalence towards the universality of reason and truth during its cross-cultural implantation. For example, although Holmes's scientific reasoning methods in detection are highly regarded by the Chinese detective Huo, consciousness of and reflection on the participation of culture in knowledge making is constantly present in the discourse of the Huo Sang cases. In the story "Xiang shi" 箱尸 (The corpse in the trunk), when detective Huo's assistant Bao attempts to mechanically borrow Holmes's knowledge by using the label in the clothes as a clue to find the maker, Huo warns him that this method does not work in China because people's clothes do not contain such information. Instead, he directs Bao to focus on the lock used for the trunk, because the surface of the lock, as customary in China, is always gilded with the name of the maker.³² During this subtle cultural confrontation, Cheng's ambivalence about the self-unity of Western knowledge is already looming behind the texts.

This ambivalence towards Western knowledge is presented more intensely in "Yeban husheng" 夜半呼声 (A scream at midnight). In this mystery, a short narrative seemingly irrelevant to the case itself is inserted at the beginning and at the end of the investigation. A policeman's teenage son has been severely ill for more than one week. At first three traditional Chinese doctors are consulted to treat the child, but each of them gives a different diagnosis. Then the mother turns to superstition and consults a

³² Cheng Xiaoqing, "Xiang shi," quoted from *ibid*, p. 333.

local witch. But all efforts fail and the child does not get any better; instead, his health deteriorates day by day. At that crucial moment, detective Huo persuades the mother to consult with a physician practicing Western medicine. Miraculously, the child's condition improves within a short time. After seeing the positive results of the treatment, the mother is able to gradually break away from her suspicious beliefs.³³

This short narrative about illness and the search for treatment is full of symbolic meanings for China's national crisis at the turn of the twentieth century. China was the sick child who needed medicine to treat her illness. Chinese traditional medicine/learning/culture had proved to be ineffective and it failed to restore her health. Therefore Chinese intellectuals began to turn to Western medicine (implying learning and knowledge) for treatment, and this seemed to work in improving China's condition. Medicine and the search for treatment are repeated themes in the works of May Fourth writers. One of the best-known examples is Lu Xun's story "Yao" 药 (Medicine), in which an old couple superstitiously believe that they can cure their son's tuberculosis by feeding him a steamed bun after it is dipped in the fresh blood of a revolutionary on the day of execution. Autobiographical elements based on Lu Xun's bitter experiences with medicine and revolution permeate the narrative of this story. His father Zhou Boyi 周伯宜 died at the hands of a quack Chinese medical doctor whose treatments were based on superstitious beliefs; this motivated Lu Xun to seek education in Japan and to study Western medicine. In addition, Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875-1907), an outstanding female revolutionary and political figure who led uprisings to overthrow the Qing government,

³³ Cheng Xiaoqing, *Cheng Xiaoqing wenji*, pp. 41, 123.

was betrayed and denounced by close friends and publicly executed near Lu Xun's hometown.

In the story, the complicated interactions between the two parallel themes of medicine/superstition and revolution hold the key to our understanding of Lu Xun's condemnation of the man-eat-man Chinese mentality that is a consequence of China's scientific, cultural, and spiritual "backwardness." Simultaneously, despite the repeated failures and sacrifices of many revolutionaries, Lu Xun still keeps his hope for revolution high, for he believes it is a new "medicine" for China that will change the status quo, although it might not cure the souls and spirits of Chinese people. In her article "Lu Xun's 'Medicine'," literary critic Milena Dolezelová-Velingerová provides a detailed analysis of the principles that Lu Xun uses in manipulating information and in creating dynamic oppositions to express the bizarre juxtapositions of a society in tumult. She observes:

It is through a structural interpretation of "Medicine" that one can identify these juxtapositions and, therefore, better formulate Lu Xun's ideological message. Indeed, the intended message reflects the binary nature of the story's organization, for the dynamic relationship between the themes of darkness [referring to superstition] and revolution culminates in the

negation of the powers of darkness and the affirmation of a frightening, but cathartic symbol of revolution.³⁴

Therefore, through the intertextual reading of the narrative of “Yeban husheng” together with that of “Yao,” we perceive that Cheng and Lu Xun both criticize the foolishness of using superstition as medicine to cure China’s illness; this symbolizes the inability of traditional Chinese culture to save the nation from its crisis.

In “Yeban husheng,” although Western learning and knowledge are used as the medicine for China’s illness, the murder case located within the narrative structure presents a different side of the picture. Tian Wenmin has just returned to Shanghai from America after receiving his Ph.D. degree in science from the University of Chicago. He is hired for a professor’s position at Weixin University 维新大学 and soon becomes engaged to the daughter of Cao Qiying, a rich businessman who owns an iron company in Shanghai.³⁵ Shortly after the engagement, Tian is murdered and details of the mystery around his death start to unfold. It turns out that Tian had already been married before he went to study in America, and he still had a wife at home in the countryside when he became engaged to Cao’s daughter.

Besides teaching physics and chemistry at Weixin University, Tian publishes many articles in local newspapers advocating “free love” and “the abolishment of

³⁴ Dolezelová-Velingerová, *Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era*, ed. Merle Goldman, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 230-31.

