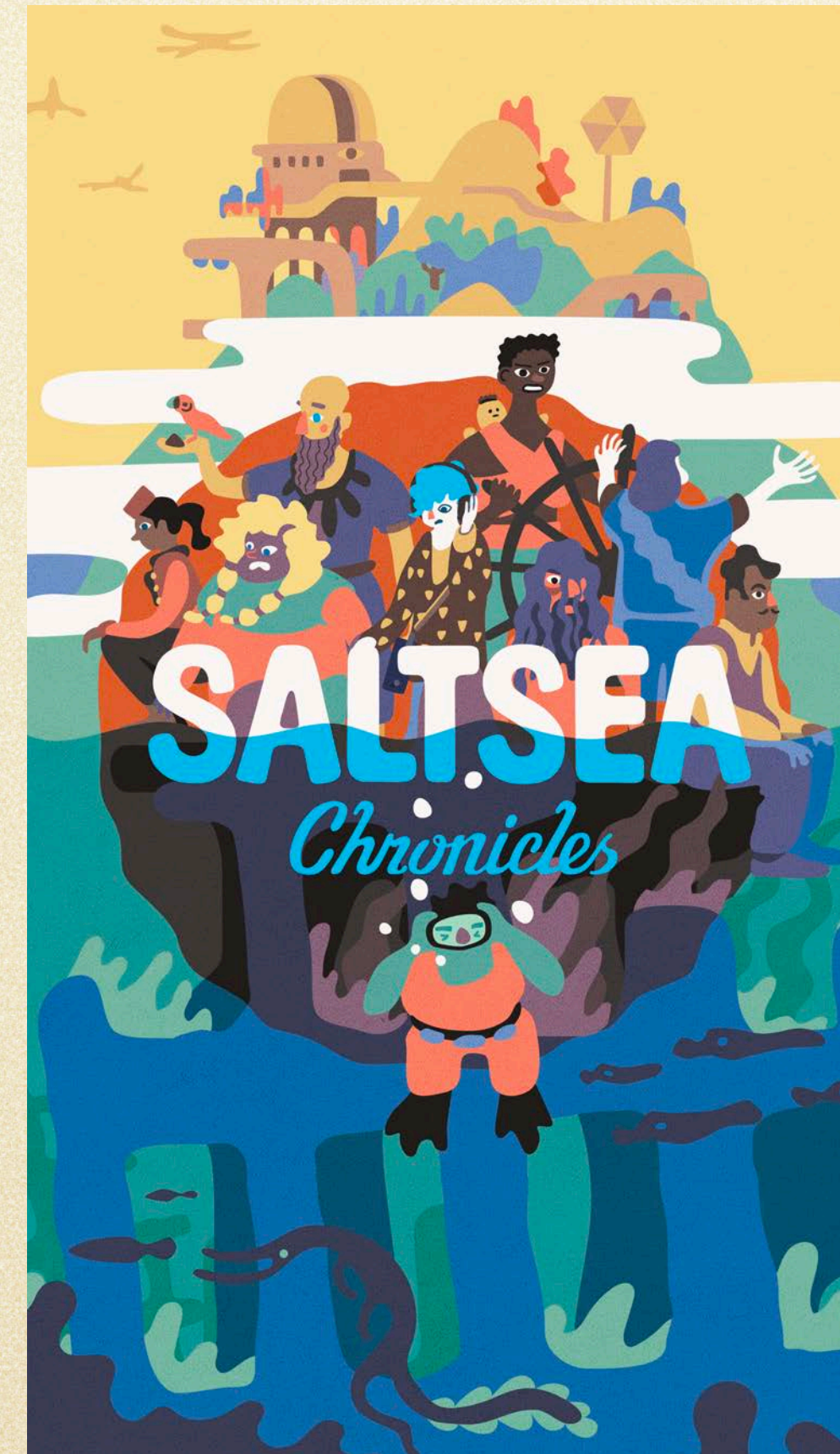
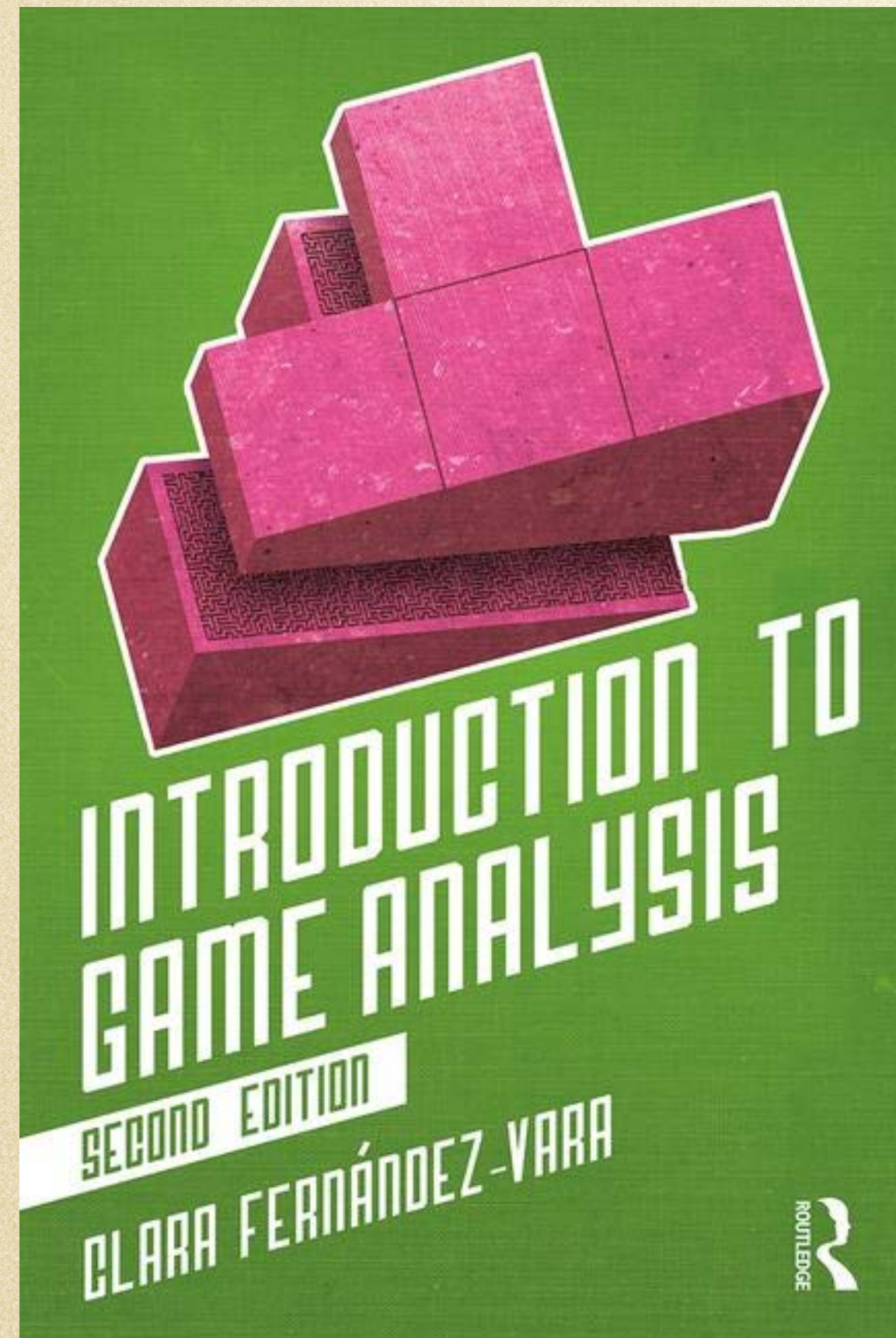


Take That!  
The Multicultural Origins of the  
Ace Attorney Series

Clara Fernandez-Vara, Ph.D.

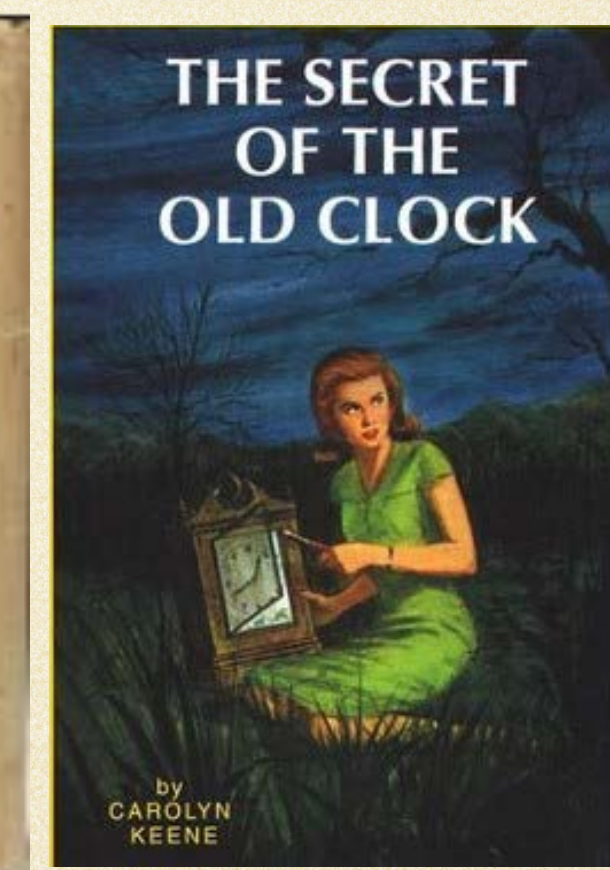
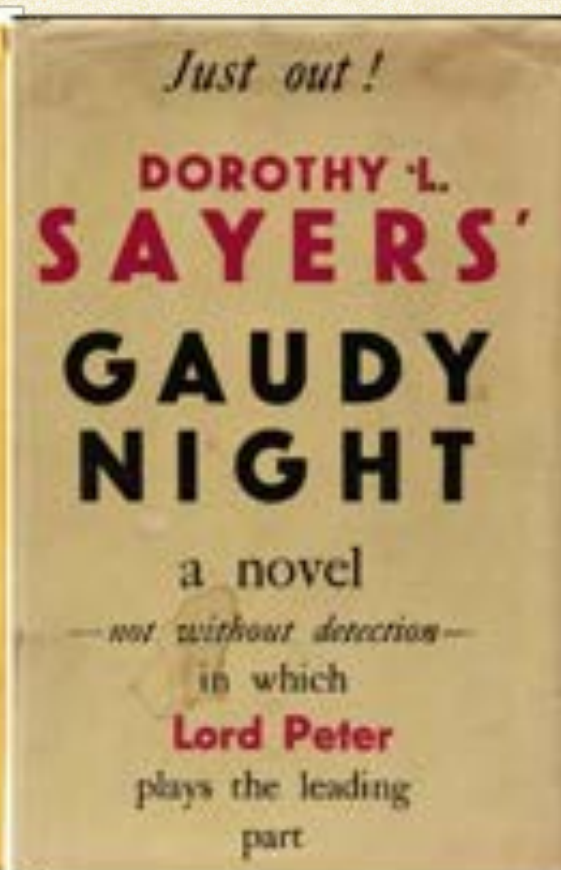
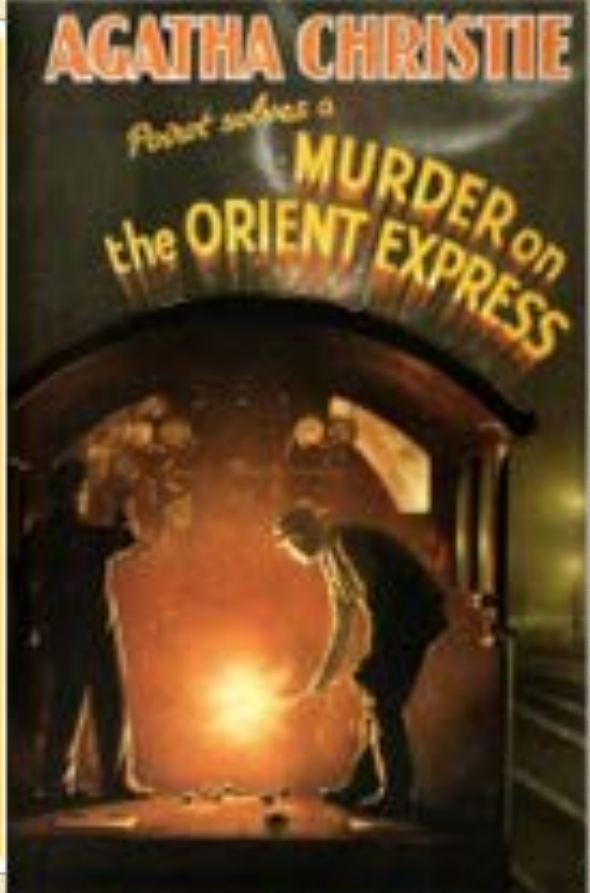
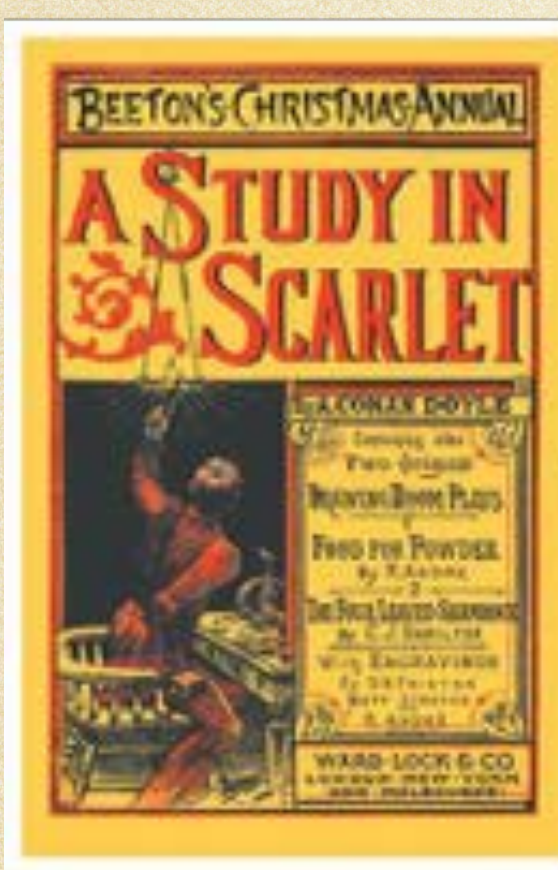
New York University

