

OPUNTIA

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SHERLOCKIANA: PART 12

by Dale Speirs

Pastiches: Short Stories.

"The Adventure Of The Memento Mori" (2012 June, STRAND MAGAZINE) is another average pastiche by Lyndsay Faye, who drops a horrible anachronistic clanger on the second page. Holmes has received a message from a damsel in distress. He deduces that she was writing from a place where she had no reference books handy because the Baker Street address on the envelope didn't have a postal code. Postal codes didn't come into use in Britain until 75 years later. Be that as it may, Holmes deduces where she is being held in captivity from her coded message, and rescues her from the clutches of a mad scientist who is experimenting on asylum inmates.

Faye's next pastiche is "The Adventure Of The Lightless Maiden" (2012 November, STRAND MAGAZINE). A young woman comes to Holmes wanting him to see proof of her ability to raise a ghost, with the aid of her fiancé. Alas, he is just using her for promotional purposes, passing off photos of her midnight ramblings in yon shady glens as the ghost itself.

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE GHOSTS OF BLY (2010, hardcover) by Donald Thomas is a collection of four of his stories.

It starts off with "The Case Of A Boy's Honour" (and that last word is correctly spelled with a "u" in the British/Canadian style). The story opens in May 1913 when Holmes and Watson receive Admiral Jackie Fisher and Mycroft. The Admiralty is investigating a minor theft in one of its cadet schools for young boys looking to go on to a career in the Royal Navy. Their fear is that it will blow up into a front-page scandal because the accused boy apparently tried to commit suicide. Holmes and Watson visit the school, have an unsuccessful interview with the headmaster, and go off on their own investigation. The true culprit is found and is suitably humiliated. Humiliated, because the school and the Royal Navy were still caught up in the era of nobility and gentlemen's sons getting preference despite better candidates at hand. Fisher himself fought hard, often unsuccessfully, to clear out the peerage's sons and replace them with those who knew how to repair an engine or calculate a shell's trajectory. The story is an illuminating look at how Holmes and Watson, both commoners themselves, deal with the bastions of privilege. It is a study in scarlet robes.

"The Case Of The Ghosts At Bly" has Holmes being requested to investigate the death of a boy, supposedly by his insane governess. She had been driven to distraction by the appearance of two ghosts, those of two villagers recently dead from accident. Holmes and Watson visit the manor house and stage a fake seance to flush out the culprits. It works, and the background story is

uncovered, a love triangle that resulted in the issue of a child, the boy himself. At that point the story shifts back to London, where a police stakeout for the father fails badly. The chase is on, and what first seems to be an epilogue instead stretches the story out by half again. There is the pursuit itself, and every time Holmes and Inspector Gregson pause for breath, Holmes begins a lengthy expository monologue. The murderer is undone by a neat piece of sabotage carried out by his ex-lover. There follows another epilogue (by now the reader is wondering if the story will actually end) at the coroner's hearing before the story finally wraps up. It reads well but the editor should have snipped some of the "and then ..." segments.

"Sherlock Holmes: The Actor" takes up the point that Holmes could have been a professional actor, what with his penchant for disguises during surveillance. This is not a story but a vignette where nothing happens. Watson looks over some old papers and reminisces about the stage and its actors, many of whom were characters in both senses of the word. Lots of witty epigrams and an enjoyable read, but not a mystery story. It does, however, lead up to the final story of this collection, that of ...

"The Case Of The Matinee Idol", which builds on the scene set by the vignette. Murder has been committed on the stage in the scene from HAMLET where King Claudius drinks from a poisoned goblet.

Only this night, it really was poisoned, and the actor departs to the next life without waiting for a curtain call. The suspect seems to go out of his way to make everyone think he did it. Holmes believes him to be protecting the real murderer, and after some skillful misdirection by the author, that person is identified. But then, it is discovered that the back stage door was unlocked and anyone could have entered backstage and poisoned the chalice. No case could be successfully prosecuted with such a large element of doubt. Holmes arranges the ending so that justice is done, if not by the law, then by other means.

MORE HOLMES FOR THE HOLIDAYS (1999, hardcover) is an anthology of Sherlockian Christmas pastiches edited by the prolific Martin H. Greenberg, Jon Lellenberg, and Carol-Lynn Waugh. Many of the stories have no direct relevance to the Christmas season beyond being said to have taken place at that time of year. They could have just as easily taken place on a summer's bank holiday.

