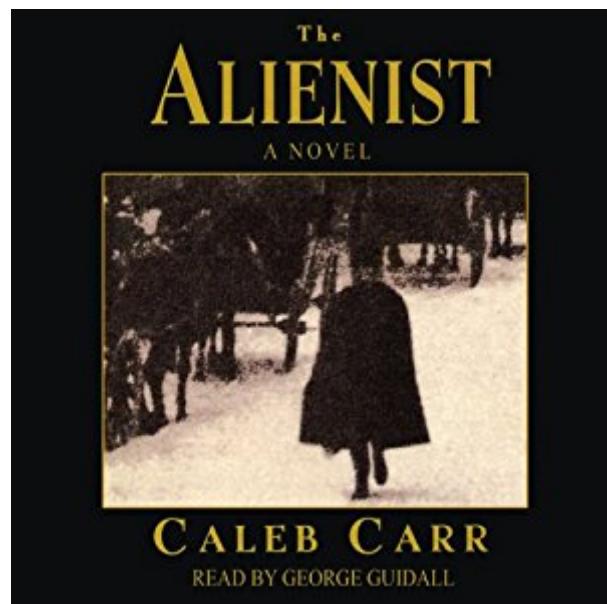


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The Alienist



Synopsis

The year is 1896, the place, New York City. On a cold March night New York Times reporter John Schuyler Moore is summoned to the East River by his friend and former Harvard classmate Dr. Laszlo Kreizler, a psychologist, or "alienist." On the unfinished Williamsburg Bridge, they view the horribly mutilated body of an adolescent boy, a prostitute from one of Manhattan's infamous brothels. The newly appointed police commissioner, Theodore Roosevelt, in a highly unorthodox move, enlists the two men in the murder investigation, counting on the reserved Kreizler's intellect and Moore's knowledge of New York's vast criminal underworld. They are joined by Sara Howard, a brave and determined woman who works as a secretary in the police department. Laboring in secret (for alienists, and the emerging discipline of psychology, are viewed by the public with skepticism at best), the unlikely team embarks on what is a revolutionary effort in criminology-- amassing a psychological profile of the man they're looking for based on the details of his crimes. Their dangerous quest takes them into the tortured past and twisted mind of a murderer who has killed before, and will kill again before the hunt is over. Fast-paced and gripping, infused with a historian's exactitude, *The Alienist* conjures up the Gilded Age and its untarnished underside: verminous tenements and opulent mansions, corrupt cops and flamboyant gangsters, shining opera houses and seamy gin mills. Here is a New York during an age when questioning society's belief that all killers are born, not made, could have unexpected and mortal consequences.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Read this book in the 90s and revisited it. Amazing what time and distance will do for interpreting a

work like this.

The Caleb Carr novels featuring Dr. Laszlo Kreizler, the eponymous alienist (i.e., a psychologist, in the parlance of turn-of-the-century - that would be the just-about 20th century - New York City), are thrillers of the most fantastic kind. The Alienist is the story of the first serial killer investigation in the City - or, more precisely, the first time anyone has linked multiple murders in such a way as to invoke the concept of a serial killer. Dr. Kreizler's methods - the application of psychological and modern police procedural techniques - are criticized by most, but receive support from New York City police commissioner Theodore Roosevelt. I love when authors work actual historical figures into historical fiction. Well, when they do it well, that is. When they do not, well, "Eek," she said. Carr's Teddy Roosevelt is a larger-than-life character and steals many of the scenes he appears in - which is rather how he has been described in his biographies, most notably Theodore Rex (Modern Library Paperbacks) by Edmund Morris, which is a fascinating read in its own right. In both The Alienist and its sequel The Angel of Darkness (the continuing saga of serial murder in New York), Carr manages to strike a perfect balance between drama and suspense, action and attention to detail, and humanity and inhumanity. There have been rumors of a third Dr. Kreizler novel, but nothing has materialized to date, which is a crying shame. I keep my fingers crossed though, because these are characters that beg to be allowed to breathe again...

It seems obvious Carr has a wealth of nonfiction experience since his prose is extremely even and precise. Also, the copious research that must have supported this novel is evident on every page. I think it's hard to set a story in 1896 without exposing modernity -- and Carr does straddle the border with anachronism, but he manages to keep things under control. Like other reviewers, I did find the story to drag a bit in places, but otherwise, there are well-crafted characters, a strong story, and plenty of suspense.

I love the period history insight that comes with a great story with great characters

I liked it, it was very well researched, great characters but endless details that could have been eliminated (i.e. pages of descriptions of catching and riding in hansom cabs). I felt like the autobiographical details of Roosevelt's life were extremely interesting and made this seem more of an historical account rather than a novel. Not sure if I'll read the next book, but if you have the time

and patience, this is a good book.

Good story if you like historical novels

Superbly written, Carr manages to carve his characters and their individual aspects on the inside of a readers mind. I love when an author manages to paint, not just characters, but the city, individual homes, offices including streets on my imagination. This difference is more like watching a movie. Suspenseful and hard to put down. I would only complain about the very end where the serial killer becomes a cookie cutter type that we are all too familiar with and it made me sad that the creativity that was a constant theme sort of lagged at the end.

It has been a few years since I read this book but remember when I picked it up, it was hard to put down. Story starts with a lot of action and ends with great scenes. Would be a great movie if the right people made it. Characters are great and all add to the team of investigators. Mr. Carr is great at his details and I feel like I once ate at Delmonico's 10 course meal as the characters. In addition love that the characters have real people from History like Roosevelt when he was the Commissioner of the New York Police Dept. I love this book so much I read it at least once a year. I just wish we had more novels with these characters which can go down in history as Americas' Sherlock Holmes if Mr. Carr decided to add to this collection of characters. And yes I know Mr. Carr wrote a Sherlock Homes novel with permission of the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle family.

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The Alienist The Alienist: A Novel (Dr. Lazlo Kreizler Book 1)

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