

**The Failure of Animal Symbolisation in the Plantationocene of
“The Adventure of the Crooked Man” (1893) by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**

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Abstract

This paper argues that “The Adventure of the Crooked Man” (1893) by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle uses animal symbolism, especially of snakes, birds and mongooses, to express hopes and fears at the time of British imperial decline, concerning the public memory of the Sepoy rebellion in 1857. However, the short story’s attempt to use the mongoose to support imperial authority symbolically fails, as the mongoose plays two contradictory roles, as the hero against snake-like rebels and as the unsuccessful attacker of a caged canary, which popularly symbolised Victorian women. Furthermore, reading the mongoose symbol in the context of colonial plantations, this paper argues that the commodification of the mongoose to perpetuate colonial power disrupts the colonial symbolisation of the mongoose in both aspects and exposes the British Empire as the origin of racist and anthropocentric violence.

Keywords: Sherlock Holmes, animal studies, Indian rebellion of 1857, colonialism, plantations

“The Adventure of the Crooked Man” (1893) by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is solved not only by Holmes’ reading of the crime scene but also by the revelation of an animal performer with a “crooked” back, Henry Wood, who uses Teddy the mongoose and his defanged cobra for his performance at a military canteen in Aldershot. The mysterious death of Colonel James Barclay, whose respectable family life is praised in the regiment (Doyle, 2009, p.158), is the result of his own guilt from betraying Wood, his Irish compatriot and, at the time of the Sepoy rebellion in 1857, a comrade in the same regiment. Barclay tricks Wood into running into the rebels and Wood is later tortured and thus disfigured by the rebels, because Barclay wants to get rid of Wood, his romantic rival, and marry Nancy Devoy, whom they both love. Wood does not die and is enslaved by a hill tribe in India, before he escapes and learns conjuring tricks in Punjab becoming a performer. The returning Wood, who misses England’s bright green

fields and hedges (p. 171), stays at a boarding house, works as an animal performer and runs into Nancy Devoy, who becomes Nancy Barclay through her marriage to James Barclay, and Miss Morrison, her friend, on the streets of Aldershot. Wood and Nancy Devoy learn about each other's lives and thus Nancy Devoy, returning home, has a fight with her husband about his betrayal. Wood follows her, carrying boxes containing his performing animals. Teddy, Wood's mongoose, rushes into the Barclays' house, attempting to reach for the canary in the cage. Barclay sees Wood through the French windows and, shocked, has a stroke, leading to his death before his head has hit the fender, bleeding profusely. Nancy screams and faints. Wood catches his mongoose and picks the lock which has to be opened from the inside, but, fearing he might be accused of murdering Barclay, he leaves the scene of the crime. The crime scene remains under lock and key, with a few of Teddy the mongoose's footprints inside and Wood's footprints outside.

In Watson's narration, the story begins with Holmes visiting him at his home very late at night and asking him to join his journey to Aldershot to investigate the locked-room mystery. The crime scene for Holmes befuddles him because of the footprints of the mongoose, which Holmes and Watson cannot identify. Nancy remains unconscious from the shock and is suspected of the murder of her husband. Holmes then interrogates Miss Morrison and finds Wood's landlady, who leads him to Wood. In order to exculpate Nancy, Wood reveals his history with James Barclay and Nancy Devoy. He also reveals Teddy the mongoose to Watson and he tells Holmes and Watson he prefers calling it "a snake-catcher" (p.172). At the end of the story, Holmes decides not to reveal the history of romantic rivalry and betrayal, while Major Murphy, who informs Holmes about the case, considers apoplexy to be the cause of Barclay's death.

The short story does not only rely on the animal performer for the truth of the case, it also requires a menagerie, in both physical and metaphorical forms, to explicate the complex narratives concerning the Sepoy rebellion. Wood compares the situation of besiegement in the uprising to rats in a cage being threatened by a terrier (p. 170). Wood also compares his non-normative body to that of a chimpanzee (p. 171) and a camel (p. 169). The story also employs the mongoose as the main actor of the story, which does not only puzzle Holmes and Watson but also sees it react - with other non-human animals, the defanged cobras in Wood's show and the caged canary in the Barclays' household. As both Barclay and Wood take part in the battle against the rebels in India, the return of the mongoose evokes both the haunting horror of the past, the invasion of the Barclays' ideal home and a hope for the future, against the symbolic Indian cobras.

The Sepoy rebellion, or the 1857 Indian uprising¹, the historical background of Wood and Barclay's romantic conflict, is a shocking chapter in the history of the British Empire, as Sepoy soldiers of the British East India Company were considered trustworthy and loyal before the uprising (Bender, 2016, p.4). Sepoy soldiers, from "sipahi", the term by which the British East India Company referred to "the native soldiers" (Pati, 2010, p. xiii), in colonial India rebelled against British army officers at Meerut on 10th May 1857, presumably because of the rumour that the new type of ammunition "required the bullet to be bitten" and the bullets were greased with either "the fat of cattle or pig" (p. xiv). Such an action challenged Hindu soldiers, who considered cattle sacred, as well as Muslim soldiers, who considered eating pork contamination (p.xiv)². The rebels later marched to Delhi, taking control of the city (Bender, 2016, p.2 - 3). The rebellion against the British Empire then spread, mainly in the north, northwestern and central India (Pati, 2010, p.xiii). The rebellion was even more shocking in the British memory after the Cawnpore incident, when British residents and soldiers were besieged by the rebels, promised a safe passage but betrayed. British women and children were killed and their bodies were thrown into a well (Bender, 2016, p.3). The Cawnpore incident, Bender (2016) argues, justified "the already growing use of brutal force" by the British imperial army (p.3). The concerns about white women being attacked by Indian rebels led to the fabrication of "eye-witnessed" accounts about Indian rebels raping British women (Pati, 2010, p.xiv). Concern about the safety of white women encountering racialised men also appears in "The Crooked Man".

The 1890s, when "The Crooked Man" was published, was "[t]he most productive period in the history of the Mutiny novel" (Chakravarty, 2005, p.6) and the popular literary imagination of the uprising suggests both "a fantasy of mastery" at the time of British imperial domination of India in the 1890s and "underlying anxieties of a colonial regime and a garrison state ... in the midst of ... the forms of life and the lived everydayness of the indigenous world" (p.7). "The Adventure of the Crooked Man", published in 1893, corresponds to Chakravarty (2005)'s argument, as it shows both mastery and anxiety concerning imperial matters invading the metropole. Additionally, I argue, such anxieties correspond with British imperial fears of decline, "in which Britain's primacy as a

¹ This paper uses the terms "Sepoy rebellion", "1857 Indian uprising", "Indian rebellion" and "Indian uprising" interchangeably. Even though the term "The Mutiny" is also prevalently used in Victorian writings, I prefer other terms mentioned in order to emphasise the great and long-lasting influence of the rebellion, which was not a mere mutiny.

² Biswamoy Pati (2010) argues that the assumption that the rebellion was caused by ammunition mostly came from British colonisers in India (p.xiii). Jill Bender (2016) adds that the focus on the ammunition problem "did not challenge the legitimacy of British colonial control or validate Indian unrest" (p.5).

global economic power was rivaled by Germany and America” (Ledger and Luckhurst, 2000, p.xiii).