"The Christmas Gift" by Anne Perry is the first story of the batch. It begins with the concert violinist Vassily Golkov failing to appear at a performance because his Stradivarius was stolen. The violin is the MacGuffin of the story. It is held for ransom, Holmes identifies the suspect, and a trap is set. An ordinary pastiche, with at least one loose thread left dangling. And!, the author Ms. Perry uses too many exclamation marks! Constantly in Holmes'

dialogue! They should have been edited out! All of them!

"The Four Wise Men" by Peter Lovesey has Watson being invited by an old army friend now living in bucolic Somerset to a Christmas pageant. He brings Holmes along. As part of the ceremony, a valuable piece of jewelry called the Bullpen Star was displayed. As you knew was going to happen, it is stolen. I guessed the culprit several pages ahead of the denouement. The pastiche reads well but is routine.

"Eleemosynary, My Dear Watson" by Barbara Peel is about a jewelry store robbery which subsequently escalates to kidnaping and various other assorted felonies. Holmes and Watson deal with a group of choir boys who act as lookouts for the smash-and-grab gang, and end up staking out an abandoned Salvation Army mission in Limehouse. It mostly ends well when the jewels are recovered but a father is forced to disown his son.

"The Adventure Of The Greatest Gift" by Loren Estleman has Holmes receiving an Edison cylinder from an unknown sender which triggers an investigation. The cylinder has a recorded song from which Holmes deduces that he is wanted at a private function to prevent an assassination. Since the sender was anonymous, a short note might have been more logical. It then transpires that it was a sham staged by Mycroft Holmes to recruit his brother to do some spying in Europe.

Again, what was the point? Mycroft could just as easily asked Sherlock directly. All very amusing but a pointless story.

“The Christmas Conspiracy” by Edward Hoch has Holmes acting on behalf of a woman who thinks there is a plot to cheat her out of some land. The question is why, as the land is on the Thames estuary and is as often underwater as it is dry. Holmes and Watson accompany her to a Christmas party where the host is offering to have the deal signed. One of the usual suspects turns up dead. The butler did it, but he was not as he seemed. There was a conspiracy that seems unlikely, but we’ll let that go.

“The Music Of Christmas” by L.B. Greenwood has Holmes and Watson at a church service where the offering is stolen. The preacher asks Holmes to investigate and so he does, going through all the suspects. The culprit is found but as Holmes has remarked elsewhere, justice is not the same as the law. The money is returned and no more about it is said, for the sinners repented.

“The Adventure Of The Second Violet” by Daniel Stashover is a sequel bringing back Miss Violet Hunter, of the Copper Beeches fame, who is now Mrs Violet Oldershot and once more in trouble. The whole thing turns out to be an O. Henry story, with Violet selling her hair to a wigmaker to buy a gold chain for her husband’s watch, and he pawning his watch to buy her some tortoiseshell ornamental combs for her long chestnut hair. It’s

been done, and rewriting it as a Sherlockian pastiche doesn’t make it new.

Crossover Pastiche.

Many pastiche writers cannot resist the temptation to bring in characters from other fiction or even real life. There are certain names very popular, such as Jack the Ripper or Oscar Wilde, but as these become over-used, other characters and real people are dragged in. I think that eventually everyone famous who lived between 1870 and 1920 will be dragged into a Holmes pastiche.

“The Case Of The Rajah’s Emerald” by Carolyn Wheat is from the anthology MORE HOLMES FOR THE HOLIDAYS (1999, hardcover). Timothy Cratchit, the original Tiny Tim, is now a grown man working as a solicitor. Scrooge has died of advanced years, and the probate of his will is complicated by two claimants to the inheritance. One must be an imposter, and Cratchit, as the executor, asks Holmes for help in identifying the true heir. Both turn out to be imposters but Holmes identifies a third man who fits the bill. Micawber and Kipling show up in the story in walk-on parts. The pastiche trickles to an end with much explanatory dialogue between the characters. Nonetheless it reads well.

From the same anthology comes “The Adventure Of The Christmas Bear” by Bill Crider. Oscar Wilde seeks out Holmes’

help, fearful that someone is out to get him. The suspect is a man wearing bison robes and as a result looks not unlike a bear. Holmes locates the stalker with some deductions just on the knife-edge of plausibility. The suspect and Wilde grapple, and Oscar kills his assailant in self-defense, also with a knife edge.

