

“I AM AN OMNIVOROUS READER”

Book reviews by NICHOLAS UTECHIN, ALISTAIR DUNCAN and ROGER JOHNSON

Barrymore in Baker Street: “The Great Profile” Meets “The Great Detective”, and They Both Get Their Names Up in Lights by Sonia Fetherston (*The Baker Street Journal 2012 Christmas Annual*) *The Baker Street Irregulars*. 2012. 64pp (pbk)

I am a great fan of these Christmas Annuals — and since I have written two, I know the amount of research and work that needs to be done to reach the exacting standards of Editor Steven Rothman. It is, I have to say, a pity that a recent change in fiscal policy by the Irregulars means that these add-on pieces of scholarship are now available only to those who subscribe to the *BSJ* — which means that in this case a lot of Holmesians are going to miss out on this excellent work on the 1922 film *Sherlock Holmes*, starring John Barrymore.

Ms Fetherston is a relatively new writer on the Sherlockian block and curiously absolutely nothing is revealed in her “Whodunit?” biographical entry here, other than that she “lives in the Pacific Northwest”!

Thank goodness that she reveals herself through some praiseworthy spadework on the film — how it came to be, what went on behind the scenes and, crucially, how the film was restored. The author comes clean about the film itself: “Let’s get this out of the way right up front: Goldwyn Pictures’ silent film, *Sherlock Holmes*...was not the greatest movie ever made”. It has, however, garnered praise since it was first shown in its new form.

Sherlock Holmes was shot on nitrate film stock which, as Sonia Fetherston points out, “[u]nless cared for under proper conditions...deteriorates quickly, turning first into chemical goop and then into an ash-like powder”. No copy of the movie was known to exist for half a century, but the tale is told in almost detective story style of how old canisters were found, and then, critically, some “titles” — which gave the restorers and film historians (including at one stage the great Kevin Brownlow) an idea of how to put the material in order. In the end (following an amazing intervention by Hillary Clinton), a budget of \$85,000 saw the project through. And it’s on DVD.

There is here as well much on Barrymore, his Watson (Roland Young) and the other leading characters in the film (can you honestly tell me that you *knew* William Powell was in it as one of Moriarty’s henchmen?)

These *Annuals* first came out under the tutelage of Edgar W Smith from 1956-60 inclusive and were restarted in 1998 by the-then *BSJ* Editor Don Pollock; Rothman has now edited fourteen. Until recently, *anyone* could buy them for \$12.

NU

Mastermind: How to think like Sherlock Holmes by Maria Konnikova. *Canongate*. 2013. 288pp. £16.99 (hbk)

There are plenty of books out there that claim that they can improve the way we think, process information and train our brains to be better problem solving tools. Maria Konnikova’s book is in very much the same line but its hook is that it claims to teach you how to think like

Sherlock Holmes. Plenty of people will buy this book, because of that subtitle, who would not buy other books in a similar vein.

So is the subtitle of this book therefore nothing more than a marketing ploy? Let’s see.

Mastermind breaks down into four sections but all of them to seem to have, at their core, the same basic agenda. This is to highlight that there are, according to Konnikova, two ways of thinking and deducing. She terms them System Watson and System Holmes. The former is apparently the default that most of our lazy brains fall into. The second is the system used by the great detective that we can supposedly train ourselves to follow.

The problem I had with the book is that it seems to continually go through the same routine. Print an excerpt from a Holmes adventure; explain how Watson got it wrong and then explain how Holmes got it right. The bias in each case seems to be towards the former. In other words, Konnikova’s book spends a lot of time telling us what we do wrong rather than what we need to do right.

I also feel that Konnikova has made a simple (perhaps elementary) mistake. Her explanations of what we do wrong in our thinking processes are undoubtedly useful but they are also very dry and the natural temptation of our lazy “System Watson” brain is to skip forward to the parts that teach us how to think like Holmes. After all that is why we’ve picked up the book in the first place; we did not pick it up to be told how much like Watson we are.

