"I AM AN OMNIVOROUS READER"

Book reviews by CATHERINE COOKE, HERMAN REICHENBACH and ROGER JOHNSON

Clutches of a Fiend: A Facsimile of the Original Manuscript of "The Illustrious Client" by Arthur Conan Doyle, with Annotations and Commentary, edited, with an introduction, by Steven T Doyle, BSI. *The Baker Street Irregulars*, 2023. 179+10pp. $44.95 (hbk) from https://bakerstreetirregulars.com/the-bsi-press/

There are twenty-three facsimiles of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes manuscripts on my shelves, including "How Watson Learned the Trick" and the deservedly never-produced play *Angels of Darkness*, which features Watson but not Holmes. Sixteen of them were published by the Baker Street Irregulars. Now it's a delight to welcome another in the BSI's remarkable series.

As usual, each page of the MS is accompanied by Philip Bergem's meticulous annotated transcript, and there are nine essays, including the editor's introduction. Randall Stock looks at the history and development of the manuscript. Steven Doyle and Bill Mason note that this case places Holmes firmly in the world of "hard-boiled" detective fiction, and that Adelbert Gruner, rather than Charles Augustus Milverton, is truly "the worst man in London". Pat Ward examines the few screen adaptations, all for television, in her article, "Sex and Violence and … Sherlock Holmes?". Leslie Klinger compares Gruner's "lust diary" to the books of such Victorian erotomanes as "Walter", author of *My Secret Life*. The other articles, all worth your attention, are by Mike McSwiggin, Ira Brad Matetsky, Monica Schmidt and Alan Rettig.

Contributors and publishers "have done wonders — wonders!"

RJ

Sherlock Holmes and the British Empire: Proceedings and papers from the Baker Street Irregulars conference held at the Bear Mountain Inn, Bear Mountain State Park, New York, July 29-31, 2022, edited, with an introduction, by Ross E Davies, BSI. *The Baker Street Irregulars*, 2023. 210+6pp. $29.95 (pbk) from https://bakerstreetirregulars.com/the-bsi-press/

There are nineteen papers here, in the order in which they were delivered over what was evidently an exceptional three days. Our Society has organised many long weekends away from London, but always to a place of Holmesian or Doylean significance, where talks, however good — and many have been superb — were only a part of the programme. At the BSI's conference, the talks *were* the programme, and we should be grateful to Ross Davies and the BSI Press for making them available to those of us who weren't able to make it to the Bear Mountain State Park.

Three of the papers were each delivered by two people: "Canada and the Canon", "The Wonderful World of Whist" and "Great Ladies, Unsettling Wives and Women of Independent Means". That gives you an idea of the variety of the subjects. Among the solo talks were "The Canonical Empire", "Sherlock Holmes on Stage Across the British Empire", "Kipling, Doyle, the Canon, and Empire", "A Canonical Safari Through British Colonial Africa", "*Silver Blaze*, the World of Art, and British Gentlemen of the Victorian Era", "The Great Agra Treasure and the Canonical Plundering of India", and "Arthur Conan Doyle: The Egyptian Connection". There were too many speakers to list here; all I think, were from the US and Canada, except Jay Ganguly and Maria Fleischhack, from India and Germany respectively.

Besides the scholarly papers, we have the programme of *An Imperial-Canonical Revue: Empire-Inspired Sherlockian Songs*, performed by Alex Katz and Karen Wilson; and a new epic poem, "Sherlock Holmes in the British Empire", by Albert and Betsy Rosenblatt. There are illustrations galore, mostly colour photos taken during the conference, of the speakers and, for example, of Henry Boote recreating a turn at Day's Music Hall. This book fulfils Lord Reith's aims for the nascent BBC: it informs, it educates, and by golly it entertains!

RJ

A West Wind: How America and Americans Influenced the Sherlockian Canon, Edited, with an Introduction, by Thomas A Horrocks, PhD, BSI, and Ray Betzner, BSI. *The Baker Street Irregulars*, 2023. 204+6pp. $39.95 (hbk) from https://bakerstreetirregulars.com/the-bsi-press/

A notable influence on the character of Sherlock Holmes was C Auguste Dupin, the French ratiocinator, created by an American, Edgar Allan Poe. Holmes himself first became famous in the USA because of the then-legal pirating of *A Study in Scarlet*, but we owe his second appearance to the American editor J.M. Stoddart, who commissioned

The Sign of the Four for publication in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* on both sides of the Atlantic. And after Holmes's reported demise in "The Final Problem" and the success of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* — a sensational earlier case — it was another American magazine, *Collier's*, which commissioned "The Empty House", and ensured the detective's return. The USA and Canada are notable factors in at least a third of the stories in the canon, including three of the four novels; the contributors to *A West Wind* have significant matter to discuss, and they don't disappoint.

