

“I AM AN OMNIVOROUS READER”

Book reviews by LISA BURSCHEIDT, CATHERINE COOKE, ALISTAIR DUNCAN, PAUL MILLER, MARK MOWER, JOHN RADFORD, VALERIE SCHREINER, JEAN UPTON and ROGER JOHNSON

Through the Archives by Jessica Victoria Woolf. *The Sherlock Holmes Society of London*, 2018. 76pp, large (A4) format. £11.00/€22.00/US\$25.00 (pbk). Prices include postage

Through the Archives gives an insight into the history and the archives of the Society. Presented in a scrapbook format, it is so crammed with content that it is impossible to find a page that does not excite interest. Like the archive it represents, it is full of diverse materials: poetry, plays, photos of expeditions, Holmesian collectables and all manner of documents and letters. While many of the documents are merely there illustratively, it pays to whip out your magnifying glass to read them (and let's face it, all Holmesians have a lens and relish the opportunity to use it) as each one provides interest.

High points for me were Auberon Redfean's poem "Cyanea" and finding out more about the many Swiss Expeditions. As a fairly new member, it was also great to be able to set names in context, particularly those who were involved in the formation and re-formation of the Society. Be warned, however, that the book may end up costing you more than just the cover price, as it is full of things you didn't know you needed. It made me order *Necropolis* by Basil Copper and the Society's own *France in the Blood*, for example. The book easily achieves its goal of connecting the reader with the Society's history and stimulating an interest in its archives. With its contagious enthusiasm, it is a book which any Society member would enjoy.

PM

[Jessica Woolf is the Society's former Volunteer Archivist. She has moved on to bigger things, as Curator of the Postal Museum, which we visited during this year's May Mini-Festival. Ed.]

Holmes and Watson: a Miscellany by S.C. Roberts. *The British Library*, 2018. 160pp. £10.00 (hbk)

I can't improve on Ivar Gunn's review of the first edition, published in the December 1953 SHJ:

"Our President modestly calls his collection of Holmesian studies a patchwork, but, if so, it is a patchwork glowing with all the colour and richness of amethyst snuff-boxes, emerald tie-pins and beryl coronets. Moreover, it is a craftsman's hand which has taken these pieces, composed at various times and for diverse settings, and woven them into a pattern which gives them a new unity and an enhanced interest. As Holmes observed, you can tell an old master by the sweep of his brush. This unity of design is most impressive in the series of six papers which take

Sherlock Holmes himself, his life, tastes and personality as their theme, Mr Roberts's biography of Dr Watson (also printed here in full) is deservedly a classic, but it is only now, when these studies of Holmes have been brought together for the first time, that we can see that they form an equally full and rounded portrait of the Master.

"Always Mr Roberts beguiles us with his easy, supple style and firm mastery of his material. In his brilliant refutation of Holmes's misogyny and, again, in the Oxford v. Cambridge controversy, every piece of evidence is so adroitly chiselled and fitted into the fabric of the argument that we lean back, persuaded almost against our will, and exclaim with Watson, 'You have an answer to everything.' No less admirable is his scholarly restraint, well exemplified in his treatment of Holmes's relations with Miss Trevor and Miss Violet Hunter. He suggests, but does not labour, the possibility of a romantic attachment, delicately hinting in a footnote that the whole Birmingham area may have held a measure of poignancy for Holmes through its associations with these two ladies. This discretion is the hallmark of Mr Roberts's wit and fancy; in a notable passage, which some other commentators might well take to heart, he deprecates fantastic theorising and the straining after novelty for novelty's sake. He insists, as Holmes did, on 'the scientific use of the imagination' and he always has 'some material basis for his speculations.' Always, did I say? Well, even Homer may nod, and Mr Roberts himself now seems to have some misgivings about that conjectural marriage of Dr Watson and Miss de Merville.

"These studies of Holmes and Watson are the two main courses of the feast. For savoury there is the crisp, nostalgic survey of the Sherlock Holmes Exhibition, and for dessert those mellow and hitherto almost inaccessible fruits of pastiche, 'Christmas Eve' and 'The Megatherium Thefts'. The place for this book is on your shelf next to *British Birds* and *Catullus* and *The Holy War* — a bargain every one of them. For this is the greatest bargain of them all, the perfect answer to the problem of how to while away these bleak autumnal evenings when the rain beats against the windows and the wind cries and sobs like a child in the chimney."