Now is this our fault? It probably is but then as Konnikova is an expert on this she really ought to have anticipated this reaction and deployed, earlier than she does, some simple and very demonstrative exercises in the system Holmes (rather than Watson) line that would engage us and make us want to read more. As it stands I think her book’s structure will cause a lot of people to skip ahead (as I did) or put it down and be in no hurry to pick it up again. This would be a shame as parts of the book are interesting and instructive.

To conclude, will you be able to think like Sherlock Holmes after you have read this book? In my opinion the answer to this is almost certainly ‘no’ but you will understand (or begin to understand) why you don’t, which is almost certainly a necessary first step.

AD

A Chronology of the Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, May 22nd 1859 to July 7th 1930 by Brian W Pugh. *MX Publishing*. 2012. 280pp. £14.99 (pbk)

As Randall Stock notes in his foreword, a chronology is not a biography, but Brian Pugh’s *magnum opus* is more valuable than most of the published lives of Conan Doyle. The new edition adds about fifty pages, seven of them containing a chronological summary of the journal recently published as ‘*Dangerous Work*’: *Diary of an Arctic Adventure* (enthusiastically reviewed in the last issue of this Journal). Here are lists of ACD’s various homes, his sporting career, the burial places of the

Doyles, statues and plaques, and more, including some fascinating photographs. But the essence of the book is in the orderly calendar of Sir Arthur's life, in which innumerable ambiguities and uncertainties are authoritatively resolved. Brian Pugh has created that rare thing, a genuinely essential work of reference.

RJ

“Occasionally to Embellish”: *Some Writings on Sherlock Holmes* by Nicholas Utechin. *Gasogene Books*, www.wessexpress.com/. 2012. xiv + 139pp. \$18.95 (pbk)

Nick Utechin's first contribution to the Writings about the Writings was a letter to *The Sherlock Holmes Journal* in 1966. A whole succession of well-written, well-considered articles followed, in the SHJ, *The Baker Street Journal*, *Shades of Sherlock*, *Baker Street Miscellanea* and elsewhere — controversial, fanciful, enlightening, and always entertaining. He's very good on villains, particularly Moriarty and Moran, but whether that fact is truly significant, well, I'm not sure. He even found time to collaborate with Austen Mitchelson on two rather good Holmes novels, but his *magnum opus* is *Sherlock Holmes at Oxford*, a handsome chapbook which has run to, I think, three editions. It had its origins in an essay entitled “This Charming Town”, published in the BSJ in 1976, which you can read in this nice new book, with twenty-two other pieces. He's been a major player of our Game for more forty years, and this collection is, if anything, overdue!

RJ

Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle: Multi-Media Afterlives edited by Sabine Vanacker and Catherine Wynne. *Palgrave Macmillan*. 2012. 240pp. £50.00 (hbk)

Our sort of scholarship is, I maintain, entirely valid, but it isn't the only way to approach the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes. This volume of twelve essays presented at a conference at Hull in 2009, is the fifth recent collection of academic papers to come my way. (Conan Doyle would no doubt be bewildered by the serious attention now paid to what he saw as some of his least important work.) This book opens, pleasingly, with a piece on Holmes in advertising by Amanda J Field, winner of the 2010 Tony & Freda Howlett Literary Award for *England's Secret Weapon: The Wartime Films of Sherlock Holmes*. Clive Bloom and Andrew Lycett consider Conan Doyle's spiritualism and his belief in fairies, which say more about him than we may think. Neil McCaw, Academic Director of the Conan Doyle Collection at Portsmouth, looks at the Granada TV series from a political standpoint... Most of the papers are intellectually stimulating, some are challenging — all are interesting.