# Who am I?



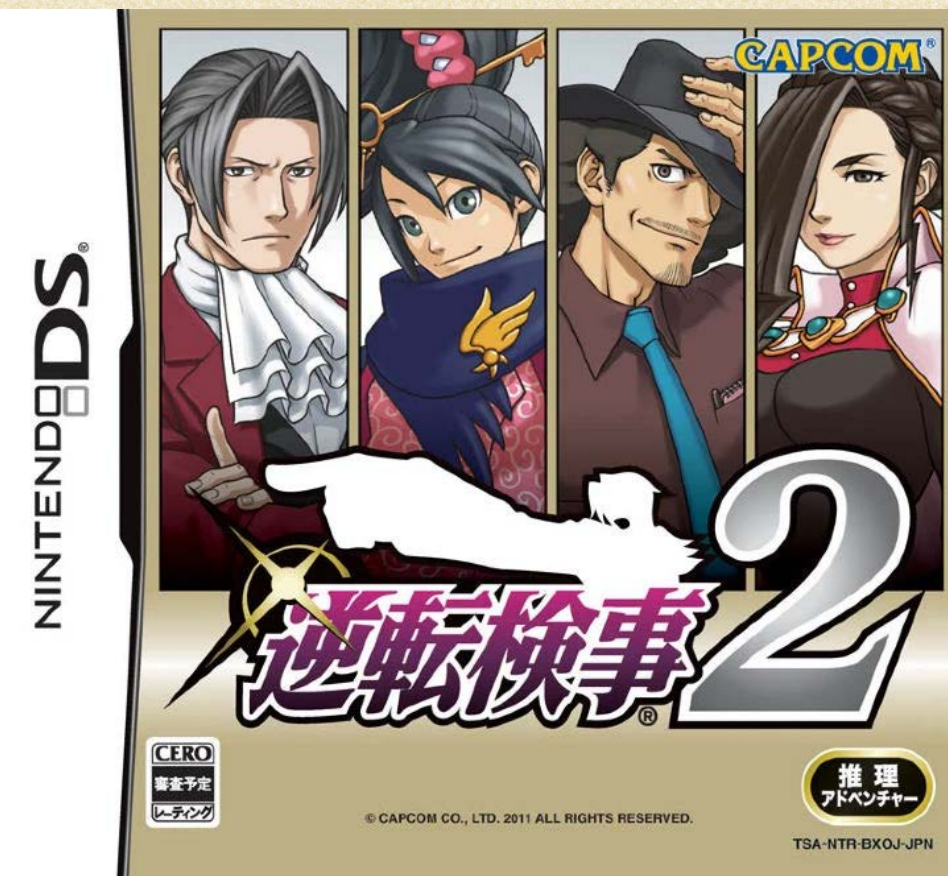
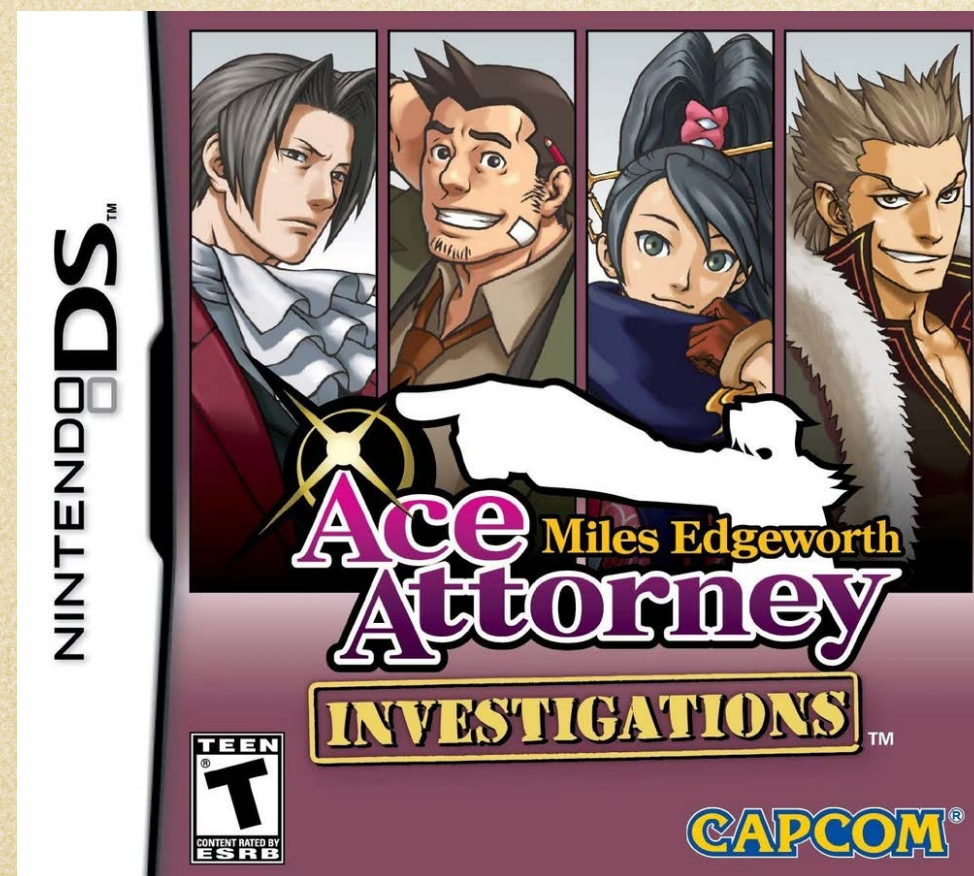
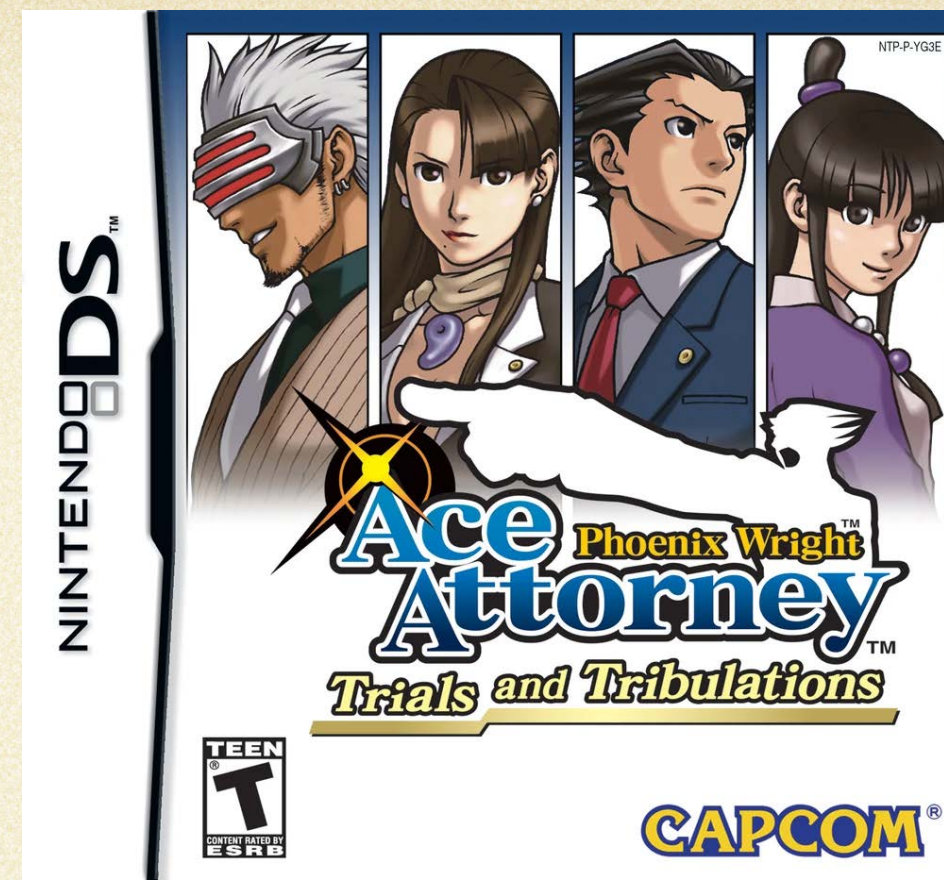
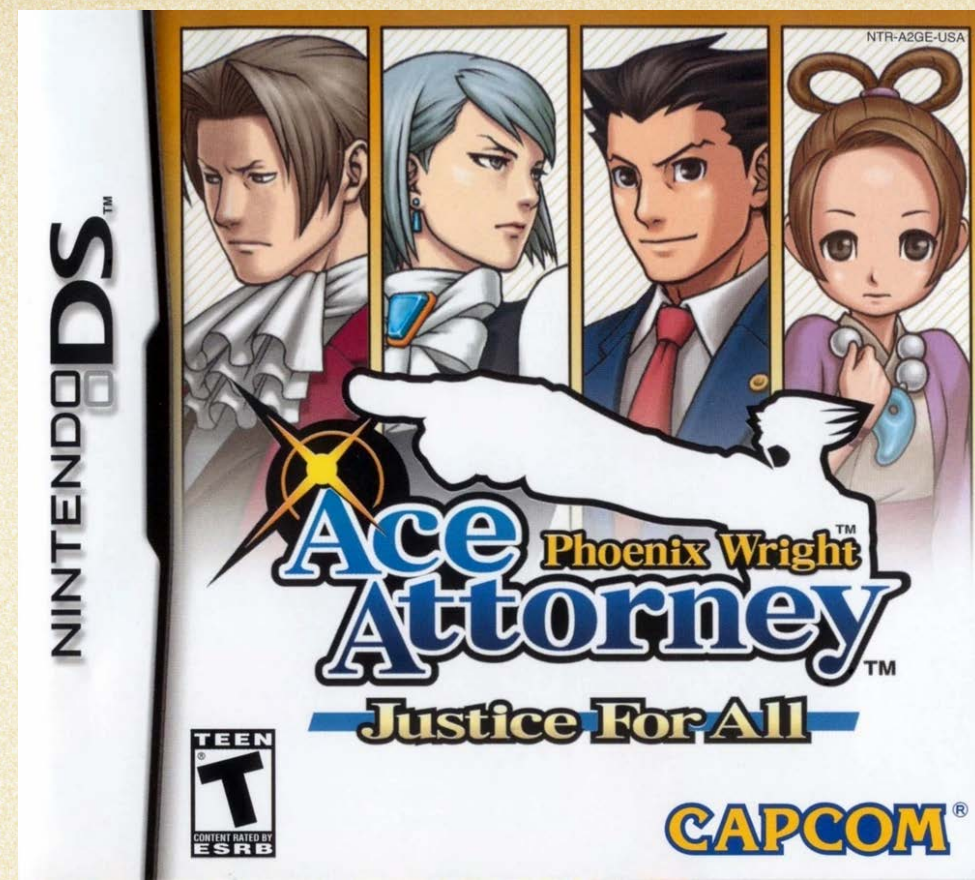
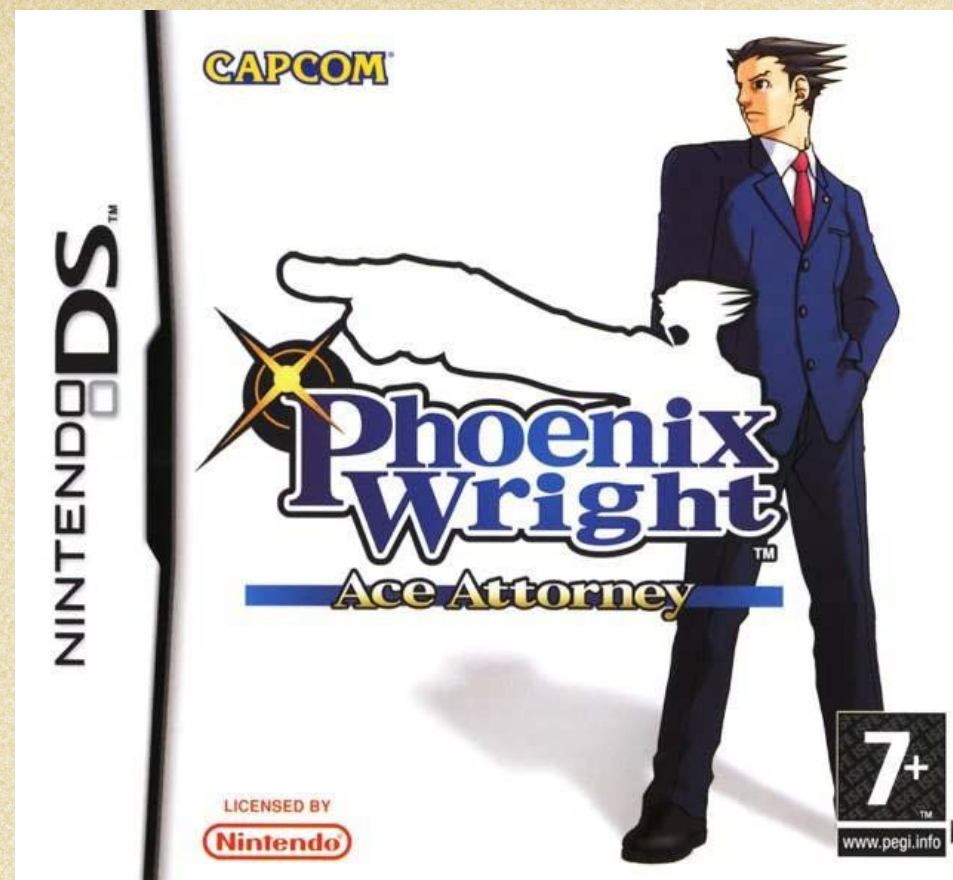
@clarafv (Twitter) / Mastodon: [@clarafv@mastodon.social](https://mastodon.social/@clarafv) / [clara.fernandez@nyu.edu](mailto:clara.fernandez@nyu.edu)