Again from MHFTH is “The Adventure Of The Naturalist’s Stock Pin” by Jon Breen, which starts with a stranger visiting Baker Street for help in dealing with an utterer of threats. The reader will guess the identity of the client by the second page, and by the fourth page Holmes and Watson greet Charles Darwin by his name. He hires them to deal with his scourge and so they do. The culprit is drawn out to a meeting, ambushed just as he tries an ambush, and turned over to Scotland Yard. A lackadaisical pastiche, with the author trying to arouse interest by the concept of the crossover, not the actual story.

“The Startling Events In The Electrified City” by Thomas Perry is from the anthology A STUDY IN SHERLOCK (2011, trade paperback). It brings Holmes and Watson to the 1901 Exposition in Buffalo at the request of President McKinley. The President is weary of political life and wants Holmes to stage a fake assassination so McKinley can go into hiding. Not at all a believable premise for a story. One mildly redeeming feature is that as Holmes sets up the plot, he foils several real would-be assassins along the way.

HUMAN EVOLUTION: PART 3. **DISPERSAL OUTSIDE AFRICA AND EUROPE.**

by Dale Speirs

Fossil remains show that by 40,000 years ago, humans had reached into the European Arctic [64]. There is debate as to whether these were modern humans or Neanderthals. Fluctuations in the Ice Ages drove them back out again but eventually humans returned and stayed. Humans expanding into southern Asia were affected indirectly by the Ice Ages as well [75]. During glacial maximums, so much water was locked up in continental ice sheets that the sea level dropped dramatically. This was when the Arabian Gulf was dry land and the islands of southeast Asia were part of one sub-continent, known as the Sunda Shelf. Humans spread east from Africa and then north along the Chinese coast into the Arctic. When interglacial warm periods occurred, the seas rose again and flooded much dry land. This constant fluctuation in sea levels forced humans to constantly change and adapt back and forth from coastal dwellers to inland hunters.

As an aside, the ancient Sumerian legends of a universal flood, which were later adapted by Jewish priests into the story of Noah’s Flood, almost certainly developed from memories of the Arabian Gulf being flooded within a few years as northern glaciers melted and sea levels rose quickly over the flat plains now beneath the Gulf.

Australia was settled by humans at least 60,000 years ago, based on DNA analysis of bones from the Pleistocene [43]. En route, humans colonized the islands of southeastern Asia. Some were trapped in cul-de-sacs such as small islands. An example is the pygmy humans of Flores, Indonesia, who were only one metre tall [48]. The first reports of this island-dwelling hobbit in 2004 named the fossils as *Homo floresiensis* but there is debate as to whether this was a full species or simply a dwarf form of *Homo erectus*. The two species of humans, *H. erectus* and *H. sapiens*, were competitors throughout Africa and Asia until the better species won.

It also appears that migration of humans out into the Pacific islands of Polynesia were triggered by red tides, which were blooms of red algae that rendered local fish poisonous and forced humans out into the unknown from necessity [77]. Australia and New Zealand may have also been colonized because of red tides affecting the old homelands. The Pacific was the final frontier in human dispersal, and settlement of the eastern islands didn't begin until 1025 to 1120 A.D., followed by a second pulse of migrants circa 1190 to 1290 A.D., based on radiocarbon dating [86].

The Americas were settled by two different movements of humans about 15,000 years ago [27]. One migration came from Eurasia and settled in what is now continental USA. The other migration came from eastern Asia and are the Inuit, Aleut, and Na-Dene of

northern North America. Studies show that non-Arctic North American tribes are genetically related to Asians from Mongolia, Manchuria, and southeastern Siberia, but not to eastern Siberians of the Arctic [70]. Again, it was not a case of one tribe settling the land and expanding, as several or many independent migrations are probable.

Nor was it necessary to having a land bridge where the Bering Strait is today, an idea that was popularized by academics who didn't understand the ability of humans to paddle kayaks or small boats across the short distance or along the coasts [54]. The ancestral Aleut and Inuit did not need to wait for a land bridge; they were used to travelling by water in summer, and in the winter could walk across on the ice. They still can today. Paddling across the Bering Strait would be like paddling across a wide lake or making an extended trip down a river. It was also suggested that ancestral tribes travelling across a land bridge would not be aware they were moving into a new land, but this is nonsense; nomads are well aware of their surroundings.

