



# THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower  
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

MINUTES  
of the meeting  
of the  
BIMETALLIC QUESTION  
December 1, 2005

### Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on:  
Thursday, February 2, at 6:30 p.m. at:

The Westmount Public Library  
(Westmount Room)  
4574 Sherbrooke Street West  
Montreal, Quebec

### The Quiz at the next meeting

**"The Solitary Cyclist "**  
prepared by Carol Abramson

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**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP: \$18.**  
**Please send ck to Bimetallic Question**  
to Wilfrid de Freitas  
369 Kitchener Ave., Westmount, QC H3Z 2G1  
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**Minutes** of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

**Present:** Carol Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Stanley Baker, Paul Billette, Peter Calamai, Wilfrid deFreitas, David Dowse, David Kellett, Elliott Newman, Erica Penner, Muriel Gold Poole, Kathryn Radford, Carole Rocklin, Arlene Scher, Cheryl Surkes.

**Regrets:** Patrick Campbell, Joan O'Malley

## The Annual Banquet

Date: Saturday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006  
Time: Drinks at 6:00 pm (cash bar)  
Dinner at 7 p.m.  
Venue: Restaurant Du Vieux Port  
39 rue St-Paul est, Vieux-Montréal  
Special Guest Speaker :  
Howard Richler  
*columnist, linguist, author*

## SYMPOSIUM

Enclosed you will find the registration form for ACD@35, which is being organized by our friends The Bootmakers of Toronto, in October. If you've never attended one of their events, we cannot recommend them too highly, and it's great to meet other like-minded people. Those planning to attend may wish to take advantage of the early registration discount.

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

Our Sovereign Paul Billette called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.

### **ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION:**

1) **The Democracy of Creative and Intellectual Opportunity.**

David Dowse opined that there are opportunities in our society to write one's own views on the canon and to have them aired publicly. He cited a televised episode he had seen on *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* as he (David) was preparing for work (very) early one morning. The episode was obviously influenced by the canon. What this means to all of us, aside from providing us with entertainment and hope that mystery, suspense, and resolution will continue to be spread across the planet, is that we too may find a creative outlet for our pent-up and deep-rooted feelings about the WGCD and related items. The challenge, of course, is that Alfred Hitchcock is long gone, and the WGCD lives in obscure retirement somewhere in Eastbourne, England. This is where your creativity comes in.

2) **Generosity and Honour**

Stanley Baker and Rachel Alkallay had jointly given a deposit for Colin Semel's funeral. They announced that they have now been reimbursed by the provincial government.

3) **Upcoming Annual Banquet**

In true democratic tradition, a vote of peers (we're open to definitions) determined the venue for our upcoming festive occasion (see box notice, page 1). *Le Vieux Port* squeaked by as the favourite over *The Montefiore Club* by a vote of 8-7. The Executive was directed to make the necessary arrangements. Guest speaker will be Howard Richler, host of "Speaking of Language" in the *Montreal Gazette*. Paul Billette requested that we all make the effort to wear "suitable attire" for the event, in keeping with the theme of our organization and in memory of Colin Semel who attended our last banquet with us, and never failed to wear a Victorian gentleman's suit. Our own costuming need not be elaborate, but should resemble Victorian or Sherlockian clothing. We will be offering a special toast to Colin's memory.

4) **Past Annual Banquet**

50 people attended our last banquet at *Le Vieux Port*. The surroundings were spacious, sufficiently private, and most salubrious. We have always managed to attract celebrities, including Dick Irvin, Dr. Joe Schwartz, and Mae Cutler. Come and be famous.

5) **Election of Officers**

The existing slate was carried by acclamation for 2006. For details, please see our web site. If names are not posted, we expect them to be shortly.

6) **Toast to the Master**

By Mac Belfer

"The Master was admired worldwide for his intellect, tenacity, but most of all for his ability to solve, what at the time seemed unsolvable crimes. Numerous books have been written about his exploits. Movies have been made in which some actors, notably Basil Rathbone, ably portrayed the Master's mannerisms, but could not emulate his inner passion that was uniquely his. So here once again: a toast to the inimitable Master."