³⁵ The name of the university “Weixin” 维新 means “reform” in Chinese. In the Huo Sang cases, many people’s names and place names bear meanings skillfully constructed by Cheng Xiaoqing to create tensions within the Chinese language structure.

family,” new ideas that he claims that he learned in the West.³⁶ During the time when he commits the crime of bigamy, Tian distorts the Western knowledge that he acquired in America to justify his pursuit of material gain by marrying a rich businessman’s daughter while he is still legally married to his wife. This is another of the moments when ambivalence emerges in the discourse of the Huo Sang cases. Cheng’s clever double-structure design opens up many possible readings as the two narratives about Western learning and knowledge create a textual tension that conducts constant dialogues, which destabilize the location of meaning.

The central concern is about the potential harm caused by the misuse of Western knowledge, especially when it is misinterpreted or exploited by potential criminals to lure their victims into traps. In the story “Shen long” (The magic dragon), the detective Huo’s assistant Bao writes, “[...] Nowadays there are many modern men, who claim that they respect women but actually they use them as prostitutes and toys.”³⁷ In the Huo Sang cases, many young girls fall and are taken advantage of under the banner of “free love,” a modern concept borrowed from the West. In “Wugong moying” 舞宫魔影 (The devil’s shadow in the dance-palace), the dancer Qiu Kexin provides such an example. She is seduced and raped by Wang Baixi and becomes a moneymaking machine for him by working as a late-night dancer in Shanghai. She bitterly recalls how she became his victim: “I was young... and blindly worshipped the call for “free

³⁶ Cheng Xiaoqing, *Cheng Xiaoqing wenji*, p. 101.

³⁷ Cheng Xiaoqing, *Yuanyang Hudie pai wenxue ziliao*, ed. Rui Heshi, p. 476.

love”...I fell to this devil’s [Wang Baixi] preaching and lost my virginity. I deserted my family and followed him to this evil city and started a life of hell!”³⁸

Last but not least, Cheng presents an ambivalent reading, to a certain extent, of the Chinese modernization project, and he questions how this process has shaped China’s society. There is an interesting reflection on the train at the beginning of the story “Lunxia xue” 轮下血 (Blood under the wheel). When Huo and his assistant Bao are taking the overnight train from Zhenjiang back to Shanghai, Bao engages in a philosophical reflection about the railroad, a modern method of transportation invented in the West and imported to China during the second half of the nineteenth century. He observes:

What makes traveling for people most troublesome is the long distance train. Although we rely, nowadays, on the progress of science, and there are trains that can travel at more than fifty miles an hour, which can almost be regarded as finally achieving convenience and speed, the human desire cannot be satisfied. If one rides a train, although it is only a trip of a couple of hours, one will unavoidably experience a feeling of impatience.³⁹

Bao’s ambivalence about the convenience of the modern train and its interaction with people’s psychological feelings have been vividly presented here. The dilemma of

³⁸ Cheng Xiaoqing, *Cheng Xiaoqing wenji*, p. 386.

³⁹ Ibid, English quote translated by Annabella Weisl, p. 1-2.

modern life is philosophically captured: more convenience and speed have actually made people more impatient with travel time.

In his Huo Sang cases, Cheng perceives that the train of China's modernization was going through a similar journey. With its accelerating steps of modernization and Westernization, Shanghai became one of the most modern cities in China and enjoyed great prosperity and economic growth in the early twentieth century. In "The City of Shanghai," Annabella Weisl writes:

The telephone rings, telegrams and mail arrive, the electric lights are switched on and one recognizes the features of a character in the shine of an electric bulb or an electric torch. All these new means of technology and communication such as the telegraph (1865), daily Chinese-language newspapers (1872), the rickshaw (1874), the railroad (1875), telephones (1888), the Imperial Post Office (1896), automobiles (1902) and streetcars (1902) were introduced to China, especially, Shanghai, at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.⁴⁰

Shanghai was a materialist metropolis, a city full of mixtures, clashes, and transformations. Western imperialist powers had concessions in the city that occupied an important place in Shanghai's modernization process.

⁴⁰ Weisl, "The City of Shanghai" in *Cheng Xiaoqing (1893-1976) and his Detective Stories in Modern Shanghai*, p. 54.

Shanghai was one of the first few cities in China that had adopted Western economic models and modern systems of operation for its financial market. On the one hand, this modernization made Shanghai a business hub that generated wealth and affluence that transformed people's lives. On the other hand, however, the temptation to become rich overnight and greed for material gains brought tragedy to many individuals and families. The economic progress of Shanghai at that time was closely associated with moral degeneration and decadent lifestyles. Not surprisingly, in *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, Perry Link suggests that the popular attitude at that time toward the crazy modern city, Shanghai in particular, was "anxious ambivalence."⁴¹

In his Huo Sang cases, Cheng shows particular interest in how the modernization process in Shanghai has shaped and changed people's views and values, defining people's behavior and social interactions. For instance, in "Yizhi xie" 一只鞋 (The shoe), Gao Youzhi, who is a bank manager in Hangzhou, a satellite city of Shanghai, puts large amounts of money into stocks to seek high-profit returns. However, the stock market in Shanghai unexpectedly crashes in a single day, and he falls into deep debt. To pay off these debts, he begins to make fraudulent transactions and moves bank money to his personal account. In the end, the crime that he commits not only ruins his own life but also brings about the murder of his innocent wife, sacrificed for his failure in the stock market.