RJ

The Wrong Passage: A Facsimile of the Original Manuscript of ‘The Golden Pince-Nez’, edited and introduced by Robert Katz and Andrew Solberg. *The Baker Street Irregulars*. Xiii + 253pp. \$35.00 (hbk)

Of all the BSI's publishing ventures, aside from the ever-fascinating History Project and, of course, *The Baker Street Journal*, the most important, it seems to me, is the

Baker Street Irregulars Manuscript Series. Only rarely do we have the chance to study one of Conan Doyle's actual manuscripts, but the growing number of facsimile editions provides us each with a direct link to the author's original thoughts and enables us to appreciate, with the help of perceptive commentaries, how those thoughts matured and changed. In this latest volume in the BSI series, Philip Bergem's annotations and the essays by Randall Stock, Peggy Perdue, Denny Dobry, Donald Pollock and others, on topics including politics, religion and forensic medicine, do justice to an underrated story.

RJ

The Strand Magazine & Sherlock Holmes: The Two Fixed Points in a Changing Age by Robert Veld. *Gasogene Books*. 2012. 120pp. \$24.95 (pbk)

Robert Veld's book began as a series of articles in *The Passengers' Log*, the admirable journal of the Sydney Passengers. Because he concentrates on the magazine's relationship with its single most important contributor, Mr Veld covers a shorter length of time than Reginald Pound did in *The Strand Magazine, 1891-1950*, and in greater depth. (He does, of course, consider aspects of Arthur Conan Doyle's work beyond the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes, but the title is not at all misleading.) He is able, besides, to draw on material, such as Conan Doyle's letters, that simply wasn't available before. The result is an attractive, well illustrated book that's both enlightening and engaging. I love the cover picture, which blends G H Haite's classic drawing with a modern photograph. All the book lacks, really, is an index.

RJ

Sherlock in the Spring Time: Some Idle Thoughts on Holmes and Watson by Molly Carr. *MX Publishing*. 2012. 140pp. 6.99 (pbk)

In her new book, Molly Carr has gathered some forty short and short-short essays, along with a couple of quirky stories. The essays are sometimes thought-provoking, sometimes amusing, and always interesting. Ms Carr is, I think, the first person to have noticed the curious links between Dr Watson's chronicles and a memorial at Beverley Minster, an exquisite gem of a church in an area rich in beautiful churches — that part of the East Riding of Yorkshire that's historically known as Holderness. The monument commemorates the men of the East Yorkshire Regiment who died while marching from Quetta to Kandahar in the immediate aftermath of the battle of Maiwand. Several of the names seem oddly familiar.

RJ

The Scientific Sherlock Holmes: Cracking the Case with Science and Forensics by James O'Brien. *Oxford University Press*. 2013. 256pp. £18.99

Professor O'Brien demonstrates how Arthur Conan Doyle's own scientific knowledge enabled him to create a detective who was both credible and memorable. He points out that most of the science is in the earlier stories, concluding that the far greater popularity of those tales is “surely no coincidence”, and he shows us that Holmes was more advanced in the field of chemistry than some

have suggested, even if his knowledge was not, perhaps, as profound as Watson thought. For all its good qualities, though (which do *not* include constant use of abbreviations for story titles), Professor O'Brien's book is both shallower and less accessible than *The Science of Sherlock Holmes* by E J Wagner.

RJ

Conan Doyle and the Crimes Club: The Creator of Sherlock Holmes and his Criminological Friends by Stephen Wade. *Fonthill Media*. 2012. 192pp. £18.99

A facet of Arthur Conan Doyle's life that is mentioned in only a couple of the more recent biographies, and then very briefly, is his membership of Our Society, otherwise the Crimes Club, founded in 1903 by H B Irving and five friends. Like his father Sir Henry, Irving was an actor, but he was also a barrister with a keen interest in criminology. Members of the Club with a professional interest in crime have included the KC Sir Edward Marshall Hall, known as "the Great Defender", and the famous criminal pathologist Sir Bernard Spilsbury. Conan Doyle, who joined in 1904, was one of the Crimes Club's many authors, along with, for instance, E W Hornung, P G Wodehouse, Max Pemberton and Bertram Fletcher Robinson. Stephen Wade gives us an account of the Club's genesis and a description of its early days, together with pen-portraits of a dozen members of the time, illustrating the different attitudes towards their common interest, and what they put into and took from the club. Despite the book's title, Conan Doyle gets no more space than George R Sims, and little more than AEW Mason or William Le Queux. There's an extensive bibliography, but a paucity of dates and other establishing details (Arthur Lambton claimed that a conversation he had with Conan Doyle inspired an important feature of *A Study in Scarlet*, but when did the conversation take place?). *Conan Doyle and the Crimes Club* is a good start, but it's far from the last word on the topic.