This research article argues that “The Adventure of the Crooked Man” by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle fails to use the mongoose to express colonial anxieties and this failure challenges popular animal symbols associated with the British Empire and exposes colonial violence. The presence of the mongoose in the story functions in twofold colonial symbolism in relation to the late nineteenth-century British popular racist fantasies concerning the Sepoy rebellion, alternatively called 1857 Indian uprising, as both a loyal hero and a foreign, invading villain. As Teddy the mongoose fights a snake, a nineteenth-century popular symbol of India and the unruly Indian landscape (Bhaumik, 2017, p.233), the mongoose becomes a symbol of the “helpful native” (Kuntzer, 2000, p. 26). Yet, as Teddy also invades the Barclays’ villa and attempts to catch a canary, observed by Holmes (Doyle, 2009 p.164), the mongoose also plays the role of the villainous sexualised invader, as a caged pet bird was also a popular Victorian image for women (Shefer, 1991, p.468). The contradictory roles, firstly, suggest the loss of colonial power in defining and thus controlling the human and the non-human, especially the mongoose. Secondly, this paper argues that both roles given to the mongoose are exposed as colonial theatrics, pointing to the true culprit, which is neither Henry Wood nor James Barclay nor the mongoose, but the colonial plantation economy.

In the first part of the textual analysis, Teddy’s heroism against Indian snakes is exposed as only a performance of victory, which is never completed and thus suggests both the colonialist desire to control and the colonialist failure. Teddy’s performance also raises concerns about animal cruelty, which the short story ironically also questions. In the second part, Teddy’s role as a foreign invader and the canary’s role as European women reveals that the plantation economy as well as Victorian patriarchy cause this encounter between non-human animals, both in physical and metaphorical forms, to happen. The second part also discusses how the foreign, especially in the form of the colonial plantation, is not foreign to the Victorian domestic space but is even integral to the construction of the Victorian home. Influenced by Nicole Shukin’s concept of “animal capital” and the concept of “the plantationocene”, originated by Donna Haraway (2016), this paper contrasts animal symbolism with commodified animal bodies in order to reveal the failure to control the animal, linguistically and physically, and expose how plantation economies do not only change the ecosystem but also construct fictions and symbols in order to keep the domestic away from the foreign.

Literature Review

Most writings on Sherlock Holmes' relationship to the British Empire include "The Adventure of the Crooked Man" as one of their examples of the imperial anxiety about British degeneracy, and yet "The Crooked Man" is not their main focus, despite its complexity in terms of imperial and racial politics. Andrew Glazzard (2018), in *The Case of Sherlock Holmes*, argues that Colonel Barclay is one of the Gothic evildoers in the Sherlock Holmes series who have gone "bad in the East" (p.20). "The Crooked Man" is undoubtedly included in the category of fictions after the Sepoy rebellion in the nineteenth century and it shows how, at home and abroad, the English could not escape the fruit of "white man's misdeeds" in the context of the Sepoy rebellion (p.136), especially in the form of white men's betrayal of one another (p.130). Leslie Haynsworth (2001) in "Sensational Adventures: Sherlock Holmes and His Generic Past" also considers "The Crooked Man", like *The Sign of Four*, the representation of domestic repercussions of imperial crimes (p. 473). Roos Brekelmans (2010)' blog post on Sherlock Holmes and Orientalism called "'It's a mongoose!' Imperialism and Orientalism in Victorian Detective Fiction" on 6th March 2010 seems intriguingly, from the title, to focus on "The Crooked Man", and yet the blog post only discusses it alongside *The Sign of Four* and "The Speckled Band", considering it one of the examples of the representation of the exotic, inscrutable Orient, in the form of the mongoose, which cannot be read by the Occident. Brekelmans (2010) makes the interesting point that Teddy the mongoose, from Watson's description, does not resemble any Oriental mongooses at all, and yet, he argues, the inscrutable mongoose is an example of "Doyle's practice of Orientalism".

Even though these analyses mention "The Crooked Man" in passing, this paper agrees with Glazzard (2018) and Haynsworth (2001) that "The Crooked Man" blurs the line between the British metropole and the colonies and exposes the misdeeds of imperialists. This paper adds an aspect of animal studies to show that the return of colonial crimes also appears in the form of the non-human and the idea of crimes can include the devastation of the ecosystem. Brekelmans (2010)' discussion of the inscrutability of the Orient in "The Crooked Man", however, contrasts with the view on non-human animals in this paper. This paper offers a layered discussion of the complexity between the domestic and the foreign and shows the attempt to domesticate and translate the inscrutable mongoose into British imperial understanding and use. This paper also shows that the Victorians were not unfamiliar with the mongooses and Holmes' inability to conjecture the mongoose might turn the Orient into the other, and yet, as the other, the mongoose questions imperialist attempts to control and make use of non-human animals.

There are a few analyses which pay more attention to "The Crooked Man". Through the postcolonial lens, Yumna Siddiqi (2007), in *Anxieties of Empire and Fiction of Intrigue*, considers the short story a "fiction of

counterinsurgency” (p.86). Influenced by Ranajit Guha’s “The Prose of Counter-insurgency” (p.87), Siddiqi (2007) argues that “The Crooked Man” “not only diminish(es) the political import of insurgency”, in this case 1857 Indian uprising and Irish insurgency against the British Empire, “but also asserts the need for, and rhetorically enacts the gathering of, knowledge and the pursuit of order and control” (p.88). According to Siddiqi (2007), “The Crooked Man” contains layers of imperial anxieties. To begin with, the short story contains anxieties about “possible displacement and vagrancy” within the British imperial system. “The Crooked Man” “portrays more graphically than any other of Doyle’s detective stories, the predicament of the “poor whites” in the colony (p.100). However, both Barclay and Wood as Irish soldiers add another layer of anxiety to the security of the British Empire, which places the Irish in “an anomalous position” as rebels against the Empire and its loyal soldiers (p.101). The Irish are also, according to Siddiqi (2007), hard to distinguish from the English, and thus the short story makes the difference visible either by physique; as in Wood’s crooked back and Orientalised body, as observed in Paget’s illustration of “The Crooked Man” in the Strand magazine, showing Wood in a turban (p.100); or by characteristics, as in Colonel Barclay’s capability of “occasional violence and vindictiveness (p. 101). However, the Irish soldiers’ potential to disrupt English authority is “delegitimised”, as Barclay’s personal mischief against Wood and Wood’s “abject crippled body” do not disrupt British hegemony and are considered a part of a crime, not an insurgency. Siddiqi (2007) finds that, even though Doyle’s use of the convention of detective fiction to ensure that crimes are not complex social phenomena but solvable cases (p. 102); “The Crooked Man”, among many other instances, does not “offer ideologically and psychologically tidy resolutions.” Siddiqi (2007) argues that even though Barclay is exposed and “justly suffers a stroke, Wood is not rehabilitated” (p.103). In conclusion, Siddiqi (2007) critiques Doyle’s failure to “indict colonial capitalism and administration” and argues that Doyle’s failure to provide complete closure to the case reveals the paradox of late nineteenth-century British imperialism (p.104).

This paper agrees with Siddiqi (2007), especially when she argues that “The Crooked Man” cannot offer a clear-cut solution to complicated imperial anxieties, in the form of declining colonialists within the metropole and colonial insurgencies. Yet, this paper argues that Barclay’s betrayal of Wood can be seen as both personal and political, as the betrayal of his compatriots and romantic rival in the context of the Sepoy rebellion suggests the betrayal of the imperial army also. The personal act of romantic rivalry within imperial administration cannot be seen only as personal and thus does not delegitimise the potential of the rebelliousness in this betrayal, even though Barclay only plans to eliminate his romantic rival. This paper thus considers Barclay’s death the punishment for betraying the British Empire.

