

Murder, Mystery, and Serial Magazines: The Evolution of Detective Stories to Tales of International Crime

My greatly adored collection of short stories, novels, and commentary began at my local library one day long ago when I picked out *C is for Corpse* to listen to on a long car journey. Not long after I began purchasing books from this series starting with *A is for Alibi* and eventually progressing to *J is for Judgement*. This was my introduction to the detective story, a fascinating genre that I can't get enough of.

Last semester I took Duke's Detective Story class, and I must say I think I may be slightly obsessed with detective stories now. This class showed me the wide variety of crime fiction from traditional Golden Age classics and hard-boiled stories to the eventual incorporation of noir and crime dramas. A simple final assignment of writing our own murder mystery where we "killed" the professor turned into so much more, dialing up my interest in detective stories even further. I'm continuing to write more short stories, and I hope to one day submit them to Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine and be published. To go from reading Ellery Queen, to learning about how Ellery Queen progressed the industry, to being inspired to publish in their magazine is an incredible journey that makes me want to read more detective novels in hopes that my storytelling abilities will greatly improve.

Prior to my detective story class, I was most familiar with crime dramas often adapted to television (Rizzoli & Isles, *Bones*, *Haven*). I looked for books with cultural and historical references and I loved everything I read; however, I came to realize that my collection was missing copious amounts of history and evolution. So with the help of many used-bookstores and short stories read in class, I rapidly obtained many more books, which quite honestly are not enough at the rate I am reading all of them. To add to that, much of this genre is serialized whether full-length novel series or short stories originally published in magazines such as *The Strand*. This serial format provides a seemingly infinite number of books to add to my to-read list. Every time I obtain gift cards for my birthday or holidays, my first instinct is to continue adding to the many series that I currently have, hoping that one day I will collect and read the entirety of the series that I currently have started.

Moreover, with every criticism or commentary I read, I want to know more about why we read mysteries, how labor strikes influenced the development of hard-boiled novels, and how crime stories reflect our society at the time of publication. Through books such as *Mortal Consequences* and *Murder for Pleasure*, I learn a little more and I think a little harder about my own opinions when I read the genre. Reading detective stories and crime dramas has become more than a pleasurable pastime; it provides space to think about how "evil" is distributed and viewed in society and how that has changed over time.

Each story that I have so carefully chosen or had chosen for me has been lovingly read and is representative of my exploration of the genre. From reading a child's abridged adaptation of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* to obsessing over the clues dropped in *The Devotion of Suspect X*, I cherish every minute spent reading and rereading my books. I care not if my books were purchased or provided to me as a result of academic requirements or if I found them during one of the many many hours I spent perusing used-bookstores. My collection makes me proud and I don't think there will ever come a day when I wish to stop expanding my library that I so thoroughly enjoy.

Annotated Bibliography

1. Cox, Anthony Berkely. *The Case of the Poisoned Chocolates*. Felony & Mayhem Press, 2010.

One of the many classic examples of the so-called armchair detective, this novel set in 1930s London is a Golden Age classic. I discovered this novel through my Detective Story class. In this story, the Crime Circle, a group of intellectuals/amateur detectives, attempt to reason through murder by poisoned chocolates. An entertaining read in addition to a logic puzzle, I loved reading it and trying to guess the murderer.

2. Braithwaite, Oyinkan. *My Sister, the Serial Killer*. Random House USA, 2019.

I originally obtained this novel as one of five we had to read for my Detective Story class. A modern story by a Nigerian author, this novel quickly became one to hold my attention. An oddity due to its narrative style, story, and locale, I highly value this book. While most detective stories are set in Europe or the United States, *My Sister, the Serial Killer* takes place in Lagos, Nigeria. It tells a tale of a sister who murders her boyfriends and a sister who cleans them up. The reader is a witness to the internal struggle of Korede who has to figure out if Ayoola kills out of self-defense or something else and if she should tell on her sister. Not a traditional crime novel, but one you shouldn't miss out on.