RJ

The Singular Adventure of Charles Goodfoote: A Thrilling Tale of a Perilous Escapade Set in the Old West by Charles Goodfoote, edited by John H Watson MD and Thomas F Hanratty. *CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform*, 2012. 308pp. £9.35 (pbk)

In 1976 Thomas Hanratty, a forensic investigator and long-time Sherlockian, produced *Crime Scene Sketches: Reproduced in Facsimile from the Pen and Ink Drawings in the Notebook of a Private Enquiry Agent*, illuminating eighteen of the chronicles in the style of the great Hans Gross. (Long out of print, the contents of the book are freely available - and are highly recommended - on-line at <http://redbirdstudio.com/CrimeScenes/>.)

Mr Hanratty's latest book brings the teenage Sherlock Holmes to America, following the brutal murder of one of his friends. The bodyguard assigned to him, Charles Goodfoote, becomes his mentor as well. The half-breed Goodfoote, a leading investigator with the Pinkerton Agency, uses early forensic science and traditional Native American methods to help young Holmes realise and develop his own detective skills. In the appropriately named *Disenchantment*, Arizona

Territory, the improbable partners uncover a chilling conspiracy and, with help from an Apache woman-warrior, a beautiful British spy, and a dogged US Marshal, face a vicious enemy. The characters are fully rounded, the setting almost painfully real, the plot exciting, the dialogue fresh — in short it's a winner!

RJ

Dead Man's Land by Robert Ryan. *Simon & Schuster*. 2013. 480pp. £12.99 (hbk)

In "The Sign of the Broken Sword" Father Brown asked his friend Flambeau, "Where does a wise man hide a pebble?" The answer: "On the beach." And where better to hide a corpse than a battlefield? When, amid the slaughter of the Western Front, Major John H Watson of the Army Medical Corps notices that one body bears unusual wounds, his curiosity is piqued. So is his desire to redress an evident injustice. Sherlock Holmes is far away, but Watson still has it in him to be an irregular investigator when more bodies are found with similar injuries. He has experienced warfare before, in Afghanistan, but that was more than thirty years ago, and things in Flanders are unimaginably worse, even without the prospect of a vicious killer with a personal agenda. The characterisation in *Dead Man's Land* is utterly credible, as is the description of life in the trenches — and the necessary concentration on the medical service is a fascinating bonus. This is both a first-rate crime story and a considerable novel.

RJ

Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Bulgarian Codex by Tim Symonds. *MX Publishing*. 2012. 180pp. £7.99

Mr Symonds's second Holmes novel is a rattling good yarn of political and personal intrigue in the Balkans. The masked visitor who calls at 221B in 1900 puts Dr Watson in mind of the King of Bohemia. In fact he is Ferdinand, Prince Regnant of a small nation threatened by three great empires, and he begs Holmes to investigate the disappearance of an ancient and vitally sacred manuscript. During their mission to Sofia Holmes and Watson encounter murder, treason, corruption and something very like vampirism. The Prince, later Tsar of Bulgaria, was known as Foxy Ferdinand, and the epithet was well deserved.