7) **Show and Tell**

a) Paul Billette shared the family tree and chronology of Sherlock Holmes and his family. He had bought this very attractive poster in London at Murder Inc. The poster indicated a third Holmes sibling, a fact which astonished most of us who are familiar enough with Mycroft.

b) Paul also produced for our pleasure a book, *The Victorian Internet*, by Tom Standage. Paul described it as "an excellent book, easy to read." It's about the telegraph and its influence not only on the evolution of mass communication, but on women's rights. It is one of the first, if not the first example of the emergence of meritocracy in business; that is, the right of an individual to be paid for productivity and quality regardless of gender. Thus, as an employer, the telegraph system gave equal pay opportunity to women as well as to men.

c) We believe Paul has recently visited the U.K. He also showed us a flyer from the Sherlock Holmes Pub off Trafalgar Square.

d) Also for our pleasure, Paul offered a review by Robert Fulford of Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle-inspired books from the October 18<sup>th</sup> edition of *The National Post*. Books covered were: *The Man from Beyond* (Norton), by Gabriel Brownstein, and *Arthur & George* (Jonathan Cape), by Julian Barnes. Both books delve into fascinating – if somewhat disturbingly amusing – aspects of Doyle's life and personality and remind us that greatness, while bearing rewards of potential fame and wealth, also exacts a toll. But we already knew that. This is a fascinating and informative review, and includes comments on four other Holmes-related or Holmes-inspired literary works. The Barnes book points to Doyle's humanitarianism, and passion for true justice, referring to Doyle's championing of a man accused of maiming cattle. Through Doyle's intervention, the conviction was overturned. Paul also produced a photocopy of a review from the *Financial Times*, November 26/November 27, 2005, by

Ludovic Hunter-Tilney on these Sherlockian, Doyle-related, and detective publications: *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes: The Novels*, edited by Leslie S. Klinger; *Detective Fiction* by Charles J. Rzepka; *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, by Lee Horsley; and *Arthur & George*, by Julian Barnes.

- e) Paul continued with valuable comments on the new annotated Sherlock Holmes edition by Klinger. He said that the comments on "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot" were quite similar to those in the Baring-Gould edition. Peter Calamai, a journalist visiting our city from Ottawa on business, and more importantly, a guest to our meeting, added that the Klinger edition contains forty years additional scholarship compared with the Baring-Gould tome.
- f) Kathryn Radford offered comment on *The Murder Rooms*, a series of films written by David Pirie, having to do with Sherlockian crimes. She referred to "The Egyptian Adding Machine," and the television series, *House*, featuring the exploits of a forensic doctor residing at the now-famous 221B address, who uses Holmes-like methods to solve crimes.
- g) Wilfrid informed us that there is a Sherlockian living in Winnipeg who does exceptionally convincing recitations of Dickens. His name is John D. Huston, and he is very talented. Wilfrid said that "he has an uncanny resemblance to Dickens. (By the time you will have received this newsletter, Mr. Huston will have performed his solo recitation of *A Christmas Carol* at Holy Family Church, 7355 Lajeunesse, in Montreal, on December 10.
- h) David Kellett recounted seeing Vincent Price in *An Evening with Oscar Wilde* in two acts, with only two props (a chair and a rose) about 20 years ago.
- i) This too falls under the umbrella of Show and Tell. Stanley Baker reminded us that we could renew our membership this evening. What does this have to do with Show and Tell? We're glad you asked. It's an opportunity to show the money. Then tell our friends we are members of the fascinating and richly rewarding society, The Bimetallic Question. And bring them to the next meeting. We can show them a richly rewarding time and they can show us their money. This is the Sherlockian circle of life. We knew you had a strategy, Stanley. Thank you.

