



The Angel of Darkness

Caleb Carr

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In *The Angel of Darkness*, Caleb Carr brings back the vivid world of his bestselling *The Alienist* but with a twist: this story is told by the former street urchin Stevie Taggart, whose rough life has given him wisdom beyond his years. Thus New York City, and the groundbreaking alienist Dr. Kreizler himself, are seen anew.

It is June 1897. A year has passed since Dr. Laszlo Kreizler, a pioneer in forensic psychiatry, tracked down the brutal serial killer John Beecham with the help of a team of trusted companions and a revolutionary application of the principles of his discipline. Kreizler and his friends--high-living crime reporter John Schuyler Moore; indomitable, derringer-toting Sara Howard; the brilliant (and bickering) detective brothers Marcus and Lucius Isaacson; powerful and compassionate Cyrus Montrose; and Stevie Taggart, the boy Kreizler saved from a life of street crime--have returned to their former pursuits and tried to forget the horror of the Beecham case. But when the distraught wife of a Spanish diplomat begs Sara's aid, the team reunites to help find her kidnapped infant daughter. It is a case fraught with danger, since Spain and the United States are on the verge of war.

Once again, Caleb Carr proves his brilliant ability to re-create the past, both high life and low. As the horror unfolds, Delmonico's still serves up wondrous meals, and a summer trip to the elegant gambling parlors of Saratoga provides precious keys to the murderer's past. At the same time, we go on revealing journeys into Stevie's New York, a place where poor and neglected children--then as now--turn to crime and drugs at shockingly early ages. Peppered throughout are characters taken from real life and rendered with historical vigor, including suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton; painter Albert Pinkham Ryder; and Clarence Darrow, who thunders for the defense in a tense courtroom drama during which the sanctity of American motherhood itself is put on trial. Fast-paced and chilling, *The Angel of Darkness* is a tour de force, a novel of modern evil in old New York.

The Angel of Darkness Details

Date : Published 1997 by Ballantine Books

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Author : Caleb Carr

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From Reader Review The Angel of Darkness for online ebook

Will Byrnes says

If we succeed in bringing Libby Hatch to trial, it won't be just the outrage of the humble citizens in town like Ballston Spa that we'll have to deal with. No, no - all the mighty weight of this sparkling society will come crashing down on our heads, too. For it's the essence of hypocrisy, isn't it, Doctor, that it requires masks to hide behind? And the masks of the idyllic home and the sanctity of motherhood are the first and most untouchable of all.

Carr is looking at the female as serial killer, in late 19th century New York City. He says that although male serial killers reap the most publicity, women are no less likely to slaughter en masse. The difference is that men tend to murder strangers, while women tend to murder children, their own, or children in their care. Society has a great problem accepting this deviation from what it considers normal, maternal instinct on the part of a woman, and hushes such incidents. Carr puts forth the notion that if society was not so over-invested in defining the role of women as necessarily maternal and nurturing, some of the gentler sex mass killers might not have become the monsters they became. It is largely because these women were unable to satisfy society's demand that they fill a particular role, that they turned to darker undertakings.

Caleb Carr - from Lapham's Quarterly

In this tale, the cast from his smash hit novel, *The Alienist*, is re-united. In addition, contemporary figures such as Cady Stanton, Teddy Roosevelt and Clarence Darrow are brought in to add color and periodicity. Doctor Kreizler and his pals pursue the trail of Libby Hatch, identified as the kidnapper of the daughter of the Spanish ambassador. They discover a trail of dead babies in her historical wake and in tracking down her past, discover how truly evil she is. Kreizler, of course posits that people become that way as a result of their "social context." Stevepipe Taggart, Kreizler's young adolescent driver, is the narrator this time. Not, to my mind, very convincingly, but the story rolls along nicely despite my inability to believe for one second that the uneducated Stevie would have been up the task of constructing the tale. Carr tries to make the narrator sound like Stevie by consistently substituting "what" for "that." There is much description of the gang atmosphere of the day, the political climate, local politics, police impotence. It was a fun read. Really three and a half, but I rounded up to four.

=====EXTRA STUFF

Check out this fun fan site for Carr's work - 17th Street

Carr, so far as I can tell, does not maintain an on-line presence.

Here is a nice brief bio of Carr on Alchetron

BTW his novel, *The Alienist*, is being developed by TNT as a series. First episode should air some time in 21017

Although I read this in the last millenium, and wrote most of the above review then, it has never been posted before.