There is a noteworthy analysis especially discussing “The Crooked Man” in the light of disability studies. In Kylee-Anne Hingston (2022)’s *Articulating Bodies: The Narrative Form of Disability and Illness in Victorian Fiction*. Hingston (2022) argues that “The Crooked Man” challenges the criminalisation of deformed bodies, popular in the late nineteenth-century England, by showing that the normative-bodied Colonel Barclay is the evildoer. She argues that “The Crooked Man” represents at first the ableist and racist view towards Wood’s deformed body, through the eyes of Miss Morrison and the landlady (p.183). However, the short story’s twist ending challenges Victorian social expectations about deformity and reveals that there is “[n]othing so unnatural as the normal body” (p. 187). She also argues that even though the mongoose’s footprints left at the scene can be surmised, Wood’s footprints at the crime scene, despite his many actions, are not read as much by Holmes and thus can be considered to resist interpretations. Henry Wood’s non-normative body thus, for Hingston (2022), embodies colonial anxieties and, at the same time, subverts “the attempt to interpret the deviant body” (p.187).

Even though this paper does not focus on Henry Wood’s non-normative body, this paper agrees with both the convention and the subversion this story suggests, as it argues that racist and anthropocentric aspects of animal symbolism is the key to the reading of this short story and yet this story also shows its doubt about ethics at the time of the British Empire, with no resolutions. This paper also diverts from Hingston (2022)’s ideas in her paper in three aspects. Firstly, even though I agree with Hingston (2022) that the landlady’s reading of Wood’s body is racist, her lodging challenges Victorian domesticity, which is inextricably linked with racist mentality of the inside and the outside and thus opens the possibility of a new domestic space, which lets the foreign and the animalistic co-exist with the domestic and the human. Secondly, this paper also argues that even though the short story challenges the stereotypical depiction of non-normative bodies, Wood uses animalistic and racist labelling upon his own body, comparing himself to a camel and a chimpanzee, and suggests he still endorses racism and ableism.

Methodology

The relation between the symbolic mongoose and the contextualised labouring mongoose in the colonies in “The Adventure of the Crooked Man” corresponds with the idea of animal capital, proposed by Nicole Shukin (2009). Shukin (2009) proposes, “ “[a]nimal capital” simultaneously notates the semiotic currency of animal signs and the carnal traffic in animal substances” from the twentieth century onwards. (p.7) She argues that her animal capitals refer to both physical and symbolic capitals and yet “the economic and symbolic capital of animal life can no longer be sorted into binary distinction” (p.7). Even though Shukin (2009), despite the perception of animal symbolism as universal, “seek[s]

to historicise” only discourses about animals and capital from the twentieth century onwards (p.7), her idea of showing the link between the economic and symbolic capital can be related to the symbolisation of animals in “The Crooked Man”, especially the mongoose, in association with snakes and birds, placed in the historical context of the usage of mongoose on plantations.

Shukin (2009) then calls the process of converting animal flesh to sign and vice versa “rendering”, a play on the double meaning of rendering as the “mimetic act of making a copy” in the artistic context and as “the boiling down and recycling of animal remains” (p.20). Shukin (2009) uses the word rendering to show “the complicity of ‘the arts’ and ‘industry’” (p.20). Even though “rendering” is the logic of modern capitalism in controlling animal flesh and signs, “rendering” can also “serve as a generative trope for counterhegemonic forms of critical practice that strive to illuminate the contingency of animal capital to political effect” (p.25). For her the critics of animal capital have to expose the mutual reliance of both commodified animal in the flesh and animal symbol, and yet the critics have to also show the incommensurability of the commodity and the sign (p.24).

This paper, following Shukin (2009), shows how commodified animal bodies feed into the colonialist symbolism of animals and vice versa, yet it also exposes how animal symbolism is constructed to maintain British colonial authority. This paper does not only show contradictions of the representations of the mongoose, as a hero and an invader, but it also argues that these symbols rise from colonial plantation economy, which employed mongooses to eradicate snakes and control pests. This paper emphasises that “The Crooked Man” exposes, on the one hand, the symbolic heroism of the mongoose by emphasising that the mongoose in the story is a mere labouring performer and the fight between the mongoose and the snake has to be repeated in order to gain money from the performance, and thus cannot symbolise a complete victory over rebellious India. On the other hand, this research article argues that the economic contextualisation of the symbolisation of the mongoose as an invader exposes the colonial planters themselves, who introduced mongooses to their plantation and failed to control them.

This paper also employs the idea of animot, proposed by Jacques Derrida (2008) in *The Animal that Therefore I am*, in the first part of the textual analysis, to argue about the various names used with the mongoose as well as Wood’s self-imposed animality. Derrida (2008) argues that “animot”, his pun on “animaux”, meaning “animals” in French, combined with “mot”, which means word in French, challenges the concept of animal and is also a linguistic construction, which contains various species, except the human (p.47). The use of Derrida (2008)’s “animot” in this paper supports the argument that linguistic control over the mongoose fails. Even though Shukin (2009) critiques Derrida (2008)’s idea about the animal as too idealistic and thus ignorant of the materialistic state of the

animal (Shukin, 2009, p. 37), the incorporation of Derrida (2008)'s animot in the paper does not challenge Shukin (2009)'s concept of animal capital but shows how, even at the level of signs, language fails to contain the animal, and this failure also loosens the grip of imperialist exploitation upon the animals and the animalistic.

The overarching context of this analysis cannot be imagined without the idea of the Plantationocene. The term "Plantationocene", perfectly described by Nicholas Tyler Reich (2021), attempts to explain "the reiterative violences of the colonial plantation economy as both an agricultural terror on nonhuman ecosystems across colonized spaces" and the rationale behind the violence against non-white colonial subjects for imperial profit. (p.77). Plantationocene, proposed by Donna Haraway (2016), which, unlike the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene, "makes one pay attention to the historical relocations of the substances of living and dying around the Earth as a necessary prerequisite to their extraction" (Haraway et al, 2016, p.23). The short story does not only show itself as a story which can be born only by the colonial plantation systems but also show the realisation of the colonialists, who gain from the wealth of the plantations, that they are only within the plantation worlds of their own making. Yet, nonhuman animals in those plantations rebel against them and blur the lines between the domestic and the wild, and the human and the animal. The mongoose becomes a symbolic hero because of the plantation economy and it becomes a villain because of, similarly, the plantation economy.