The continental ice sheets disrupted the initial human colonization of North America, forcing them out of the centre of the continent and into the south and the coastal margins of unglaciated areas. As the ice sheets retreated, humans followed along into the new lands. There was never a time after the ice melted that the new wilderness was a pristine environment, as early explorers and

modern environmentalists believed; humans were always everywhere. Western Canada was covered by ice until 12,000 years ago, and the earliest human settlements were close behind. Post-glacial colonization occurred from the south, not the north where the Inuit and Aleut were, and thus all the southern tribes in the Canadian provinces came up from the USA. They simply followed the big game in the new open environments [55].

[to be continued]

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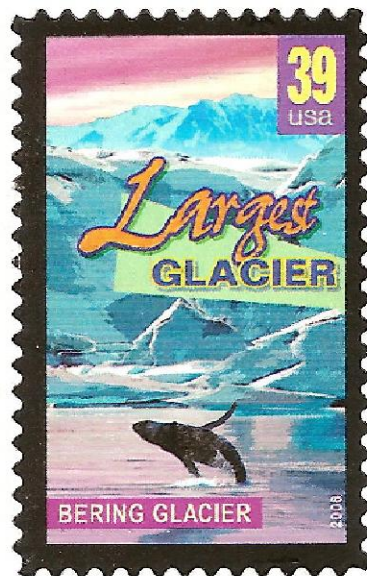
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ECONOMIC SYSTEMS IN FICTION

by Dale Speirs

Them Thar Hills.

The utopian novel has always been a popular genre of fiction. We all dream of a life of peace and abundance, but still work for our daily bread and send our sons off to war. Most utopias in fiction get from here to there by a bit of hand-waving by the author. It isn't the utopia that readers disagree with, it's the trouble in making the transition. I have a sideline book collection of novels about economics, most of which are studies in the psychology of the author who reveals in his writing his subconscious and what he would do if he were the Great Dictator. Most science fiction seldom considers economics. Star-faring societies often have no money, no budgets, no currency exchange rates, and no payroll to meet.

What if gold was not available as a currency reserve? We already know the answer to this when the world went off the gold standard in 1971 and gave us endless inflation. A century ago, it was unthinkable that governments would not be disciplined by gold, so the question was more rhetorical back then. THE MOON METAL by Garrett Serviss considers this question. This is a novella first published in 1900, and reprinted in 2008. It begins with the discovery of gold in the Antarctica, so abundant that it

flooded the market and destroyed its value as a monetary reserve. Platinum also becomes abundant, silver always was, and the end result is a financial panic in a world based on the gold standard. Countries today use unbacked paper and electronic money as a fiat currency, but that was unthinkable fantasy in Serviss's time.

Pause for two digressions. Firstly, fiat currency is money not backed by any tangible thing like gold. It is accepted by the public only because the government will take it in payment of taxes and fees. Secondly, Serviss was writing at a time when countries still backed their currencies with gold. In 1971, Nixon took the USA off the gold standard and the rest of the world had to follow suit or lose their currency reserves. Serviss would be astonished if he came forward to our time and saw that we have trillions of dollars, loonies, euros, and so forth that exist only as electrons in computers.

Serviss gets in some funny shots, such as the emergency meeting of financiers and politicians from around the world where the German delegate got so flustered while speaking that he lost track of his verb and couldn't finish his speech. At the meeting, Dr. Max Syx appears out of nowhere, introduces himself, and presents a sample of a new and rare metal he calls artemisium, which he proposes as a replacement for gold. The metal glows with an unearthly light, like moonlight. The author describes it as a

"coruscating metal", which should get a laugh out of Lovecraft fans. Serviss does a bit of hand-waving here, for the financiers instantly and unanimously accept Syx's new metal as a replacement for gold.

Dr. Syx then leads everyone to his artemisium mine in the Grand Tetons, which Serviss coyly translates as the Big Tetons, mindful of his prudish audience. Syx seems to be bipolar, alternating between amiable and hysterical, with lots of cackling laughter. Notwithstanding that, within a year artemisium becomes the new world monetary standard. Prospectors rush for the Tetons, but their mines can't locate any artemisium. A young mining engineer, Andrew Hall, is first to voice the suspicion that Syx has salted the ore with artemisium. By counter-tunnelling, he finds that the Syx mine tunnels are shams, with no ore in them.

