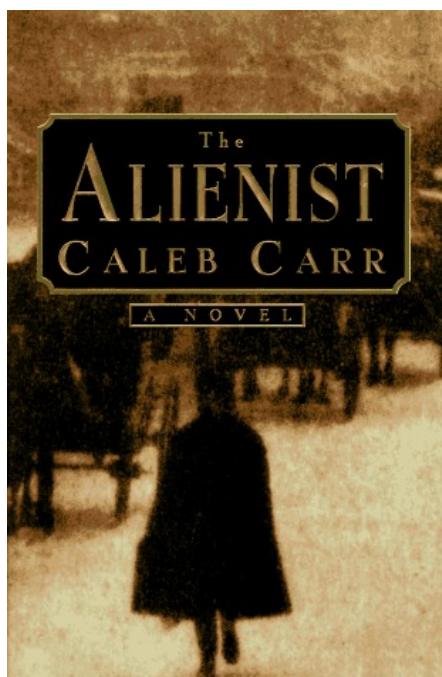




The Alienist

Caleb Carr

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The Alienist Caleb Carr

When *The Alienist* was first published in 1994, it was a major phenomenon, spending six months on the New York Times bestseller list, receiving critical acclaim, and selling millions of copies. This modern classic continues to be a touchstone of historical suspense fiction for readers everywhere.

The year is 1896. The city is New York. Newspaper reporter John Schuyler Moore is summoned by his friend Dr. Laszlo Kreizler—a psychologist, or “alienist”—to view the horribly mutilated body of an adolescent boy abandoned on the unfinished Williamsburg Bridge. From there the two embark on a revolutionary effort in criminology: creating a psychological profile of the perpetrator based on the details of his crimes. Their dangerous quest takes them into the tortured past and twisted mind of a murderer who will kill again before their hunt is over.

Fast-paced and riveting, infused with historical detail, *The Alienist* conjures up Gilded Age New York, with its tenements and mansions, corrupt cops and flamboyant gangsters, shining opera houses and seamy gin mills. It is an age in which questioning society’s belief that all killers are born, not made, could have unexpected and fatal consequences.

The Alienist Details

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Author : Caleb Carr

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Mystery, Suspense, Horror

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From Reader Review The Alienist for online ebook

Jeffrey Keeten says

New TV series based on the book is showing on TNT and launching January 22nd, 2018.

"I caught a vague glimpse of human flesh glowing in the moonlight. We took a few steps closer, and then I made out plainly the figure of a naked young boy on his knees. His hands had been bound behind his back, causing his head to rest on the stone surface of the promenade, and his feet were similarly tied. A gag had been wrapped around his head, holding his painted mouth open at a painful angle. His face was glistening with tears; but he was alive."

Some demented fiend is leaving mutilated and brutalized corpses of young boys all over New York City. It is 1896, and Theodore Roosevelt is the newly appointed police commissioner. In a highly unorthodox move, he appoints his old friends Dr. Laszlo Kreizler, Alienist, and John Schuyler Moore, journalist, to a special task force to hunt down this killer and bring him to justice. Too many of the cops in the New York system are just criminals with badges and more interested in graft and corruption than finding a killer, especially one who is murdering nancy boy prostitutes.

Hurry or a child will die!

What the heck is an Alienist, you might ask? *"Alienist is an archaic term for a psychiatrist or psychologist. Despite falling out of favor by the middle of the twentieth century, it received renewed attention when used in the title of Caleb Carr's novel, **The Alienist (1994)**. Although currently not often used in common parlance, the term 'alienist' is still employed in psychiatric hospitals to describe those mental health professionals who evaluate defendants to determine their competency to stand trial. However, in this context, professionals are more often referred to as forensic psychologists."*

Kreizler is an unmistakable, unusual character that, once met, you'd never forget him. *"His black eyes, so much like a large bird's, flitted about the paper as he shifted from one foot to the other in sudden, quick movements. He held the Times in his right hand, and his left arm, underdeveloped as the result of a childhood injury, was pulled in close to his body. The left hand occasionally rose to swipe at his neatly trimmed mustache and the small patch of beard under his lip. His dark hair, cut far too long to meet the fashion of the day, and swept back on his head, was moist, for he always went hatless; and this, along with the bobbing of his face at the pages before him, only increased the impression of some hungry, restless hawk determined to wring satisfaction from the worrisome world around him."*

These are early days for profiling serial killers, but Kreizler and his team are using the evidence they are collecting to build a file that slowly adds shape and substance to the shadowy figure killing these young boys. Poverty insures that there are no shortage of disadvantaged immigrant boys to replace the ones who are being culled from the herd. For most of New York, these murders are merely a brief distraction with their coffee or a topic for repartee over dinner. For Kreizler and Moore, it is a situation that becomes more sinister and diabolical the more they learn about the killer.

