



The Pink 'Un



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I Find It Recorded in My Notebook . . .

Nineteen people drifted to The Palmetto Club for the Hansom Wheels meeting on April 19. After dinner, I blew the Blue Kazoo to get everybody's attention; when that didn't work, I tapped on a glass with a spoon; and when *that* failed to get people to quit yakking and lend me their ears, I banged my head on the lectern several times. *That* did it. Wiping the blood from my brow, I declared that the game was afoot. We toasted *the* woman, Irene Adler; and **Jamie McCullough** led us in the Musgrave Ritual. I pointed out to the group that this month was the forty-first anniversary of the Hansom Wheels, which had its first official meeting on April 14, 1977. I know things like that because I am The Tantalus.

We then took up the Happy Hour Posers, in which the point is to decipher the titles of adventures from a bunch of fairly stupid puns: 1. How did the "Born to Run" singer come into possession of a hair-care device that once belonged to the one who sang through a megaphone? = the Boss-comb-Vallee mystery = "The Bos-combe Valley Mystery ("Born to Run" was sung by Bruce Springsteen, aka "The Boss"; the hair-care device is a comb; and the guy who sang through a megaphone was Rudy Vallee). 2. Sam Spade told his secretary, "Effie, I'll be out of the office tomorrow because I have to decorate Easter eggs for my nephews and nieces" = the dyeing detective = "The Dying Detective." 3. Popeye ran aground on some rocks and smashed in the front of his boat again. He declared, "That does it! I yam what I yam, and I isn't havin' that thing fixed anymore!" = "His Last Bow." 4. Gregor Samsa = "The Creeping Man," the Assigned Story for the meeting (in Franz Kafka's story "The Metamorphosis," Gregor Samsa awakens to find that he has been transformed into "einem ungeheueren Ungeziefer," that is, "a monstrous vermin"—a gigantic insect—and goes creeping around the house on his six legs until he finally dies. By the way, people tend to think of the bug as a cockroach, but Kafka denied that that was the case.)

The Featured Presentation was a talk by **Myrtle Robinson**, "The Conan Doyle Horrors," which was written and originally delivered in February 2003 by our former program director, **Bob Robinson**, who argued that many horror movies, and one comic strip, were inspired by stories written by Dr. Watson's literary agent, Arthur Conan Doyle. This time the talk was illustrated by PowerPoint, which probably didn't exist when **Bob** gave it. The slides were prepared by **your Editor**, who also projected them on the wall using equipment borrowed from **Pat McNeely**. **Bob** and **Myrtle** pointed out that the 1943 movie *The Ape Man* was inspired by "The Creeping Man"; *The Mummy* (1932) and its many sequels derived from "Lot No. 49"; *Man Made Monster* (1941) and some aspects of *Frankenstein* (1931) borrowed from "The Los Amigos Fiasco"; and *The Lost World* was not only made into several movies, starting with a silent one in 1925, but also led to *King Kong* in 1933. Also, Doyle's "The Great Brown-Pericord Motor" suggested a plot for Chester Gould's comic strip "Dick Tracy."



Lon Chaney Jr. in *Man Made Monster*

Joann Morton wrapped things up by reading the Sacred Sonnet, "221B," and we all went away contented.

For August: A Real-Life Jack the Ripper!

Oh, wait . . . Jack the Ripper *was* real, wasn't he? Well, you will hear about Jack and a Victorian killer who may have been even worse when the Hansom Wheels meets at **7:00 P.M. Thursday, August 23**, at **The Palmetto Club, 1231 Sumter Street**. The price will be **\$27.00 per person**. **Wayne Scott** will curdle our blood with "Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle, and London's

Deadly Competition: The Thames Torso Killer vs. White-chapel Jack." The Assigned Story will be "The Man with the Twisted Lip." Please make **reservations** with **your Editor** at **(803) 787-2219**; by email at hansomwheels@aol.com; or click "**Reply**" on the email to which this newsletter is attached **as soon as possible**, but **no later than Monday, August 20**. See you there!

Happy Hour Posers (Name the Adventures)!

1. Our speaker is august, baronial, epic, gallant, grand, grandiose, heroic, imperial, imposing, magnificent, majestic, massive, monumental, noble, proud, regal, royal, splendid, and stately.
2. He called out to his wife, “Honey, I can’t fasten these tax returns together because this thingamajig is all mangled, and it’s the only one left. Please get me the stapler.”
3. Be sure to flatten it before you recycle it.
4. Pancho took one look at the Cisco Kid’s huge new stove and said, “¡Caramba, Ceesco, that ees _____!”