# Detective Games



# Ace Attorney Games (2001-2021)





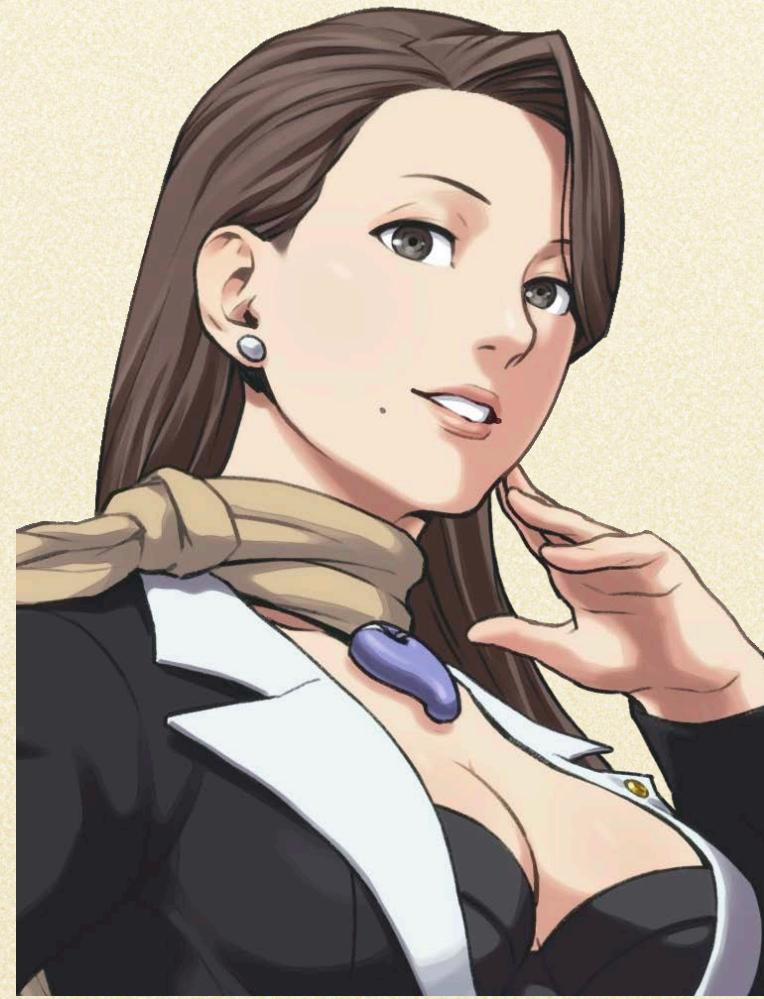
# Other Media



# Gyakuten Saiban 3: Miles Edgeworth by the Takarazuka Revue



# Characters







# The Turnabout Plot

# The Turnabout Plot: Introducing the Case



“The Adventure  
of the Great Departure”



Kurain Village in  
“Reunion and Turnabout”

# The Turnabout Plot: Murder!



“The First Turnabout”

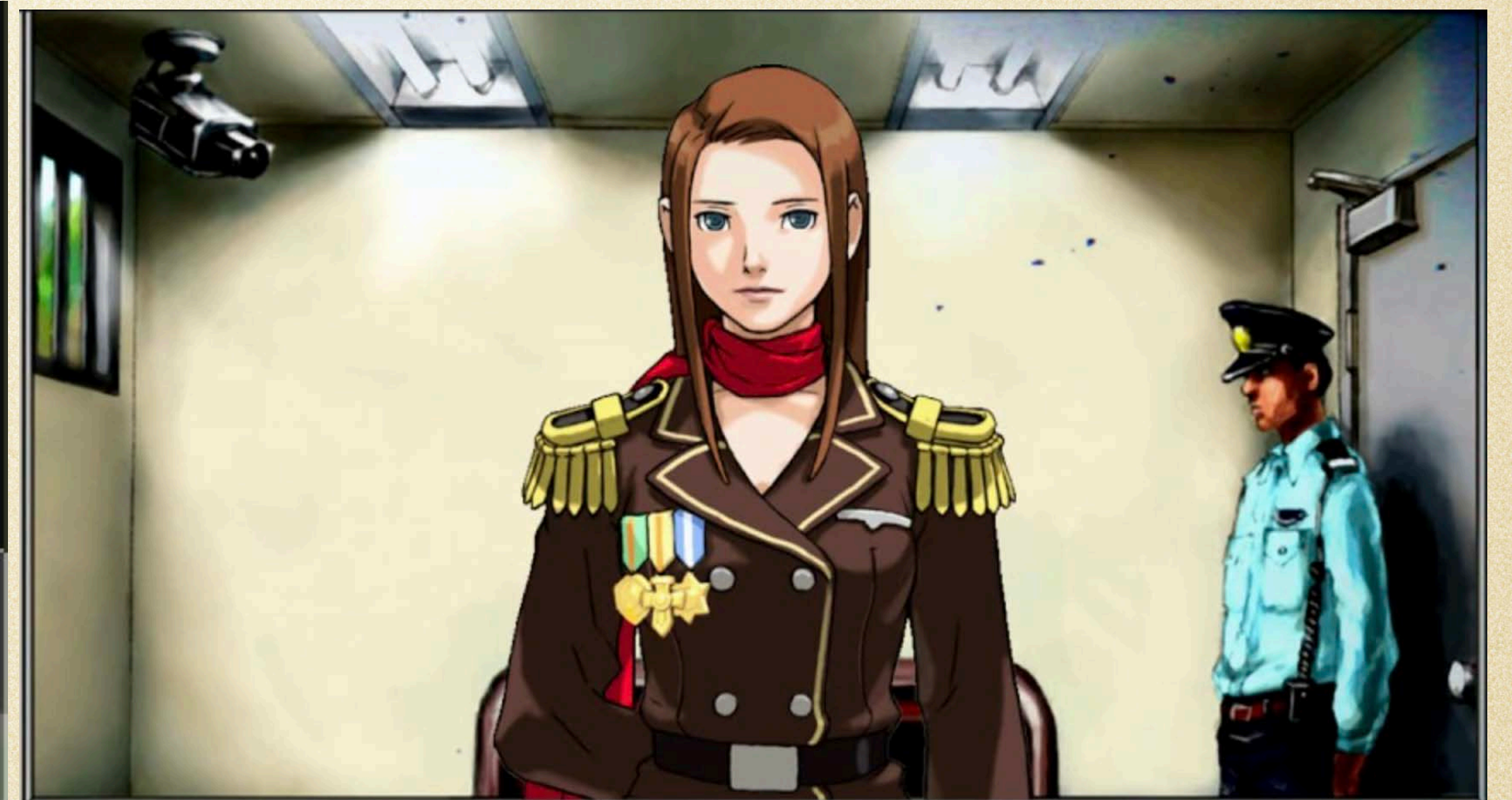


“Turnabout Goodbyes”