RJ

Encounters of Sherlock Holmes edited by George Mann. *Titan Books*. 400pp. £7.99 (pbk)

It was no surprise to learn that our member Richard Dinnick is one of the contributors to this enjoyable anthology. Several leading science fiction and fantasy writers have been enthusiastic Holmes devotees, and it's good to see that tradition continuing, with stories here from the likes of James Lovegrove, Mark Hodder, Cavan Scott, Paul Magrs and Steve Lockley. As you might guess, most of these tales involve the *outré*, the *recherché*, the improbable, and the downright fantastic. Among the phenomena that Holmes and Watson encounter are a living mummy haunting the London Underground, Dr Henry Jekyll, Victor Frankenstein's creature, HG Wells's Martian invaders... Wells himself

has a part to play, as do A J Raffles and Bunny Manders, Sir Richard Burton and Algernon Swinburne (an improbable detective duo that flourishes in novels by Mark Hodder). Most of the authors achieve an acceptable likeness of the Watson/Doyle style, while some opt for a third-person narrative, and Mr Magrs tells his story through letters written to Dr Watson by Mrs Hudson. To be worth publishing, Sherlock Holmes pastiche doesn't have to be startlingly different, but it should be written with knowledge, imagination, affection and style. The fourteen tales in *Encounters of Sherlock Holmes* pass the test.

RJ

Sherlock Holmes and the Knave of Hearts by Steve Hayes and David Whitehead. *Robert Hale*. 2013. 224pp. £19.99 (hbk)

Separately and in partnership, Messrs Hayes and Whitehead are remarkably prolific writers. I was apprehensive when their novel *Sherlock Holmes and the Queen of Diamonds* reached me a year ago. To my relief I found it a clever, exciting and well-written yarn, told with obvious respect and affection for the period and the characters. Its successor is, if anything, better. On at least two occasions, we know, Watson felt obliged to take Holmes away from London to recover from the curious excesses of his chosen way of life. This new tale sees the two in Paris, where inevitably, it seems, they encounter a vicious criminal conspiracy, "the Knaves", and thwart the attempted murder of Jules Verne. (If that last seems a little too rich, well, the attempt on Verne's life is historical fact, and the circumstances surrounding it were as odd as any fiction.) Grand stuff!

RJ

The Detective, the Woman and the Winking Tree by Amy Thomas. *MX Publishing*. 220pp. £9.99 (pbk)

Ms Thomas's second novel about Holmes and Irene Adler by Amy Thomas uses the same narrative technique as the first, *The Detective and the Woman*: Miss Adler's chapters are told in the first person, and Holmes's in the third person. It works well, not least because *the* woman emerges as a strong, intelligent and entirely credible character, whom Holmes rightly comes to admire. The subject of this new joint investigation is the apparently impossible disappearance of a Mr James Phillimore, who (as we remember from Dr Watson's guarded remark) "stepping back into his own house to get his umbrella, was never more seen in this world". Amy Thomas is a Baker Street Babe — and that, I assure you, is a recommendation.

RJ

The Amateur Executioner: Enoch Hale Meets Sherlock Holmes by Dan Andriacco and Kieran McMullen. *MX Publishing*. 2013. 180pp. £7.99 (pbk)

Enoch Hale, a native Bostonian, is a reporter for London's Central News Syndicate (where, in 1920, Horace Harker is still a familiar figure, though far from revered) and a friend of Chief Inspector Wiggins of Scotland Yard. As it becomes evident that the apparent suicide of a Music Hall artiste was only the first of a

series of murders by hanging, Hale's determination to find the link between the victims is variously helped and hindered by a cast of remarkable characters that includes his friend T S Eliot, W B Yeats, Bernard Shaw, Ezra Pound, Alfred Hitchcock and Winston Churchill. The presence of each person is rarely gratuitous and is never forced. Given Hale's personality and background, and the edgy mixture of crime and politics in which he becomes involved, their participation is almost to be expected. So, of course, is that of Sherlock Holmes. In contrast to most tales involving Holmes, *The Amateur Executioner* takes us into an ambiguous and murky world where right and wrong aren't always distinguishable. I look forward to reading more about Enoch Hale.