A brief personal selection: Mattias Boström on "A Quartering of the Union Jack with the Stars and Stripes"; Ross E Davies on "The Canonical View of American Criminals and Law Enforcement"; Michael W Homer on "American Clandestine Societies in the Canon"; Julie McKuras on "American Women in the Canon"; Curtis Armstrong on "How Well Did Holmes Play an American?"; Anastasia Klimchynskaya on "Sherlock Holmes in American Television"; and Ashley D Polasek on "Holmes in Hollywood". There are fifteen essays in all, and every one is worth reading.

RJ

Finding Sherlock Holmes: A Guide to Locations in England Mentioned in the Sherlock Holmes Canon by Paul Thomas Miller. *Belanger Books*, 2023. 475pp. £20.00/$24.95 (pbk)

Paul Miller is, I suspect, known equally for his humour and for his disciplined approach to Holmesian scholarship. His first contribution to the *Journal* was "The Adventure of the Missing Tail", a delightful parody of Winnie-the-Pooh, in the Summer 2019 issue. That same year, Wildside Press published his book *Watson Does Not Lie: A Chronology of Sherlock Holmes and John H Watson* — and he was already researching in a different field, the first fruits of which we published in the Winter 2020 *Journal*. "The Devil's Foot and Tredannick Wartha" tells how he reconnoitred the area where Holmes and Watson investigated the case of the Cornish horror, and how he convincingly identified the true home of the Tregennis family. In 2021 he self-published a good slim volume, *Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes in Portsmouth and Southsea*, but the full extent of his research became apparent with the publication of *Finding Sherlock Holmes*.

As far as possible, Paul has personally explored most of the English locations of the great detective's sixty canonical exploits, from Baskerville Hall to Holdernesse Hall, from Tredannick Wollas to Donnithorpe. Everything is carefully examined and researched: he gives his reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with earlier topographers, and on the few occasions when he draws on the work of another, he acknowledges the fact. The result is the fullest guide to Holmes's England that has come my way. There are more than a hundred photographs. The chapters, each covering one story, are arranged in alphabetical order according to Jay Finlay Christ's title codes, beginning with 3GAB, 3GAR and 3STU, and only then progressing to ABBE. I'd rather have had the stories ordered as they are in the standard editions of the canon — but that's a minor quibble, and it doesn't detract from the overall excellence of the book.

(As you can read in the Editorial Notes, Paul Thomas Miller won the 2024 Tony & Freda Howlett Literary Award for Finding Sherlock Holmes,*)*

RJ

The Criminal World of Sherlock Holmes, Volumes One, Two and Three by Kelvin I Jones. *MX Publishing*, 2022. 248pp, £14.13 (Vol. 1); 290pp, £14.13 (Vol. 2); 270pp, £15.70 (Vol. 3). All pbk, but Kindle editions of Vols 1 & 2 available from Amazon.

Despite the publication date, the set of three doesn't seem to have been available until December 2023; still, better late than never. Kelvin Jones has produced a remarkable number of Holmes-related books over a period of more than forty years, some of considerable importance, and all worth reading — if you can find them. Copies of the handsome original hardback editions of *The Making of Sherlock Holmes* and *The Sherlock Holmes Murder File* (both Magico Magazine, 1984 and 1985) are currently listed on Amazon for £20.39 and £36.17 respectively. Fortunately, their contents, updated to a degree, are included in Volume One of this triad, along with a great deal else, including numerous illustrations.

A four-part investigation of "The Ubiquitous Jack the Ripper" is divided between Volumes One and Two, and in Volume Three is "When Conan Doyle Met Jack the Ripper: A Problem Solved". (Others have named the same person as the Whitechapel murderer. I am not convinced, but it would certainly make ACD's acquaintance with him more likely.) Other criminals of the 19th and early 20th centuries are discussed across the trilogy, often in relation to the fictional rogues encountered

in the canon. The methods of criminals are described, as are those of the police and of the pioneers of scientific criminology, such as Hans Gross, Alphonse Bertillon and Edmond Locard — which in turn are compared with the methods of Sherlock Holmes.

There's much more, and it makes for stimulating reading, even if one occasionally disagrees with the author's conclusions. It has to be said, though, that the books are not problem-free. Both text and layout need editing. The indexes are not full enough to be really helpful. Many of the illustrations appear squashed or elongated… That said, it's remarkable that *The Criminal World of Sherlock Holmes* exists at all, as Kelvin Jones is now so severely afflicted by Parkinson's disease that typing is almost impossible. This will almost certainly be his last substantial work, and I'm pleased to recommend it.

The prices are as on the publisher's website. Note that Volume 3 is in a larger format [11¾ x 8¼ ins] than Volumes 1 and 2 [10 x 8ins].