Laura says

Just arrived from USA trough BM.

Even if I haven't read the first book of this series, The Alienist, it didn't compromise this reading.

The plot starts with the kidnapping of a Spanish diplomat's baby but then the main story switched to the suspect of this crime, Libby Hatch, a nurse who is the suspect murderess of her own children.

Dr. Lazlo Kreizler, a psychologist or "the alienist" who tries to help the only surviving child to testimony against her own mother, leads the investigation team.

It should be pointed out that, by the end of the 19th century, many of the actual forensic tools were not available at that time, such as recognition of fingerprints, bullet's tests and so on.

During Libby's prosecution, her defendant attorney, Dr. Clarence Darrow was a master of legal argumentation, even if I'm not an expert on legal matters, on the contrary.

Another great character is "Teddy Roosevelt", the New York Police Commissioner who led the US Navy in order to settle the final persecution of the suspect!

What else should be said about this book? In order to avoid spoilers, just READ this book, you won't regret.

Amy says

This is one the worst books that I've actually read all the way through...though I'm not sure why I even bothered. The author's point is that if you really believe in women's equality, you have to believe that women are as capable of evil as men. I don't disagree, but I do have some problems with the way the author attempted to prove this idea, which I think he considers more controversial than it really is. First of all, the characters in the novel who espouse the author's view are preachy, preachy, preachy. Or maybe he (Carr) just has the doctor character repeat the point so many times because he doesn't trust the readers to get it if it isn't spelled out over and over. Second, the female character who supposedly demonstrates how women can do bad things is so inconsistent! I don't remember all the specifics (and trust me, I wish I remembered even less about this book), but it's something like she kidnaps babies to make herself appear like a respectable mother...but then if she's so interested in appearing to conform to society's expectations of women, why is she openly living in sin with a mob boss? Also, another annoyance I had with the book was the frequent introduction of historic persons from the era as fictionalized characters. Let's see if I can remember all the dead celebrities who made cameos: Teddy Roosevelt, Jim Brady, Clarence Darrow, Elizabeth Cady Stanton...I'm sure there are more I'm forgetting. Maybe some people like name-dropping in their fiction, but I find it tiresome.

Laurie Anderson says

With one glaring exception* this is an extremely enjoyable, well-researched, and well-written piece of historical fiction. I was a huge fan of Carr's *The Alienist* and now want to go back and reread it. Carr brings a wonderful combination of the story-teller's craft and the history-lover's attention to accuracy and detail to his work.

If you want to know more about *The Angel of Darkness* and Carr's earlier hist-fic (with many of the same characters) *The Alienist*, head over to <http://17thstreet.net/> a site devoted to them. There you can find reviews, details and a wealth of historical information about the settings and backgrounds to Carr's novels.

I would have loved to have given *Angel of Darkness* 5 stars except....

*The Aborigine.

One of the problems facing the historical fiction writer is how to portray the roles and treatment of marginalized peoples in earlier time periods. Some feel that the only truth that can/should be presented is one of constant racism and sexism (there are more categories, of course, but these are the two at work in *Angel*) because "that's the way it was."

But historical fiction is not an attempt to portray the past in terms of the past. I would argue that is impossible, because any modern author can't help but be strongly influenced by their own time period. The responsibility of the author is to create a window into the past world, and a way for readers to understand that world both within the context of its own time period and our own.

(This is part of the reason it takes so darned long to write historical fiction.)

Carr handles the role of women fairly deftly in this book: there are two female central characters and a host of secondary characters who each shed light on the limits and opportunities faced by (white) women during the time frame and settings of this book. Clearly he knows how to do this.

His handling of characters who were not white is not as skilled. We don't see many of them in this book, but there are two, Cyrus, the black man who works with Dr. Kreizler, and was also a part of solving the crimes in *The Alienist*, as well as *Angel of Darkness*. We don't learn too much about Cyrus in *Angel*, other than he has a good relationship with the narrator, young Stevie, and is well-liked and appreciated by the other main characters. Maybe Cyrus' representation worked a little better because he was integral to the group of sleuths in both books.

But there is another character in *Angel* - *El Niño* - whose role and descriptions really bothered me. We never learn his true name, despite the fact that he switches sides (leaving the bad guys and joining the heroes) and becomes fairly close to the narrator, indeed - he saves the day at a critical point in the book. He and the narrator, Stevie, have similar backgrounds of poverty and violence. They understand each other and become very friendly. Which is why Carr's choice to not develop the character of *El Niño* is puzzling and disappointing.