3. Chandler, Raymond. *Blackmailers Don't Shoot: and Other Stories*. The Folio Society, 2007.

A compilation of stories written by one of the most prominent names in the age of hard-boiled detective fiction, this book holds wonderful memories for me. This was my introduction to hard-boiled fiction, very distinct from Golden Age detective stories. My friends and I took turns reading *Blackmailers Don't Shoot* out loud on a road trip and now the line "This is a gun buddy. It goes boom boom. Want to try it?" which made us burst out laughing has become a tag line to be repeated forever.

4. Chesterton, G. K. *The Innocence of Father Brown*. Mint Editions, 2021.
5. Chesterton, G.K. *Father Brown: The Essential Tales*. Edited by P.D. James, Modern Library, 2005.

I may have started watching the Father Brown series before I read the stories, but my excitement to find these books at a used bookstore was unparalleled. The emphasis on the Catholic faith may be a turn-off to some at first, but G.K. Chesterton is a detective writer first and uses theology and the skills of a priest to catch the criminal. These stories are also fascinating because Father Brown utilizes human behavior more than scientific evidence in contrast to characters like Sherlock Holmes.

6. Christie, Agatha. *Miss Marple: The Complete Short Stories*. William Morrow, an Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2017.

- Christie, Agatha. *The Secret Adversary: A Tommy and Tuppence Mystery*. Vintage Books, 2019.

It is near impossible to maintain a collection of mystery and crime without the famous Agatha Christie. Miss Marple, Tommy and Tuppence, and Hercule Poirot are all staple figures who have influenced TV, film, radio shows, and written fiction to an innumerable extent. Her works are considered a portion of the Golden Age of detective fiction, and for good reason too with all the fame and awards that come with her stories. Christie is also known for using poison and framing the least likely character as the murderer.

- Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Dover, 2010.
- Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Sign of Four*. Penguin Classics, 2001.

Another Golden Age classic, no collection could miss Arthur Conan Doyle. I've read Sherlock Holmes for as long as I can remember slowly but surely progressing from the abridged children's versions to the multitude of unabridged novels and short stories. Inspired by Poe's C. Auguste Dupin, Conan Doyle took the genre and massively popularized it. Like many others, I love Sherlock Holmes in part due to the masterful creation of the villain, Moriarty, and the popularization of the sidekick figure (Watson).

- Ellroy, James. *L.A. Confidential*. Warner Books, 1997.

A masterful example of crime noir, Ellroy is a genius in his writing. From changing the style of speech with each character that is followed and creating an invisible narrator to exhibiting eye-catching newspaper article inserts, Ellroy displays a variety of writing styles to explore 1950s L.A.P.D. In this novel, Ellroy weaves a message of an infectiously corrupt society through the fictional depiction of a series of violent murders and related crimes.

An extremely important piece of my collection, this novel is often compared to hard-boiled detective fiction written by the likes of Hammett and Chandler. While not exactly hard-boiled fiction, this is a beautiful example in the evolution and expansion of crime novels to include noir.

- Gerritsen, Tess. *Body Double: a Rizzoli & Isles Novel*. Ballantine Books, 2014.
- Gerritsen, Tess. *The Apprentice: A Rizzoli & Isles Novel*. Ballantine Books, 2016.
- Gerritsen, Tess. *The Bone Garden*. Ballantine Books, 2016.
- Gerritsen, Tess. *The Sinner: A Rizzoli & Isles Novel*. Ballantine Books, 2016.
- Gerritsen, Tess. *The Surgeon: A Rizzoli & Isles Novel*. Ballantine Books, 2012.
- Gerritsen, Tess. *Vanish: A Rizzoli & Isles Novel*. Ballantine Books, 2016.

I used to love watching the crime drama Rizzoli & Isles on TV when I was younger, so it seemed only natural to pick up the books the series was based on. In both the media adaptation and the original novels, Rizzoli, a cop, and Isles, a medical examiner, investigate murders and crime. These books may not hold historical significance to the evolution of crime novels and media, but they hold their own within the genre. These are

fairly old books in my crime collection, and I reread them over and over again. I liked her writing style so much, I had to expand my collection to her other crime novels such as *The Bone Garden*.