Hurry or a child will die!

They add a pair of incorruptible brothers to their team and a police secretary named Sara Howard. Kreizler has made a habit of collecting unusual people over the years. He also has several ex-criminals working for

him who add some muscle and street smarts to the group. The trail of this killer sends some of them out west to see if his origins will give them any clues to his motivations. In NY, they interview boys in places like Paresis Hall, where the skin trade is exploited and soiled doves are 12 years old or even younger. They troll the seamiest gin mills and gangster hangouts, looking for any information that will help them close in on this fiendish killer. Brushing the grime, soot, and filth from their close encounters with the sordid nightlife are contrasted with their enjoyment of the splendors of the opera house and the delicious, famous Delmonicos Restaurant.

Hurry or a child will die!

Their investigation also brings them in contact with the world famous **Black Library**, owned by the very wealthy J. P. Morgan. It is fascinating how the most unseemly, seedier sides of town always seem to intersect with the most affluent, "elite" society. There are secrets masked by the silk wallpaper and hidden behind brocade curtains.

This is the second time I've read this book. The first time was back in 1994 when it was first released, and both times I've been struck with the authenticity of experiencing Victorian New York from the locations, disreputable and elegant, we are allowed to visit during the investigation to the fog strewn streets as they race to catch a killer before he can strike again.

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews, visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com>
I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

LeAnne says

To paraphrase Jules from Pulp Fiction, "**Say *Marches Carcano chair one more time....***" BAM!

Sorry. My tolerance for the repeated naming of the characters' fabulous Italian chairs, bought at auction, was shot by the fifth time the overinflated verbiage was used. I don't know, maybe the writer - a history buff - made this furniture up based on a famous murder weapon. A Carcano was what was used to kill JFK, if you didn't know. Anyway, I was ready to fire a gun into these ridiculous chairs myself.

EDIT: in trying to give the book its due, I read that the author has gone back to writing non-fiction, military history books. That seemed like a better fit, and I just now clicked on his author profile to see if there were something my son, a military history buff, might like. HA! The first thing I saw was that Caleb Carr read and reviewed The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America - he gave it TWO STARS! Oh the irony.

Let me back up. I first read The Alienist 20 some years ago. Upon joining GoodReads, like you, I went through some lists of books and gauged my old reads based on memory. It was one of those psychological thrillers popular in the late 80s and early 90s. Patricia Cornwell's forensic murder investigations, the FBI profilers who sought out Buffalo Bill via Hannibal Lecter, those true crime books from Ann Rule, and the cult-fave "why-dun-it" The Secret History by Donna Tart were en vogue with publishers and readers alike. Here, we do have some nice tie-ins to real events and personas from late 1800s NYC. Im guessing New Yorkers will have gotten a kick out of this backdrop - this is like CSI NYC: Century 19.

I gave The Alienist three stars then and now a two, re-reading it as a commitment for book club. The story is

a Sherlock Holmes-Dr. Watson trope with a token emancipated female, a black sidekick, compassion for the gay community, and a couple of unappreciated-by-the-police-force-but-brilliant Jewish detectives. One of the victims is a kid with middle Eastern heritage, too - the author ticked every box he could including Irish cops on the dole and clergy being paid off by the uber wealthy. He even tossed in some animal cruelty. Lastly, the analysis of abnormal human psychology was about as deep as a write up in Cosmo magazine.

Now, if you have never read any true-crime books or novels where profiling is described, then you may actually enjoy this story. But let me better suggest His Bloody Project: Documents Relating to the Case of Roderick Macrae for something also set in the 1800s and about a thousand times better than this!

I do confess to having a crush on Teddy Roosevelt and initially was delighted to see his role crop up throughout the book - I had forgotten he was in the story. Unfortunately, the author rather wrote Roosevelt like a caricature of himself, even feeling compelled to insert the appearance of Roosevelt's overly boisterous children, one after another. Yes, I know he was a terrific father and loved his children to be active, but this little section was over the top. We had to hear the exclamation BULLY! way too often.