El Niño is described as an "aboriginal pygmy" from the Philippines who speaks an "aboriginal" language as well as Spanish and English. Almost every single time the narrator refers to him, it is as "the aborigine." To the point that it jarred me out of the story and irritated me. I understand the racial prejudices held by white people in New York City in the late 19th century. But our narrator - a white child of the streets - is more accepting than others in the book. He develops a friendship with *El Niño*. The fact that Carr didn't develop the character of the Filipino man beyond that of a cardboard box is a huge failure of craft.

Nick T. Borrelli says

Nowhere near as good as Carr's first effort - *The Alienist*. This just seemed like a bad clone of that book where Carr was trying to incorporate the same elements. Unfortunately the story wasn't as good and it felt forced. It has all the same characters that you loved in *The Alienist* but for some reason it just didn't make me swoon the way its predecessor did. Do yourself a favor and stop with *The Alienist*. This one was just unnecessary.

Bobby Underwood says

All those who read and loved Caleb Carr's "*The Alienist*" were ecstatic to once again take a carriage ride over the cobblestone streets of Old New York as a mystery is solved. This one involves the kidnapping of a woman's child which becomes a race against time when Dr. Lazlo Kreizler uses psychiatry to paint a portrait of a very dangerous woman.

Stevie tells the story this time rather than Moore, as our group of friends use Dr. Kreizler's revolutionary methods to solve this mystery. He is a pioneering Alienist, and together with John Moore, Sara Howard, the Isaacsons and Kreizler's servant, Cyrus, a riveting and at times edge-of-your-seat adventure springs forth.

Carr is so good that before you realize it you are in Old New York at the turn of the century, and so in-love with these people that you hate to leave them for sleep or work. The author does for Old New York and psychiatry what John Dunning did for old books in his Cliff Janeway series. Even at a hefty 600 pages your interest never lags, as is the case with all great books. When that last page is turned you will do so reluctantly, sad that such a great book has ended.

The characters Carr creates are all too human and real, as is the time period. There are moments of action and suspense that keep you turning pages as quickly as you can read. The historical figures are not just thrown in to evoke the time period as some writers of historical fiction do. Carr makes them come alive, just as he did with Dr. Kreizler's friend Theodore Roosevelt in "*The Alienist*." The solving of the prior Beechum case came at a great personal price to Dr. Kreizler, and in "*The Angel of Darkness*" Stevie will grow up and face tragedy of his own.

Perhaps this isn't quite as riveting or as freely-flowing as the *The Alienist*, as noted by others, but since we only have the two, it seems hardly fair to knock off a star for what the book isn't, rather than celebrating how good it is. I truly believe, if *The Alienist* did not exist, and expectations based on that so high, this one would be viewed in an entirely more favorable light by readers.

Return to Delmonico's where great food is still served and your old friends John, Sara, Stevie and Cyrus are planning their next move against a kidnapper and a murderer of children in Old New York. It is one trip where the journey itself is time well-spent.

Rachel says

I remember thinking this book was incredible the first time around. Now, 6 years later, all I could think about was how ridiculous the narration was. You can't be all like, "I'm Stevie Taggart which means I'm all about turn of the century New York street patois even though my diction is actually really elevated and the only

difference between my speaking style and that of John Moore, a Harvard-educated New York Times reporter from a high society family, is that I say "what" instead of "that" but I don't even do that all the time anyway." Also, the villain wasn't interesting and nothing really happened. All the reviews I've read said that Carr had written another historical thriller on the same level as the Alienist but that's complete bullshit. I wouldn't even rate this book so lowly if it wasn't by the same guy. It's disappointing to read this kind of crap from someone you know can actually write.

Lauren says

I really enjoyed *The Alienist*, the first book by Caleb Carr about Dr. Laszlo Kreizler and his "colleagues". When I finished that story, I was very curious for more details. *Angel of Darkness* picks up soon after the previous case, and the action begins almost immediately. This story is narrated by the teenage Stevie Taggert, the street kid that Dr. Kriezler has taken in, and saved from a life of crime. A Spanish diplomat's child is kidnapped in public, and the mother sees her daughter a few days later on a train. She is not able to confront the woman, and soon enlists the services of Sarah Howard, who has started an investigation service. In a short amount of time, Sarah reassembles the group and they pinpoint the suspect as Elsbeth Hunter. Yet, the deeper they dig into the woman's past, the more they discover of the hideousness nature of her crimes. With her many aliases, Elsbeth has traveled around New York kidnapping, and killing children.