17. Grafton, Sue. *"A" Is for Alibi: a Kinsey Millhone Mystery*. Bantam Books, 1987.
18. Grafton, Sue. *"B" Is for Burglar*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1985.
19. Grafton, Sue. *C Is for Corpse*. Pan Books, Pan Macmillan, 2012.
20. Grafton, Sue. *D Is for Deadbeat*. Pan Books, Pan Macmillan, 2012.
21. Grafton, Sue. *E Is for Evidence*. Pan Books, Pan Macmillan, 2013.
22. Grafton, Sue. *"F" Is for Fugitive: a Kinsey Millhone Mystery*. St. Martin's Griffin, 2013.
23. Grafton, Sue. *G Is for Gumshoe: a Kinsey Millhone Mystery*. St. Martin's Griffin, 2013.
24. Grafton, Sue. *H Is for Homicide*. St. Martin's Griffin, 2013.
25. Grafton, Sue. *J Is for Judgment*. St Martin's Press, 2008.

The Alphabet Series/ Kinsey Millhone stories are how my collection began. I remember as a child, checking out the *C is for Corpse* book on tape at my local library, listening to it on a road trip, and forever loving these books. Several years after checking out the book on tape, I started buying the books in order, slowly reading them through the years. Not only do I attribute my love of detective stories to this series, but I am also fascinated by the unique void these books filled. This series started in the 1980s at the same time as Sara Paretsky's V.I. Warshawski series and they were both very important to the evolution of the female detective. Very, very few detective figures had been females up until this point. They also focused heavily on the insurance industry, which is also super interesting. They fill a fascinating evolutionary step in the timeline leading to post 2000s crime novels.

26. Hammett, Dashiell. *The Big Knockover: Selected Stories and Short Novels*. Vintage Crime, 1999.
27. Hammett, Dashiell. *The Maltese Falcon*. Vintage Crime/Black Lizard, 1992.

The above stories are classic well-known examples of hard-boiled detective fiction, brought together in book form from their original magazine publications (serial magazine publications in the case of *The Maltese Falcon*). I obtained *The Big Knockover* after my detective novel class, but I read *The Maltese Falcon* while I was in high school (of my own free will). Truly must-reads when trying to understand the 1930s atmosphere and how labor strikes and corruption led to the detective often working on the wrong side of the law.

28. Haycraft, Howard. *Murder for Pleasure: The Life and Times of the Detective Story*. Dover Publications, Inc., 2019.

This nonfiction book serves as an early examination of detective stories, especially those from England. I read a couple of chapters for my detective story class and simply had to read the whole thing. My favorite chapter that I refer to time and time again is entitled "Dictators, Democrats, and Detectives." It explores the relationship between democracy, the use of evidence, and the development of detective novels in countries that emphasize

civil rights. Other sections include the predicted popularity of the detective story and how detective stories are written. Slightly outdated to some, it provides a fascinating glance into the world of detective stories and reminds us of some of the forgotten authors.

29. Higashino, Keigo. *The Devotion of Suspect X: A Detective Galileo Novel*. Translated by Alexander O. Smith, Minotaur Books, 2012.

One of my most recent additions to my collection, obtained for my Detective Novel class, this is a unique novel originating in Japan instead of in the U.S. or Europe. This book has so many quintessential detective story elements (e.g. the intro connects to the solution, follows the 10 detective story commandments, etc.), but the plot occurs in the here and now. This is by far one of my favorite books, which I cannot recommend enough. Clues are laid out for the reader throughout the story, but the author includes some genius plot twists for an incredible resolution.

30. King, Laurie R. *A Letter of Mary: Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes Mysteries*. St. Martin's Press, 1997.
31. King, Laurie R. *A Monstrous Regiment of Women: a Mary Russell Novel*. Picador, 2007.
32. King, Laurie R. *Justice Hall: a Mary Russell Novel*. Bantam Books, 2009.
33. King, Laurie R. *O Jerusalem: a Mary Russell Novel*. Bantam Books, 1999.
34. King, Laurie R. *The Beekeeper's Apprentice, or, On the Segregation of the Queen*. St. Martin's Press, 1994.
35. King, Laurie R. *The Moor: a Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes Novel*. Picador/Thomas Dunne Books, 2007.
36. King, Laurie. *The Game: a Mary Russell Novel*. Bantam Books, 2010.