RJ

Sherlock Holmes in Paris by Séamas Duffy. *Black Coat Press*. 2013. 260pp. £12.99 (pbk)

Mr Duffy (like Arthur Conan Doyle, a Scotsman of Irish descent) evidently knows Dr Watson's chronicles, the literature that surrounds them, and the society that gave them birth. His own tales, a novella and two short stories, include all the essential elements for our pleasure: dazzling deductions, mysterious crimes, secret messages, references to untold cases, Lestrade, Mycroft, Mrs Hudson, breakfast at 221B, and the right relationship between Holmes and Watson. The long story, *The Adventure of the Nebrodi Sapphire*, takes the two to Paris to protect the famous jewel — but they find the sapphire secure and the man charged with guarding it dead in a locked room. Moriarty, François le Villard, Arsène Lupin and a Corsican secret society all play their part. The two short stories are likewise intriguing and enjoyable.

RJ

Peter Cushing: A Life in Film by David Miller. *Titan Books*. 2013. 192pp. £18.99 (hbk)

This, published for its subject's centenary, is a very handsome and splendidly illustrated revised edition of *The Peter Cushing Companion*, one of the best books about our late Honorary Member. Because of Cushing's reputation as a master of horror his films will be enjoyed by millions for decades to come, but that reputation has tended to overshadow his subtle and meticulous acting in other fields, most of them on stage or television. The 1954 BBC TV production of *1984* is available on DVD (in America, not in the UK); Cushing's tortured performance as Winston Smith is superb. It's also worth seeking out his pre-Hammer films, such as *Alexander the Great*, *Moulin Rouge*, and especially Olivier's *Hamlet*. He played Sherlock Holmes seventeen times, from Hammer's flawed but entertaining *Hound of the Baskervilles* in 1958 to Tyburn's excellent *The Masks of Death* in 1984. Of the 1968 BBC TV series, only six episodes survive, but they include the two-part *Hound of the Baskervilles*, which many of us rate the finest screen version of the story. David Miller's book is a worthy tribute to a great actor.

RJ

Audio books

In 1971 Peter Cushing recorded an unabridged reading of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* for the Royal National Institute for the Blind. For forty years it was available only to registered blind and partially sighted people in the UK, until in 2011 Cosmic Hobo (now called Bafflelegab) released the first four stories on CD, with liner notes by David Stuart Davies. In March this year came *The Return of Sherlock Holmes, Volume Two* (Bafflelegab Productions; 4 CDs; £14.99). It's been said that you really need an actor who's played Dr Watson to narrate these tales, but however he may be identified in our minds with the Detective, Peter Cushing, in sound alone, is an entirely credible Doctor. And then there are the other characters, major and minor, all depicted as believable individual human beings... Cushing does full justice to the atmosphere, the excitement, the humour and the ingenuity of these tales. What a bonus for us that the recordings should at last become available to the general public! I hope we don't have to wait so long for Volume Three.

Sherlock Holmes, as we know, was only a fraction of Conan Doyle's literary output. His weird fiction, influenced in part by his admiration for Poe, includes a dozen or more excellent stories. Now Educated English Audiobooks has released a four-CD set, *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Tales of Terror*, containing "The Beetle-Hunter", "The Case of Lady Sannox", "The New Catacomb", "The Lift", "The Brown Hand" and "The Brazilian Cat", read with clarity, authority and feeling by Peter Greenhalgh, together with the full text in an attractive illustrated paperback book (www.speechandpronunciation.com; £19.50 + post-age; digital download £14.50).

RJ

In brief

Many scholars have applied their specialist expertise to illuminating an aspect of the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes. Bernard Davies on topography, Maurice Campbell on medicine, Madeline Stern on rare books, Patricia Guy on wine ... The list seems endless. With *The Sherlock Holmes Stories and Combustion Science*, J C Jones has chosen what may seem the most unlikely subject area. In fact the forty or so short essays, several reprinted from this *Journal*, help us to appreciate many of the more curious details of the Canon. Copies of the 120-page book are available for £10.00 each from the author at j.c.jones@eng.abdn.ac.uk.