Meanwhile, problems with the artemisium standard begin to show why our world eventually went off gold. If the metal is not supplied in sufficient quantity to match central bank currency printing, deflation sets in. Nixon took the USA off the gold standard because the Federal Reserve printed too many dollars, at that time redeemable in gold. Syx is faced with an angry mob trying to seize his mine and foundry. He wipes them out with a beam of heat energy that leaves every dead rioter covered with a thin film of artemisium. It is supposed by others at the time that he hosed them down with molten artemisium.

Hall and his friend keep trying various methods of discovering Syx's method of producing artemisium, coming to the conclusion that he must be an accomplished alchemist. Eventually Hall discovers how Syx was doing it. He was mining the metal from Tycho Crater on the Moon, using a double-talk ray machine that not only beamed immense amounts of energy to the Moon without anyone else noticing (think plasma beams), but caused the metal to travel back to the Earth on the beam as if it were the return flow in a plumbing system or a Cooke's tube.

Having discovered the secret, Hall starts to manufacture his own supply of artemisium, which puts Syx in a huff. Syx blows up his own foundry, then ostensibly disappears. In actuality, he made the tour of various nations, letting other scientists in on the secret. Before long, the Moon is under steady bombardment and artemisium floods the market, destroying its value as a monetary standard. Serviss waffles the ending here; the governments of the world unite and take over artemisium production as a strictly controlled monopoly. Not very likely, but Serviss was a hack writer who didn't bother about plausibility. The epilogue is amusing, as it is explained why Hall can never bear to look at the Moon again because it looks like the face of Dr. Syx.

All told, this story wasn't literature even then. It does illustrate an interesting psychological study, where the author cannot conceive of a world where all the currencies were fiat.

FRIDAY, THE THIRTEENTH (the comma is often omitted by indexers and reviewers) is a novel of stock market derring-do by Thomas W. Lawson (1857-1925), originally published in 1907. This book is said to be the origin of the Friday the 13th superstition but I haven't researched the veracity of that claim. I have the 2007 print-on-demand trade paperback from Echo Library. Lawson was well qualified to write this as he was a Boston stock broker involved in the manipulation of copper mining stocks and other sharp practice. The only seven-masted sailing ship ever built was named after him. Both came to a bad end, the former dying in poverty and the latter being shipwrecked.

The novel is set in the New York Stock Exchange. The narrator is a stock broker named Jim Randolph, who recounts the story of his friend Bob Brownley trying to help out a southern belle named Beulah Sands (of Sands Landing, Virginia). Her family are facing financial ruin at the hands of a gang of Baltimore short-sellers who wrecked the Sands trust funds. Romance rears its ugly head when Brownley installs Miss Sands in his office as a secretary. He starts trouble in the Sugar pit on the exchange floor, trying to run up Sands fortune to get her money back, but is bushwhacked by short-sellers. The bears, trading on inside knowledge, catch him out and drive Sugar prices lower, leaving Brownley and Sands worse off than before. A few weeks later, Friday the 13th,

the bears become bulls and start selling Sugar at higher prices, until Brownley rains on their parade and starts short-selling them. He triggers a financial panic but in the end recovers the money he lost and more.

Nothing goes smoothly in melodrama however, and Miss Sands spurns his hand in marriage because he bankrupted so many others in winning back her family's fortune. She wants him to reimburse those innocents who lost money in the panic, indicating that insanity runs in her family. Proof of this comes the next day in a report that her father, not knowing of the reversal in fortunes, had committed suicide after first killing her mother and sister. This pushes her off the deep end and she does something even more drastic; she marries Brownley. She goes into seclusion and Brownley becomes a maniac on the stock exchange, obsessed with breaking his enemies. A few years later, he creates another panic even worse than the previous one. In a five-page speech to the stock exchange membership, he offers to reverse his trades if they agree to rules prohibiting short selling, insider trading, and all the other standard practices. (Lawson was obviously expiating his sins.) This goes over about as well as you would expect, so Brownley takes the market down in revenge. Alas, this time his wife dies from apoplexy and Brownley is left with massive guilt.

But that was long ago and far away. Things like that don't happen no more these days.

ALL THE GOLD IN CHINA

by Dale Speirs

On 2012-12-13, the British Ministry of Finance trotted Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip through the gold vaults of the Bank of England, with television cameras in tow. This was a move, stinking of desperation, to assure the public that all is well on Threadneedle Street. Unfortunately it backfired. A few days later at a reception at 10 Downing Street, the Queen was heard telling George Osborne, the Chancellor of the Exchequer; *"I saw all the gold bars. Regrettably not all of them belong to us."*

For, as the Queen and gold bugs know, most of the gold in central bank vaults belongs to someone else. Worse yet, more and more of it is being shipped to China, Russia, and numerous Asian and Arabic countries. They know it is better to have physical gold in hand than pieces of paper or electrons on a computer screen. They know how the Western nations like to impose sanctions on Islamic and Asian countries at the drop of a hat. This renders any fiat currency holdings worthless but gold in hand cannot be devalued. Cypriots found out in 2013 that their own government would do it to them.