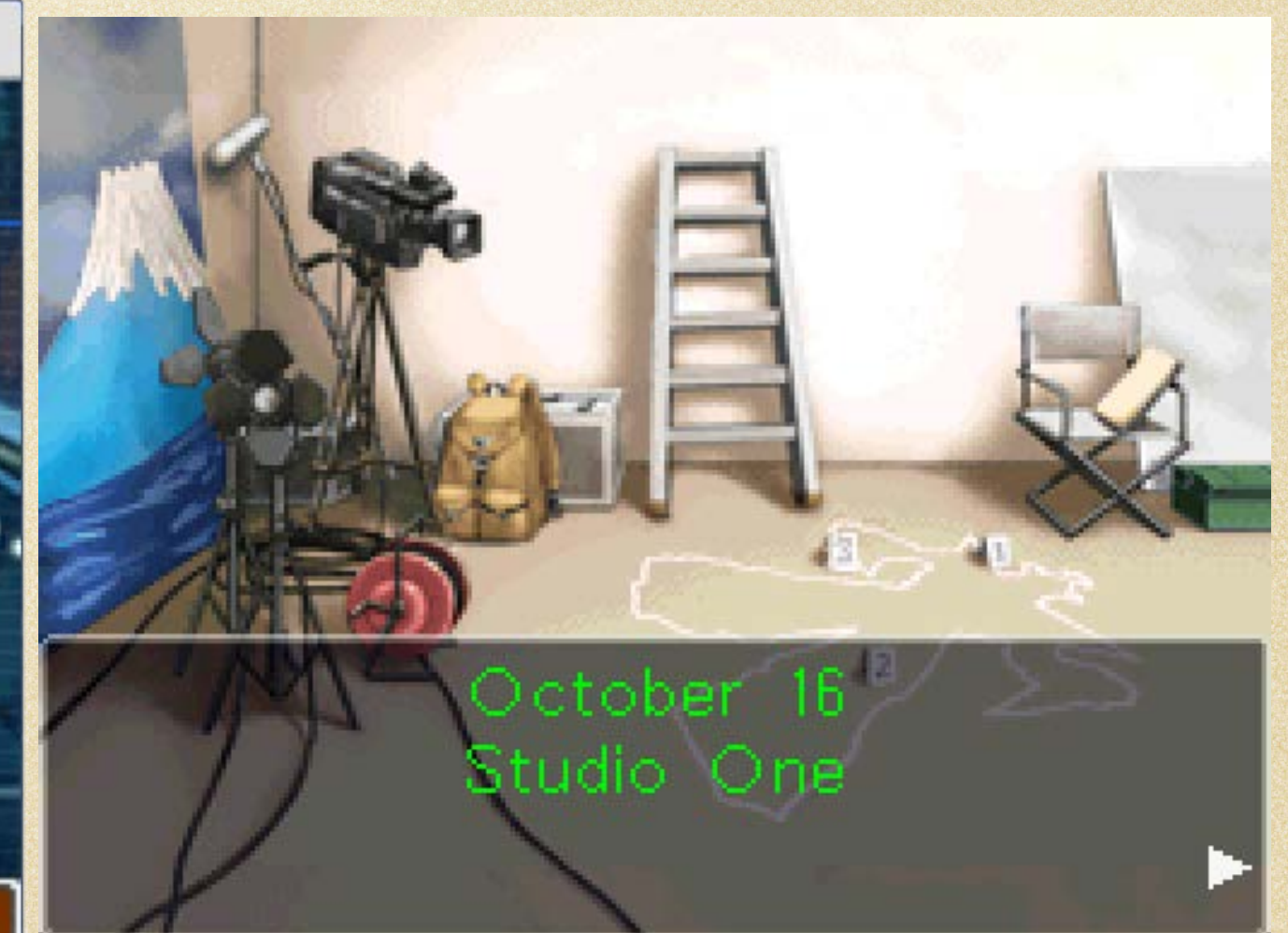
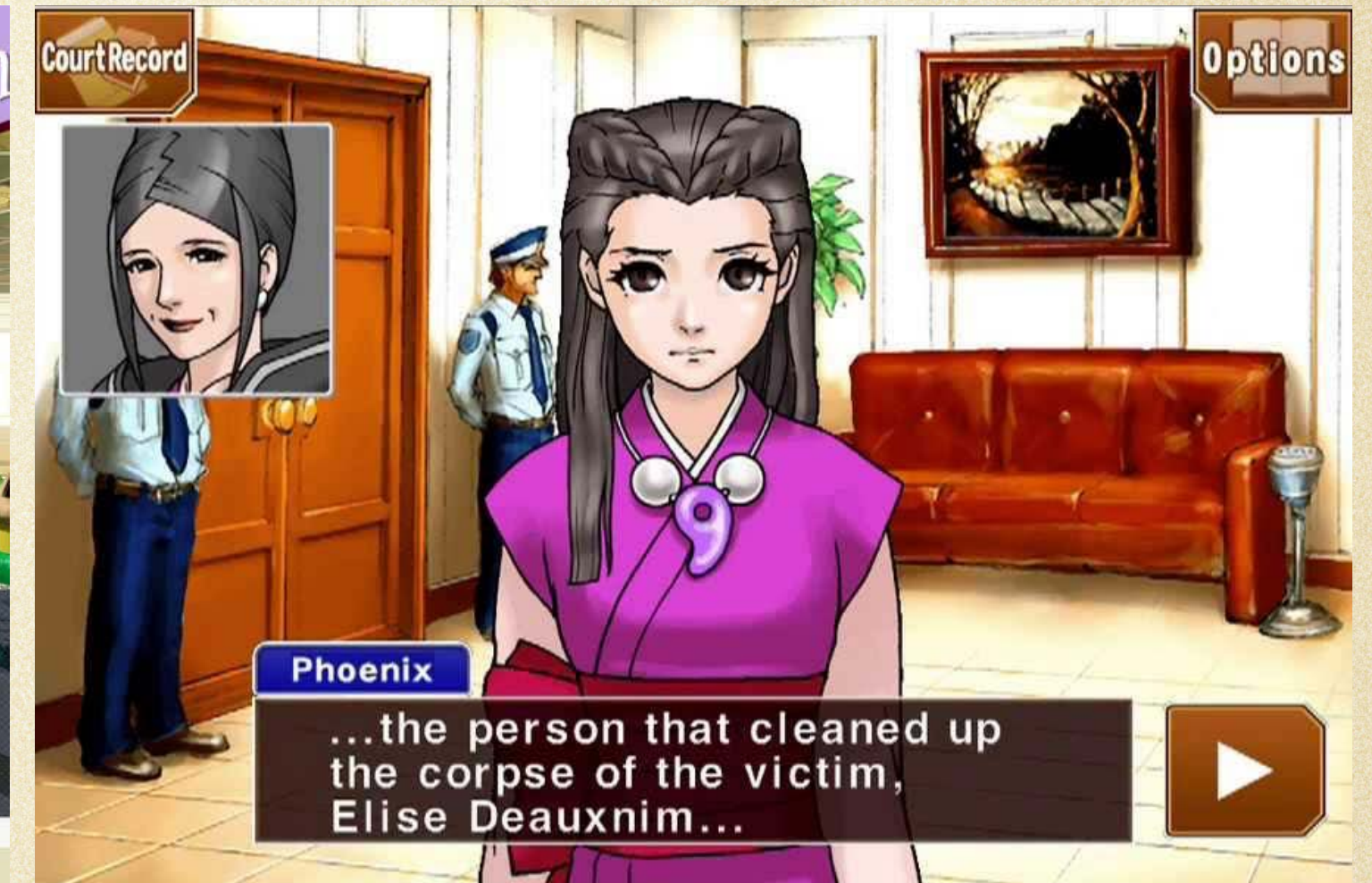
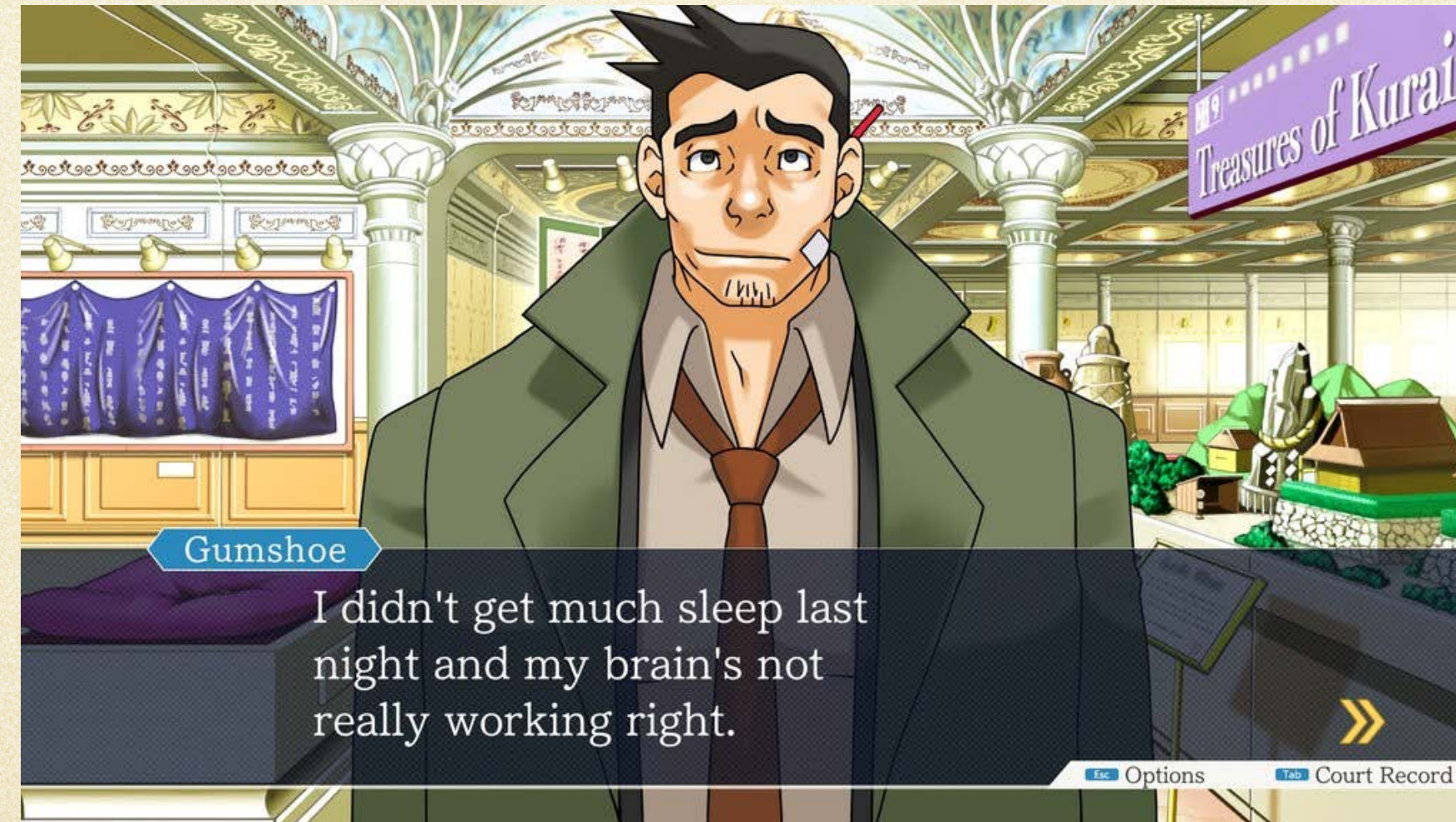


“The Foreign Turnabout”

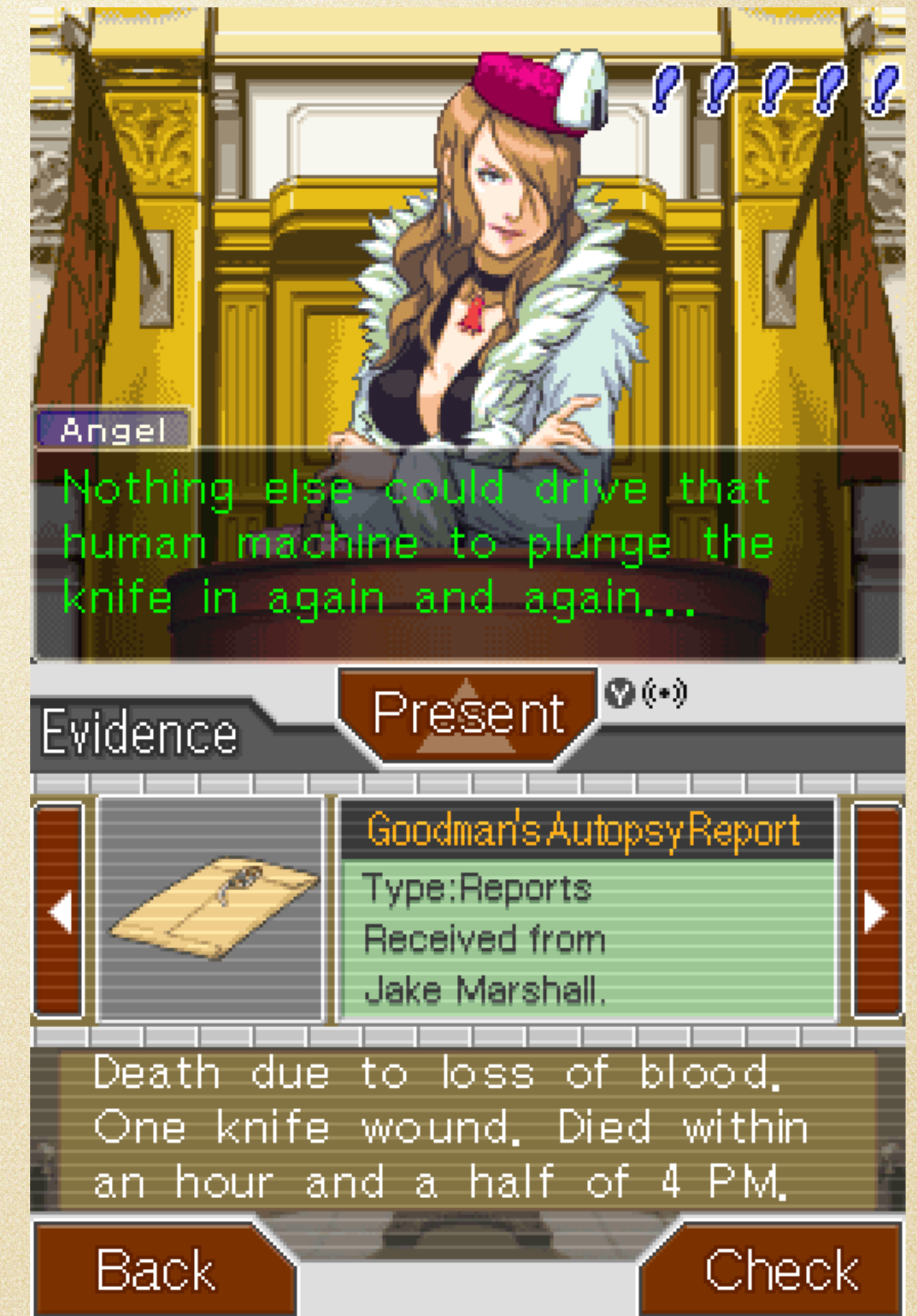
# The Turnabout Plot: The Wrong Person is Arrested