So much of detective fiction is in a serial format, including the Mary Russell novels. A Sherlock Holmes spin-off, this series brings together historical fiction with a detective element. Crimes are solved and the characters are creative geniuses, but these books stray a lot from the Golden Age formula. Nonetheless, this series is a great example of how Golden Age stories permeate through time and are constantly used as inspiration for modern crime stories.

This unique union of crime and historical fiction has inspired a great many new academic interests from detective stories and the many reinventions of Sherlock Holmes to the poetry of Fernando Pessoa. These books truly reinforce how detectives/investigators must be both knowledgeable about a wide variety of subjects and creative in producing a solution. For anyone who wants a gentle introduction to detective fiction, I would highly recommend these books. I know when I initially picked up the first couple books in the series, I read them straight through and then reread them several more times because I enjoyed them so much.

37. King, Stephen. *The Colorado Kid: a Hard Case Crime Novel*. Titan Books, 2019.

Stephen King may not be a traditional crime writer, but this novella is a curious adaptation of the detective story. In this story, two old-time journalists recount the story

of the Colorado Kid- a boy whose lifeless body was found on the beach. No one was able to close the case, and no resolution comes in telling the story to the audience. A wonderful twist on the detective story, it doesn't provide the standard finale. There is no solution unlike every other book on this list, but it provides a fascinating commentary on why people enjoy mysteries.

38. Pachter, Josh, and Ellery Queen. *The Misadventures of Ellery Queen*. Edited by Dale C. Andrews, Wildside Press, 2018.

In this compilation of Ellery Queen stories and stories influenced by Ellery Queen, we return to the genre of hard-boiled detective stories. Ellery Queen, an amateur detective, helps solve baffling cases in New York and quickly became a staple in detective fiction. Ellery Queen is also historically important as the authors who wrote under the pen name Ellery Queen founded the Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine. This magazine specializes in crime fiction, and one day soon I hope to submit a story that I wrote to their magazine.

39. Paretsky, S. *Indemnity Only: A V.I. Warshawski Novel*. Penguin Books, 1987.

I also obtained this novel for my Detective Story class, making it a relatively recent addition to my collection. Rapidly, I became fascinated with this book as it was so similar to Sue Grafton's series. Both detectives are single female private investigators involved in the insurance business. The stories are narrated in the first person and the author uses the city as a character. It's quite crazy how similar they are and how Paretsky's and Grafton's first books were both published in 1982. In later V.I. Warshawski novels, there are even mentions of Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone!

40. Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Murders in the Rue Morgue and Other Tales*. Penguin Books, 2012.

Unbeknownst to many, Edgar Allan Poe was the creator of detective stories with his C. Auguste Dupin character. These short stories are *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Purloined Letter*, and the *Mystery of Marie Rogêt*. While very dry at times with arguments of checkers over chess, these stories were still interesting and formative as they emphasized the logic puzzle nature of early detective stories. I, myself, was very proud that I solved the *Murders in the Rue Morgue* before the final reveal. This book in my collection is also super important to me because it is a reminder of how Poe created the poet-mathematician. The character of the poet-mathematician emphasizes the necessity of breadth of knowledge and creativity to solve cases, which is seen in almost all Golden Age detective stories, especially Sherlock Holmes. I love how I can use this book as a conversational piece as I truly love discussing the importance of the poet-mathematician to whoever will listen.

41. Reichs, Kathy. *206 Bones*. Pocket Star Books, 2010.
42. Reichs, Kathy. *Monday Mourning*. Pocket Star Books, 2005.

Similar to Rizzoli & Isles, I started watching the TV adaptation *Bones* long before I started reading the books. This series, which follows forensic anthropologist Temperance Brennan, is more technical than most and emphasizes the importance of science to identify victims and solve crimes. Considered a crime thriller and police procedural, there is always a murder that must be solved, but it is unique compared to other crime thrillers due to the aspect of forensic anthropology as a means of investigation. I love these books as it gives an incredible view into the science of forensic anthropology and how it is used in modern times to solve a crime.