RJ

Canonical Cornerstones: Foundational Books of a Sherlockian Library, edited by Peter Eckrich and Rob Nunn. *Gasogene Books*, 2023. 125pp. $24.95 (pbk) from https://www.wessexpress.com/

In 2022, Gasogene published *The Finest Assorted Collection: Essays on Collecting Sherlock Holmes*. Now we have the companion volume from the same editors, who invited seventeen veteran and vintage Holmesians to recommend reading matter which they think every Baker Street devotee should have to hand. The assumption, of course, is that we already have access to the canonical fifty-six short and four long stories — but can you put your hands on W.S. Baring-Gould's *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, published in 1967? Or Leslie Klinger's *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* (2004-5)? Holmesian scholarship had advanced and multiplied greatly in the in the intervening years, but Klinger's superb edition hasn't made Baring-Gould's unnecessary — though I can't be alone in wishing that B-G had followed the standard arrangement of the stories instead of presenting them according to his own debatable chronology. Those annotated editions are recommended respectively by Julie McKuras and Peter E Blau.

Here also are, among others, Ray Betzner on Vincent Starrett's *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*; Catherine Cooke on Michael Harrison's *In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes*; Mike McSwiggin on D Martin Dakin's *A Sherlock Holmes Commentary*; Sonia Fetherston on Jack Tracy's *Encyclopaedia Sherlockiana*; Mark Alberstat on Mattias Boström's *From Holmes to Sherlock* (unaccountably re-titled *The Life and Death of Sherlock Holmes* by its UK publishers); Ira Brad Matetsky on Ronald Burt De Waal's *The World Bibliography of Sherlock Holmes*; Dan Andriacco on Edgar W Smith's *Profile by Gaslight*; Regina Stinson on Steven Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes for Dummies*; and, er, me on S.C. Roberts' *Holmes and Watson: A Miscellany*.

The remaining contributors are Peggy MacFarlane, Anastasia Klymchynskaya, Mark Jones, Ross E Davies, Timothy J Johnson and Russell Merritt. And the foreword is by Michael Dirda. These essays will be invaluable for newcomers to the great game, and old hands may well find themselves seeing old favourites in a new light. Capital!

RJ

Robert van Gulik and His Chinese Sherlock Holmes: The Global Travels of Judge Dee by Sabrina Yuan Hao. *Koninklijke Brill*, 2023. 238 pp. €99.00 (*c*. £85.00, hbk).

The publisher of Sabrina Yuan Hao's comprehensive analysis of the creation and international reception of the fictional Chinese detective character Di Gong'an is not the first to try to sell Di as the "Chinese Sherlock Holmes". But as Vincent Starrett observed as early as 1942 in his brief but seminal survey, "Some Chinese detective stories", Di (also known as Dee Goong An) was there first. Nevertheless, Starrett recognised similarities between Di and Sherlock Holmes, even if Conan Doyle could hardly have been familiar with an ancient Chinese literary genre that had yet to be translated into English.

Gong'an is an honorific title that in pre-modern China meant 'Judge'. A Chinese judge, however, was also senior detective, prosecutor and jury in one. Di Gong'an, based upon a seventh-century historical figure, was not the first Chinese fictional detective, or even the most popular one, but he is certainly the one best known today outside East Asia. Credit goes to the Dutch Sinologist and diplomat Robert van Gulik (1910–1967).

With excessive emphasis on supernatural forces, *gong'an* stories did not lend themselves easily to a Western readership. As First Secretary in the Dutch embassy in China during the Second World War, with time to kill, van Gulik discovered in an antiquarian bookshop, and then translated into

English, a Di Gong'an novel by an anonymous, presumably seventeenth- or eighteenth-century author that he thought might work. Over the next two decades, he subsequently wrote a dozen new Di Gong'an novels, many, if not all, loosely based upon other Chinese detective stories. As early as 1896, on the other hand, "The Naval Treaty" had become the first Sherlock Holmes story to be translated into Chinese. The reciprocal influence of Chinese and Western detective fiction lies at the heart of Professor Yuan's well-written and prudently illustrated study of the "Chinese Sherlock Holmes".

HR

The Common-Place Book: 2024 by Rob Nunn. *The Author*, 2024. 52pp. £3.95/$4.99 (pbk) or £1.57/$1.99 (Kindle) - both from Amazon

This is the second in an appropriately irregular series of Rob Nunn's Holmesian writings, reprinted from the various journals and anthologies where they first appeared. So here, three years after the first slim volume, we have thirteen pieces including "Sherlock Holmes and the Softer Human Emotions", "The Immense Significance of the Curried Mutton", "She is Always *the* Woman" and (from the SHJ) "A Fiendish Forum" — which apparently inspired a friend to ask Mr Nunn what drugs he was on when he wrote it! The last and longest is "A Friend of Mr Sherlock is Always Welcome", subtitled "Elementary Lessons for Sherlockian Students", and it's sound advice from a teacher who gives his 5th-grade pupils "a two-week unit on Sherlock Holmes". Whenever the next *Common-Place Book* appears, it will certainly bring us further intelligent and entertaining articles from Rob Nunn.