Sailor, Plumber, or Priest?



By Liese Sherwood-Fabre, Ph.D.

The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia Website lists eleven stories where Sherlock Holmes used fourteen different disguises: a sailor (*The Sign of the Four*); an asthmatic old master mariner (*The Sign of the Four*); a drunken-looking groom (“A Scandal in Bohemia”); an amiable and simple-minded Nonconformist clergyman (“A Scandal in Bohemia”); a **doddering opium smoker (“The Man with the Twisted Lip”)***; a common loafer (“The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet”); a venerable Italian priest (“The Final Problem”); an elderly book collector (“The Adventure of the Empty House”); an East End familiar known as Captain Basil (“The Adventure of Black Peter”); a plumber with a rising business named Escott (“The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton”); an unshaven French *ouvrier* (“The Adventure of Lady France Carfax”); a workman looking for a job, an old sporting man, and an elderly woman (“The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone”); and an Irish-American spy named Altamont (“His Last Bow”).

This list suggests that he was able to age himself; another accent; change his sex; and be quite attractive to he was quite adept at acting and had several places around



pearance.¹

While the use of disguises dates back to the Bible, Holmes’s skills exhibit that of a true master. As CIA remarks, the basis for a good disguise is not only chang- full illusion that misdirects others to keep them from see- disguise is based on an understanding of the culture, creation of a backstory, and making everything appear familiar and in the open.³ This occurs through understanding the culture and picking benign characters for the disguise, such as the elder- ly or women.⁴

One of the most innovative tools described by Mendez is the GAMBIT. Given the sensitive nature of the device, he only provides a vague description of the actual disguise. Developed through a collaboration with a Hollywood makeup artist, the malleable material used to create cinematic science-fiction characters serves in real life to change the race, ethnicity, and even sex of an individual. Over his career, Mendez worked to create a disguise kit that could be applied quick- ly in the dark and even carried or stored flat to easily hide or pass on.⁵ Mendez’s wife, Jonna tells of her own use of the disguise at a briefing in the White House. After entering the Oval Office using a GAMBIT, she removed it—thoroughly fascinating the senior President Bush. While the event was photographed, the only copy she was able to obtain had the actual disguise air-brushed out. This technique of changing a person’s physical appearance is still considered top secret.⁶

Changing a person’s physical appearance, however, is only part of the disguise. Mendez notes that it is a much larger package—the gait, the mannerisms, and the attitude—as well as good planning and strong backstory that makes a disguise succeed. The operation must set up the deception.⁷

Holmes had a clear understanding of the “whole package” required to pull off a successful ruse one hundred years before Mendez. On more than one occasion, Watson described how Holmes was able to create a completely different per- sona based on the character he portrayed—a priest, a bookseller, or an Irish-American spy. This transformation was com- plete enough to pass inspection by his closest friend or to win the heart of Charles Milverton’s housemaid. Holmes could so entirely submerge his own personality when masquerading as the young plumber Escott that he was not beyond pro- posing marriage when he himself (Holmes) would never have considered it. Holmes was such a master of disguise, he actually fooled himself.

appear sick, drunk, or drugged; adopt women. We also learn from Watson that London where he could change his ap-

Watson’s descriptions indicate that “master of disguise” Antonio Mendez ing one’s appearance but also creating a ing what is before them.² The appropriate

1. https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Sherlock_Holmes#Disguises

2. <https://www.spymuseum.org/multimedia/spycast/episode/the-secret-history-of-disguises/>

3. <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol46no1/article09.html>

4. <https://www.spymuseum.org/multimedia/spycast/episode/the-secret-history-of-disguises/>

5. Antonio Mendez, *The Master of Disguise*, New York: William Morrow and Company, 1999, p. 119.

6. <https://www.spymuseum.org/multimedia/spycast/episode/woman-in-disguise--jonna-mendez/>

7. Mendez, p. 232.

Dr. Sherwood-Fabre’s book The Life and Times of Sherlock Holmes includes this and other essays on Victorian England and is now available on Amazon. It will be available everywhere September 15. She will have a booth at “From Gillette to Brett V” in Bloomington, Indiana, in October, where copies will also be available for purchase.

***The Assigned Story for the August meeting.**