In place of the author's preface, this attractive and welcome new edition (look closely at the fantastic beasts depicted on the cover) has an appreciative introduction by our President Emeritus, Guy Marriott.

RJ

Conan Doyle For the Defence: A Sensational Murder, the Quest for Justice and the World's Greatest Detective Writer by Margalit Fox. *Profile Books*, 2018. 344pp. £16.99 (hbk)

Arthur Conan Doyle's forays into the world of true crime and miscarriages of justice are well known, the two most famous and chronicled being the cases of George Edalji and Oscar Slater. The former is the most often discussed, perhaps because Edalji was a fine upstanding member of the community, whereas Slater was not (or certainly not perceived as such). The two cases share wrongful conviction and imprisonment, as well as a significant dose of gruesomeness; but where Edalji was imprisoned for supposedly mutilating horses and cattle Slater was imprisoned, and nearly hanged, for murder.

The Slater case is a well travelled route for writers, even if not yet the trampled path that the Edalji case has become; you may wonder therefore what a new book can bring to the subject. Fox sets the scene well. She describes the pertinent facts of the case and the background against which it was set, shining a light on the uncomfortable prejudices that enabled Slater to be tried and convicted when most of the evidence against him was acknowledged to be worthless. In other books I've read the trial and appeals are discussed at length but Slater's time in prison (and his increasingly desperate communication with his family) has not been given the same level of exposure. However, Fox lays as much emphasis on Slater's time in prison as on the trial.

If you are new to the case, you would make a good purchase with this volume. However, if you already own books on the Slater case and are not a completist, you might not find enough that is new to warrant adding it to your shelves. Personally, as a Doyle devotee, I would happily have purchased this book and am happy to recommend it to anyone who shares my interest.

AD

A Chronology of the Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: May 22nd 1859 to July 7th 1930 by Brian W Pugh. *MX Publishing*, 2018. 455pp. £29.99/€34.99/\$34.95 (pbk)

Brian Pugh has been working on his chronology of Arthur Conan Doyle for many years. The 2009 edition was a trusty companion and, as it went through subsequent revisions, I was gratified to see my own works referred to in its pages. I value and admire Brian's work so much that it is an honour to be mentioned alongside great names such as Stashower, Lycett, Dickson Carr and Nordon. This latest version is enormous at over 450 pages — roughly three times the size of the 2009 edition.

So what do you get in this edition? First and foremost it incorporates all corrections to previous editions, thus superseding them. It also includes all the

maps (now in full colour) and material featured in the 2016 *Addenda & Corrigenda*. Then, of course, there are the fruits of Brian's latest research: family trees, maps, photographs of residences, commemorative plaques, graves, a day-by-day list of pertinent activities, a bibliography of Conan Doyle and those who've written about him. There are also photos, of which some are appearing in print, it is believed, for the first time. Any student of Doyle (and Holmes) needs to be equipped with certain books — the core texts if you will. This is a vital element of that core library.

AD

The Complete Paget Portfolio: Every Sherlock Holmes Illustration by Sidney Paget Reproduced Directly from *The Strand Magazine*, Including the Surviving Original Artwork by Nicholas Utechin. *Gasogene Books*, 2018. 274pp. \$46.95 (pbk)

Copies of *The Strand Magazine* with Paget's illustrations aren't cheap. I was able to assemble, in various bindings, all the bound volumes from 1891 to 1912, for as little as £2.00 each in the early days and no more than £15.00 later on, but in recent years, prices have shot up. There are editions of the Canon with all the *Strand* illustrations, but the reproduction is always inferior to the original — and even the original isn't what it was, as time takes its toll. Paget created our image of Holmes and his world, and his pictures deserve to be looked at properly. Nick Utechin's book gives us the opportunity: his publishers, Steven Doyle and Mark Gagen, have ensured that the reproductions are as clean and accurate as possible. And for the first time 22 of the 27 surviving original drawings are published alongside the engravings that appeared in the *Strand*, as well as the three portraits of Holmes, all unpublished in the artist's lifetime. This lovely book will be essential for some of us, and extremely desirable for all.

(Have you noticed how Holmes's appearance differs from story to story? He does often resemble his supposed model, Walter Paget, but he frequently looks much more like the artist himself.)