⁴¹ Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, p. 227.

The Play Between the Urban and the Rural

In China's picture of modernity, the relationship between the urban and the rural was heatedly discussed in the May Fourth discourse. In *Shanghai Modern*, Leo Ou-fan Lee observes that Chinese modernity was presented quintessentially as an urban experience, which includes such elements as industrial growth and a materialist lifestyle.⁴² As a result, non-urban areas were excluded from China's modernization picture and "degenerated" into the unenlightened "other." The best example that we can draw might be Lu Xun's *Zhufu* 祝福 (The new year's sacrifice). The miserable servant life of the countrywoman, Xianglin's wife, is presented through the voice of an intellectual narrator from the city. Literary critic Rey Chow observes that this story is "one of the most compelling encounters between a member of the dominating class and a downtrodden 'other' in twentieth-century literature."⁴³ Her statement shows that, in Lu Xun's narrative construction, the values, culture, and tradition of the rural area were totally negated and condemned based on the measuring standards advocated by the urban area, namely education and enlightenment. Despite this overwhelming construction of the urban as the place for progress and enlightenment, there was a minority group of writers in the early twentieth century who held an ambivalent attitude towards the monolithic construction of the new urban modernity and turned to the countryside to seek the plurality and dialectics of China's modernization experience.

Shen Congwen 沈从文 (1902-1988), one of the best known May Fourth writers, searched for inspiration from his hometown, situated in the rural area of west Hunan

⁴² Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945*.

⁴³ Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity*, p. 107.

Province. In Shen's stories like "Xiaoxiao" 萧萧, "Sansan" 三三 and "Bian cheng" 边城 (The border town), the countryside stands not only as a geographical territory but also as a primitive force that can break the imprisonment of accumulated customs and the brashness of the Westernized urban modernity. Shen's portrayal of the primitive land is juxtaposed with his gendering of the main characters as adolescent country girls who are nursed and educated by nature, full of life's possibilities. The distinctions between the heroines and nature are blurred, so that these teenage female characters no longer stand out as the "traditional, visually fetishized objects"⁴⁴ gazed on by the surrounding world. For instance, the country girl Sansan encounters the city people in real life who are exemplified by a sumptuously rich young man from the city, probably an opium addict. It is through Sansan's eyes that the man's world is observed: he is clothed in white trousers and white shoes, with a sickly pale face; the nurse whom he brings with him wears a white dress and a white cap. The color white is a symbol of death in Chinese culture. In comparison to the vitality of the countryside, the "sickness" of the city is intrusive, contagious and threatening.

Cheng's engagement of the rural area is similar to that of Sheng Congwen, bringing it into confrontation and dialogue with the urban in his Huo Sang cases, although he mainly focuses on urban modernization in Shanghai. In Cheng's narrative construction, the rural area is undergoing crucial changes during its interactions with the urban, and he paints a picture of confusion and ambivalence. In "Shen long" 神龙

⁴⁴ Ibid.

(The magic dragon), Hu Shifang travels from the countryside to Shanghai to ask the detective Huo for help for his son who has been charged with the murder of his nephew. Before the meeting, Huo's assistant Bao imagines that Hu must be dressed in plain clothes and will immediately stand out in the crowd of the metropolis. However, when Hu arrives, Bao is shocked to see that he is dressed as fashionably as any local Shanghainese; Hu also hands them his business card which introduces him as manager of Qiankang Dye Shop in the countryside; Hu even follows urban customs by taking off his straw hat when he comes in the door. This is the first time in the story that the rural and urban binary opposition is subverted and the boundary is blurred. The rural is following in the footsteps of urban modernization by adopting its fashionable dresses and customs and is beginning the process of industrialization.

As the story unfolds, we learn that Hu's nephew Mo Rongjin has lived a decadent life in the countryside after he inherited a large piece of farmland from his uncle. When Mo is murdered, the police suspect that Hu's son has committed the crime to take over the land. However, it turns out that Mo was a migrant worker in a pharmacy store in Shanghai before he returned to the countryside. His life began to be shaped by the temptations of the modern cosmopolitan, and he became addicted to pornographic books and magazines. To satisfy his lust, Mo seduced a girl of about seventeen years old, made her pregnant and then abandoned her. The girl feels so ashamed that she drowns herself in the river. By means of this tragedy, Cheng presents to us the other side of rural transformation during its interaction with the urban: innocent countrymen

lose themselves when encountering the materialistic urban way of life and they easily fall victim to decadence, decay and moral degeneration.

In “Lunxia xue” 轮下血 (Blood under the wheel), Cheng examines a different side of the relationship between the rural and the urban. To rebel against arranged marriages and escape from their families’ oppressions, Gu Ziyou and You Aiquan, a young couple from the city Tianjin, marry each other secretly for love and elope to Liuye village to seek refuge. They rent a room at the peasant home of an old widowed mother and her two adult sons, Wang Dabao and Wang Erbao. Soon after the couple settles down, the elder brother Wang Dabao starts to behave inappropriately towards Gu’s wife. Wang ambushes Gu when Gu is on his way to the train station and attempts to murder him and take his wife. The story had a dramatic turn in the end: Wang does not succeed in murdering Gu; instead, he accidentally kills himself during the struggle.

