

Whodunit

Nobody asked but ...

I count among my major influences several writers who specialize or specialized in detective fiction, aka pulp fiction. I have come to consider many of the purveyors of this lurid fiction to be among the finest literary practitioners, literature producers, and philosophy masters. Who are some of these knights of the pen? To name a few, Dashiell Hammett, Mark Twain, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Raymond Chandler, Ross McDonald, Sue Grafton, Benjamin Black, Noah Hawley, Arthur Conan Doyle, Henning Mankell, Stieg Larsson, Ruth Rendell, and Michael Connelly. Each of these creators have a thing in common — each have created a highly idiosyncratic individualist protagonist. These characters are standalone loners who value unique moral codes; private eyes, insurance investigators, medical examiners, opportunists, uncollectivized hangers-on in police departments, dilettantes, agency operatives, newsmen, computer hackers, portraits from life's other side — the Continental Op and Sam Spade, Pudd'nhead Wilson, Porfiry Petrovich, Philip Marlowe, Lew Archer, Kinsey Milhone, Quirke, Nikki Swango and Gloria Burgle, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, Kurt Wallander, Lisbeth Salander and Mikael Blomkvist, Inspector Wexford, and Hieronymus Bosch. I am part of a philosophy discussion group where a friend commented that those of us who are considerate are each on our own moral quest. The above listed authors and characters are most definitely on individual moral quests. I am transfixed by how each of them sees his or her own constellation of morals, rights and wrongs, responsibilities, consequences.

— Kilgore Forelle