Little stuff that bugged me? There were sections in The Alienist where the characters turned their noses up at hardworking farmers or less affluent passengers on a train, and yet while at the opera, their dialogue slammed New York's upper crust for not wanting to associate with a mere crime reporter and an alienist/psychologist. Aside from the constant mention of the aforementioned Marchese Carcano chairs, their giddiness over opera, the description of multiple six course meals at Delmonico's, and the need to change into dinner clothes gave the entire book a snotty, metro-sexual feel. I'm generally okay with unlikeable protagonists and often get attached to even the most unsavory anti-hero. Here, they were just written too snarky for me to care about.

Save yourself the time and effort, and just watch the January 22nd debut of The Alienist on TNT. The costumes and late 1800s backgrounds guarantee to be lush, and I'll bet the screenwriters do a good job with the rewrite.

And for God's sake, keep a look out for those ridiculous Italian chairs.

EDIT. The TNT series includes a subplot with the journalist who is now instead an illustrator (so we can see the reactions of those who view his sketches of the murdered?) tying to some secret marriage fantasy. The chairs haven't appeared just yet! Ha.

Dianne says

Done!!! I LOOVED this Sherlock Holmesian historical fiction thriller set in 1890's New York city. I wanted to get it read before the TNT series starts January 22 - it looks so good! I hope they don't ruin it by making too many changes to the story or the characters. Keeping my fingers crossed - the cast is great!

If, like me, you haven't read this 1994 classic yet, I highly recommend it! Great plot, characters and a wonderful glimpse of Gilded Age New York.

Stephen says

This book was **FIZZING** which, according to my *19th Century Art of Manliness* glossary, means excellent, top notch. Well, fizzing it was. Through most of this book, I had it rated at 5.0 stars as I was absolutely captivated by the writing, the characters and the plot and loved how they were all deftly tethered to a great depiction of late 19th Century everyday life.

I would describe this as a psychological thriller and detective mystery set in the 1890's and blending a Sherlock Holmes type investigator (i.e., Dr. Lazlo Kreizler) and a Hannibal Lector/Jeffrey Dahmer like serial killer straight of today. For me, what set it over the top good was the healthy dose of historical fiction thrown in for interesting background. It just gave the book a unique, interesting feel as it had the darkness and grit of a present day "hunt the serial killer" story but with the customs, constraints and daily rituals of 19th Century New York life.

In addition, to the excellent job the author did in establishing a sense of place, I also really liked the way Carr incorporated into the narrative several "real life" murderers that were contemporaries of the killer in this novel. This added a sense of authenticity that upped the creepy on the rest of the plot. For example, the book refers to Dr. H.H. Holmes whose murders were depicted in *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair that Changed America* and Jesse Pomeroy who was depicted in *Fiend: The Shocking True Story Of Americas Youngest Serial Killer*).

The main character, Dr. Kreizler, was excellent and focused a great vehicle to carry the plot forward. The pacing was good and mystery solving aspects of this novel (i.e., the piecing together of clues and discussions of what they mean) about as good as it gets. There is real talent in this work and I was greatly impressed by the read.

My one gripe is that I thought the ending, while in keeping with the tone of the rest of the book, was a little flat. I was hoping for a better payoff and ended up with a slight case of literary "blue brains" when I didn't get the release I was hoping for. Thus I lowered my overall rating to 4.5 stars because nobody likes "blue brains."

Still I would **HIGHLY RECOMMEND** this to fans of the genre or just someone looking for a great story. I will definitely be checking out the sequel.

Nominee: Bram Stoker Award for Best Novel.

Matthew Quann says

Five Questions to Help Decide if You Should Read Caleb Carr's *The Alienist*

1) Do you love a good thriller?

Because what you might find between the covers of this book is a story that is anything but your typical thriller. Though it contains many frights, twists, and tense moments, the pace is much different from your standard fare. Carr chooses to unfold the tale of the shocking murders of child prostitutes as a journey of almost-academic discovery led by the Sherlock-esque Laszlo Kreizler. Though there's all the elements of your run-of-the-mill nail biter, they are spaced out over long periods and occasionally eschew the traditional clip for which the genre is famous. That isn't to say that the book is not compelling or hard to put down!

2) Do you like your books thick?