Like the previous book, there were some cameos with great historical figures. Teddy Roosevelt makes a special appearance, this time as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Another historical figure that plays a small part in the story is Clarence Darrow (pre-Monkey Trial) when he defends Mrs. Hunter (or Hatch, or Frasier, Franklin... whichever name she decides to use!).

Carr is a gifted storyteller, and his books are hard to put down. I love the glimpses of early 20th century New York life. Stevie's narration of the story was a nice touch, and I appreciated seeing it from his vantage point. Other readers have said that this does not compare to *The Alienist*, but personally I thought it was a very good follow-up.

Susy says

3.5 stars

An exciting story which has you alternately sitting on the edge of your seat waiting for what is coming next and sitting back enjoying the descriptive (background) passages. Sometimes it did feel like Carr was dwelling too long on certain past incidents or backgrounds that, at least to me, were not that interesting, though not often. I really grew to like the main characters, felt a connection, even to the more secondary characters. All in all a very good read that made me curious about the first book in this series (this one was given to me as a gift). Definitely want to read that one as well!

Bettie? says

Description: *In The Angel of Darkness, Caleb Carr brings back the vivid world of his bestselling The Alienist but with a twist: this story is told by the former street urchin Stevie Taggert, whose rough life has given him wisdom beyond his years. Thus New York City, and the groundbreaking alienist Dr. Kreizler himself, are seen anew.*

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June 19th 1919

There's likely some polished way of starting a story like this, a clever bit of gaming that'd sucker people in surer than the best banco feeler in town.

A juicy, fat weekend read. Light in touch, grim in storyline.

3.5* rounded up because it kept me glued.

4* The Alienist

3.5* The Angel of Darkness

1* Killing Time

Brad says

This review was written in the late nineties (just for myself), and it was buried in amongst my things until today, when I uncovered the journal it was written in. I have transcribed it verbatim from all those years ago (although square brackets indicate some additional information for the sake of readability). It is one of my lost reviews.

I thought Japheth Drury was bad, but I hadn't met Libby Hatch. She was pure, nasty evil, which was a lot of fun to read, but the best parts of the tale came in other forms.

Same author, same setting and same characters as *The Alienist*, but John Schuyler Moore is no longer our narrator; due to a bet, Stevie, our favourite chain-smoking teen, has taken over the reins and written the story of the group's second case. Stevepipe's perspective keeps the series fresh and gives us a nicely detached view of Mr. Moore's friend, Mr. Picton -- the hyper-jovial Assistant District Attorney.

And once again we've got history: Roosevelt's Spanish War, post-Civil War incapacity, and the famous Clarence Darrow.

My favourite moment requires note: Teddy squaring off against Goo Goo Knox. The Irishman swings his axe handle, Teddy catches it, tears it free, and smacks Goo Goo across the skull. Down goes Goo Goo. Carry a big stick, indeed! I can't wait to see that fight on-screen. [Ummmm ... yeah. Some year maybe.]

KJ, Madame Librarian says

It had all of the flaws of the first, and none of the charm.

The Flaws:

- 1) Female characters killed off to advance a man's character development, no matter how gratuitous.
- 2) Said female character was a coke fiend who didn't notice her coke was laced with arsenic. Right after spending time with a notorious murderer. Really? REALLY? She didn't notice her own cocaine was, shall we say, OFF?
- 3) Only one female character with lines, who represents everything of the Strong Female Character.
- 4) Everyone else was a dude. The most gratuitous historical sausagefest I've ever seen.
- 5) Only neurotypical characters get to live. Anyone whose brain chemistry or function might be remotely different dies.

The Charms:

- 1) No inclusion of the higher moral, political, and ideological battle of Old School vs. Progressive.
 - 2) Inclusion of historical figures turns gratuitous and insulting to my intelligence.
 - 3) No actual profiling of the serial killer. Whereas Carr jumped through hoops to show how Beecham was understandable and occasionally sympathetic, Libby Hatch gets no such courtesies. Possibly because she's a woman.
 - 4) All the side mysteries are dull, flat, and unsolved.
-

Marnie says

Fans of historical detectives and even the television show Criminal Minds will enjoy the sequel to The Alienist. The first 1/4 of this book started slow and had me worried that what I liked so much about the Alienist would not be present in this sequel. It took a bit for the story to build but then I thoroughly enjoyed the story.