RJ

The Sherlock Effect: How Forensic Doctors and Investigators Disastrously Reason Like the Great Detective by Thomas W Young. *CRC Press*, 2018. xiii + 254 pp. £26.99 (hbk)

The author is a retired forensic pathologist of wide experience in the USA. The book is a semi-autobiographical account of how he came to enter that profession, and to conclude that many miscarriages of justice result from faulty reasoning by forensic expert witnesses. His argument is supported by numerous case studies, and illustrated by the example of Sherlock Holmes, with whom he starts. He points to the uniquely wide-spread fame of the detective and his method.

This rests, as Holmes describes, on “reasoning backwards”, from a given situation to how it came about. He concludes that Watson has been in Afghanistan from the latter’s appearance: medical type, military bearing, deep tan, haggard face, etc. But each feature might well have had a different origin. Young argues that forensic experts too often similarly jump to conclusions which may be correct but cannot be relied on without further direct evidence (he seems to favour eye-witness testimony, but the pitfalls of that are well established). The argument is valid and important.

However the book is not about Holmes; one recalls an alleged review of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, in a journal on estate management, complaining that there was little of practical use to gamekeepers. Holmes’s method was more sophisticated than Young’s version. He knew that it involved probabilities. It was usually supported by evidence, from investigations or confessions. It was close to what the philosopher C.S. Peirce called “abduction”. Peirce argued that humans have always had to make decisions on partial evidence. It has been essential for survival, so we have evolved an ability to get it right, at least often enough. Holmes recognised a hereditary element in his ability, but all human skills need experience and practice to develop. From cookery to chess, experts develop a sort of intuition about the best choices. Holmes’s derived from his vast knowledge of crime and his own cases. Like great scientists, his genius consists not in his method which is fallible, but in getting the right answer nevertheless. True, he said “It is a capital mistake to theorise before you have all the data,” but he surely knew that such omniscience was impossible.

Thus, a valuable and readable book, tangentially about Holmes.

JR

Arthur Conan Doyle’s Art of Fiction: A Revaluation by Nils Clausson. *Cambridge Scholars Publishing*, 2018. 402pp. £67.99 (hbk)

There has been something of a recent vogue for academic writing on the Sherlock Holmes stories and other fiction of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Many have looked at the texts less as literary works, and more as a reflection of late-nineteenth and early twentieth century social structures and mores. Clausson takes this as his starting point: the stories are seen as popular fiction, and therefore not as literature but as a reflection of popular culture. The stories are seen as relieving the worries of their middle-class audience by providing a hero. More recently they are seen as reflecting and seeking to affirm the colonial beliefs of Victorian and Edwardian Britain, and by extension to highlight Conan Doyle’s own acceptance of and support for those views, which is in turn reflected negatively back on him. Clausson’s book is as much a criticism of these academic works as it is a book on Conan Doyle’s works. His stance is that a critic will

often see in the works he examines what he wants to find: his “reading” is biased.

This is not an academic survey of all Conan Doyle’s fiction; it takes the best examples and discusses a close reading of them in the light of what other academics have written. There is a chapter on *The Lost World* as an Anti-Imperialist Fable, one on *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *fin-de-siècle* Gothic. Another looks at *The Sign of Four* showing how a close reading belies the accusations laid against Conan Doyle of a racist depiction of Tonga as a savage cannibal. Contrary to the fictional Gazetteer quoted, Small never describes Tonga as hideous, and Tonga responds with loyalty to the kindness Small shows him, travelling quietly round the country with him, performing as a side-show exhibit. The novella is about friendships, betrayal and disloyalty, and surprisingly it is the “civilised” officer Sholto who is shown as untrustworthy, not the supposed “savage”. Clausson’s book is expensive, but it is well worth reading, as a discussion of Conan Doyle’s work and as a warning to beware the persuasion of those who are highly selective in making their arguments. We should know better, as Sayers wrote in *Unpopular Opinions*, “...how easy it is for an unscrupulous pseudo-scholarship to extract fantastic and misleading conclusions from a literary text by a series of omissions, emendations and distortions of context.”

CC

A Study in Sherlock: Watson’s Notebook by Raymond G Farney. *Outskirts Press*, 2018. 716pp. £36.95 (hbk)

Like Martin Dakin’s *Sherlock Holmes Commentary*, Mr Farney’s book looks separately at each story in the Canon, but his approach is different. Here is the information a researcher would need on pretty much any aspect of each case, mostly via extracts long and short. The general pattern, after *Publication & Dates*, is: *Story Introduction, Date, Duration, Crime, Client, Victim, Crime Scene, Criminals, Punishment, Official Police, Characters, Others Mentioned, Locations, Locations Mentioned, Evidence & Clues, Motive, Timeline, Story Conclusion, Weather, Payment, Quotes, Questions, and Notes*. It’s all carried out with great care and remarkable thoroughness (though a couple of names are misspelt), and will certainly prove useful to Holmes scholars.