Last year MX released *Sherlock Holmes on the Air*, a selection of the best radio scripts by our own Matthew J Elliott. Now comes *Sherlock Holmes in Pursuit* (MX; £7.99), containing six first-rate stories in the Watson style, four of them originally published in the much-missed *Sherlock Magazine*. My only cavil is that it's often hard to tell where one paragraph ends and another begins, as the first lines aren't indented, nor are the paragraphs separated. The quality of the stories more than makes up for that inconvenience, though.

The Art of Deduction compiled by Hannah Rogers and edited by Steve Emecz (MX, 2013; £9.99) is a bewilderingly varied collection of prose, verse and pictures, most but not all inspired by *Sherlock*, and all, I think, contributed by people who usually publish their

work on-line. The proof-reading, it has to be said, is shockingly poor ("I road all the way to the jail with a not in my stomach"...) but the book's heart is in the right place. It was created both to raise awareness of the Undershaw Preservation Trust and to raise funds for Help for Heroes

As with Alan Stockwell's earlier collection *The Singular Adventures of Mr Sherlock Holmes*, the tales in *The Singular Exploits of Mr Sherlock Holmes* (Vesper Hawk Publishing, 2012; £7.95) are firmly "in the traditional manner", apart from the occasional introduction of "certain characters and events of the time" — and the fact that one story, "A Christmas Interlude", omits Holmes altogether. But the voice throughout is that of John H Watson (or an acceptable imitation), the setting is true to the period, and the plots are inventive. I particularly like "The Ancient Ring of the Prophet", which tells the tale of the politician, the lighthouse and the trained cormorant.

Sherlock Holmes & Young Winston: The Jubilee Plot by Mike Hogan (MX; £9.99) is the second novel in a promising series. In June 1887 the prospect of publication at last for *A Study in Scarlet* is overshadowed by the imminent crowning event of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee: a service at Westminster Abbey attended by her government ministers, peers of the realm and fifty foreign monarchs. Dynamite attacks by the Fenians are a very real threat. Lestrade has been seconded to Scotland Yard's new Special Irish Branch, but Holmes, Watson and the twelve-year-old Winston Churchill face even worse danger.

In *The Many Watsons* (MX Publishing, 2012; £7.99) Kieran McMullen takes a look at fifty-four actors, male and female, who have played Dr Watson or a Watson character on screen. It's good to see the Watsons getting their share of attention, though the text needs proofreading, and I could wish that the actors had been dealt with in alphabetical or chronological order. Should there be a second edition, I hope Mr McMullen will include some at least of the radio Watsons — Leigh Lovell, Alfred Shirley, Norman Shelley, Michael Williams, Andrew Sachs, Larry Albert... Royalties from this light, lively collection of essays will go to the Undershaw Preservation Trust.

David Ruffle completes his "Lyme Regis trilogy" with *Sherlock Holmes and the Lyme Regis Trials* (MX Publishing, 2012; £6.99). The title refers in part to the difficulties overcome by the pioneer palaeontologist Mary Anning, a poorly educated woman in a world dominated by men, but principally to top-secret naval trials, which lead to espionage and murder. This pleasant volume is completed by a distinctly off-beat account of the case of the Grosvenor Square furniture van. Mr Ruffle is also the author of a charming children's book, *Sherlock Holmes and the Missing Snowman*, illustrated by Rikey Austin (MX Publishing, 2012; £6.99), a sweet little story with delightful full-colour pictures.

Mystery at St Andrews by W P Lawler (Uncle Wilson's Productions, 208 Hilltop Drive, West Wyoming, PA 18644, USA; 2012; \$14.95) like *Dead Man's Land* sees Watson coping without Holmes, but this exploit takes place in early 1894, when Holmes was thought to

have been killed in Switzerland. At his wife's insistence, Watson takes a break at the famous home of golf, where all is not as tranquil as he might have hoped, and the woman needs his help. The author's love of both the Holmes Canon and of golf ensures authenticity and appeal.