Because *The Alienist* was more of an undertaking than I had been expecting. Carr's formatting of the book as the memoirs of John Shuyler Moore allows him to luxuriate amidst the the 1890's setting that he so convincingly brings to life. At first this felt like unnecessary and I was begging for tighter editing. Pushing past my millennial attention span, I found that by the time the book really starts to pick up, Carr had beautifully established the world and made me care for his characters. Each paragraph is laden with detail, and while not all of it is vital to the story, it helps to enrich Carr's vision of 1869 New York.

3) Did you love *Mindhunter*?

Because I sure did! Though the chronological proximity in which I consumed them likely colours my judgement, I couldn't help but compare Carr's novel to the excellent, David Fincher-directed serial killer drama on Netflix. Both stories feature a colourful cast of characters who rarely shy away from the morally and physically revolting subject matter with which they deal. Like *Mindhunter*, *The Alienist* sees the team trading academic insights into the mutilation and murders of the killers whom they hunt and struggling against those who disagree with their atypical methods. Suffice to say, if you like the pace and tone of *Mindhunter* and can imagine it transplanted into the late 1800's, you'll like this too.

4) Do you like a good cast?

Because Carr populates his novel with many endearing characters outside of the good doctor, Laszlo Kreizler. Moore serves as a rakish and hard-drinking journalist who is dismayed to have been cast aside by his former fiancé. Moore's narration works, in part, because he is present for all the most thrilling of occurrences, but also because he offers a relatable window through which the reader can view the macabre and academic nature of the team's work. Sara Howard is also compelling in both her natural adaptation to the work and her steadfast struggle against the patriarchy. Mixed in with these three leads are a host of other wonderful characters who were a joy to meet whether they were in the story for pages or throughout.

5) Do you like to do a bit of thinking?

Because *The Alienist* proved to be a much more cerebral novel than I had anticipated. Not only does the book take an intellectual approach to murder-hunting but it also addresses social upheaval at the turn of the century, child prostitution, immigration, and much more. I was a little taken aback at first when I saw how much time Carr intended to spend on the broadening of societal woes. Luckily, this makes for a book that feels both like a challenge overcome and a reward earned by the time I closed its final pages. If you can handle a book that's not only different from your standard thriller, but a bit of a thinker too then you'll be well-pleased with Carr's novel.

Paul Bryant says

I don't know about your shelves but my shelves of unread books have become clogged with novels I thought I wanted to read five or six years ago and now I can't remember why I thought I wanted to read them and since I've now read all the ones I *could* remember why I wanted to read them I'm left with this scurvy crew, and there they are, glaring at me and muttering *hey, you, get with the program, read me*. And some turn on the waterworks and cry out beseechingly *ohhh please mister, I've been so patient for six years now, I need to be read*. I feel like a right bastard but I have to be honest – *why are you there?* I ask them. *Why are you taking up this valuable real estate? I'm talking to you, Continental Drift, Tiger the Lurp Dog, Imaginary Women and Smonk*. Smonk?? What the hell is Smonk? But of course they don't know. No book knows why

you buy it. Just like you don't know why you're born.

You might think the blurbs on these books could give a clue but blurbs lie. You would have to waterboard a blurb to get anything like the truth out of it but waterboarding is illegal. I have stopped doing that now.

Course I do know why some books are there – these are the **Novels I Should Have Read By Now**. There they stand sneering at me like undone homework – *The Forsyte Saga*, *Sister Carrie*, *The Way We Live Now*, *The Ambassadors*, *Middlemarch* – all big enough to bust up your big toe real bad if they fell on it. *Herr, herr, he's scared of us*, they jeer. *Yer big Jessie*.

I just about remembered why I bought *The Alienist* years ago – I love modern Victorian novels like *Fingersmith* or *The Quincunx*, and I like a nice gruesome murder and I do believe this novel smashes these concepts together so what could therefore not be to like?

I gave it the statutory 100 pages then stopped. It wasn't bad but I could see where this thing was going and a wave of tiredness came over me. What we have is yet another version of the brilliant Sherlock Holmes (Dr Kreizler) and the tough, dependable Dr Watson (John Moore); plus the usual highly unlikely gaggle of helpers – a giant black guy, two Jewish detectives, a remarkably feisty female police secretary who packs a .45 – really, all from central casting. Should we say, all from Liberal Left Central Casting – once again, all the good guys in the novel have nice progressive inclusive non-racist attitudes. The kind of attitudes modern readers would feel comfortable with, however likely they may have been in New York 1896. And once again our heroes are faced with a giant conspiracy of the powerful who like to prey on the powerless and chop them up for fun.