Textual Analysis

Mongoose, Snakes and the Theatre of Racialised Animality

The discussion of Victorian symbolism of the mongoose has to include Rudyard Kipling (1994)'s "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi," first published in St Nicholas Magazine in November, 1893, and later collected in *The Jungle Book* in 1894 (Alan Underwood and John Radcliffe, 2021). It features the eponymous loyal mongoose and its fight against two cobras, which hoped to reign in the garden after getting rid of the British owner (Kipling, 1994, p.102), in order to protect its British masters, who help it from drowning. Lisa Lewis (2013) in her article "'Rikki-Tikki-Tavi' and Indian History" argues that the short story represents the haunting of the 1857 Indian uprising. Naga and Nagaina, the two cobras, represent the Indian aristocrat who joined the rebels, while Rikki-Tikki-Tavi represents the loyal Sikhs who joined the British reprisals against the Indian rebels at Oudh (p.138). Lewis (2013) suggests that the garden which inspired the garden in this story was also imbued with haunting memories of the Indian uprising, as it was situated in Allahabad (p.133) from where many of the rebels originated (p. 136). Lewis (2013) also argues, "Kipling couldn't face the Mutiny, it might be argued, except in terms of loyal Indians and victorious Britons"

(p.138). Lewis (2013)' analysis of animal symbolism and politics of races echoes previous literary analyses of the short story by, for example, Daphne Kuntzer (2000) and Shefali Rajamannar (2012). However, Lewis (2013) points out the story's association with the Sepoy rebellion, especially the setting at Allahabad, which, according to Christopher Roden (2009), is probably the original setting of "Bhurtee" in "The Crooked Man" (p. 305 – 306). Interestingly, "Teddy," the name of the mongoose in "The Crooked Man", which was first published in July 1893 (Roden, 2009, p.303), is similar to the name of the British boy in "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi". The connection between these two short stories suggests the popularity of the symbolism of the mongoose representing those who are loyal to the British Empire.

The appearance of the mongoose as the killer of snakes in both literary works cannot be extricated from the lives of the animals on the colonial plantations. Lloyd Price argues that "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" is a part of the British discourse that snakes are threats to British colonisers (2017, p.7). The newspaper *Field* on 26th December 1857, around the time of the uprising, published a letter from its reader, talking about having mongooses as pets in India to protect them from snakes. A gentleman, who called himself L. R., confirmed that his mongoose pet helped him kill snakes, if one entered his house (p. 14). Deryck O. Lodrick (1982) also argues, "...it was common practice among the British in India to keep mongooses as pets specifically for the purpose of ridding their house of poisonous snakes, scorpions, and other dangerous vermin." (p.192). A narrative from a Madras newspaper about the fight between a mongoose and a cobra, dated 15th July 1863, was published in the Victorian journal *Leisure Hours* in 1879. This narrative was again published in *The Standard*, with an introductory paragraph about the "introduction of mongooses in Australia", and later copied to various local newspapers, such as the *Woodbridge Reporter*, dated 11th January 1883, (p.3), the *Tamworth Herald*, dated 13th January 1883, (p.6), and the *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, dated 13th January 1883, (p.2). Thus, the association of the mongoose with Henry Wood, the loyal lover of Nancy Devoy, in "The Crooked Man" corresponds with the popular racialised symbolism of the mongoose and the cobra.

In this part, I discuss the symbolism of heroism against imperial threats associated with the mongoose, either in the form of Indian as well as Irish rebels. Also, my analysis shows how this symbolism exposes its own construction, showing itself as a part of imperialist theatrics in order to boost British morale at a time of British anxiety about their imperial power, as discussed in the introduction (Ledger and Luckhurst, 2000, p. xiii). The exposure of theatricality debunks the imperial confidence in their control over the animal and the colonised, both physically and metaphorically.

The association of the mongoose with Henry Wood antagonises snakes and reflects the attempt at control over the colonial landscape and the symbolism

of the mongoose, an exotic animal, shows hope for the loyalty of the colonial subjects at a time of imperial decline in the late nineteenth century. Rahul Bhaumik (2017) argues that British Orientalists constructed India as a snake-infested wilderness because they were influenced by the lived experience of British colonisers in India, who attempted to transform the landscape for their agricultural use. Such a representation of Orientalist landscape is added to the association of snakes with Satan (pp. 233 - 234).

The mongoose and the snake do not only reflect symbolically the attempt at imperial control in India and the hope for Indian loyalty against the rebels; but they also reflect the imperial anxieties about Irish nationalist rebels. At the beginning of the story, the narrative reveals that James Barclay, Henry Woo, and Nancy Devoy are Irish. James Barclay and Henry Wood serve in The Royal Malloys, “one of the best Irish regiments in the British Army” (Doyle, 2009, p.157). Despite Holmes’ praise for the role of this regiment in the British Empire, “in the Crimea and the Mutiny” (p.157), Nancy’s last name, “Devoy,” comes from John Devoy, a vocal Irish-American activist, who began his life “as a Fenian organiser in the British army” (Roden, 2009, p. 305). Nancy Devoy’s last name reminds the readers of the ongoing Anglo-Irish conflict at the time. James Barclay takes the role of the “crooked” man who betrays his compatriot and military comrade, and thus represents Irish sedition within the Empire, in contrast to the loyal Wood. The association of the rebellious Irish with the figure of the serpent corresponds with the myth of Saint Patrick’s expulsion of snakes from Ireland, which has been written about in Ireland since the seventh century (Flechner, 2019, p.213) and is believed to show the power of Christianity over Satan, as represented in *The Life of Patrick* by Jocelyn of Furness (p.212), an early thirteenth-century hagiography of Saint Patrick (p.213). As India has both the treacherous snakes and the loyal mongooses, Ireland has both the snakes and Saint Patrick. India and Ireland appear to be similar, in relation to the symbolism of snakes in the context of rebellions against the British Empire.

Similarly, the short story also associates Indian and Irish serpentine sedition with the religious conceptualisation of evil. Nancy Barclay and Miss Morrison join a charity event at The Guild of St George (Doyle, 2009, p.159). The reference to Saint George, the patron saint of England, does not only emphasise the desired patriotic and military loyalty for British imperial subjects in the time of anxiety about the loss of imperial power but it also suggests the image of a military figure fighting a serpentine monster, as Saint George is known to defeat the dragon (Farmer, 2011, p.188). Even though the story seems to play into the stereotype of credulous Catholic Irish, as perceived in James Barclay’s fear of the supernatural (p.158), the religious intertext of the short story goes along with the punishment of the “serpent” by the mongoose. Catherine Wynne (2002), in *The Colonial Conan Doyle*, argues, “For Doyle, the snake motif is central to the representation of otherness, cultural and religious conflict, murderous intent, and

libidinous excess.” (p.126). Wynne (2002)’s argument also works with James Barclay, who does not only represent the racial and religious other but also suggest “libidinous excess” when he marries the woman his friend desire by betraying his comrade and compatriot.

The snake imagery also appears in Irish contemporaneous writings about imperialism and rebels. In “The Fiend of the Cooperage” (1897), Doyle features discussion about Irish Home Rule between the radical and the unionist, and it is the unionist who is killed by a boa constrictor, “the fiend” in the title. Wynne (2002) argues that the story aligns the murderous python, seeking its prey nocturnally, with “...the reptilian, menacing Fenians of the popular press ...” (p.134). The use of mongoose in “The Crooked Man” thus still follows the popular tradition of depicting treacherous Irish and symbolises British imperial loss of power in the case of the Indian uprising in 1857.

Even though snakes in “The Crooked Man” are almost invisible, as Wood reveals that he carries a cobra in a box along with Teddy the mongoose for his performance (Doyle, 2009, p.172), the revelation that James Barclay, an Irish soldier, betrays his military comrade and compatriot similarly reflects the fear of the Irish rebels destroying the benevolent relations between Irish subjects and the British Empire as well as the subservient relationship between Irish and Indian nationalist activists. Silvestri (2016) argues, “From the late nineteenth century onwards, Ireland stood as an example of anti-colonial resistance for Indian nationalists, providing examples of both violent resistance and constitutional agitation” (p.6)³. The death of James Barclay comes from his own guilt but the appearance of Henry Wood and the mongoose at his house leads to such realisation. Wood tells Holmes, “The bare sight of me was like a bullet through his guilty heart” (Doyle, 2009, p.172). James Barclay thus, in a sense, is a metaphorical serpent, eradicated by the metonymic mongoose. In addition, when Wood finally explains what Teddy is, he prefers calling it “snake-catcher”, despite its various names (p.172).