None of the central banks buying physical gold simply put in an order for x thousand tonnes of gold because that would spike the price and crash the fiat currencies. They have to buy in smaller

amounts, several hundred tonnes spread out over the year. Fortunately they are helped by banks operating on Wall Street who constantly short-sell gold for their own paper profits. This drives down the futures contract price. When the mass media report the price of gold and silver in the news, they are referring to this price. China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, et al are delighted to convert their pieces of paper into physical gold at a cheaper rate, so they don't complain. As a result, the USA and Britain have become major exporters of gold, not because the mines in Idaho and Nevada are churning it out faster than ever, but because the gold bars are being moved out of the New York and London depositories to the People's Bank of China, etcetera. The Germans have also woken up and have started repatriating their gold from the USA, France, and Britain. During the Cold War, the German central bank kept all its gold in those countries for fear of a Russian invasion, just as during World War Two the Bank of England moved all its gold to Canada.

The sheeple don't want to know about any of this. Bad news is blocked out, assuming the mass media even bother to cover it. Much better to watch reality shows than reality itself. It's all too complicated to understand, say the people who memorize starting lineups of their sports teams or who can name the actor who played the third Klingon from the left in scene 2, episode 12, season 4 of ST:TNG. But it's not complicated at all.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Editor's remarks in square brackets.]

FROM: Murray Moore
1065 Henley Road
Mississauga, Ontario L4Y 1C8

2013-01-29

You mention your coin collection gathering dust and continuing as a philatelist. I recently sold what remained of my stamp collection from the 1960s, Canadian stamps. The only stamp the dealer wanted was my Bluenose. Stamp collecting is stagnant, and coins are only sought for their silver and gold content, he told me.

[I think the dealer was being polite to you by giving the excuse of a down market. Stamp and coin dealers are constantly afflicted by people bringing in fill-in-the-blanks albums who think they're going to get \$\$\$\$. Anything in an average album is common and always will be. In most cases, people are bringing in albums filled with ordinary stamps, mostly packet grade material and usually with defects. The Bluenose stamp was issued in 1929 just in time for the Great Depression when few had spare cash and its 50-cent face value could buy a couple of good meals, so it is scarce. In likewise manner, circulated base-metal coins in the average coin collection are not wanted; numismatists want mint uncirculated coins. However, top-quality stamps and coins are bringing big

prices, but the average person who put together the collection as a kid doesn't have any. And for those who find Grandpa's old album, neither did he.]

-12-

FROM: Anna Banana
3747 Highway 101
Roberts Creek, British Columbia V0N 2W2

2013-01-28

[Re: old-time radio shows] I wondered if you have copies of the Goon shows broadcast in the 1950s, a great favourite in my home. Also, THE GREAT GILDERSLEEVE, OZZIE AND HARRIET, and THE SHADOW.

[I have taped a couple of Goon shows off a local radio station that runs old-time radio (OTR) shows every night but they are a little too frenetic for me. Funnier British shows are ROUND THE HORNE and HANCOCK'S HALF HOUR. For American comedy I prefer Jack Benny, Fibber McGee, OUR MISS BROOKS, and DUFFY'S TAVERN. For mystery, I like SAM SPADE, Nero Wolfe, and JOHNNY DOLLAR. For police procedurals there are DRAGNET, 21ST PRECINCT, THE BLACK MUSEUM, and THE LINEUP. There are hundreds of OTR shows as free mp3 downloads at: www.archive.org/details/radioprograms]

FROM: Bob Jennings
29 Whiting Road
Oxford, Massachusetts 01540-2035

2013-01-25

I Also Heard From: Mike Meara, Ken Faig Jr, Tokitama, Franz Zrilich, Lloyd Penney, William Breiding, John Held Jr, Peter Netmail

[Re: my reviews of some OTR shows about early tape recorders]
I think you were a bit hard on the characters because of their inability to instantly manage what was to them a brand-new piece of machinery they had never seen or handled before. Some tape recorders only came with five control buttons but many had more gizmos to fiddle with.