We have been here before. Many times. Really, it's a little bit corny. But that's crime fiction. When I listen to doo wop music or blues I know what I'm going to get. When I read a big 500 page novel I don't want to know what I'm going to get.

And now.... onto *Smonk!*

Bobby Underwood says

Caleb Carr's novel of a serial killer on the loose in turn of the century New York, and the dangerous pursuit of him by Dr. Lazlo Kreizler and his friends is a truly wonderful read. This has so much period atmosphere the reader can almost hear the hoofbeats trotting over the cobblestone streets beneath gaslit street lamps. It is long and exciting, yet not long enough, because by the time you finish, you'll feel like many of these people are your friends, and want to spend more time with them.

The riveting story is narrated by Dr. Kreizler's good friend, John Moore. Before you are finished reading this delicious historical mystery you will meet an array of interesting and memorable characters you'll come to cherish. Sara Howard is a pretty and extremely capable woman ahead of her time. Sara and Kreizler's pal, Moore, push the investigation forward against strong opposition from conventional law enforcement. Two New York cops also ahead of their time, Lucius and Marcus, will use footwork and cutting-edge investigative techniques to catch a dangerous killer. A young street urchin, Stevie, saved from a miserable future by the good doctor, and a very loyal servant named Cyrus round out this rag-tag group that confront the unthinkable. They will break new ground, using Lazlo's "profile" to catch a serial killer.

When Lazlo's old friend, Theodore Roosevelt, now head of the New York Police Department, is confronted with several murders of boy prostitutes so gruesome in nature that even the most seasoned and hardened of

professionals can barely stomach being called to the murder scenes, he makes a decision that will change the face of police-work forever. He unofficially allows Kreizler to form a small group to pursue the killer through psychological profiling. Police secretary Sara Howard, and crime reporter John Moore, a man who knows the underbelly of New York all too well, are two of the main players in this exciting mystery. As they close in on the killer through Kreizler's use of psychological profiling, danger hits closer to home than any of our friends had expected.

There are moments so full of flavor in this fine historical mystery that you'll feel like you are sitting alongside the characters at Delmonico's as they enjoy a good meal, and plan their next move. This fine novel is truly memorable, and holds a special place among books I've read. If you love historical mysteries you do not want to miss this one!

Barbara says

4.5 stars

New York City in 1896 isn't the nicest place to live. Outside of the ritzy neighborhoods the apartment buildings are shabby, overcrowded, and smelly; the streets are dirty and dangerous; and whore houses of every kind are prolific and unregulated. Moreover criminals operate freely and government agencies and police are largely corrupt. To add to the city's problems a serial killer is murdering and mutilating children, mostly young boy prostitutes who dress up as girls. The murderer gouges out their eyes, cuts off their genitals and buttocks, leaves them in gruesome positions, and so on.

Enter Theodore Roosevelt, the new Police Commissioner of New York, who wants to rout out police corruption. Roosevelt has dismissed some of the worst offenders and, in the face of strong opposition, is willing to use unorthodox methods to catch the child killer. Thus a rather unconventional secret investigative team is assembled, led by Dr. Laszlo Kreizler - a psychiatrist (or alienist as they were known at the time).

Laszlo's other team members are John Schuyler Moore, a newspaper reporter; Sara Howard, a would-be detective who's currently Roosevelt's secretary; and Detective Sergeants Marcus Isaacson and Lucius Isaacson, two talented and incorruptible cops. A couple of Kreizler's former patients also help out: Cyrus, a big black man who functions as a bodyguard and assistant; and young Stevie, a messenger and carriage driver.

Laszlo and his group are more or less distant precursors to the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit. They study psychology books and lectures to suss out how and why the perpetrator evolved into a vicious psychopath. The team also assembles clues by examining crime scenes, collecting fingerprints, interviewing witnesses, consulting old records, visiting places the killer may have lived, etc. Step by step, the team assembles a physical and psychological picture of the killer.

During their inquiries, the investigators are constantly followed, threatened, harassed, hampered, and even attacked. It seems that powerful forces in the city - including slumlords, businessmen, gang bosses, ex-cops, and religious leaders - don't want the child killings investigated. They fear widespread public awareness of the horrific crimes will rile up the populace and interfere with their money-making schemes. This of course is reprehensible, especially for churches.