Wood’s selection of the name suggests his loyalty to the Empire through his reliance on the popular symbolism of the mongoose and the cobra, pointing out only the name which relates to imperial plantations. Such loyalty does not only rely on aligning himself with the mongoose but also on animalising his crooked back in terms which support British imperial, ableist and anthropocentric authority. Not only does he compare his bent back to that of “a camel” (p.169), he even hopes, “Nancy and [his] old pals should think of Harry Wood as having died

³ It should be noted that Silvestri (2016), in his book, aims to represent the complicated relationship of the Irish, the Indians and the metropolis in colonial times, not just in the form of the rebellious collaboration between the Irish and the Indians against the British Empire. He exemplifies his case, in the Introduction, by discussing the complicated history of Thomas Henry Kavanagh, who was perceived as an Irish hero for the Empire by disguising himself as an Indian to rescue British colonial subjects. Yet, he also critiqued imperial violence in India (pp. 1 - 4).

with a straight back, than seeing him crawling with a stick like a chimpanzee” (p.171). In Henry Wood’s case both animals, from different geographical origins, are categorised into one inferior class, which places non-human animals and non-European ethnicities together. As for human animals’ association of themselves with non-human animals, Derrida (2008) observes the use of animal symbolism in order to talk about the humans themselves. He argues, “One can always speak of the *bêtise* of men, sometimes their bestiality; there is no sense in speaking of the *bêtise*, or bestiality, of an animal [bête], no right to do so” (p.64). Derrida (2008) shows that the term *bêtise* shows how animal symbolism becomes a method by which humans talk only about themselves. In this case, Wood’s comparison emphasises his loyalty to the racist and ableist Empire not only because he considers himself inferior to able-bodied British humans but also because he compares himself to non-human animals, which, as commodities, endorsed the imperial power. Camels have been used in European colonies, especially in the case of the British imperial army in Central Asia and the North of British India (Morrison, 2014, p.465). The Camel Corps was also established in 1884 for “the relief of General Gordon in Khartoum” (Irwin, 2010, p.166), yet it arrived two days too late as Gordon was killed in Khartoum by Muslim nationalists (Ledger and Luckhurst, 2000, p.169). He was later mythologised as a sacrificial hero of the Empire (p.169). Wood’s comparison of his body difference denotes his readiness to serve in the British army, even though he was also ashamed of his own body. In the case of the chimpanzees, Wood’s simile reflects nineteenth-century European biologists’ admission that the chimpanzee’s body and neuroanatomy are similar to humans and yet taxonomists struggle to name its genus since the eighteenth century, categorising them as *Homo* (human), *Simia* (ape), or *Pan* (Hunt, 2020, p.27). His self-deprecatory chimpanzee imagery thus tries to distinguish between the human and the animal, considering the latter inferior, and yet also tries to show his desire to become workable within and loyal to the British Empire because he is still very similar to the human and endorses racism and ableism. Thus, his comparison to both the camel and the chimpanzee suggests his desire to obey the Empire and thus corresponds to his associations with the mongoose or “the snake-catcher”, as he calls it.

However, in the particular scene when Teddy is revealed, the anthropocentric control over the non-human is challenged. This short story, I argue, reveals how systems of animal naming and animalistic labelling (as in the case of Wood’s self-imposed animalistic ableism) fail, even though Holmes and Watson can finally identify Teddy as a mongoose at the end of the story. The mongoose in this short story is revealed to be, to use Derrida (2008)’s metaphor, a chimera. Derrida (2008) considers “animot”, as introduced in the methodology section, corresponding to the mythological chimera, a combination of various animals in one body, because the concept of animot reminds the humans that the use of the term of animals linguistically contains a great number of species under

the umbrella of “the animal” (p.48). Derrida (2008) proposes, “*Ecce animot*. Neither a species nor a gender nor an individual, it is an irreducible living multiplicity of mortals, and rather than a double clone or a portmanteau word, a sort of monstrous hybrid, a chimera waiting to be put to death ...” (p.41). In the scene of revelation of the mongoose, three names used to describe the species of the animals are announced: “mongoose”, “*ichneumon*” and “snake-catcher” (Doyle, 2009, p.172). The variety of names for the species of Teddy shows the anthropocentric attempt to control the non-human linguistically fails, as one particular species can come up with different names in one language. In the scene when Holmes discovers the footprints, Watson and Holmes do not only fail to identify the mongoose but show how Teddy’s footprints evoke a menagerie of similar non-human animals. Watson tries to identify Teddy’s footprints as belonging to either a dog or a monkey. Holmes is quite sure that the creature is “neither dog, nor cat, nor monkey”, and “probably some creature of the weasel or stoat tribe” (pp. 163 – 164). This scene shows how the body of one particular mongoose, not the whole species, can be associated with various other non-human animals, and thus corresponds with the imagery of the animal as chimera, as Derrida (2008) suggests. Holmes and Watson’s attempts to fix the mongoose release various animals from the taxonomic menagerie and ironically add confusion and mystery to the short story.

Wood’s choice to call his mongoose “snake catcher” implies his enmity to symbolic and physical treacherous serpents of the British Empire, and his job as an animal performer, to “amuse” (p.171) residents in a military town like Aldershot, can also refer to his desire to eradicate the serpent. Even though the rendering of the animal flesh to the animal sign in this short story seems smooth, the commodified animal theatre, related to the symbolism, implies a stalemate between the animals, rather than a clear victory of the mongoose, as both animals, not just the mongoose, are a part of the commodified colonialist theatre. The cobras have to survive as well as the mongoose in order to financially gain from the show repetitively. The short story’s animal symbolism, assigned to Wood and Barclay, and the animal theatre reference each other, becomes mere fantasy to console colonial anxieties in late nineteenth-century Britain. Yet, such a fantasy the theatre aims to present is undercut by commodification, which perpetuates the symbolism and yet shows that the cobras cannot be defeated once and for all.

Even though the aim to defeat the serpents is clear for Wood, who amuses his military spectators with his imperialist symbolic show, “The Crooked Man” contains a message against animal fights and blood sports, which contradicts with the use of mongoose-cobra symbolism to boost the morale of the British Empire. Cruelty to animals had been protested against widely in the nineteenth century both in legal forms; which began as Martin’s Act, to control the maltreatment of cattle, and in social movements; such as the humane movements (Ritvo, 1987, p. 127). It should be noted that, “as early as 1830s”, Ritvo (1987) argues, the

movement considered “kindness to animals a native trait” to England and projected animal cruelty to Catholic countries (p.127). The un-Englishness of animal cruelty condemns Wood’s show but also the symbolism itself, which, in this short story, cannot be extricated from the animal theatre. This short story also metaphorically refers to another type of animal blood sport and arguably critiques it. Wood tells the story of his situation at the time of the Indian uprising: “There were ten thousand rebels around us, and they were keen as a set of terriers around a rat cage” (Doyle, 2009, p. 170). The rat-baiting metaphor used to explain the dangerous situation of the rebellion does not only emphasise the cruelty of animal blood sport as spectacles, but also switches the side of the metaphors and thus turns the colonisers into rats, which can be seen as pests and were “popularly imagined as an invading force” (Hatter and Crofts, 2019, p.134). The comparison thus challenges the justification of colonial settlement and violence. Also, terriers were famously used to kill rats (p.135) and they were used in rat-baiting matches, a blood sport enjoyed in pubs (London Museum, n.d.). Even though the rat-baiting imagery emphasises the colonisers’ victimhood and conceals imperial violence, it exposes the physical violence of animal shows, such as the fight between Teddy and the cobras, and challenges the use of the mongoose-cobra symbolism. Furthermore, the imagery questions the ethics of the imperial project of colonising the landscape by controlling pests.