RJ

The MX Book of New Sherlock Holmes Stories — Part XL: Further Untold Cases (1879-1886), Part XLI: Further Untold Cases (1887-1892) *and* **Part XLII: Further Untold Cases (1894-1922)**
edited by David Marcum. *MX Publishing*, 2023. 44+402pp (Part XL), 44+460pp (Part XLI), 44-366pp (Part XLII). Each £28.25 (hbk), £15.70 (pbk). Prices from the publisher's website.

Nine years after the first three volumes appeared, we are nearing the end of this monumental project, and the principle remains: to please the discerning reader with new exploits of the great detective, and thereby to help fund the regeneration of the house that Conan Doyle built for himself and his family at Hindhead in Surrey. The house had recently become home to the Stepping Stones School, "where children from Year 3 to Post 16 with mild to moderate learning difficulties and additional needs, such as ASD, cerebral palsy, hemiplegia, and medical vulnerabilities can access the national curriculum and qualification pathways in a safe, secure, and friendly environment." The school is now called *Undershaw*, the name that Conan Doyle chose for his house, but the purpose of the books remains.

There are fifty-three stories in these new volumes, all, plus poems by Kelvin I Jones and Joseph W Svec III, as well as introductory essays by David Marcum and others. Among the contributors to are names both familiar (Hugh Ashton, Paul D Gilbert, Tracy J Revels, Roger Riccard, Liese Sherwood-Fabre…) and less familiar (Tim Newton Anderson, Deanna Baran, Paula Hammond, Naching T Kassa, Robert V Stapleton…). And there's I.A. Watson, who claims to be the great-grand-nephew of Dr John H Watson! None of them will make a penny out of it, of course. And, as Paul Thomas Miller wrote of an earlier set in the series, "There is some variable quality in the stories, but none fall below an acceptable standard. As ever, there is something here for everyone."

RJ

The Monographs: Becoming Sherlock Holmes (2nd Edition) by Ben Cardall. *MX Publishing*, 2024. 274+14pp. £24.79 (hbk), £12.99 (pbk)

Ben Cardall is a magician and mentalist in the tradition of the late James Randi. His talent, developed through determined reasoning and practice, for reading *people* in the way that Sherlock Holmes did, enabled his professional move from martial arts instructor for local police officers to security and protection expert with an international company. Actually, it's more than reading people, of course: online, Mr Cardall is *The Deductionist*, and his observation, his reasoning, and his memory — all rigorously trained — make him as close to a real-life Holmes as we're likely to see. This new edition of *The Monographs* explains how he approached and developed the essential skills, and how his readers can do the same. If they have the desire, the determination, that is — and, I suspect, the necessary modicum of talent. Ben Cardall is a master of his subject; I confess that I haven't yet attempted the exercises his book recommends, but I have enjoyed reading the book!

RJ

The Adventure of the Second Wife by Andrew Finkel. *Even Keel Press*, 2024. 276pp. £20.00 (hbk)

Abdul Hamid II, 34th and last Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, a man known to history as an absolute monarch, paranoid about being overthrown. His creation of secret police and imposition of censorship stood on the one hand, with the building of railways and on-going reforms in areas such as bureaucracy and education on the other. He was also a skilled carpenter, a lover of the arts, himself composing several operas. He also loved the Sherlock Holmes stories and awarded Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the Order of the Medjidie, 2nd-Class, in 1907.

This is the starting point for Andrew Finkel's novel. A London doctor working with a brilliant Turkish professor, tries to solve the mystery of Arthur Conan Doyle's reported dying words about The Adventure of the Second Wife — did Conan Doyle write a Holmes story purely for Abdul Hamid, does the manuscript exist, can the doctor make his name in the Sherlockian world by finding and lecturing on it? In doing this, he learns much about himself and finds his life completely disrupted.

Finkel, a well-respected journalist who has spent many years in Istanbul reporting for organisations such as *The Times*, *The Economist* and CNN, takes us into Abdul Hamid's world, giving us glimpses of life there, for the Sultan, some of his family, for his guards and agents, as well has playing with the world of Sherlock Holmes, those who study the stories and weave theories. This is not a pastiche, though it includes one, which the reader discovers as the protagonist does. It is a hugely enjoyable, quite complicated novel, in which there is more than just the one Second Wife.

CC