[The OTR radio show] BOSTON BLACKIE followed a very successful series of stories and novels by Jack Boyle in the first three decades of the 1900s and nine equally successful silent movies. Columbia Pictures bought the movie rights and turned out a series of B pictures in the 1940s starring Chester Morris. Most of those were cookie-cutter stories using the same basic plot, saved only by strong performances by Morris as Blackie and the other actors. The radio series was intended to be a spin-off of the movies ... This series went over very well in syndication and the show was heard here and there through the early 1950s, when it got another boost after the syndicated TV series became a staple through the mid-1960s.

ZINE LISTINGS

by Dale Speirs

[The Usual means \$4 cash (\$6 overseas) or trade for your zine. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada or overseas (the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount) or mint USA stamps (which are not valid for postage outside USA). US\$ banknotes are still acceptable around the world.]

[SF means science fiction. An apazine is a zine for an amateur press association distro, a perzine is a personal zine, sercon is serious-constructive, and a genzine is a general zine]

Brooklyn! #79 (US\$10 for four issues, from Fred Argoff, Penthouse L, 1170 Ocean Parkway, Brooklyn, New York 11230-4060) A tour through various neighbourhoods in Brooklyn, including one that is below sea level, which was a surprise to me. Also a report on the aftereffects of Hurricane Sandy, with a photo of pedestrians filling two lanes of a street as they wait for buses (70 people per bus) to take them to work while the subway (1,000 people per train) was flooded.

Rambles To The Libertarian Connection #330 to #337 (The Usual from James Dawson, Box 292, Malden, Washington 99149) Libertarian apazine, mostly on that ideology but also with additional comments on a variety of other subjects. One thing that struck me were comments about alternative health measures used by many Americans because they can't afford regular health care. I'm at the age where I start spending more time in doctor's offices, so I'm glad Canada has universal health care for all not dependent on holding a job or a good pension plan.

Grunted Warning #17 (The Usual from Stuart Stratu, Box 35, Marrickville, New South Wales 2204, Australia) Photocopy collage zine of newspaper clippings from around the world, depicting the weird things that humans do or the bizarre troubles they get into.

Junk Zine #7 (The Usual from James Dawson, Box 292, Malden, Washington 99149) Letterzine, mostly from prisoners explaining the difficulties of trying to publish or receive zines from behind bars, as well as the other frustrations of life in the slammer.

Chunga #20 (The Usual from Randy Byer, 1013 North 36 Street, Seattle, Washington 98103) SF genzine with trip and convention reports and articles on a variety of subjects from old-time fandom to aliens in movies to what constitutes SF music. Lots of letters of comment.

Ray X X-Rayer #89 to #94 (The Usual from -14-
Boxholder, Box 2, Plattsburgh, New York 12901-0002)
A very interesting zine that roughs up the lunatic fringe and conspiracy theorists. News about UFOnuts slagging each other, a Ponzi schemer who gulled New Agers for a movie that was never made, and mysterious hand lotion sellers. There is an obituary for Jim Moseley, whose zine SAUCER SMEAR went for decades documenting the escapades of UFOnuts. I hope Ray X will pick up the fallen torch from Jim and carry on the good fight.

EOD Letter #25 (The Usual from Ken Faig Jr, 2311 Swainwood Drive, Glenview, Illinois 60025-2741) Apazine devoted to H.P. Lovecraft. This issue discusses the genealogy of the Phillips side of the family (the P in HPL) and reviews a few books of eldritch fiction and poetry.

Fadeaway #33 (The Usual from Robert Jennings, 29 Whiting Road, Oxford, Massachusetts 01540-2035) This issue starts off with an inquiry by Louis Desy Jr into mass-media reports that modern comics were booming and would be a great investment, despite the ongoing decline in stores and online sites that he observed. Desy concludes that the reports are based on uninformed journalists picking too short a time series to compare past and present sales, and confusing a dead-cat bounce with the actual long-term conditions. Comic book sales are still down 20 million units from 1997. Also lots of letters of comment.

Last Night At The Casino #3 to #4 (The Usual from Billy Roberts, 107B S. Camino del Pueblo, Bernalillo, New Mexico 87004) Perzine about life as a dealer in a casino, with a look at the types of gamblers and the rules that staff must follow. What was particularly funny to me was the story about how management relaxed the dress code for men and allowed them to grow goatees, as a result of which almost all of them did so. (I've had a goatee all my adult life.)