Not to mention the comparison between the siege in India and rat-baiting which challenges the legitimacy of imperialist animal symbols, the short story also shows violence in Henry Wood’s preparation for the performance. Wood tells Holmes that his cobra, used for the show with Teddy the mongoose, is defanged (Doyle, 2009, p.172). The symbolic fight between loyal Indian subjects and the rebels is exposed as a construction, which is made possible by deforming animals. As Sunaura Taylor (2017) argues that animals are crippled to become human commodities, as in the meat and dairy industries (p.39), Henry Wood and the cobra become fellow victims of British colonialist ableism and speciesism. Even though the story aims to accuse Indian rebels and Barclay’s betrayal for Wood’s deformity, James Barclay’s plan also lies within the British army itself, stemming from male rivalry between Barclay and Wood. In addition, a large amount of public condemnation in the nineteenth century from Britain, as a reaction to the Indian uprising, blamed the British imperial army for “their failure to understand India and Indians” (Gopal, 2019, p.43). Priyamvada Gopal also argues, “[p]artly in response, a small but distinct body of dissident discourse ... sought to invoke a degree of sympathetic understanding for the rebellion as well as a critical disposition towards the imperial project” (p.45). The comparison of the cobra with Wood, instead of the mongoose, questions the legitimacy of antagonizing the cobra, both symbolically and physically and the attempt to loyally protect the British Empire and laud the Irish soldier’s heroism.

As cobras were seen, symbolically and physically, as the enemies of the British Empire's plantation economy, mongooses, the enemies of the cobras, thus also play the role of the loyal Indians against the rebellious, uprising Sepoys. However, "The Crooked Man" reveals uncertainty about the mongoose-cobra colonial allegory. The animal theatre, a space for the symbolisation of animal bodies to express a colonialist message to the public, exposes the desire for colonial victory and ironically reveals the perpetual failure to defeat the cobra once and for all. The fight between animals and the defanging of the cobras as an important part of colonial production of this animal theatre correspond with the critique of allegorical rat-baiting in the context of the Indian uprising. "The Crooked Man" thus reflects hidden anxieties about the one-sided antagonisation of the Indian rebels and the failure of controlling non-human animals in plantation economies. The use of mongooses against cobras on colonial plantations, possibly similar to the theatre in the short story, did not lead to a complete imperial victory over unruly nature but led to more imperial and ecological problems, to be discussed in the next part.

Domesticity, Romance, and Animality

The beginning of "The Crooked Man" foreshadows the invasion of the domestic space. The story begins in Watson's house, where Holmes intrudes upon Watson's time of rest (Doyle, 2009, p. 155). Even though Watson welcomes Holmes happily; not knowing the nightly visitor is Holmes, he is at first annoyed by the interruption of his rest. The preliminary action leads to the plot where Holmes helps solve the domestic mystery, in which a "foreign" character invades a British household and exposes the hidden violence of domestic peace. Even though Teddy the mongoose, the companion of the "foreigner", is symbolised as a foreign, loyal friend to the British in India, it invades the Barclays' household and aims for the canary's cage (p.164).

In the first section, I argue that the symbolisation of the mongoose as the loyal hero of the British Empire fails as Teddy the mongoose shows potentiality, from its naming, beyond its imperial duty as a snake-catcher and the theatrical act of snake-catching is exposed as un-ending and unethical, revealing concerns about colonial violence under the surface of hopes and dreams about colonial victory and Indian loyalty. This section, however, argues that, paradoxically, the mongoose also represents the opposite of the imperial heroes: the invader into the British domestic realm. Teddy does not only play the role, literally, of the vanquisher of cobras but also an invasive animal, aiming to catch a canary in the cage. The antagonisation of Teddy reflects the colonialists' distrust of Indian loyalty, challenging the hope for imperial victory and thus emphasising the loss of control over non-human animals, which cannot be easily symbolised especially to support imperialist fantasies. This section argues further that the antagonisation of the mongoose as the invader of the Victorian domestic sphere does not only

challenge imperial confidence, but also exposes imperial interference in the colonial ecosystem, which blurs the line between the domestic and the foreign and the human and the non-human. In short, this section argues that, as the domestic space in this short story is already multi-ethnic and multispecies even before the invasion of the antagonistic mongoose, the British domestic space cannot be extricated from the plantation economy; the presence of the mongoose reveals such proximity with the plantations. Even though James Barclays' domestic space has collections of weapons from various foreign countries, which he takes as trophies, (161) and thus the domestic space is obviously contaminated by foreign blood and foreshadows the return of Barclays' haunting past, the short story's focus on the mongoose as its utmost mystery emphasises the importance of revealing not only the one-sided narrative of white suffering in the Sepoy rebellion but also the plantation economy which constructs British domesticity, clashes against indigenous Indians (Moxham, 2009, p.107) and disrupts ecosystems.

The scene of Holmes surmising about Teddy the mongoose threatening the bird connotes the fear of the British Empire concerning the rape of women in the 1857 Indian uprising. Jenny Sharpe (1993) argues, "During the 1857 revolt, the idea of rebellion was so closely imbricated with the violation of English womanhood that the Mutiny was remembered as a barbaric attack on innocent women" (p.2). At the turn towards the twentieth century, she adds that two legal and political events in colonial India, the Ilbert Bill⁴ controversy of 1883 and 1919 Punjab disturbances⁵, challenged imperial political stability, especially in terms of the fear of the violation of white, female bodies (p. 2). In terms of symbolism, not only does the canary represent, in the nineteenth-century popular press, the success of human domestication and "idealized domestic space" (Burton, 2017, p.16), the bird in the cage, in Victorian arts, popularly represents women's crossroads toward sexual experience (Shefer, 1991, p.467). In addition, the nineteenth-century popular press often compared crinolines to bird cages (p.468). The action of the mongoose aiming for the bird in the cage also reflects Victorian anxieties about fallen women, in comparison to William Holman Hunt's painting *The Awakening Conscience*, signed 1853 and displayed 1854, which features a cat catching a bird (pp.475 - 476). The mongoose even emphasises the foreignness of the invader, as the canary itself popularly symbolises the domestic, as discussed earlier. The intrusion of the mongoose into the domestic space thus has sexual connotations which bring back the racist propaganda against the rebels and thus shows the fear of the British imperialists of losing their power.

⁴ The Ilbert bill "permitted Indian judges to try Europeans in rural areas" (Sharpe, 1993, p. 2).

⁵ Punjab disturbances were then caused by Indian demonstrations "against a bill that allowed the trial of political prisoners without jury or appeal". The demonstrations led to a massacre of "unarmed protesters" by the army (Sharpe, 1993, p.2).