The names of these characters are full of symbolic meaning. With last name and given name combined, the husband’s name “Gu Ziyou” 顾自由 means “look for freedom” and the wife’s name “You Aiquan” 尤爱权 is interpreted as “particularly love rights.” In contrast to these modern positive signifiers, the peasant’s given name “Dabao” 大宝 is a common traditional name that contains the Chinese character for “gold and treasures.” As the plot unfolds, the name begins to bear the negative connotation of “greed and lust.” The village’s name “Liuye” 柳叶 is also interesting. Its literal meaning is “willow tree leaves,” which has deep cultural meanings in literature. The willow tree and its leaves are popular images in classical Chinese poems. They symbolize the life and beauty of spring as the tree get new leaves in that

season;⁴⁵ it is also associated with nostalgia as the character “liu” 柳 shares the same *pinyin* pronunciation as the Chinese word “liu” 留 (to stay). On the other hand, the shape of the willow tree leaf is like a knife, a tool that can be used in good and bad ways.

These symbolic meanings map out and foreshadow the relationship between the city and the countryside that Cheng examines in this story. In fighting against repressions of traditional patriarchal family values, one place that modern young men and women in the city turn to is the countryside for the purpose of seeking escape, protection, and freedom. Until the turn of the twentieth century, the image of the rural area as refuge was deeply rooted in the philosophy and culture of Confucianism and Taoism. Traditional Confucian thought recognized the importance of agriculture as the basis of the state and took the humble peasant to be “a rational and perfectible human being.”⁴⁶ The Taoist practice in traditional China also idealized the contentment of country life and regarded it as a place to retreat for peace and harmony. However, soon after the rebellious young urban couple in this story settles down in the countryside, the beautiful bubble is burst, and they experience a sense of disillusionment, as it is not a garden of paradise as they have imagined, but a place as dangerous as the city and not free from human evils.

⁴⁵ “Yong liu” 咏柳 (An ode to the willow) is one of the best-known poems about willow trees. The poet is He Zhizhang 贺知章 (ca. 659-744) of the Tang Dynasty. In this poem, he admires the graceful figure of the willow tree and the beautiful color of its leaves and the magic transformative power of spring.

⁴⁶ Mary Clabaugh Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-Chih Restoration, 1862-1874* (New York: Atheneum, 1967), p. 3.

By exploring these intricate dialectical relationships that are shaping both the urban area and the rural area, Cheng breaks the silence of the rural area and brings it to the dialogue, and thus challenges the May Fourth writers' monolithic construction of urban modernity. In these narratives, Cheng's ambivalence towards modernization emerges and lingers both within and outside of the discourse of the Huo Sang cases. In addition to that, Cheng's ambivalence towards the supremacy of science, the tendency of rationalization and the role of Western knowledge in shaping China's society, destabilizes these foundational concepts upon which Conan Doyle's Holmes stories are built, even though only to a limited extent. The essential unity established in Western detective fiction is disturbed and interrupted. Cheng has created a site of contested discourses in his Huo Sang cases where a discursive construct is dynamically negotiated in relation to its Western counterpart.

Conclusion:

Detective Fiction, Politics, and Cultural Anxiety

Moon's down, crows cry and frost fills all the sky;

By maples and boat lights, I sleepless lie.

Outside Suzhou Hanshan temple is in sight;

Its ringing bells reach my boat at midnight.

— Zhang Ji 张继 (715-779, Chinese Poet)¹

The significance of my research lies in my consideration of the multi-layered dialogues and negotiations conducted between Chinese detective fiction of the Golden Age, especially Cheng Xiaoqing's Huo Sang cases, and Conan Doyle's Holmes detective stories at the turn of the twentieth century. It is my hope that I have contributed to our understanding about the transnational and cross-boundary travels of cultural elements that permeate interstices of both Chinese and Western detective discourses in relation to issues such as tradition, modernity, nationalism, gender, identity, and politics. It has been an enjoyable experience to discover structural instabilities when meaning collapses and to capture glimpses of ambiguities that fall beyond control of text and/or its author. As part of popular culture, detective fiction's power of participation and engagement in shaping complex cultural relationships between China and Britain, Orient and Occident, have

¹ Zhang Ji, "Fengqiao yebo" 枫桥夜泊 (A night mooring by maple bridge) in *Yingyi Tangshi jueju baishou* 英译唐诗绝句百首 (English translation of one hundred Tang poems), trans. Wang Dalian 王大濂, (Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe, 1998), p. 94.

continually amazed me throughout my search for answers to the questions that I posed at the beginning of this study.