- j) Jack Anderson passed around old photos from London's Unity Theatre of the 1960s and 1970s, which included shots of Colin Semel. Stanley Baker indicated he had appeared there as well, in a famous period play, *Waiting for Lefty* by Clifford Odets. Other famous stars who appeared early in their careers at Unity were Pamela Routledge, star of the popular television series, *Keeping Up Appearances*; and Michael Gambon, title character in the British-produced *Maigret* detective series. Gambon has appeared most recently in *Harry Potter*, as well as in the feature film *A Company of Gentlemen* with Sean Connery. Add to this list Bob Hoskins, with whom our Colin Semel shared living quarters for several years while both performed at Unity. Hoskins is renowned for his breakthrough role as the detective in *Roger Rabbit*, and many other films.
- k) We all stood as Rachel Alkallay delivered a heartfelt reminiscence on Colin Semel. She described Colin as being loyal and true to our society; a loving father; a joy to know; and theatrical to the end. She spoke for us all when she said he was and will be a part of our lives.
- l) Stanley Baker offered tribute and thanks to Wilfrid for organizing visits by society and members and friends to Colin while he was in the hospital. Never a day went by that Colin wasn't visited by at least one of our society. (As an aside, we know that Rachel, Stanley, Wilfrid, and others gave selflessly of their time and efforts in transitioning Colin from his apartment to a residence, and from there to hospital. Much red tape was involved, and perhaps some frustration too. Colin's final months, weeks, and days, were attended by his friends from our society who undertook the arduous and emotional task of contacting friends in England, at his synagogue in Montreal, and his son Sidney, as well as taking responsibility for the funeral arrangements. The phone calls, the visits, the heartbreak, the love and caring – all these were done unquestioningly and selflessly. One comment which may point to the exceptional friendship and dedication of Colin's crew came from a healthcare professional at the hospital: "Colin gets more visitors and calls bugging the nurses and doctors about his condition than anyone else in the ward." From the sadness comes the joy and comfort in knowing Colin was supported in every way possible. Thank you all.)

8) **Toast to Watson**

By Paul Billette

(Third paragraph from the *National Post* (October 18, 2005 review by Robert Fulford, entitled "The Original Man of Mystery," reprinted here. Also cited above in #7-d. Although the paragraph refers to Doyle, perhaps more than a little of the nature of Holmes' biographer Watson is revealed. The debt we owe Watson for presenting the myriad facets of the enigmatic Holmes is evident. Also evident is the splitting of Doyle's personality into Holmes and Watson, two fictional halves of a rather compelling real-world figure. What amazing parallels can we draw between Holmes' misogyny and Doyle's torment, Watson's precise yet often guarded chronicling and Doyle's mysterious inner life?)

"He was a doctor, a genial clubman, a fine cricketer and England's most successful and talked-about writer. His experiments in spiritualism were still at the hobby stage, not yet an obsession. Everything was fine except that he couldn't escape his leaden feeling that he was somehow to blame (for his long-ailing wife's death while he was secretly in love with another woman). He could hardly turn to the woman who had been waiting for years, sharing with him the secret of their chaste love and their implied future; her presence only deepened his remorse."

- 9) Cheryl Surkes asked if the BmQ has ever had a Sherlockian film festival. This prompted a lively discussion, and a promise by all to think about this as a way of attracting more attention to the society and providing a worthwhile activity. According to our members, various attributes of such a festival could be:
- A scholarly introduction to each film.
  - David Kellet offered his vast collection
  - Elliott Newman described the film series model offered by the Quebec wing of the Canadian Psychoanalytic Society.
  - Peter Calamai said we could bring actors to the viewings.
  - Various sources of films were discussed.
  - Arlene Scher said we might partner with a theatre of Cine Express on Ste. Catherine Street.
- 10) Stanley Baker and Rachel Alkallay announced they are winding up the affairs of Colin Semel's estate. Rachel said, "It's more complicated to die than to live. I suggest you live as long as possible." We appreciate this advice and assure Rachel that we intend to comply as much as possible.

11) **Toast to Mrs. Hudson**  
By Cheryl Selick Surkes

A few words in tribute to our beloved Mrs. Hudson.

Upon reflecting on Mrs. Hudson's substantial and significant contributions to the life and work of Mr. Sherlock Holmes, I am reminded of the biblical poem from the book of Proverbs, (Chapter 31, Verse 10), entitled "A Woman of Valor." It begins, "A woman of valor, who can find? For her price is far above rubies." The poem speaks of how a woman toils from early morning until late at night tending to her family's needs, expecting no recognition or glory in return. This defines Mrs. Hudson.