Interestingly, even though a caged canary as a symbol is integral in denigrating the foreign mongoose, which invades the British domestic space, the canary in the story is not described. Readers know there is a canary only when Holmes tells Watson that a canary is about to be attacked by Teddy the mongoose (Doyle, 2009, p. 164) but the appearance of the canary, or even its cage, is not described. In parallel to the canary, it should be noted that, even though the fear of interracial rape in the criminalisation of the symbolic mongoose can suggest the protection of women, this short story rarely lets a woman speak on her own but within a racist and sexist framed narrative. Female characters, like the Barclays' canary, do not appear on their own but only appear within European male narratives. The plot itself, written as a record by Watson, also silences women. Nancy Barclay is so shocked after the sudden death of her husband that she is "still in a state of insensibility" (p. 161). When Holmes wants to know the truth about the case from Wood, he insists that Wood has to exculpate her by narrating the incident from his point of view or else Nancy Barclay is to be arrested (p.169). Later, after Wood tells his story, Holmes insists that he might contact Wood again "if Mrs (sic) Barclay should prove to be in serious trouble" (p.172). Mrs. Barclay has no opportunity to tell her story. She cannot even speak. As for Miss Morrison, even though she reveals the truth about Nancy Devoy's meeting with Henry Wood to Holmes, Watson tells the story through Holmes. Miss Morrison's words were within Holmes' bigger quotation marks, containing the story of his own meeting with Miss Morrison (pp. 165- 167). If the mongoose attacking the canary can symbolise fear of the harassment of the British women by the Indian rebels, the narration of the story reveals that it is the European men who speak in their voice in order to justify white suffering and their colonial violence.

Similarly, the bird, mentioned as a victim of the mongoose by Holmes, is almost non-existent and, like Nancy Devoy and Miss Morrison, is spoken about, rather than appears in the description of the case by Watson. It is worth noting that Victorian popular poems about pet canaries, mostly praising them as the ultimate pet of the parlour, faced challenges in the late nineteenth century, as the animal rights movements and early feminist movements questioned the sacredness of domesticity and exposed domestic spaces as prisons (Burton, 2017, p.23). Popular poems and narratives about pet canaries in the nineteenth century often ignore the possibility of the sentience of the birds and focus more on the bird's obedience (p.22). Reflecting one another, the canary and female characters in this short story expose violence not only from outside the domestic space but also from within.

Even though the caged canary is almost non-existent and denied sentience, like Nancy Barclay, the popular Victorian context surrounding the domestication of canaries shows that the domestic space is not only violent, but also multi-ethnic and multispecies. The mongoose, which breaches the line between the inside and the outside of the domestic space, is not the first foreign non-human animal

entering the house. Although James Barclay's household, because of its connection to foreign and colonised regions, suggests his violent history and his association with foreignness, the caged canary is not included as an outstanding example of racial contamination of the British or, at least, it is not even shown and discussed. The Barclays' house is called Lachine (Doyle, 2009, p.159), which is homophonic with La Chine, French for China. The household is also decorated with various weapons from the colonies to which James Barclays travels (p.161). The canary is not a remarkable item, worthy of Watson's description, except from Holmes' remark, and yet it needs to be referred to as it symbolises domesticity. However, British canary enthusiasts knew that canaries were foreign birds from a European colony. An anonymous poem published in 1708 compared canaries to migrating Huguenots in London (Parsons, 1987, p.24). As the short story does not represent the canary as an exotic bird, it seems to assume that the canary can represent the British household, despite its origin. "The Crooked Man" was also published in the late nineteenth century, the time when, Parsons (1987) argues, the popularity of canaries as pets reached its peak (p.26). The canary in this short story is thus not only oppressed by British violent domestication but also challenges the binary of the domestic and the foreign, asking whether the separation between the two is clear-cut.

The attack of the mongoose, which helped eradicate pests on plantations and colonial domestic space, also reveals the multi-ethnic and multispecies aspects of British colonial domesticity. The multi-ethnic and multispecies household in this story, however, cannot contain the non-human, exposing the British Empire as the cause of its own loss of power. In order to domesticate, "foreign invaders" are invited, and yet they cross the line into the domestic space. The mongoose's attack on domesticated fowls had been reported and known in various colonies, such as Jamaica and Hawaii, after the introduction of mongooses to eradicate native rats for colonial plantations (Lodrick, 1982, p.192). As the introduced mongooses attack the domesticated fowls on the colonialists' farm, the mongoose exposes the plantation owners themselves, not the mongoose, as the culprit and invader, and also reveals the colonial failure to control nonhuman animals, especially the mongoose. The rat-baiting metaphor used by Wood, discussed in the previous section, emphasises ethical concern about colonisation, as, in the case of colonial plantation, the introduction of the mongoose from India to eradicate rats destroyed the ecosystem (Holmes, 2023, p.392). In the case of Jamaica, they attacked "indigenous reptiles and birds", leading to the overpopulation of ticks (p. 391). In "The Crooked Man", before the mongoose is revealed, Holmes makes a guess that the creature resembles weasels and stoats. Mongooses do not only resemble weasels by their physical appearance but both species also become invasive species in British colonies, introduced to reduce pests, since the nineteenth century (p.392). This comparison, however, again exposes the British Empire as an agent which, in order to "domesticate" the

land, introduced the foreign into the domestic space, and in the case of the weasels, the British creature becomes the foreign in New Zealand (p.392). The comparison between the two species, like the canary, thus blurs the line between the foreign and the domestic, as both creatures were moved in order to preserve the imperial plantation economy. As “fantasies of reverse invasion” became a popular plot in the late nineteenth century (Ledger and Luckhurst, 2000, p.xvi), Teddy the mongoose, along with Henry Wood, can be seen as an invader. Yet, “The Crooked Man” cannot confirm the boundary between the domestic and the foreign.

Teddy the mongoose is rendered contradictorily as both the protector of the colonial domestic spaces, and the invader of such spaces. It suggests ambiguity in both cases as the mongoose only takes the theatrical role of the hero, and it does not directly attack the canary, but make an attempt (Doyle, 2009, p.164). Such ambiguity exposes how the rendering of the mongoose, either as the loyal guardian for the Empire or as the invading outsider, fails, as two imperial significations contrast each other in one symbol. The contrasting narratives about the mongoose in the context of colonial plantations turn Teddy the mongoose into a mystery, which rivals the mystery of the cause of James Barclay’s death. The contrasting mongoose symbols also imply colonial anxieties about the management of the colonial plantations, where the mongooses play both roles.