In the Holmes stories, to a large extent, Conan Doyle's construction of a dark, diseased, dangerous, menacing, and uncivilized Orient serves to justify the imperial rule of the British Empire over territories and societies that had fallen behind in the trajectory of modernization. Britain's colonial superiority is interpreted and perceived as a modernizing force that defines reason, science, and progress through the symbolic portrayal of Holmes, the white male British detective who possesses extraordinary abilities in detecting Oriental abnormalities and contagions. The racial paranoia that permeates Conan Doyle's detective discourse had its roots in Empire's collective fear about the Orient's resistance and resilience against its colonial rule and exploitations. The Second Afghan War and the Indian Mutiny, as recalled in the Holmes stories, were threatening not just because they destabilized and reshaped the concept of the white male British identity that dominated Victorian thinking about gender and imperialism. But more importantly, they were dangerous because that they represented the Orient's attempts to overthrow British colonial rule and to compete for global power both economically and politically. The compulsive need in the Holmes stories to demonize and to criminalize the Orient thus betrayed the Empire's anxiety toward an emerging and developing Asia that strove to modernize itself and to gain freedom and independence.

Although the Orient is projected as a contaminating and dangerous entity that threatens British superiority, Conan Doyle's discourse of Orientalism contains spaces that allow other values to emerge and to participate in the dialogue with those unfavorable

depictions. First and foremost, Asia is also a place of wealth created by great civilizations. The "backwardness" of the Orient at the turn of the twentieth century was due in large part to Britain's colonial exploitations. The prosperity of the Empire was built on treasures and resources stolen from the very colonies that had also provided raw materials, cheap labor, and markets for Britain's industrialization and urbanization. The symbolic empty Agra treasure box in "The Sign of Four" not only implies the Orient's loss of civilization and affluence, but it also points out how Britain accumulated its wealth in the first place, a criminal act that cast doubt on the moral superiority of British colonizers.

Britain's market economy, on the other hand, alerted the imperialists to the importance of "want creation" and the benefits of creating an increasing number of consumers with purchasing capabilities. For instance, Lord Macaulay delivered a speech as early as in July 1833 that urged Britain to construct a well-governed India so that its people were not too poor to buy from English manufactures. As he put it, "To trade with civilized men is infinitely more profitable than to govern savages."² This attitude resonates with Britain's conflicting views on its opium trade with China, as I have discussed in Chapter 2. The British East Indian Company acquired lucrative profits by dumping opium products on the Chinese market, but meanwhile, concerns started to grow about Chinese consumers' potential power to purchase other British products as they became addicted to opium. It was thus in Britain's best economic interest to build a profitable Orient in its own image; however, a well-governed Orient could pose serious

² As quoted in Thomas R. Metcalf, *New Cambridge History of India*, part III, vol. 4, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 12.

threats to the stability of the Empire, an anxiety that permeates Conan Doyle's construction of the relationships between the Orient and the Occident in his Holmes stories.

In this process of colonial clashes and interaction, the Orient shaped and was shaped by the British Empire; it also transformed and was transformed by British travelers, settlers, and colonizers. Despite its predominant dark image as a place of contamination and danger, the ambiguities and textual tensions in the Holmes stories allow us a glimpse of how the Orient was also a land of opportunity for some white British males who failed in their lives at home. In "The Sign of Four," "never much of a credit to the family" and "always a bit of a rover," Jonathan Small takes the Queen's shilling and joins the British troops in India to start a new life.³ In spite of the hideously criminal nature of the Indian Mutiny as portrayed in the story, it is this event that offers Small the opportunity to take possession of one fourth of the Agra treasure. In "The Speckled Band," Roylott is born to a ruined Saxon family and an aristocratic pauper father who lived a horrible life. "Seeing that he must adapt himself to the new conditions," Roylott leaves for Calcutta, the capital of British India, to seek wealth and prestige.⁴ There he soon establishes a large medical practice and marries a young widow with a considerable sum of money.

I have focused mainly on how the Orient is constructed as the inferior Other that threatens and contaminates Victorian culture and values. But I also recognize those subtle complications and unstable moments, as discussed above and at the end of Chapter

³ Conan Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 144.

⁴ Conan Doyle, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, p. 232.

2, which allow us to assume multiple and split personas and to trace ambiguities and textual tensions in the Holmes stories. At a later time, I would also like to pursue such aesthetic issues as the internal relationships among the text, the narrator, and the author, and the cultural history of how Victorian society was shaped by colonialism in relation to gender and class. Dr. Watson's reliability as the narrator is also an issue I would like to pursue. In addition, Conan Doyle was knighted in 1902 for his publication of a political pamphlet *The War in South Africa: Its Causes and Conduct*, in which he justified Britain's role in the Boer War.⁵ By contrast, he did not consider the Holmes stories as a literary achievement but merely as an entertaining pastime. The possible distance between the author and his text suggests a certain instability that may further complicate the ambiguities in the detective discourse. Lastly, besides the external threats posed by the Orient to the Empire in the forms of war, disease, poison, and opium smoking, there are also places where Conan Doyle implied concerns about the internal healthiness of Victorian society. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson returns to London from the Afghan War and perceives the metropolis as "that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained."⁶ In "The Speckled Band," Helen Stoner declares that, "violence of temper approaching to mania has been hereditary in the men of the family," an internal insanity that suggests a deep anxiety about the deficiency of male

⁵ In 1900, Conan Doyle traveled to South Africa and served as doctor in a medical unit that treated British soldiers wounded and diseased in the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). After his service, he wrote *The Great Boer War* (1901) and the political pamphlet that he was knighted for.