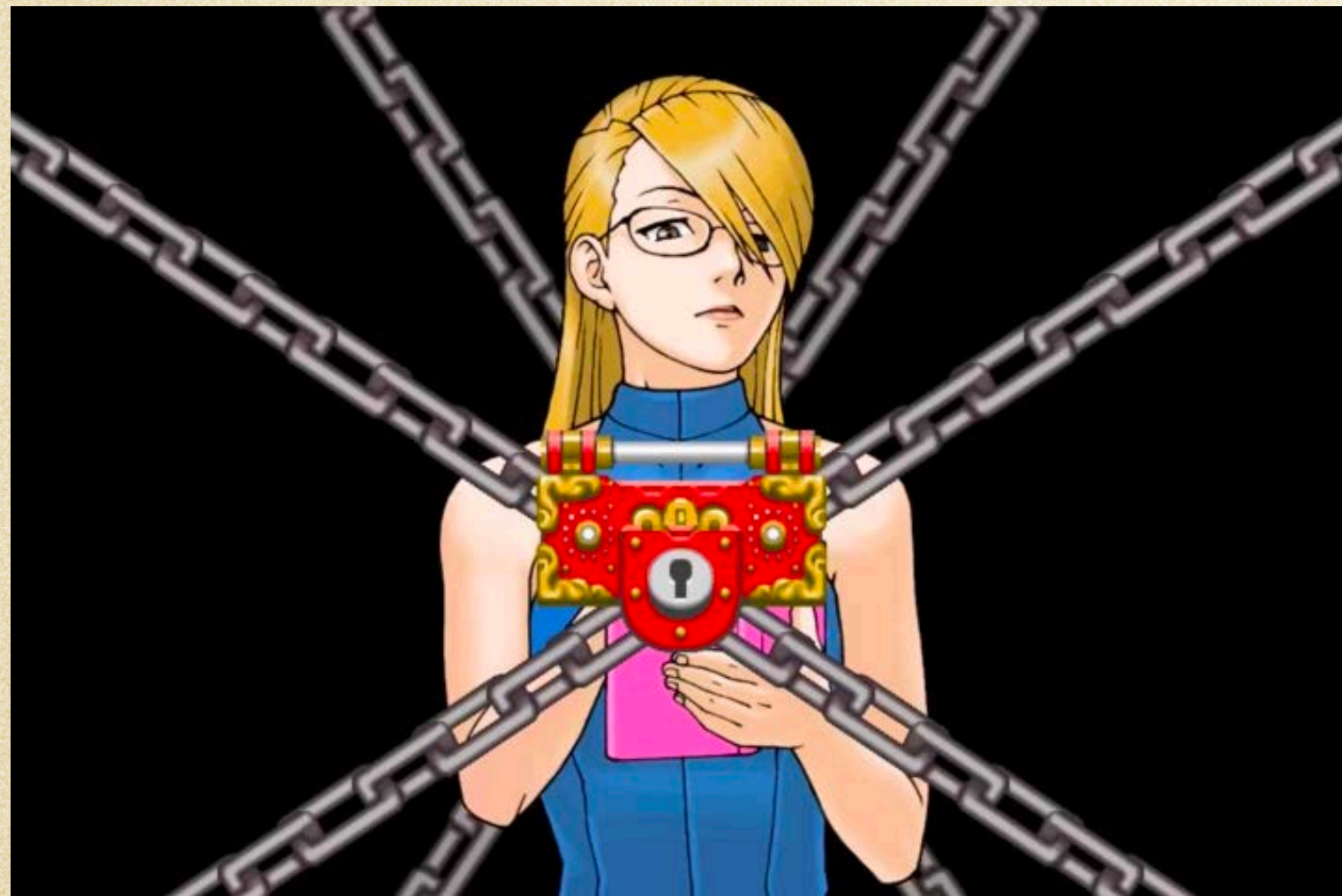
# The Turnabout Plot: Investigation



# The Turnabout Plot: The Trial



# The Actual Turnabout



Perceive



Stickler

Ergo! I used my cell phone

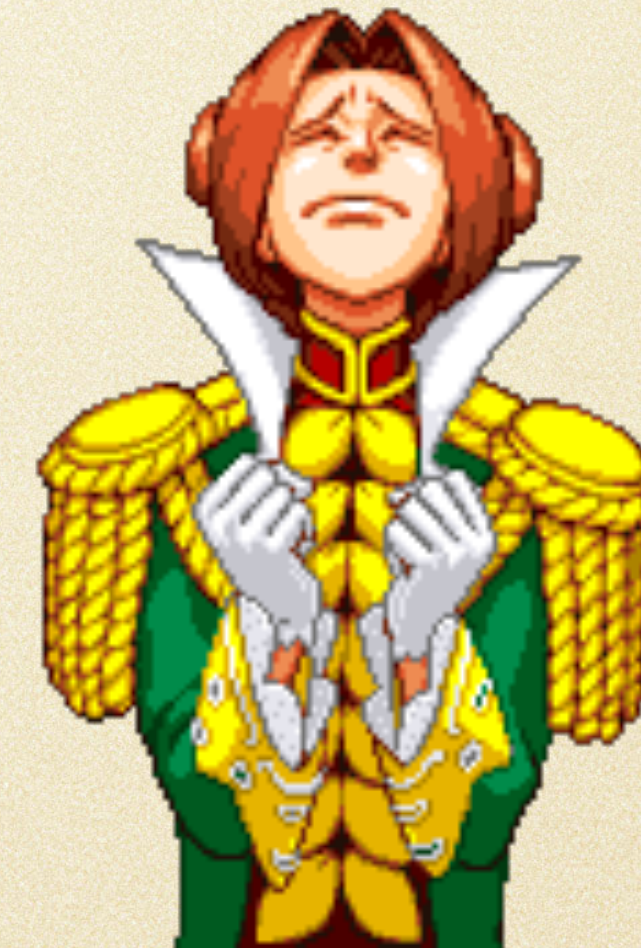


# The Actual Turnabout





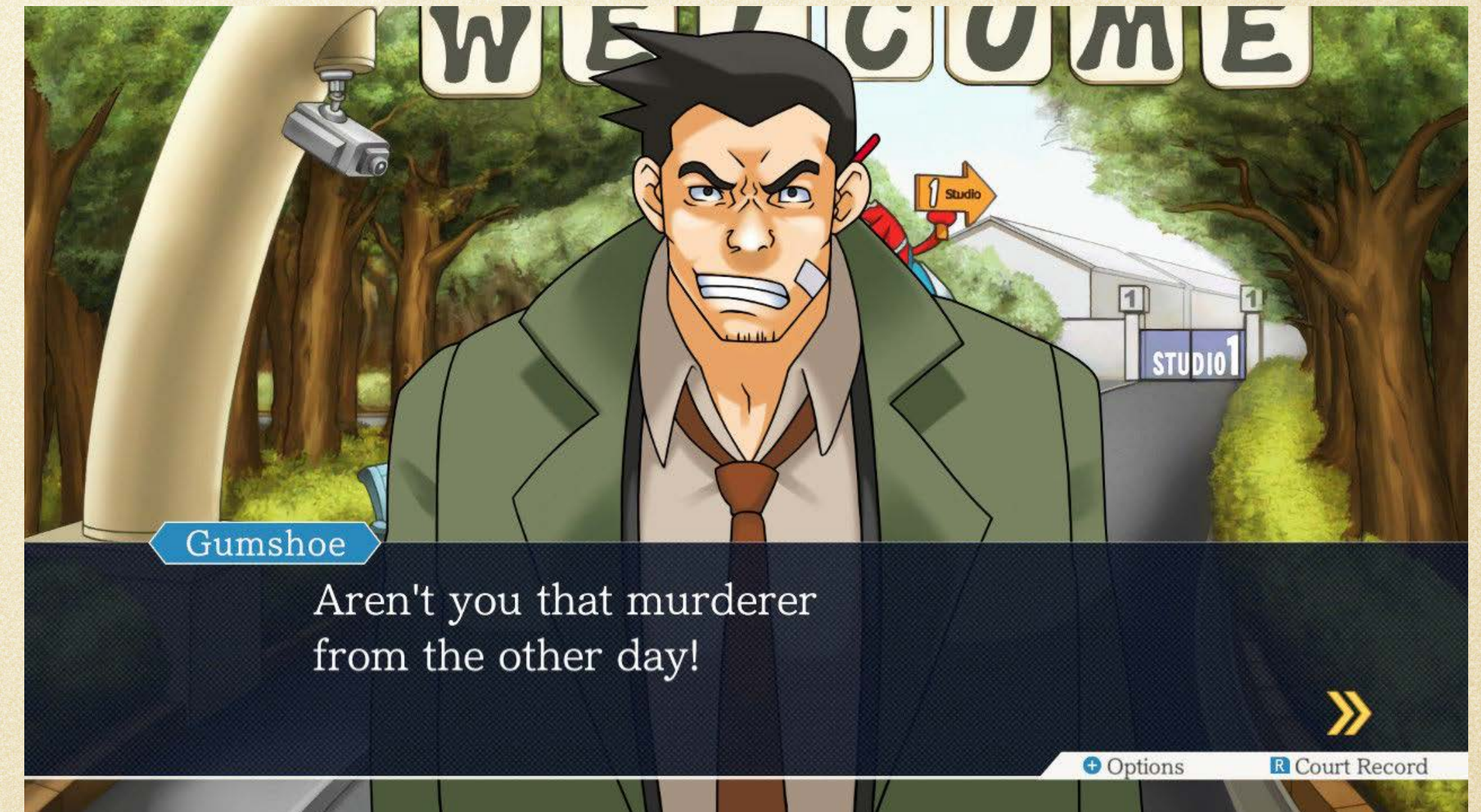
# The Turnabout Plot: The Culprit Revealed



# “Virtual” Japan



# Ace Attorney as Detective Games



# Detective Stories and Games

- Detective stories are playful by nature - many of them tease the reader to figure out the solution to the mystery before getting to the end of the story.
- The author also plays a game with the reader: providing obstacles that make it hard to figure out the solution.

Suits, Bernard. "The Detective Story: A Case Study of Games in Literature." *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 12.2 (1985): 200–219. Print.

# Detective Stories

Detective stories have two different sets of events:

- the story of the crime: events in absentia
- the story of the investigation

Todorov, Tzvetan. "The Typology of Detective Fiction." *The Poetics of Prose* (1977): 42–52.