RJ

The Adventure of the Wordy Companion: An A-Z Guide to Sherlockian Phraseology by Nicko Vaughan. *MX Publishing*, 2018. 176 pp. £8.99 (pbk)

The Holmes stories contain a lot of jargon or slang common to the period. It was second nature to the audience for whom Conan Doyle was writing but not for us today. There are phrases that simply don’t mean much to us, and others that have different meanings and need to be explained to modern readers — an

obvious example being the expression “Queer Street”, which could easily offend the reader unfamiliar with Victorian expressions. Vaughan has gone through the Canon and picked all these words and phrases out, providing an explanation for each. I naturally cannot vouch for all of them, but I am familiar with enough to attest to the accuracy of their definitions. Does the average reader of Holmes need this book to appreciate the stories? No. You can skip over those phrases if you don’t understand them, and often the context can give you a fair idea of their meaning. But if you are interested in the explanations behind these phrases it can only enhance your understanding of the stories. To those of a more scholarly persuasion I feel it can only be an asset to your library.

AD

The Sherlock Holmes Cyclopaedia, Volume 1: Sherlock Holmes on Screens 1929-1939 by Howard Ostrom, edited and illustrated by Thierry Saint-Joanis. *Mycroft’s Brother Editions*, 2018. 88pp. €30.00 post-paid (hbk)

Howard Ostrom will be known to many as an expert in Holmes on screen and stage, having worked on the subject for the last thirty years and compiled a list of over four thousand performances. (You’ll find it at nplh.co.uk/a-z-index.html.) In this beautifully presented hardback, he examines those early “talkies” which include representations of Sherlock Holmes, from Charles Eaton in 1929 to Basil Rathbone in 1939. This is a treasure trove of reviews, articles and scrumptious little factlets. The text is accompanied by some lovely illustrations of movie posters and advertisements. The press releases give an insight into the industry at the time and the public perception of Holmes. You get a real feel for what Holmes meant to each film’s contemporary audience.

As well as full-on adaptations, the book includes cartoons which parody Holmes, and several examples of the accepted image used as shorthand for a detective in comedies. Many of the films are now available on YouTube, so it is fun to follow each section by watching the film itself. Throughout, Ostrom’s passion for the subject shines through with an infectious enthusiasm. I would not have seen *Paramount on Parade*, with Clive Brook as Holmes and William Powell as Philo Vance, if not for this book. Perhaps the only downside is that I now want to see the Czech comedy *Lelíček in the Service of Sherlock Holmes* when there is no available version with English subtitles! I am already eager for the next volume and have no hesitation in recommending the first for your own Holmesian shelf.

PM

A Holmes By Any Other Name: The Twistings and Turnings of “Sherlock Holmes” by Bill Mason. *Wildside Press*, 2018. 196pp. £10.99/\$12.99 (pbk)

In *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes*, Ellery

Queen listed a dozen or so variant names used by writers of Holmesian parody and pastiche. That 1944 book inspired the 2016 conference at the University of Minnesota, where Bill Mason gave the opening address, which included “a seemingly-endless recitation of several hundred names used to spoof or imitate Sherlock Holmes”. What we have here is an annotated catalogue, from Airlock to Zoolock, including creations by Mark Twain, P.G. Wodehouse, John Lennon and Nicholas Utechin. Conan Doyle can’t have imagined what opportunities the name would offer! “There is nothing so important as trifles,” said Holmes; this book demonstrates that there’s nothing so entertaining either. (I’d argue that the Solar Pons stories are, as the author August Derleth said, *not* parody but “fond and admiring” pastiche. And the name Hawkshaw in Gus Mager’s comic strip comes from the detective in Tom Taylor’s 1863 melodrama *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, not from Sherlock Holmes.)