⁶ Conan Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 15.

whiteness and its potential degeneration.⁷

It is of great significance to examine, therefore, not only how British imperialism shapes the Orient in the Holmes stories, but also how its interaction with the Orient transforms the class and gender structures of Victorian society and shifts what it means to be British. In studying these multi-layered relationships, I have detected a strong desire in the Holmes stories to denationalize British modernity, marked by science, reason, and progress, and to transform it into universal standards and reference points for the evaluation of the Orient. Yet, to a large extent, this desire eventually manifests itself as a process of nationalization in which concerns and anxieties about the Orient are essentially about Britain itself, which was struggling to cope with changes from both inside and outside at the turn of the twentieth century. In contrast, I have observed that in the Chinese detective discourse, these relationships move in almost reverse directions. Detective translators and writers of the Golden Age were obsessed with a nationalism that would save China from its crisis. After many reform attempts ended in failure, these intellectuals turned to the West for knowledge, science, democracy, and modernity. Through their translations of the Holmes stories and the creation of modern detective stories, they sought to bring about what they considered a national mission, the education and enlightenment of Chinese society. The original process of nationalization thus turned into a form of denationalization, as Western conceptualizations of modernity began to be applied as universal standards to measure the merits of traditional Chinese literature and culture, such as *gong-an*.

⁷ Conan Doyle, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, p. 234.

The distinctions of old and new, past and present, traditional and modern, East and West, were at the center of this massive movement of denationalization. The overwhelming emphasis on “new” and “modern” was a discursive construction that attempted to break away from the cult of antiquity in Confucian thought and to pave the way for Western concepts and ideologies. In traditional Chinese culture, the “old” and the “past” are considered the repository of truth, wisdom, and human virtues and values. Confucius once said, “I transmit but do not innovate; I am truthful in what I say and devoted to antiquity.”⁸ The responsibility of intellectuals is thus not to create anything new, but to transmit the heritage of the ancients. The antiquity that Confucius referred to was a lost antiquity and a mythical golden age that intellectuals had to seek, almost reinvent, and follow. This cult of the past dominated the thinking of Confucian scholars till the end of the nineteenth century, and they evaluated modern practices by invoking the authority of the ancients. At the turn of the twentieth century and especially after the May Fourth Movement, however, this extolling of values of the past was condemned with the call of the revolutionary and iconoclastic slogan “Down with Confucius and Sons.” Traditional Chinese culture and its value system became the inferior Other of its Western counterpart; Western knowledge as “new” and “modern” began to be imported to China with great enthusiasm.

Although marginalized during the May Fourth Movement, Chinese detective translators and writers followed the same trajectory of Western modernity. They introduced the Holmes stories as new, modern, and progressive to replace the norms and

⁸ Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. D. C. Lau, (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1992), p. 56.

conversions of native Chinese *gong-an* stories. Yet I have discovered that these intellectuals were not simply borrowing from the Western detective discourse without any cultural scrutiny or surgery; but rather, whether consciously or not, they were offering a unique response to the Western model of modernity through a subtle and complicated process of indigenization. A variety of indigenizing cultural elements permeate their translations and the detective stories that they created on both structural and thematic levels. The manipulations and adaptations of the Holmes stories and the ambiguities and cultural differences that Cheng presented in his Huo Sang cases demonstrate the active role that these intellectuals played in deciphering and debating about Western signs of meaning.

Considerations about readers' cultural training and responses played an important part in shaping the process of indigenization. First of all, detective stories were perceived to have the power to mobilize a large number of readers of different social classes to participate in China's modernization project by following the call for science and democracy. Chinese translators and writers practiced utilitarianism by using the political function of detective fiction under the guise of entertainment that required only low levels of literacy. In addition, readers of detective fiction at the turn of the twentieth century were trained in classical literature and they expected familiar literary norms before they had any contact with Western literary narratives. These factors shaped pioneering detective translators' choice of an education model that took a step-by-step approach in introducing exotic Western cultural elements. This model is deeply rooted in the Confucian methods of educating his disciples. As one of Confucius' favorite students

Yan Yuan recalled, “The Master is good at leading one on step by step. He broadens me with culture and brings me back to essentials by means of the rites.”⁹ This partly explains why in the beginning translators chose to indigenize the Holmes stories to avoid shocking readers.

On the other hand, commercial considerations also played a role in the strategies that translators used to familiarize readers with non-native cultural elements. Trained in classical literature as readers, these intellectuals were expected to take *keju* 科举 (civil exams) of the Qing government; if they passed those exams, they would be recruited into the bureaucratic system that guaranteed a stable income and high prestige. However, in 1905, the imperial examination system was abolished, cutting off the only way for these scholars to secure a living in a government position. As a result, as the commercial printing industry and new business practices developed, a large proportion of these “useless” idlers became translators and writers who depended on writing to make a living and to express their political ideas. A dialectic commercial relationship was thus established between readers and translators, who were keen to take readers’ responses and expectations into consideration during the process of translation as they now relied on remunerations for family income.