Mrs. Hudson is gracious and tolerant, patient, capable, caring and generous. It is because of Mrs. Hudson's devotion to him and her efficiency in tending to the minutiae of daily life that Mr. Holmes is unburdened by routine trivialities and therefore is free to indulge his eccentricities and creative genius. Mrs. Hudson is, quite simply, indispensable to the The Master.

Make no mistake about it, Ladies and Gentlemen, we raise our glasses tonight to pay tribute to dear Mrs. Hudson, without whom there would be no tea in the teapot, no long on the fire, no starch in His collar, and I daresay, no Home for Sherlock Holmes. To Mrs. Hudson, benevolent of nature and noble of spirit.

- 12) **Quiz**  
 "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot"  
 Presented by: David Kellett  
 Possible total: 68  
 Winners were:

Rank	Name	Score
1.	Carol Abramson	54
2.	Peter Calamai	44½
3.	Erica Penner	43½

All winners received editorial cartoon books by Aislin.

Next quiz will be based on "The Solitary Cyclist," prepared by Carol Abramson

- 13) **Toast to The Woman**  
 By Stanley Baker

Irene Adler could be described as the Adventuress of Sherlock Holmes, not to be confused with *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

Perhaps in support of his alleged misogyny, Holmes had said, "Women are never to be trusted – not the best of them." But he came through with an awe and respect for Irene Adler. Not only was she the only person who had ever got the better of him as in "A Scandal in Bohemia," but it is said that Irene and Holmes had an affair in 1892. They may have even produced a son, who became Nero Wolfe, Rex Stout's New York detective. However, we have no proof of hanky-panky between Holmes and Irene Adler. (Stanley, do you know how hard it is for your unanointed scribe to refrain from responding to this?)

Moreover, in the story for this week's quiz, "The Devil's Foot," Holmes admits that he has never loved, but states that if he did and if the woman was murdered, as described in the story, he might act, as the lawless lion-hunter did, and take the life of the killer. This could have been quite a switch in Holmes' character, which Doyle could have made into another adventure.

Watson was portrayed as a ladies' man, but in the canon, there is a definitive absence of any hint of romance for Holmes. Irene, who was said to have been born into a Jewish family in New Jersey in 1858 was described by Holmes as "The daintiest thing under a bonnet on this planet." She has been the heroine of many books, including *Another Scandal in Bohemia*, and *Good Morning Irene*, both by the American feminist author Carole Nelson Douglas.

Irene Adler was more than just beautiful; she was a talented actress and singer, skilled in disguise, with an excellent mind that could outwit the world's greatest detective. "In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex ..." She became the icon of female independence, style, and resourcefulness in the Victorian era, and in Holmes' eyes she was always "The Woman."

In Sherlock Holmes Societies throughout the world, from Dubai to Tierra del Fuego, there is always a toast to "The Woman." The Bi-Metallic Question adheres to this protocol.

Please raise your glasses and toast "The Woman."

p.t.o. →→→→

**Our dear friends**, you would confer a great favour upon us by joining us at the next meeting of "THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION" which is being held on Thursday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2006, at 6:30 p.m.

For the latest society news or updates on our history, please go to [www.bimetallicquestion.org](http://www.bimetallicquestion.org)

## Poem

*(We of the BmQ are particularly fortunate in having a poet in our midst. Perhaps this poem has is more in common with the themes of our society than is first evident.)*

### Famine in Africa

by Mac Belfer

The cradle of mankind  
Is now its grave  
The children stand  
On the wasted earth  
With legs too thin  
To support their bloated bodies  
Flies buzz around  
The living and the dead  
And hope is buried  
With those who die  
We the wealthy  
Fortunate in our rich lands  
Must be shown horror  
Sparingly  
For we get accustomed to it  
Too easily  
We watch the desolation  
On expensive television sets  
While we have our second  
Cup of coffee  
Much could be done  
If we could see  
That they are part  
Of what we are  
And feel the loss  
Of their needless dying