# Whodunit vs Thriller

## Whodunit

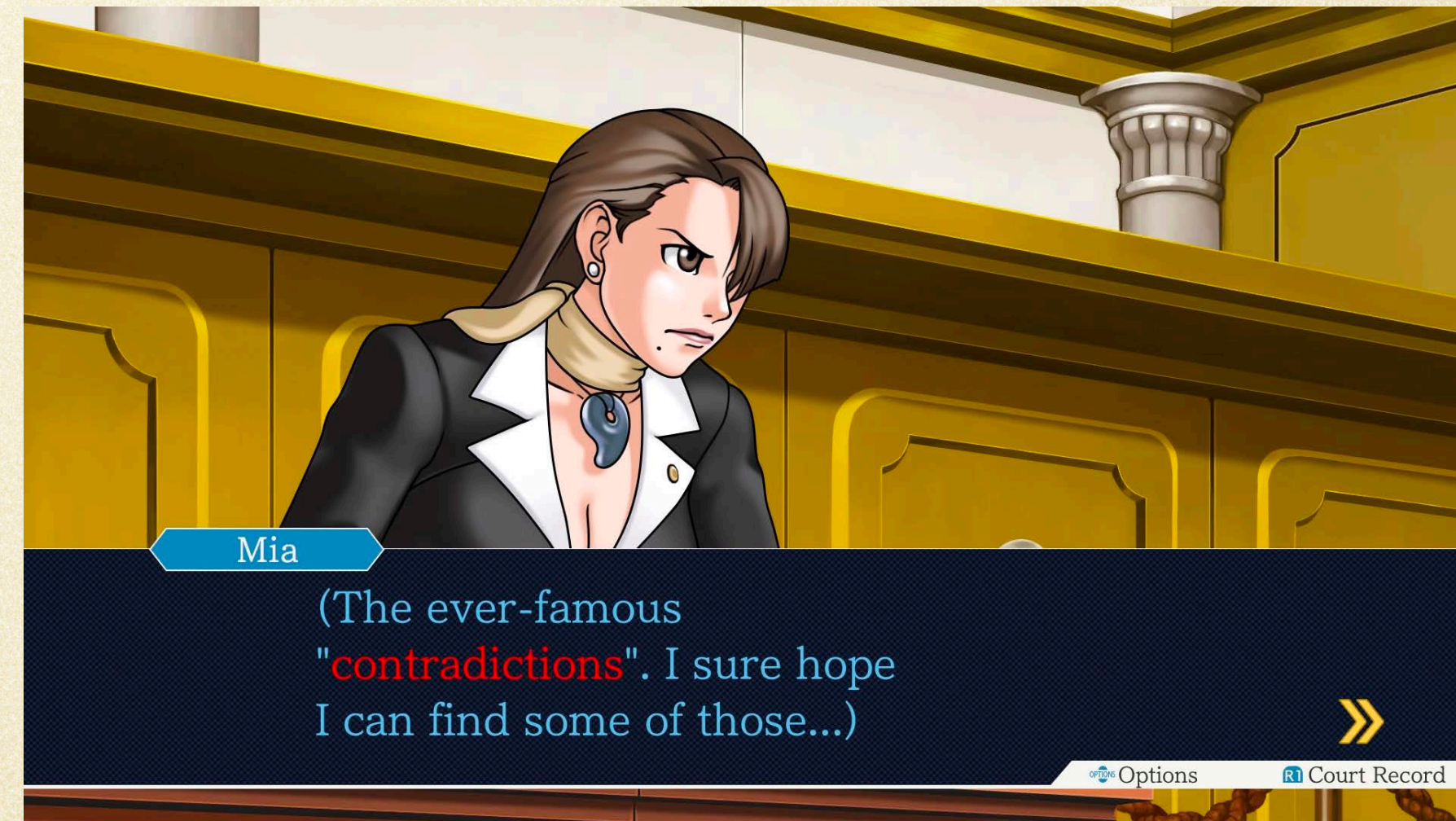
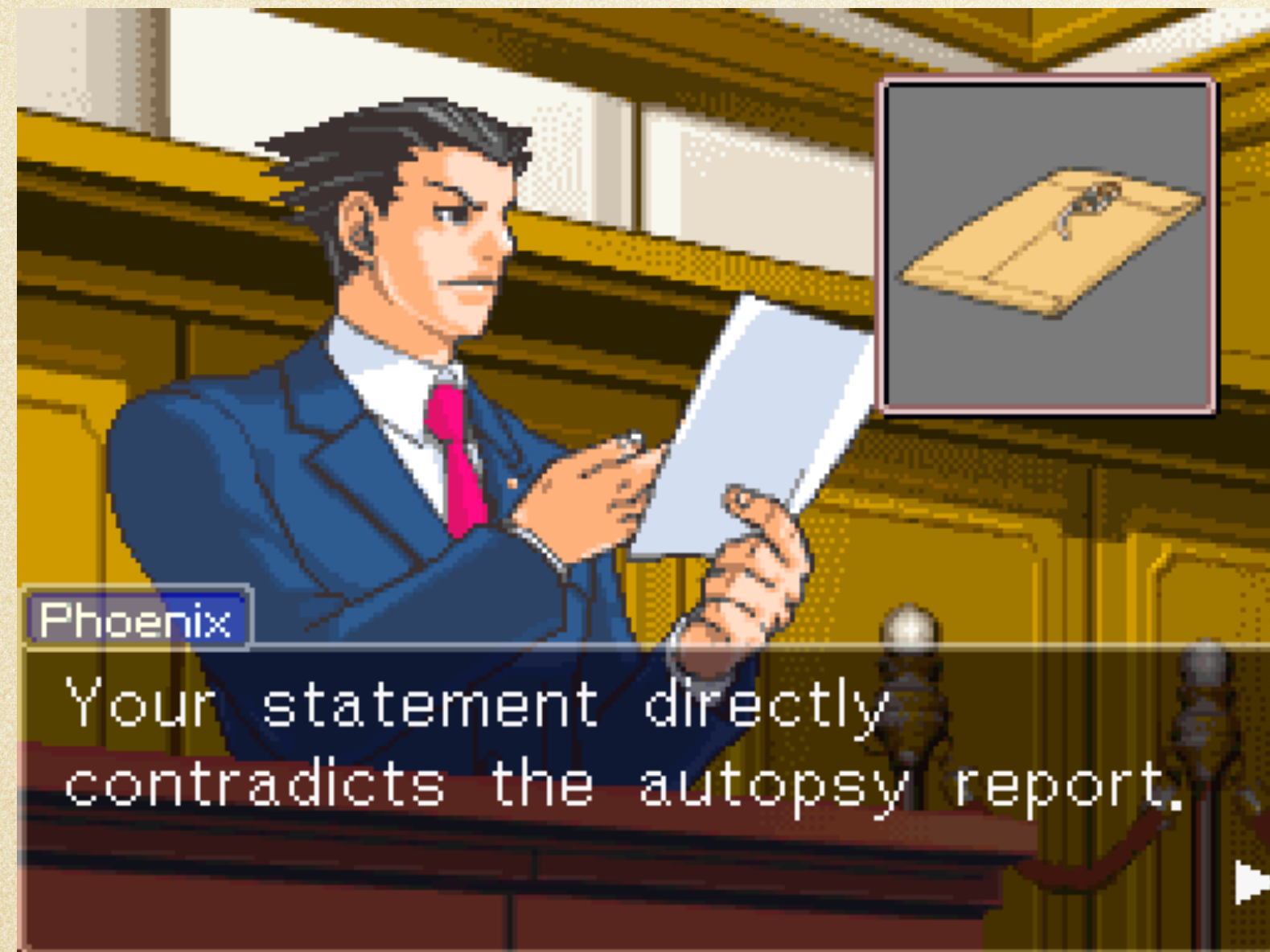
- The story of the crime is the prevalent; the story of the investigation is retelling it.
- Focus on the crime.
- Drive of reader is curiosity.

## Thriller

- The story of the crime is an excuse to trigger the story of the investigation; the investigation takes over.
- Focus on the detective
- Drive of the reader is suspense.

Todorov, Tzvetan. "The Typology of Detective Fiction." *The Poetics of Prose* (1977): 42–52.

# Ace Attorney, detective games





Interviewer: What did you have to do to adapt a puzzle plot mystery into the game medium?

Takumi: To create a game where the player is rewarded for their deductions, I first came up with a game style that was about exposing the lies of the culprit. So then I had to think about professions where you'd need to expose lies, and I finally arrived at a defense attorney.

“Creator Interview - Takumi Shū”,  
*Hayakawa's Mystery Magazine*, March 2012.

<https://gyakutensaibanlibrary.blogspot.com/2020/12/creator-interview-takumi-shu-2012.html>



The Media Origins of Ace  
Attorney

# Inspiration from other media

Interviewer: Are there any works that have left a particularly strong impression on you?

Takumi: Carter Dickson's *The Judas Window* left quite an impact on me, by showing me how amusing a courtroom mystery could be. [...] That got me into reading Gardner's *Perry Mason* series. But I'm a fan of *orthodox mystery fiction* [honkaku], so I love books with the mark of the silhouetted man of publisher Tokyo Sogen.[...]

Interviewer: I believe you're also fond of *Columbo* [...]?

Takumi: Yes. In *Gyakuten Saiban*, the goal is not to find the true culprit: it's a game about cornering the culprit. That was new for the time, so to make that clear, the early episodes take on an inverted story style. This was of course influenced by *Columbo*.

“Creator Interview - Takumi Shū”,  
*Hayakawa's Mystery Magazine*, March 2012.

<https://gyakutensaibanlibrary.blogspot.com/2020/12/creator-interview-takumi-shu-2012.html>

# Detective Stories in Japan

- Early examples:
  - Courtroom Narratives (17th-18th century)
  - Criminal Biographies



