



The Oxford Book of American Detective Stories

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Edgar Allan Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" launched the detective story in 1841. The genre began as a highbrow form of entertainment, a puzzle to be solved by a rational sifting of clues. In Britain, the stories became decidedly upper crust: the crime often committed in a world of manor homes and formal gardens, the blood on the Persian carpet usually blue. But from the beginning, American writers worked important changes on Poe's basic formula, especially in use of language and locale. As early as 1917, Susan Glaspell evinced a poignant understanding of motive in a murder in an isolated farmhouse. And with World War I, the Roaring '20s, the rise of organized crime and corrupt police with Prohibition, and the Great Depression, American detective fiction branched out in all directions, led by writers such as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, who brought crime out of the drawing room and into the "mean streets" where it actually occurred.

In *The Oxford Book of American Detective Stories*, Tony Hillerman and Rosemary Herbert bring together thirty-three tales that illuminate both the evolution of crime fiction in the United States and America's unique contribution to this highly popular genre. Tracing its progress from elegant "locked room" mysteries, to the hard-boiled realism of the '30s and '40s, to the great range of styles seen today, this superb collection includes the finest crime writers, including Erle Stanley Gardner, Raymond Chandler, Ross Macdonald, Rex Stout, Ellery Queen, Ed McBain, Sue Grafton, and Hillerman himself. There are also many delightful surprises: Bret Harte, for instance, offers a Sherlockian pastiche with a hero named Hemlock Jones, and William Faulkner blends local color, authentic dialogue, and dark, twisted pride in "An Error in Chemistry." We meet a wide range of sleuths, from armchair detective Nero Wolfe, to Richard Sale's journalist Daffy Dill, to Robert Leslie Bellem's wise-cracking Hollywood detective Dan Turner, to Linda Barnes's six-foot tall, red-haired, taxi-driving female P.I., Carlotta Carlyle. And we sample a wide variety of styles, from tales with a strongly regional flavor, to hard-edged pulp fiction, to stories with a feminist perspective. Perhaps most important, the book offers a brilliant summation of America's signal contribution to crime fiction, highlighting the myriad ways in which we have reshaped this genre. The editors show how Raymond Chandler used crime, not as a puzzle to be solved, but as a spotlight

with which he could illuminate the human condition; how Ed McBain, in "A Small Homicide," reveals a keen knowledge of police work as well as of the human sorrow which so often motivates crime; and how Ross Macdonald's Lew Archer solved crime not through blood stains and footprints, but through psychological insight into the damaged lives of the victim's family. And throughout, the editors provide highly knowledgeable introductions to each piece, written from the perspective of fellow writers and reflecting a life-long interest--not to say love--of this quintessentially American genre. American crime fiction is as varied and as democratic as America itself. Hillerman and Herbert bring us a gold mine of glorious stories that can be read for sheer pleasure, but that also illuminate how the crime story evolved from the drawing room to the back alley, and how it came to explore every corner of our nation and every facet of our lives.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Hillerman, author of the Joe Leaphorn mysteries, and Herbert, editor of *The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing*, trace this short-story genre from its beginnings in the hands of Edgar Allan Poe through its development by the likes of Erle Stanley Gardner, Mary Roberts Rinehart and Anthony Boucher to its current practice by such masters as Marcia Muller. Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," which established a great many of the whodunit conventions, is indispensable to such an overview. Raymond Chandler's "I'll be Waiting" emits a doom-laden atmosphere right from the first line; William Faulkner shows unexpected economy of language and a transparent plot in "An Error in Chemistry." Ed McBain scores high marks in "Small Homicide," in which the tiny details of a baby's untimely death resonate uncomfortably. As represented in this competent, unstartling collection, Linda Barnes ("Lucky Penny") easily outsasses Sue Grafton ("The Parker Shotgun"). Hillerman makes a solid appearance with "Chee's Witch," and in "Benny's Space" Muller captures the full subtle force of her novel-length vision. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Kirkus Reviews

Though Hillerman's introduction notes his impatience with "the rules" of the detective story's Golden Age, this magisterial selection of 34 stories is remarkably evenhanded, proceeding from Poe to Ross Macdonald and Rex Stout with scarcely a notable omission (except for Dashiell Hammett, for copyright reasons). The emphasis here is on familiar items, though work by less well-known writers like Richard Sale and Robert Leslie Bellem provide welcome variety. The problem comes in the last hundred pages--all the room the editors leave for the past 30 years. The stories by Bill Pronzini, Edward D. Hoch, Linda Barnes, Sue Grafton, Marcia Muller, and editor Hillerman are mostly exemplary; but other recent masters of the short story--like Loren D. Estleman and Ed Gorman and Lawrence Sanders--must wonder why they weren't included when historical curios by Anna Katherine Green and Arthur B. Reeve were. The anthology as museum, with Hillerman and Herbert as suave a pair of curators as you could wish. -- *Copyright ©1996, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Review

"The 33 entries in this admirable anthology offer a panoramic view of the evolution of short detective fiction."--*The Buffalo News*

"The big names of the American mystery are here in this excellent collection...but so are some likely to surprise."--*The Dallas Morning News*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary Barker:

Do you one among people who can't read pleasant if the sentence chained in the straightway, hold on guys this particular aren't like that. This The Oxford Book of American Detective Stories book is readable simply by you who hate the perfect word style. You will find the info here are arrange for enjoyable looking at experience without leaving actually decrease the knowledge that want to give to you. The writer regarding The Oxford Book of American Detective Stories content conveys thinking easily to understand by most people. The printed and e-book are not different in the written content but it just different in the form of it. So , do you nonetheless thinking The Oxford Book of American Detective Stories is not loveable to be your top record reading book?

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Jose Hackler:

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