Even though the colonial plantations are not mentioned in the short story and the invasion of the mongoose into domestic lives on plantations seems far away from England, “The Crooked Man” exposes a link between colonial plantations and British domestic space, when Nancy Barclay asks for a cup of tea (Doyle, 2009, pp.159 - 160) after her unexpected meeting in the evening with Henry Wood, whom she considers dead (p.166). When Mrs. Barclay rings the bell to ask her housemaid to bring her a cup of tea, Holmes notes, “this [is] not her usual habit” (p.159). Tea had been embedded in British middle-class domestic culture since the eighteenth century and tea-drinking had become one of “the rituals of middle-class domesticity” (Ellis and others, 2018, p.221). In this scene, serving the tea at an unusual time preludes the state of domestic abnormality, which can be seen when the servant, having served Mrs. Barclay the tea, tells others about the altercation between Mr. and Mrs. Barclay. Even though it cannot be confirmed that the tea consumed in this story comes from India; India, in the nineteenth century, has become the main colony producing tea for Britain, after the British government issued a revised charter for the British East India Company, ending its monopoly of the tea trade with China in 1834 and the Japanese government severed trades with Western countries (Moxham, 2009, p.84). It is interesting to also note that Wood’s journey around India after getting caught by the rebels includes Darjeeling (Doyle, 2009, p.171), where colonial merchants started setting up their tea plantations in 1830s (Moxham, 2009, p.99). Wood’s encounter with the “hill-folk”, who murders the rebels and enslaves him

(Doyle, 2009, p. 171), corresponds also with the narrative of the establishment of colonial tea plantation, when, according to Moxham (2009), tea investors often mistakenly surveyed the area of indigenous tribes and fighting ensued (p.107). Wood's history focuses only on white victimhood, but not the British colonial invasion. However, the "unusual tea" exposes the connection between Wood's narrative and Victorian domesticity, reminding the reader of the concealed colonial violence. "The Crooked Man" thus blurs the line between the British domestic space and the colonial plantations, questioning the foreignness of the mongoose and showing how Victorian domesticity was constructed with racist violence and more-than-human labour, despite the short story's attempt to focus only on the Indian uprising and British suffering from the rebellion.

The only place in the short story where the mongoose appears and does not attack other non-human animals is the boarding house, which is juxtaposed with the Barclays' villa of a model family (Doyle, 2009, p.158). The boarding house, I argue, admits the porosity of the border between Britain and the colonies, and proposes a third space where the mongoose resists binary symbolisation, as either a loyal warrior or a foreign invader. The boarding house in "The Crooked Man" thus exposes British imperial domesticity as a space where only dichotomous labelling works and as an obstacle towards multispecies, and multi-ethnic co-existence. Unlike Nancy Barclay and Miss Morrison, the landlady is portrayed as stingy and enjoying gossips. Instead of going to a charity activity like Mrs. Barclay, the landlady is obsessed with money (p.167). According to Holmes, when interviewed about Wood, she says, "He was all right, as far as money went, but in his deposit he had given her what looked like a bad florin. She showed it to me, Watson, and it was an Indian rupee." (p.167). In Holmes' narration about the boarding house, the money has to be included as a part of the narrative about Henry Wood. Yet, this is the only part of the narrative which shows India as the source of British wealth. Even though Holmes portrays the lodging house in contrast to the ideal domestic, yet contaminated, space of the Barclays, the lodging house straightforwardly reveals its financial connection with the British Empire. The money Wood pays the landlady possibly comes from his animal show, which derives from imperialist allegory and yet is boiled down to a rental payment from "a conjurer and performer" (p.167), to use the landlady's term in Holmes' narration. Even though the fight between mongooses and cobras has imperialist signification, in this context, it is reduced only to magic tricks and Wood's source of income. In Holmes' narrative about the landlady, which denigrates her residence as lacking in Victorian domestic ideals, the landlady's focuses only on her money challenges romanticisation and symbolisation of the fight between mongooses and cobras. Despite her "trepidation" about the creature (p.167), her lodging accommodates the mongoose, without any possibility of symbolising the mongoose in colonial discourse, and yet her lodging business exposes the source of colonial wealth at the same time. Even though, at this

lodging, the mongoose is kept in a hutch, and Wood only wants to call it “a snake catcher” (p. 167), the lodging is the room behind the scene of plantationocene theatre, where the mongoose play the contradictory roles of both a hero and a villain. The lodging strips off symbolisation, and opens possibilities human-mongoose relations under the British Empire.

While the lodging house becomes a space where the mongoose and the snake are constructed to serve the imperialist narratives concerning the suppression of the racial other and the control over the colonial landscape, the villa Lachine of the Barclays, which is the main setting of the short story, hides its connection with the imperial plantation economies. La Chine is exposed as a scandalous place of romantic and imperial betrayal, in which Indian rebels act as the utmost villains, who can become nothing but a torturer of a loyal British soldier. James Barclay, the crooked man at heart, is revealed as beguiling and yet he is shown with psychological depths, being haunted and later killed by his own guilt, as Wood and Holmes look at Barclays’ death (p.172). Lachine does not talk about the wealth it gains from imperial expansions, and does not show the plantations, in which the British Empire controlled human and nonhuman animals overseas.

Conclusion

As Glazzard (2018) calls it, “The Crooked Man” is about “a white man’s misdeeds in the East” (p.136). Yet, this paper goes beyond the previous analyses of the story’s challenge to racist and ableist stereotypes and exposes white men’s misdeeds in the form of the colonial plantation system, which shapes the more-than-human world. Henry Wood, a hidden character within the Barclays’ married life, who imposes animalistic labels upon himself, is not the only creature standing between the domestic and the foreign but the mongoose also plays these roles. This paper still focuses on the complications between the domestic and the foreign and yet its focus on the mongoose and other nonhuman animals reveals the colonial plantation system at work in organising relationships between species and moving species from one place to another.

The management of colonial plantations constructs the animal symbolism “The Crooked Man” employs, yet when reading these animals as commodities and capital, the symbolism fails to sustain its meaning and exposes the attempt to construct such meanings in order to express hope and horror about the British Empire, which, in this story, displays the mongoose as a hero and, paradoxically, an invader. Self-contradictory symbolisation can be argued as a result of the public memory about the 1857 uprising, which raised questions about Indian loyalty and betrayal. However, this paper argues that fear and hope about colonial India in the story cannot be separated from the plantation economy in and beyond India, which employed mongooses to get rid of cobras and pest animals and yet turned them into invaders, which disrupted the colonial economy.

In the first part of my analysis, I discussed the colonial symbolization of both the serpents and the mongoose and showed that the mongoose's role as a performer against the cobras both sustains colonial power through colonial symbolism and challenges the symbolism as its role is exposed as mere theatrics, which never lead to the absolute victory of the British. Looking at the flesh of the nonhuman animal in contrast to its symbolism, I also argue that the short story raises concerns about cruelty against nonhuman animals, which also undermine the attempt to use the symbolism of the victory of the mongoose over the cobra to represent colonial victory. As I challenged the story's attempt to portray the mongoose as a hero and showed its reluctance for such a portrayal; in the second part, I focused on the portrayal of Teddy the mongoose as the invader into the domestic space in "The Crooked Man", in relation to the fear concerning the Indian uprising and the fear of mongooses as invasive species in British colonies. I argued that, despite the story's attempt to make the mongoose a threat to British domestic peace, the borderline between the domestic and the foreign is breached even before the arrival of the mongoose and the Barclays' domestic perfection, in the eyes of other soldiers in Aldershot, cannot extricate itself from colonial plantations and trades, especially in the form of tea plantations. The pet canary in the story, which can be interpreted as the symbol of British domesticity, is also a naturalised bird from the Canary Islands. Consequently, the mongoose cannot act as an invader into the British domestic space but only expose the influence of the British Empire which compromises its own attempt to separate the domestic from the foreign. At the end of the second part, I also argue that "The Crooked Man" shows the mongoose in Henry Wood's lodging to suggest the possibility of the emergence of the mongoose without symbolism, and thus emphasises the failing imperial symbolism of the mongoose. To conclude, both parts of the textual analysis challenge both self-contradictory attempts to symbolise the mongoose to serve imperialist narratives. This research thus adds the more-than-human aspects to the previous reading of "The Crooked Man", exposing imperial violence which affects both human and nonhuman animals.

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