One of the most delightful volumes of Holmes pastiche I've encountered is *Sherlock Holmes and the Folk Tale Mysteries* by Gayle Lange Puhl (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, 2012; Cdn\$20.00). It's also exceptionally clever, as Ms Puhl strips thirteen traditional stories to the core, from "The Three Bears" to "Little Bo Peep", and refashions each as a mystery for Holmes and Watson to investigate. Her amusing cartoon-like illustrations might suggest that this is a book of jokes; in fact it's a collection of perfectly sound detective stories.

Masters of Crime: Fiction's Finest Villains and their Real-Life Inspirations, a handsome and very entertaining volume by Adam Nightingale (The History Press, 2011; £18.99), looks at people whose criminal careers contributed to the creation of Macheath, Fagin, Bill Sikes, Raffles, Oliver Haddo, Mr Mocata — and of course Professor Moriarty. Sherlock Holmes compared Moriarty to Jonathan Wild, and I'm inclined to agree with Mr Nightingale that Wild was the main inspiration for the Napoleon of Crime. Unfortunately names are misspelt throughout, there are some elementary errors (Jean Baptiste Greuze *did* exist, and he *did* paint *Jeune Fille à l'Agneau* — which does *not* mean "young woman from Agneau"), and there are no references. Enjoy the book, but double-check the facts.

Less strictly relevant but better written and much better researched is *The Dracula Secrets: Jack the Ripper and the Darkest Sources of Bram Stoker* (The History Press, 2012; £20.00) by Neil R Storey. As an author and as Henry Irving's manager at the Lyceum Theatre, Bram Stoker knew pretty much everyone of importance in the 1890s, including Arthur Conan Doyle and Oscar Wilde — and the hugely popular novelist Hall Caine, to whom he dedicated *Dracula*. And Caine had once been close to Francis Tumblety, an Irish quack who had a record of gross indecency and who was seriously suspected of the

Whitechapel murders. Mr Storey's researches uncover some very suggestive possibilities about the inspiration for Count Dracula.

Sherlock Holmes & the Case of the Crystal Blue Bottle by Luke Benjamin Kuhns (MX Publishing, 2012; £6.99) is, I think, MX's first graphic novel, or, rather, novella. The three parts of this short, sad story are nicely illustrated in two contrasting styles, and as a bonus there's a dozen or so individual drawings and paintings, or "pinups" — all in colour and the work of too many artists to list here.

Richard Kellogg may be best known in our circles for his 1986 book *Sherlock Holmes and the Origins of Psychology*, but the previous year Magico had published his delightful children's story *The Little Girl and Mister Holmes*, and now, after nearly three decades, comes his second Sherlockian story for young readers, *Barry Baskerville Solves a Case*, with colourful illustrations by Gary Kato. Young Barry's family and friends are amused by his desire to emulate the great detective, until his sharp eye and quick mind save his father from falling victim to a con man. The 28-page Airship 27 Production is available from Amazon.co.uk for £5.92, or as a Kindle edition for £1.34.

Back in March I was sceptical when I learned of a play that was about tour the north-west: "Somewhere between the fact and the fiction Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's greatest creation stole the soul of Jeremy Brett, the actor who would become the embodiment of the Baker Street Sleuth. *The Curse of Sherlock Holmes* follows Jeremy as he fights for his sanity... his life." I don't know how it came across in performance, but the published script by Dhanil Ali (MX Publishing, 2013; £7.99) is thought-provoking and dramatic, without being unnecessarily sensational. Since the protagonist is Jeremy Brett, however, the disclaimer: "All characters appearing in this work are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental," is decidedly disingenuous.

RJ

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www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk

Roger Johnson, Editor
Mole End
41 Sandford Road
Chelmsford
CM2 6DE