Despite the fact that they embraced the Holmes stories with enthusiasm, translators and writers of detective stories had no way to escape from and completely discard traditional Chinese literary norms, culture, and values. Native cultural elements permeate their entire translation process, their writing of detective stories, and their

⁹ Ibid, p. 78.

negotiations and interactions with the Occident. In fact, whether aware of it or not, they used traditional Chinese cultural discourse as a powerful tool to shape and sharpen their responses to Western modernity embodied in the Holmes stories. It enabled them to detect cultural differences more effectively and to question the universality of Western knowledge more critically. For example, in “Yeban hushing” 夜半呼声 (A scream at midnight), Tian Wenmin, who returns from America with a Ph.D. in science, abandons the wife of his youth/poverty in the countryside and becomes engaged to a rich businessman’s daughter in Shanghai. Although Tian attempts to justify his conduct by borrowing the Western concept of “free love,” author Cheng Xiaoqing disputes his argument and sentences him to death on the basis of deeply held traditional values that consider bigamy a terrible crime that could deserve capital punishment.

The theme of *zaokang zhiqi* 糟糠之妻 (the wife one married when one was poor) permeates Chinese literature, folklore, and operas. It can be traced back to *Shijing* 诗经 (The odes) dated from the tenth to the seventh century BC, in which a number of forsaken wives condemn the unfaithful husbands who discarded them after their families ascended to fame and affluence. This theme also resonates poignantly with the case of Qin Xianglian 秦香莲 in the Judge Bao stories: Qin, a mother of two young children, is abandoned by her husband Chen Shimei 陈世美, a scholar who rises to power from poverty by passing the imperial examinations and who marries the Emperor’s sister while hiding his marital status. When the case is brought to trial, despite intimidation and objections from several imperial family members, Judge Bao executes Chen after Chen attempts to have Qin murdered to cover up his secret.

As I have noted in many other Huo Sang cases, these differences, clashes, and confrontations between old and new cultural values and between East and West gave rise to a sense of anxiety and to an identity crisis that resonate with the tensions in the Holmes stories. Class and gender were two of the most important factors that complicated the construction of nationhood. Cheng Xiaoqing imagined a modern China that operates largely within the constraints formulated by the West; this calls into question Benedict Anderson's view that a collective image of the nation is constructed through popular processes.¹⁰ However, Cheng did not passively accept the Western model of modernization; rather, he negotiated cultural differences with the Holmes stories and showed his ambivalence about the ways that modernity shaped people's mentalities and moral values. Furthermore, the class clashes among May Fourth intellectuals in handling the relationships between the urban and the rural revealed the diversity of China's modernization experience. They also raised questions about how the Chinese national identity should be shaped and transformed, as critically captured and debated by Cheng in his Huo Sang cases.

In both Chinese detective fiction and Western detective fiction at the turn of the twentieth century, gender constituted another indispensable part in the building of nationhood, whether in its presence or absence. Responding to the gender roles constructed in the Holmes stories, Cheng challenged Conan Doyle's depictions of women as silent, invisible, passive, and domestic members of Victorian society who fall into the

¹⁰ Based on my readings of Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, and Partha Chatterjee's *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Studies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

category of either angels or demons. In Cheng's detective discourse, the emergence of the New Woman and the public presence of modern girls in the metropolis of Shanghai resonated with the May Fourth call for the liberation of women. The male intellectuals realized that, without the participation of women, true democracy and modernization could not be achieved in China. They advocated women's rights and condemned the restraints and oppressions imposed on women by Confucianism and the patriarchal value system that it represented. The new China that these male intellectuals hoped to build, however, was not a gender-neutral society. To a large extent, they were merely replacing the Confucian patriarchy with a new form of patriarchy borrowed from the West. Although formed in a different political context, the blatantly male-centered slogans of "Mr. Science" and "Mr. Democracy" that they promoted were as gendered and patriarchal as some of traditional Confucian ideologies.

As Tani E. Barlow puts it, the construction of New Woman by May Fourth intellectuals was "first and foremost a trope in the discourses of masculinist, Europeanist, Chinese realist fiction."¹¹ The detective translators and writers at that time participated in these dialogues on gender issues on both global and local levels. Finding no answer from the Holmes stories, they fell into a profound identity crisis and felt strong anxiety about their potentially marginalized social status and declining political influence as a result of the impact that the social reform had on women. Under what scholar Xueping Zhong calls "male marginality complex," it is not surprising that Cheng Xiaoqing let his female protagonist Tao Xiaodong die of overwork at the end of the story "Bai shajin" 白纱巾

¹¹ Barlow, "Theorizing Woman" in *Body, Subject & Power in China*, ed. Angela Zito and Tani E. Barlow, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 267.