The investigation is long and complex, and - though it isn't exactly boring - feels like a lot for the reader to slog through at times. We also get a peek at how some wealthier New York residents live, with fine dining

at Delmonico's; classy homes; luxe furnishings; servants; attendance at the opera; and so on.

Needless to say the team's hard work eventually pays off and leads to a dramatic climax.

The characters in the story are engaging and sufficiently fleshed out for a thriller. I especially liked tough, fearless, gun-toting Sara. She holds her own as the only female on the investigative team and, in fact, the only woman working in the police department - where most people think she doesn't belong. And I got a kick out of little Stevie, who's anxious to help and always cadging cigarettes despite numerous anti-smoking lectures from Lazslo. A jarring note in the story (for me) is a nebulous, unlikely romance that doesn't ring true.

Over all, a very good psychological thriller, recommended for fans of the genre.

You can follow my reviews at <https://reviewsbybarbsaffer.blogspot...>

Nick Pageant says

I just watched the trailer for the series of this being put out by TNT. I thought I would post a bit of a review to try and bring some attention to the book while everyone still has time to read it.

This book is fantastic! Anyone who knows me knows that I'm an extremely slow reader, but not with this. I burned through it each time I read it (I think I'm up to three.) The murders are gruesome, the characters are delightful, and, most special of all, the sense of time and place are so well-drawn that you will see, smell, and taste Old New York from the ground up. Do yourself a favor and read this one... then watch the lovely Daniel Brühl solve some crimes in an Austrian accent.

<https://youtu.be/q9867sT-Y1M>

Adina says

Update: I am so excited. I just found out there's going to be a Tv series after the novel. Here is the trailer and it looks amazing with a great cast. Can't wait.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcJQn...>

I realized that I can usually feel a 5* book from the first 50 pages. There is something in the author's voice that gets to me. The same thing happened with *The Alienist*. It just had me at hello.

The novel is historical fiction written by a non-fiction author. Although I could feel that background from the attention to the detail he employed in the description of the historical setting, it was never dull and he did a great job to introduce me in the atmosphere of 1896, New York and its underworld. I particularly enjoyed that he used as characters real people (e.g. Teddy Roosevelt) and he mingled them with fictional ones in a way that they all seemed real to me. I was expecting for Dr. Laszlo Kreizler to be an actual doctor from that time and I was quite disappointed when I found out he never existed.

This is a very well written psychological thriller which focuses more on the whydunit than on whodunit. I loved how the investigation team came up with the psychological traits of the killer and searched for the perpetrator based on them. It is a novel about the early stages of criminal profiling, quite a fascinating

subject.

My only regret was that I did not have enough time to read and I had to enjoy this beautiful book in small bites which altered the flow of my experience.

Lain says

I tend not to like historical fiction, but this one blew me away. I challenge any thriller-and-suspense lover to try this book and not get hooked by the end of the first chapter. Fabulous.

mark monday says

I guess I just need more than a mammoth miniseries version of a steampunk-era CSI episode. I've never enjoyed that show - what little I've watched of it - because the minutia of forensic science and criminal psychology utterly bore me when they are not tied to interesting themes, characters with depth, or a rich atmosphere. the entirely insipid protagonist made me entirely frustrated. the pedestrian prose made me want to scream. the fact that the cover is the most evocative thing about a novel that should have had atmosphere to die for made me feel like I was dying inside each time I turned the page only to discover 100% plot mechanics and 0% anything of interest besides the, I suppose, "page-turning" plot. the whole experience of reading this book was excruciating. however if you are a fan of CSI, then this is probably a 4 or 5 star book for you. enjoy!

Erin says

The television series is on "my list" for Netflix and like any reader, I must read the book first. Well, I am now a **Dr. Laslo Kreizler** fan or should I be more accurate and state that I am a big fan of the pairing between Lazlo and the narrator of the story, crime reporter, John Schyuler Moore. This 19th century mystery about a serial killer hunting down young boys is not for the faint hearted. But oh my goodness, it's incredibly hard to put aside!

Arah-Lynda says

Prior to the twentieth century, persons suffering from mental illness were thought to be "alienated", not only from the rest of society but from their own true natures. Those experts who studied mental pathologies were therefore know as alienists.