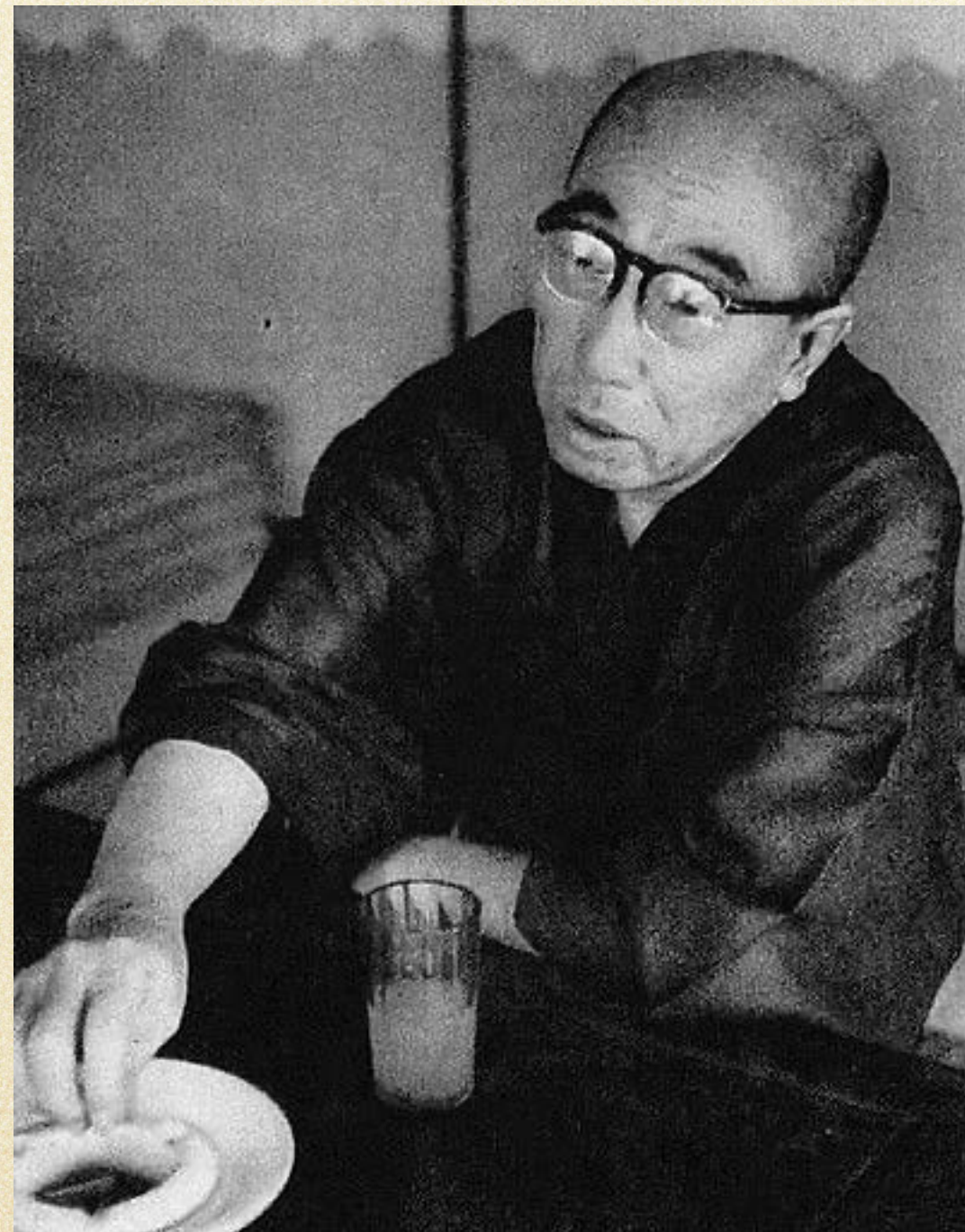
Kuroiwa Ruikō

# Detective Stories Translated

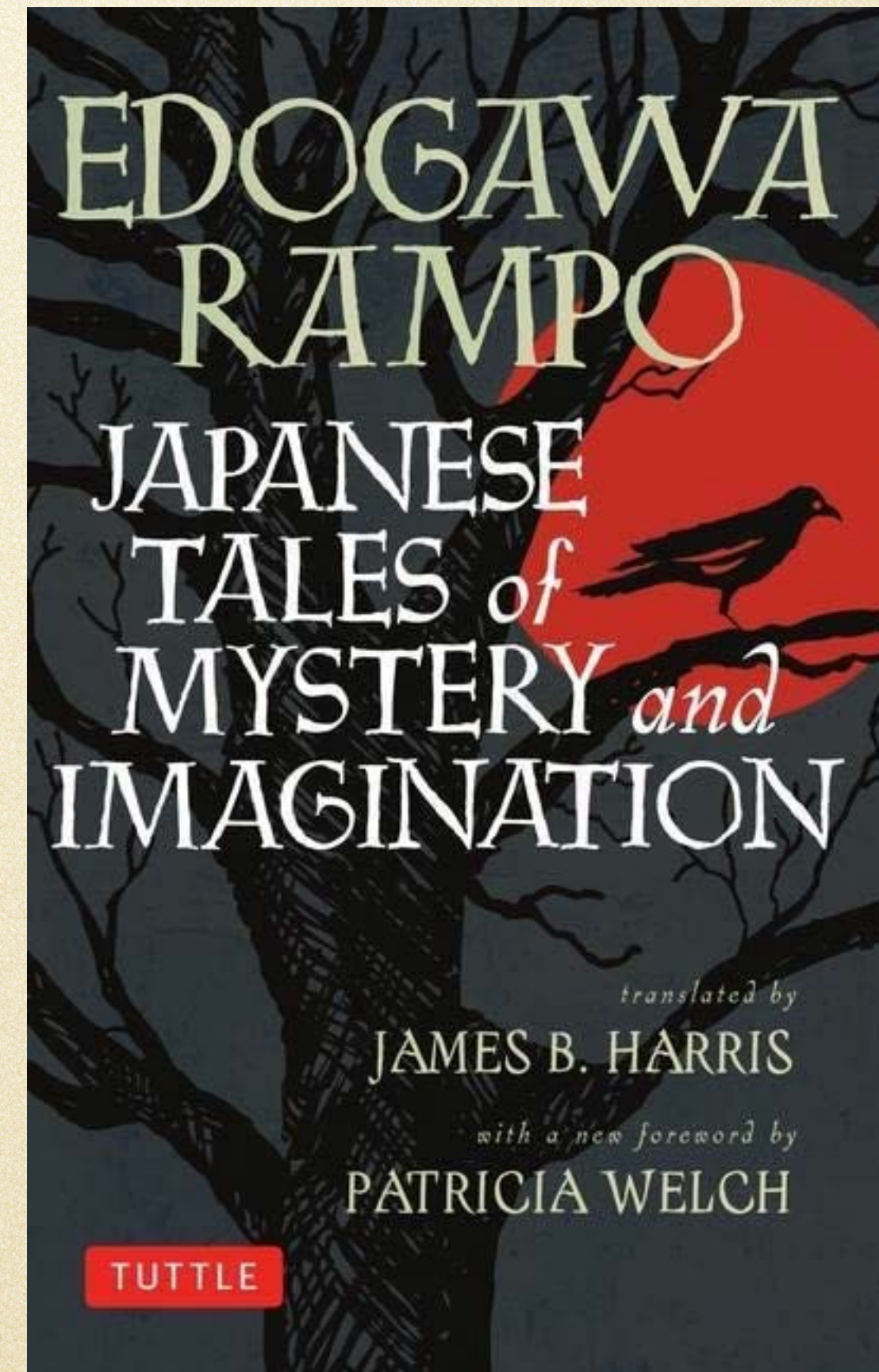
- “Ruikō’s techniques of translation placed the action of these works in an interstitial world that readers were invited to view as virtual Japan. [...] His novels are full of Parisian gentlemen named Ōtani and Honda whose wallets are thick with yen-denominated notes. But by partially Japanizing the novel’s foreign settings and characters with his domestication of proper names and other markers of cultural identity, Ruikō authorized a mapping of the legal systems portrayed in each novel [...] onto Japan’s own legal system).”

Silver, Mark H. "Purloined Letters." *Purloined Letters*. University of Hawaii Press, 2008, pp. 67-68.

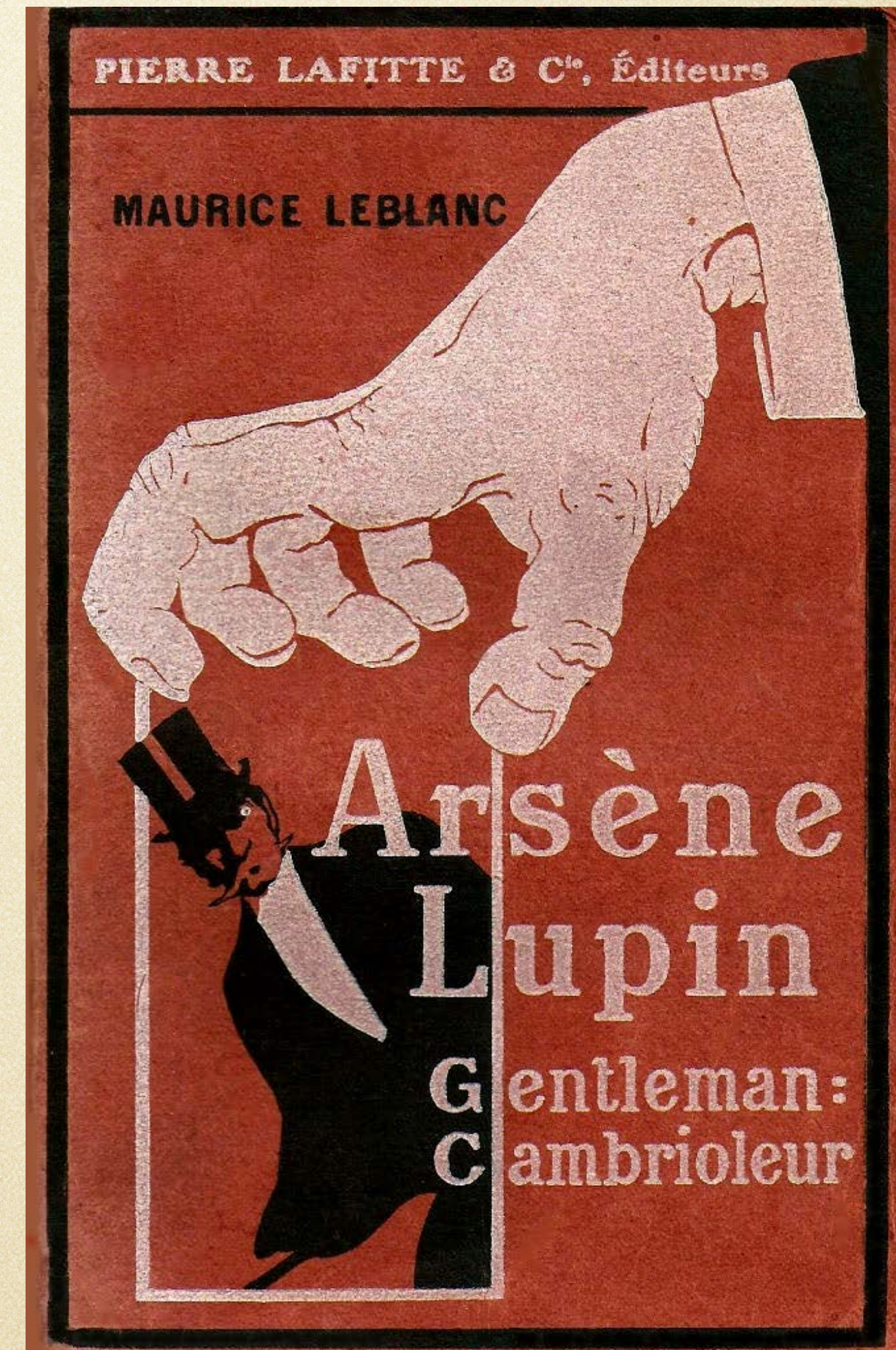
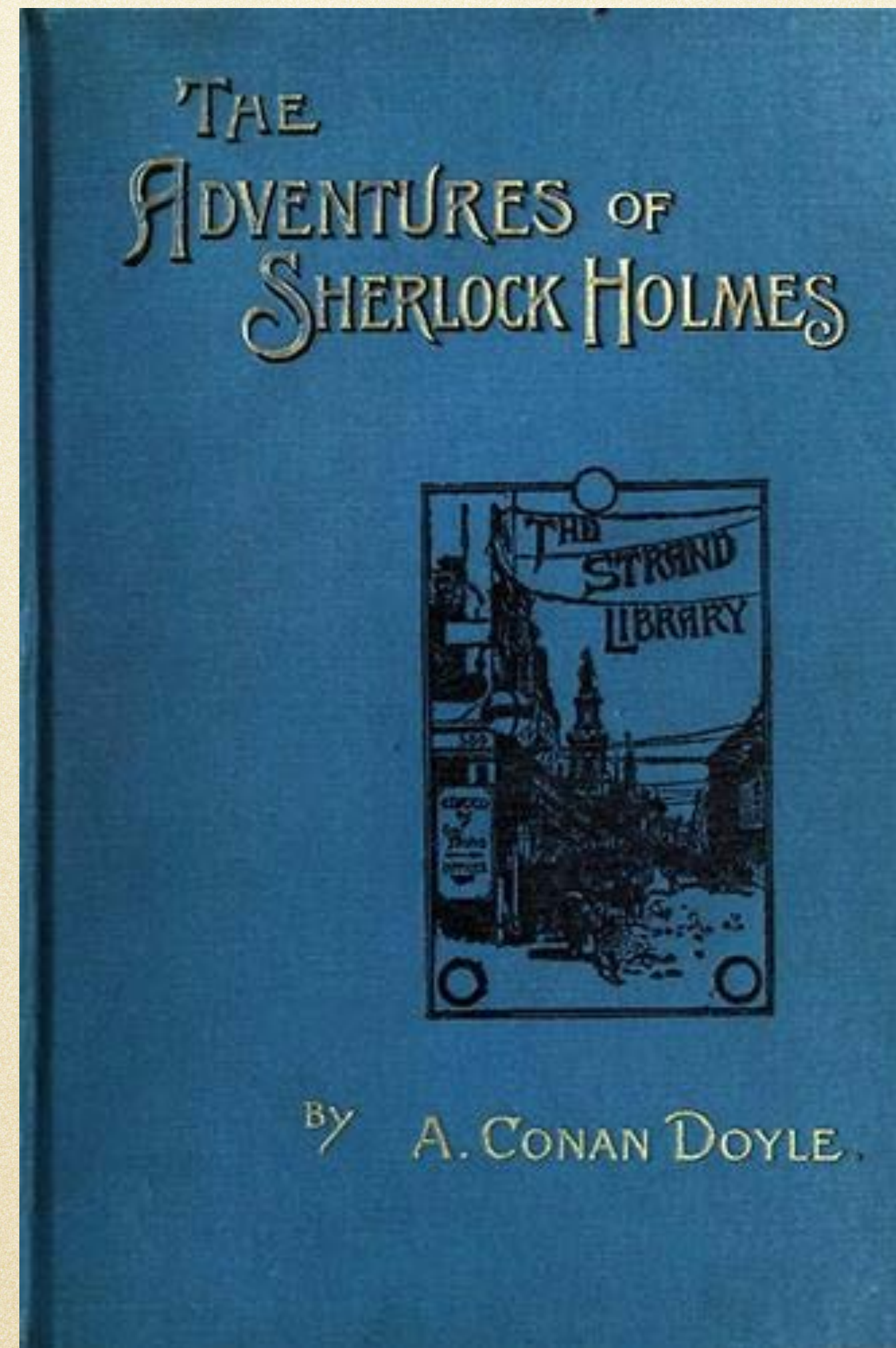
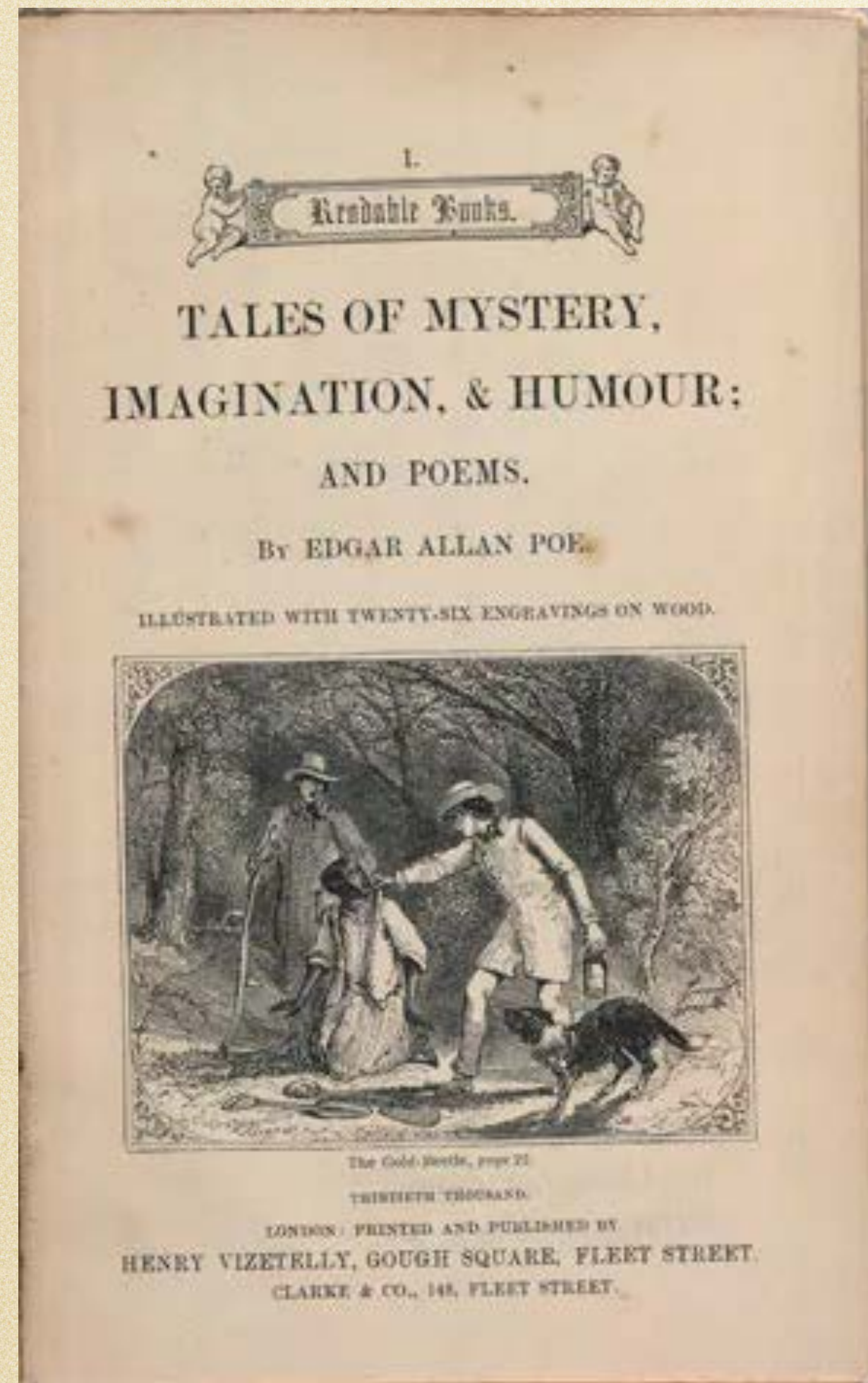
# Japanese Detective Stories