Set in the 19th century when crime fighting techniques were at their infancy I enjoyed hearing the theories behind fingerprinting, ballistics and using sketches of possible suspects. Many terms that fans of Law & Order will be familiar with are just hinted at here as they had no name in this time (like Munchausen by Proxy).

Told from the point of view of Stevie the Stovetop most of the gang from the Alienist is back to solve the case of a kidnapped baby girl. I thought a particular strength of this book was the development of the side characters. Stevie's love interest is a cocaine addicted whore who has hooked up with a particularly nasty gang member (what could go wrong?) I also enjoyed the bickering brothers who were the police detectives helping with this case but my favorite side character is a new one called El Niño who brings a sense of

mystery and humor to the story.

As with *The Alienist* many historical figures make an appearance and for the most part enhance my enjoyment of the story. The one exception, for me, was when Teddy Roosevelt showed up during the last 100 pages or so. A stronger editor might have eliminated that entire section which would have made for a better story. So despite a slow start and an ending that should have occurred 100 pages earlier I really enjoyed this book. I wish Caleb Carr had written more books with these characters because I miss them already.

Louize says

It took me two years after I read **The Alienist** to pick up its sequel. It was a challenge that prompted me to read this gargantuan. But it was the challenge that gave me a chance to reacquaint myself with some of my favorite characters.

Unlike *The Alienist*, which was told in Charles Schuyler Moore's point of view; **The Angel of Darkness** was told by the former street urchin, Stevie Taggart, ward of renowned alienist Dr. Laszlo Kreizler. It was narrated in a lighter, fresher and a more witty tone. In spite the fact that this involves him more personally than the previous case.

"There's nothing truly natural or unnatural under the sun."

What seemed to be a case of political child abduction turned out to be a serial killing. Carr did a very good job in giving this sequel the proper twist. Gradually, the story tackles the thought-provoking perceptions on mothers and women in general. Finding the criminal was only a third of the story, the rest was the challenge of putting the criminal into justice - a slow painful methodical procedure was essential every step of the way.

"The normal, ordinary woman is defined as nurturing and loving, docile and compliant. Any female who defies that categorization must be so completely evil that she's got to be feared, feared even more than the average criminal—she's got to be invested with the powers of the Devil himself."

Yes, there are plenty of distressful historical materials, being a Carr book. The story was a process, but it was never boring. Plowing through was like reading a very long letter from a dear friend. Each detail wonderfully adds understanding to every character and builds the plot. I adore this lot, and to them I will have to add the Aeta El Niño, an aboriginal from my country. I salute Carr for writing the first decent character of a Filipino in fiction that I have read so far.

There are two amazing characteristics of this series that I love most since *The Alienist*. First was the application of forensic science in its infancy. It was fascinating to witness the Isaacson brothers during their practice. The second was the seamless integration of historical figures into the story. Here, Carr did not limit himself with Theodore Roosevelt; there were cameo roles by Clarence Darrow, Cornelius Vanderbilt II, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Albert Pinkham Ryder, Cecilia Beaux. Everyone was nicely blended in, it was delicious.

In closing, let me simply say that this book was enjoyable. It might have taken me quite a time to read it, but I don't regret it. I'll be one of the many readers who'll be hoping and waiting for the next book.

You may also find this review here.

Allison says

I've always had a personal law that requires I finish any book I start. Lately, I've been reconsidering. It all started when I tried to read *The Devil Wears Prada* and was forced to throw it out the window in horror and disgust after 25 pages. That's when I realized I needed to amend the law to specify that I don't have to finish books so poorly written that I end up holding them out away from myself with two fingers while cringing as if they reek of garbage while I read. This allowed me to leave a few Costco bestsellers from my mom's pile out on the stoop for passersby with lower standards of literature, without going past that 25 page mark. It's like my life is my own again!

I'm about 25 pages into *The Angel of Darkness* here. The writing doesn't suck so much as the whole ye olden days o' yore olde timey detective situation. This may have titillated my paternal grandmother a bit. She was known to turn down "curiously strong" peppermints, worried about their effects. Alas she died in 1996 and frankly, wasn't much of a reader when she was alive either. Anyway, I've got better things to do. My one word summary of this book is this: yawnsters.