RJ

The World of Sherlock Holmes: The Facts and Fiction Behind the World’s Greatest Detective by Martin Fido. *Carlton Books*, 2018. 224pp. £13.99 (pbk)

Books typically are written about Sherlock Holmes or Arthur Conan Doyle. Martin Fido looks at both. This is a perfect beginners’ guide and introduction to the intriguing world of Holmes, combining fact and fiction with great fun and knowledge. Lists and timelines of events; a narrative of both Holmes and Conan Doyle; Holmes’s cases vs. modern day crimes and detectives; as well as subsequent crime fiction and the many iterations and adaptations throughout the century and more of the detective’s existence, from William Gillette to the recent BBC and CBS TV series. An early illustration of Holmes and Watson’s first meeting is followed by a photo of Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman as Sherlock and John. Sprinkled throughout the book are images of Holmes, Watson, and 19th Century London, as well as photos of Conan Doyle and his associates, like Dr Joseph Bell and Oscar Wilde. Fido even touches upon the work and scholarship done via groups and clubs like the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and the Baker Street Irregulars. With the holidays around the corner, this book could be a nice addition to any Sherlockian’s bookshelf, particularly that of the novice.

VS

Sherlock Holmes Is Like: Sixty Comparisons for an Incomparable Character edited by Christopher Redmond. *Wildside Press*, 2018. 277pp. £12.99/\$14.99 (pbk)

Once again, Chris Redmond invited sixty enthusiasts to contribute an essay each, the aim being to illuminate aspects of Holmes’s character by equivalent traits in another person, from myth, legend,

history or contemporary life. Some of the writers are well known and some unfamiliar; likewise, the characters chosen vary from the famous (Darwin, Houdini, Wilde), and some who should be (W.T. Stead, Sir George Lewis, C.S. Peirce) to the legendary (Odysseus, Arthur, Loki); from the obvious (Freud, Poirot, Conan Doyle) to the unfamiliar (Josiah Willard Gibbs, Raja Birbal, Sadeq Mamqoli) and the apparently improbable (the Beatles, Alice, Gertrude Stein). But whether you find a comparison convincing or not (the Third Little Pig?), you'll find it well argued and quite probably enlightening.

RJ

Sherlock Holmes: More Lost Radio Scripts by Leslie Charteris & Denis Green, edited by Ian Dickerson. *Purview Press*, 2018. 444pp. \$25.98 (pbk)

American radio discovered Holmes early on and made the most of it. I know of over 160 separate recorded plays surviving from the early period, but only a few by Charteris and Green — a pity, as their Holmes and Watson were Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce. Fortunately, Ian Dickerson discovered a quantity of their scripts among Charteris's papers and published twelve last year as *Sherlock Holmes: The Lost Radio Scripts*. Here are fourteen more, and though three are incomplete it doesn't greatly detract from the pleasure of reading them, especially if you can hear the actors' distinctive voices in your mind. Each is allegedly based on a canonical reference, as required by ACD's estate, except for adaptations (both complete) of "The Blue Carbuncle" and "Lady Frances Carfax". Mr Dickerson's introduction and notes are interesting and helpful. An excellent job altogether!

RJ

Mycroft and Sherlock by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Anna Waterhouse. *Titan Books*, 2018. 336pp. £17.99 (hbk)

With the pastiche market being what it is these days, it's a pleasure to review a Holmes book by writers who can pull off the historical setting and the well-known characters, but also put their own unique spin on things to give it that little extra bit that makes a book stand out. *Mycroft and Sherlock*, the follow-up to *Mycroft Holmes*, is such a book. It's technically a prequel — we meet the characters in their embryonic form, with Mycroft still young and much more energetic than the Canon version, and Sherlock a nineteen-year-old usually up to no good and getting into scrapes that his older brother has to help him out of. It's a fun way to experience the characters, and telling the story from Mycroft's perspective allows the authors to get away with portraying Sherlock in sometimes unflattering ways.

The mystery plot is solid, based around the concept of "story that goes all the way to the top", and the novel doesn't shy away from aspects of the Victorian era that aren't as cosy as the interior of 221B, like

rampant racism, poverty, child labour, and drug abuse. Characters like Douglas, Huan, and the Lin family are a welcome and much needed addition in a pastiche market that's still mostly centred around white characters. The novel represents London as the cosmopolitan city it's always been, while not shying away from the effects of colonialism and xenophobic attitudes on the people bringing in trade and contributing to local labour markets. As a prequel, the novel is creative with its explanations for how the Holmes brothers got from their younger selves to where we meet them in the Canon. I found both explanations satisfying and felt they added depth, especially to Mycroft, who isn't as fleshed out in the Canon as many of us would like. On the whole, I would recommend this to anyone who likes a good pastiche. It's got the right mix of creative licence, Canon knowledge, and historical research to make it worth your while.