Alexiad V11#6 to V12#1 (The Usual from Lisa and Joseph Major, 1409 Christy Avenue, Louisville, Kentucky 40204-2040) Lots of book reviews, horse news, convention reports, and letters of comment.

Christian New Age Quarterly V20#4 (US\$5 from Catherine Groves, Box 276, Clifton, New Jersey 07015-0276) This issue mostly discusses New Thought theology and the Divine Feminine goddess as seen by several different religions.

Trap Door #29 (US\$5 from Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, California 94611-1948) Articles on communal living on a Tennessee farm, marrying into Welsh culture, a Cambridge dinner with three of the greatest names in physics, the 2009 Montréal SF Worldcon, and many letters of comment. The centrepiece essay is a look at the events of July 4, 1939. That was the date of the first world SF convention, held in New York City.

It was the same date and place where Lou Gehrig made his farewell appearance due to ALS. In Germany, on that date, the Nazis rallied in Nuremberg and heard a speech from the Gauleiter about the Jews. Some of the SF fans attended the World's Fair and saw the vision of the future and all the wonders that would be.

The Fossil #355 (US\$15 per year from The Fossils, c/o Tom Parson, 157 South Logan, Denver, Colorado 80209) Zine history and club news, with a report on the zine collection of the late Guy Miller and a biography of palaeo-zinester Anthony Moitoret (1892-1979), who published his first zine in 1908.

Argentus #12 (The Usual from Steven Silver, 707 Sapling Lane, Deerfield, Illinois 60015-3969) A variety of articles on fandom, convention reports, how to publish programme books, and a look at how Heinlein's THE PUPPET MASTERS was depicted on book covers. Also an extended essay on Wagner's Ring Cycle, but I think the best explanation of it was by Anna Russell in one of her comedy routines (still available on CD if you haven't heard her; another hilarious routine she did was how to play the bagpipes).

BCSFazine #474 to #477 (The Usual from British Columbia SF Association, c/o Felicity Walker, 3851 Francis Road #209, Richmond, British Columbia V7C 1J6) SF clubzine with lots of event listings, some letters of comment, essays, and news items.

OSFS Statement #404 to #407 (The Usual from Ottawa SF Society, 18 Norice Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2G 2X5) SF clubzine with news and notes, particularly about astronomy.

Probe #154 (The Usual from SF and Fantasy South Africa, Box 781401, Sandton 2146, South Africa) SF clubzine with lots of short fiction. The best colour covers of any zine.

MarkTime #107 (The Usual from Mark Strickert, Box 343, Colton, California 92324) Perzine of a transit fan who actually works in the field (as does his wife), as well as travel reports.

Show Me The Money! #38 (The Usual from Tony Hunnicutt, Box 48161, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55448) A look at the economic news you won't find in the mass media. This issue includes a list of multi-million dollar salaries earned by television announcers and what is going wrong with genetic-engineered crops.

The Ken Chronicles #26 (The Usual from Ken Bausert, 2140 Erma Drive, East Meadow, New York 11554-1120) Perzine taken up mostly by a trip report of a tour of Europe. In particular, Ken had been doing some ancestor hunting and was able to organize a gathering of German Bauserts as the highlight of his trip. Then back home just in time for Hurricane Sandy to drop a large oak tree on his garage and demolish it.

BW #6 (The Usual from Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7ES, England) SF fanzine discussing who was and was not there at a convention, travel fan funds, the Awardies (for the best awards), and letters of comment. **-16-**

The Life Of Rodney Year 64 #2 (The Usual from Rodney Leighton, 11 Branch Road, R.R. #3, Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0) Perzine of a lumberjack with lots of zine reviews mixed in.

Xerography Debt #32 (US\$4 from Davida Gypsy Breier, Box 11064, Baltimore, Maryland 21212) Nicely printed in card covers, this reviewzine of alternative and music zines is the last best hope for the alt scene now that ZINE WORLD has folded. Hundreds of zines reviewed here by multiple reviewers, as well as news and essays about zinedom.

WORLD WIDE PARTY #20

2013 is the 20th annual World Wide Party on June 21st. Invented by Benoit Girard (Québec) and Franz Miklis (Austria), the idea is to get a wave circulating the world of zinesters, mail artists, and SF fans toasting the Papernet. At 21h00 your local time, you are requested to raise a glass to your fellow denizens of zinedom.