(The white handkerchief), for she is a New Woman figure who presents herself as fashionable, educated, independent, patriotic, and with extraordinary reasoning ability comparable to the male detective Huo Sang.¹²

My research is by no means a closed project, and I have pointed out some of the other directions that I might explore. I believe that my research on the entanglements between Chinese detective fiction and Western detective fiction at the turn of the century can help to expand our understanding of how each side positioned itself in the complexities of colonialism and the relationships between the East and the West, how each discourse shaped the culture and values of its times, and how each party interacted with readers through a dialectic power of transformation. I have pinpointed a variety of cultural elements that permeate Conan Doyle's discourse concerning Orientalism, the Chinese translations of the Holmes stories, and the writing of modern detective stories. They figure as factors that constantly disturb the autonomy of meaning, intervene in the integrity of grand narrative, and unveil the resilience of deeply held cultural norms and values. Through my comparative studies of both Chinese and Western detective discourse, I hope that a more comprehensive picture has been presented of the relationships between the Orient and the Occident through the cultural lenses of detective fiction and also of how nationalization and denationalization fluctuated as a result of difference sources of anxiety and identity crisis. The subtle and complicated process of indigenization that I have discovered provides a unique perspective on how Chinese detective translators and writers of the Golden Age conducted their negotiations and

¹² Xueping Zhong, *Masculinity Besieged?: Issues of Modernity and Male Subjectivity in Chinese Literature of the Late Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

dialogs with their Western counterparts.

The engaging powers of the Holmes stories and the Huo Sang cases that I have observed travel far beyond the turn of the twentieth century. With the emergences of new media such as film and television, the Holmes series in particular has undergone various adaptations that continuously open up new spaces of meaning and participate in the cultural readings of different generations. Beginning with his first screen appearance as early as 1900 in the Mutoscope film *Sherlock Holmes Baffled*, Sherlock Holmes has been frequently portrayed in film.¹³ For instance, the classic Holmes TV series in the 1980s and 1990s starring Jeremy Brett has a heavy Victorian flavor and has elicited reflection upon the dialectic relationships between originals and adaptations. In contrast, the two recently released films (2009 and 2011) based on Holmes in which Robert Downey Jr. plays the role of the detective have been criticized for the way the involvement of high technologies has shaped and transformed the transcendence value of the Holmes stories. Interestingly, the upcoming new Holmes series “Elementary” by CBS has cast Lucy Liu, an American actress of Taiwanese-descent, as Joan Watson, replacing Dr. Watson, the “sober” assistant to Holmes. This shift of gender and ethnic roles will surely raise questions about how the boundaries of Holmes stories have been expanded and how space has been created for new meanings and interpretations.

The fate of detective fiction in China, on the other hand, has gone through ups and

¹³ Jon Tuska, *The Detective in Hollywood: The Movie Careers of the Great Fictional Private Eyes and Their Creators* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), p. 1.

The Mutoscope was one of the earliest motion picture devices, created by American inventor Herman Casler (1867-1939). It did not project on a screen and provided viewing to only one person at a time.

downs with the changes of political environments. The first half of the twentieth century witnessed the popular success of translated works of Western detective stories and creations of modern Chinese detective stories, such as the Huo Sang cases by Cheng Xiaoqing and the Lu Ping mysteries by Sun Liaohong. A large number of detective stories were adapted into films during that time and enjoyed huge popularity in the metropolis of Shanghai. For example, one of Cheng's representative works "Jiangnan yan" 江南燕 (The South-China swallow) became a great success after it was made into a film by Shanghai wenlian yingpian gongsi 上海文联影片公司, in which nationally renowned actor Zheng Junli 郑君里 (1911-1969) played the role of Huo Sang.

From the early 1950s till the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), however, detective fiction was banned and labeled as "leftover" from traditional Confucian society and pleasure-seeking bourgeoisie literature that corrupted people's minds. Detective writers like Cheng were persecuted and classified as anti-revolutionary "right-wing" traitors; many of them committed suicide or died of torture and starvation-related diseases. Conan Doyle's Holmes stories were also considered "poisonous weeds" because of their advocating and endorsing of capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism, and their portrayal of Holmes as a highly individualistic detective who alienates the proletariat when solving crimes.¹⁴

These negative political views of detective fiction began to dissipate in the early 1980s and publications of detective stories resumed again. Since then, the Huo Sang

¹⁴ Based on my reading of Liu Kun's 刘埴 article "Zenyang zhengque de yuedu 'fu-er-mo-si' tan'an" 怎样正确地阅读“福尔摩斯”探案 (How to correctly read the Sherlock Holmes stories) in *Dushu* 读书 (Book reviews), no. 5, 1959.

stories have gradually started to receive more attention, although they are still excluded from the Chinese literary canon. During the past few decades, only two of the Huo Sang cases, “Wuhou de guisu” 舞后的归宿 (A home to return after the dance) and “Huqiu nü” 狐裘女 (The woman in a fox-fur robe), were adapted as films in the years of 1988 and 1989. Yet I am very optimistic that modern Chinese detective stories of the Golden Age will enjoy more popularity in the near future, not only in China and but potentially also in the West. In *Sherlock in Shanghai*, Chinese-American scholar Timothy C. Wong translated eight of the Huo Sang stories into English, all of which except one represent the first translations of Cheng Xiaoqing’s writings available to readers of English or any other non-Chinese language.¹⁵ As part of unofficial Chinese literary history and due to its accessibility to a large number of grass-roots readers, detective fiction holds the power to continuously transform our points of view and engage us in interactions with different narratives located between old and new, traditional and modern, East and West.

¹⁵ Wong, *Sherlock in Shanghai*, p. x.

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