LB

The MX Book of New Sherlock Holmes Stories, Part XI: Some Untold Cases (1880-1891) edited by David Marcum. *MX Publishing*, 2018. 440pp. **Part XII: Some Untold Cases (1894-1902)**. 454pp. Each £17.99 (pbk), £28.99 (hbk)

The giant rat of Sumatra, the aluminium crutch, the repulsive story of the red leech... These and many others are constant enigmas, over which devotees have long pondered. On Adrian Nebbett's website at www.schoolandholmes.com/untoldcases.html you'll find a *very* long list of published attempts to recreate many of the unrecorded investigations, by Nicholas Meyer, June Thomson, Lyndsay Faye, John Hall, David Stuart Davies, M.J. Elliott and innumerable others — most famously Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson Carr. In these volumes are thirty-two more clever, intriguing tales by such as Daniel D Victor, Tracy Revels, Mark Mower, Jayantika Ganguly and Hugh Ashton. And I'm delighted to find radio scripts by the late Jim French and the team of Charteris & Green. As with all the all the books in this series, royalties go towards the maintenance of Undershaw, Conan Doyle's former Surrey home, which now houses Stepping Stones School.

RJ

The Druid of Death: A Sherlock Holmes Adventure by Richard T Ryan. *MX Publishing*, 2018. 238pp. £17.99 (hbk)

As an unashamed fan of new Sherlock Holmes stories, I am discomfited to admit that I had not read any of Richard T Ryan's earlier novels. This is his third, and a splendid book it is. The plot revolves around some mysterious deaths, bearing the hallmarks of ritualistic sacrifice or cult murder. Scotland Yard is baffled, and Inspector Lestrade invites Holmes and Watson to assist. Our heroes are drawn into the mysterious lore of ancient druidic symbols and Celtic

mythology to face a race against time in unravelling the case and preventing further bloodshed. The pace is well-judged, and it is a gripping and colourful tale from the offset. Ryan's style is reassuringly familiar, and he clearly has a respect for the Canon, demonstrated in the many neat references and affectionate nods to the characters, stories and intrigues of the original texts. Another fine touch is the inclusion of the Revd Sabine Baring-Gould, real-life grandfather of the celebrated Sherlockian, William S Baring-Gould. Ryan demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge of British history and there is good attention to detail throughout this tale. It is a great story told with skill and affection.

MM

The Further Chronicles of Sherlock Holmes: Volumes One and Two by Denis O Smith. *MX Publishing*, 2018. 428pp. £29.99 (hbk). The two volumes are available separately in paperback, at £9.99 each.

Denis Smith is one of the best, most consistent writers in the Watsonian style, combining knowledge of the period and the Canon with a talent for character, plot and the felicitous phrase. "The Yellow Glove", one of twelve tales in this book, opens thus:

"If only criminals would occasionally display a little imagination," remarked Sherlock Holmes, as we sat in conversation after breakfast, one morning towards the end of the summer, "it would surely make life so much more interesting for everyone, and — who can say? — the criminals themselves might find that they derived an increased satisfaction from their work."

Who could resist reading on? Many pasticheurs

think that murder is essential to a Holmes story, but Mr Smith knows that some of the best tales in the Canon are free of homicide. His own stories sit comfortably alongside Conan Doyle's. Thoroughly recommended!

RJ

Island of the Mad by Laurie R. King. Allison & Busby, 2018. 452pp. £19.99 (hbk)

The popular Mary Russell series began with *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*, published in 1994, chronicling events of 1915. It is now 1925 and Holmes and his wife (!) Mary set off from Sussex on an adventure that leads them from Bedlam to Venice, including encounters with Mussolini's Blackshirts and Cole Porter. Like the other books in the series, this is witty, erudite and entertaining.

JU

Death Masque by Dan Andriacco. *MX Publishing*, 2018. 228pp. £9.99 (pbk)

For a small friendly town, Erin, Ohio has a high homicide rate. Erin's old theatre is threatened with demolition — not the Lyceum, where Sebastian McCabe's play *1895* was upstaged by a too-real murder, but the historic Bijou. Politics plague the preservation campaign, and before long a newly commissioned opera attracts something much worse to the theatre. However, Professor McCabe is a Sherlockian and a formidable detective; with the help of his brother-in-law Jeff Cody he determines to uncover the truth. It's the right choice, but not the safe one, especially for Jeff's pregnant wife Lynda. *Death Masque* is the eighth book in a consistently excellent series.

RJ

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