At two a.m. on March 3rd, 1896 someone comes pounding on the door of John Moore's grandmother's house in New York City. Not drunk, nor particularly sober, when called from his bed, John is immediately whisked away by carriage, to the site of the still under construction Williamsburg Bridge on the East River. On arrival he is greeted by none other than Theodore Roosevelt (yes the future president). Still unsure why

he is there or why his friend Dr. Kreizler, whose very carriage bore him there, is not in attendance, John casts about and around until finally he lay eyes upon it; the brutally, mutilated body of an adolescent boy. It will not be the last one he sees.

As I was reading this I often thought that it read like an actual historic event, being retold as a story. After all Mr Carr first dipped his pen in the nonfiction inkwell. Scattered throughout this story are actual historical figures, which belong in that time and place, such as Teddy Roosevelt, H. H. Holmes and Jesse Pomeroy. And that pen of which I speak, spills magic as Carr deftly transports you to an atmospheric late 19th century New York City, complete with the sights (street vendors hawking their wares; police corruption and brutality; unwashed, malnourished children running wild), sounds (hooves on cobblestones) and smells (quite disgusting reminders of time before modern day sewage systems) one would expect.

It is a first person narrative told through the perspective of John Moore, reporter on the police beat, as a recollection of events past. I know there are readers out there who felt that this robbed the story of some of its tension and suspense, I mean clearly John had to survive to tell the tale, but it did not have the same effect on me. There were plenty of other characters that Carr had me caring enough about to ensure a tight fist grip upon the page. One such character is Dr. Laszlo Kreizler, psychologist, or as they were then known, an alienist. Kreizler, at Roosevelt's request and with his assistance, pulls together a team; including the above noted John as well as two detectives, trained in and excited at the prospect of using new and modern methods such as fingerprinting and handwriting analysis, as well as Sara, Roosevelt's secretary who has ambitions to rise well beyond her current role in the NYC police department, ambitions which though stubbornly determined to achieve, she recognizes, are not even open for consideration as an appropriate role for a woman in 1896. Kreizler then leads this team, together with a smattering of some of his colourful (I am looking at you Stevie), personal aides through the process of what we today would term as psychological profiling. All very heady and compelling stuff.

As the profile, coupled with conclusions drawn from the physical evidence available, begins to take on the aspect of a real person, the team closes in on an absolutely horrific monster. I have also read some negative feedback on how this story comes to a conclusion. Some feel it was rushed or they were cheated of further psychological details, but again I cannot share those views. Given the circumstances, the details already unearthed and the political climate of that time and place, I found the ending realistically consistent with my expectations of what would in all likelihood actually happen.

If you are looking for an intelligent, high spirited, in depth, look at the mind of a sadistic serial killer as well as a stroll through the late 19th century streets of New York City then you should most assuredly pick up The Alienist. It is a thumping good read!

Linda says

"In this battle, there are many enemies."

And that's an understatement.....The darkly moving shadows seeking oblivion, nameless figures shapeshifting in back alleys and roof tops. The click of heels down rain-soaked streets leading to nowhere and to everywhere. Secrets until they are no longer.

New York City in 1896 is a mecca for the meaningful and the meaningless. Police Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt has been faced with the dregs of society: thieves, murderers, brutalizers, and sexual deviants. They

swim like river rats through the streets knowing just what hole to crawl into.

But this time, there's a killer on the loose whose target is young male prostitutes. His calling card is a savagely violent one. Roosevelt calls in Dr. Laszlo Kreizler whose command lies in the area of psychology and human criminal behavior. Psychological profiling is in its earliest stages along with the newly adopted science of fingerprinting. Kreizler creates a group of individuals including John Moore and Sara Howard. You'll meet a cast of goodies and severe baddies who will either honestly assist or dastardly sabotage the hunt for the killer on all sides of the law.

Be forewarned: This is a very graphic interlude into unspeakable crimes on the streets of New York. It certainly is not for everyone. But the writing and storyline are stellar and will play into the upcoming series on TLC beginning soon. I was nearly cross-eyed from reading into the wee hours in order to be ready for the series.

And on the flip side.....Here's hoping that these remarkable characters (especially my beloved Teddy Roosevelt) are handed off to worthy actors who will transform this book into a top-drawer experience for those who wait anxiously. Just stick to the book, people, and we'll all be tap dancing like the Rockettes.