43. Sayers, Dorothy L. *Whose Body?* Dover Publications, 2013.

A must-have in any detective or crime collection, Dorothy Sayers is a prolific author and an expert on Golden Age detective stories. She helped write down the rules of detective fiction in addition to inventing her detective, Lord Peter Wimsey. *Whose Body* is the first Lord Peter Wimsey story, introducing a genius detective and furthering the archetype of a gentlemanly British amateur detective. Highly popular, media has adapted Sayer's Lord Peter Wimsey into many different forms including television and radio shows.

44. Simenon, Georges. *Maigret's Christmas*. Harvest Books, 2003.

Georges Simenon wrote stories involving detective Jules Maigret between 1931 and 1972. Maigret works for the Paris *Brigade Criminelle* as a police commissioner. These stories, originally written in French, emphasize psychological investigations. I believe Simenon is an important author to have in my collection due to the sheer quantity of stories he contributed to the world (75 novels and another 25 short stories). I hope to soon read more of these high-quality mysteries as I was just informed there is a set at a local used bookstore.

45. Symons, Julian. *Mortal Consequences: A History from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*. Schocken Books, 1973.

A captivating read; this book briefly recounts the history of the detective story up until the 1970s. It provides a look into the definition of a detective story, the rules authors should follow, and most importantly why we read them. From the joy of a logic puzzle to the ability to escape reality or the desire to belong to a different social class, many theories are put forth as to the appeal of the detective story. Every time I read a story, I identify with a different theory a little more or a little less. I view this book as significant commentary and it helps me get more out of every story I read. It is also a unique way to obtain crime fiction suggestions through a wide period of time.

Wish List

1. Horowitz, Anthony. *Moonflower Murders: a Novel*. Harper, 2020.

I first heard about this book through NPR's end-of-year book review and it immediately caught my eye. I've always loved the books I've found through NPR and I believe this book to be no different. Set in the English countryside with a storyline inspired by Agatha Christie, this book promises to be a detective story full of riveting twists and turns.

2. Grafton, Sue. *The Alphabet Series*.

It is only natural for me to wish to complete the series that founded my collection. I've loved every book I've read often staying up until the wee hours of the morning unable to put it down and go to bed. I would absolutely love to buy books K through Y (Sue Grafton died before she could publish Z) and complete the series.

3. Sayers, Dorothy L. *Lord Peter Wimsey: The Complete Stories*. Bourbon Street Books, 2013.

A master influence of detective stories, I would love to read more than just *Whose Body*. Formative in the rules of the game, I believe it is extremely important to read Sayers' works. I would love to read the whole collection of Lord Peter Wimsey stories, each one unique and incredibly written. Reading the collection would also help me pick up on tricks that other authors use in the construction of their stories so that I may write better stories of my own.

4. Stout, Rex. *Fer-De-Lance: a Nero Wolfe Mystery*. Bantam Books, 1992.

Rex Stout is an author that has always been on my to-read list, but I have never gotten around to his books. I have, however, listened to old radio show interpretations, which has only augmented my desire to read his works. I would be ecstatic to obtain a copy of *Fer-de-Lance* not only due to the genre, but also its incorporation of herpetology. As an environmental science and linguistics student, this book seems like a perfect union of my interests. Another example of an armchair detective, I look forward to pitting my own wits against those of Nero Wolfe.

5. Yokomizo, Seishi. *The Honjin Murders (Pushkin Vertigo)*. Pushkin Press, 2020.

This book comes highly recommended to me by fellow detective story/crime fiction readers. I'm enthusiastic to obtain this novel for myriad reasons: This book is Japanese, which provides me a look into a different culture while encouraging me to explore non-European/American authors. Additionally, it is a prime example of a locked-room mystery, a category of mystery that I always love reading.