Taro Hirai, a.k.a.  
Edogawa Ranpo



# Early detective stories



# 19th Century Ace Attorney



# S.S. Van Dine's Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories

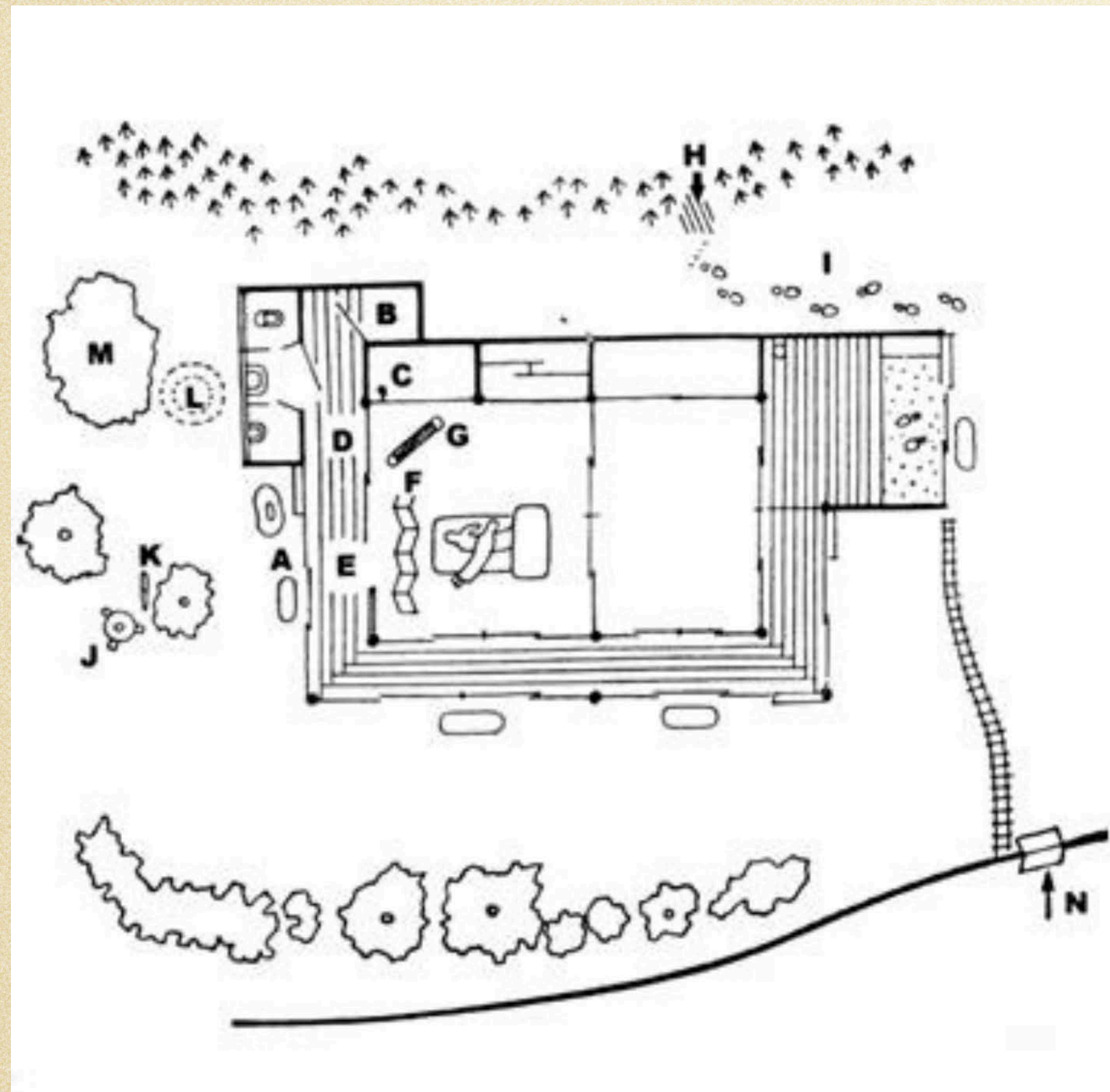
September 1928 edition of The American Magazine

The detective story is a game. It is more--it is a sporting event. And the author must play fair with the reader. He can no more resort to trickeries and deceptions and still retain his honesty than if he cheated in a bridge game. He must outwit the reader, and hold the reader's interest, through sheer ingenuity. For the writing of detective stories there are very definite laws--unwritten, perhaps, but none the less binding: and every respectable and self-respecting concocter of literary mysteries lives up to them. [...]

1. **The reader must have equal opportunity with the detective for solving the mystery.** All clues must be plainly stated and described.
2. **No willful tricks or deceptions may be played on the reader** other than those played legitimately by the criminal on the detective himself.
3. **There must be no love interest in the story.** To introduce amour is to clutter up a purely intellectual experience with irrelevant sentiment. [...]
4. **The detective himself, or one of the official investigators, should never turn out to be the culprit.** This is bald trickery, on a par with offering some one a bright penny for a five-dollar gold piece. [...]
5. **The culprit must be determined by logical deductions--not by accident or coincidence or unmotivated confession.** To solve a criminal problem in this latter fashion is like sending the reader on a deliberate wild-goose chase, and then telling him, after he has failed, that you had the object of his search up your sleeve all the time. [...]
6. **The detective novel must have a detective in it; and a detective is not a detective unless he detects.** His function is to gather clues that will eventually lead to the person who did the dirty work in the first chapter; and if the detective does not reach his conclusions through an analysis of those clues, he has no more solved his problem than the schoolboy who gets his answer out of the back of the arithmetic.
7. **There simply must be a corpse in a detective novel, and the deader the corpse the better.** No lesser crime than murder will suffice. Three hundred pages is far too much pother for a crime other than murder. [...]
8. **The problem of the crime must be solved by strictly naturalistic means.** [...] A reader has a chance when matching his wits with a rationalistic detective, but if he must compete with the world of spirits and go chasing about the fourth dimension of metaphysics, he is defeated ab initio.



# Honkaku Mysteries



Map from Yokomizo Seishi's *The Honjin Murders*  
(Honjin satsujin jiken, 1946)

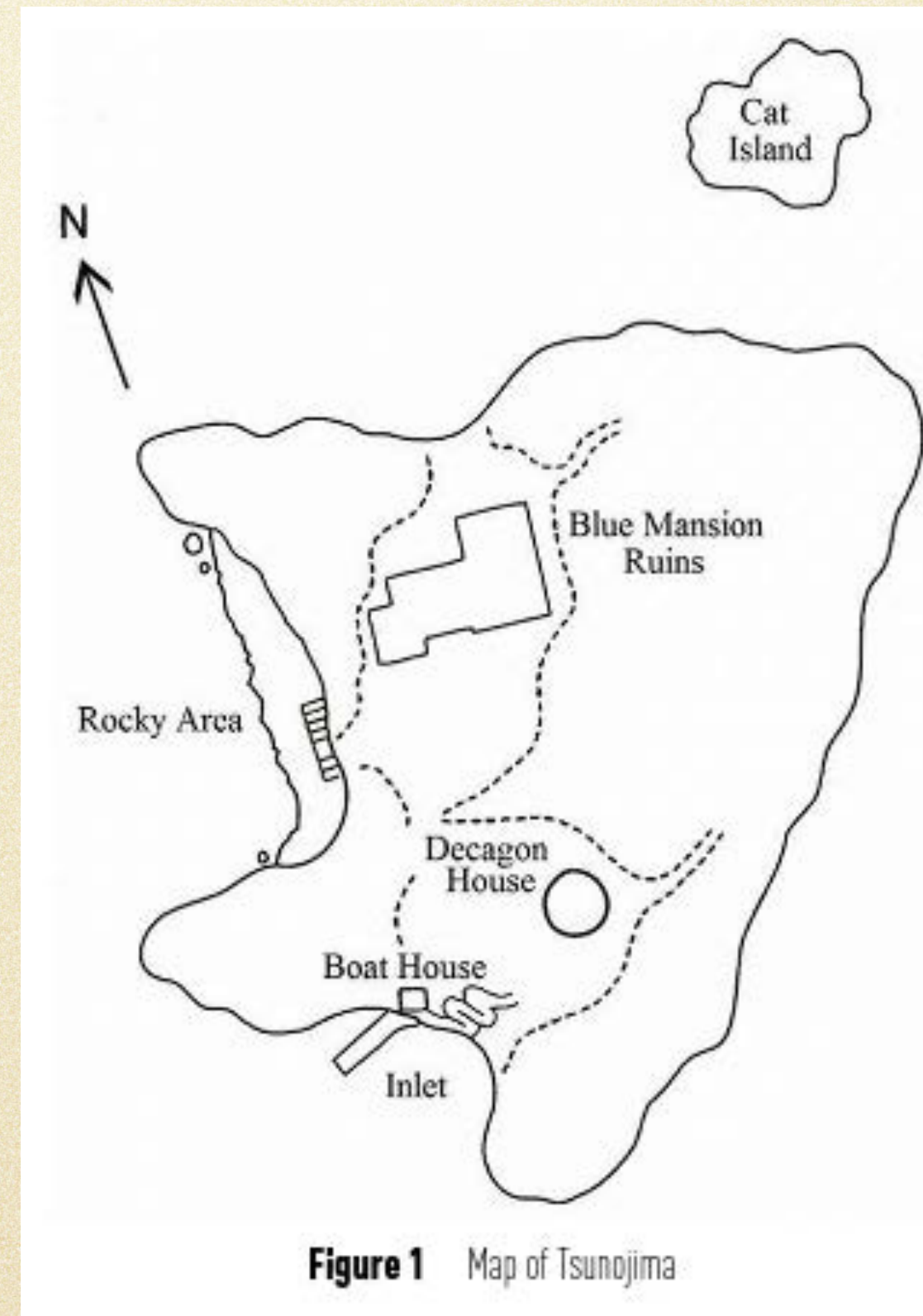


Figure 1 Map of Tsunojima

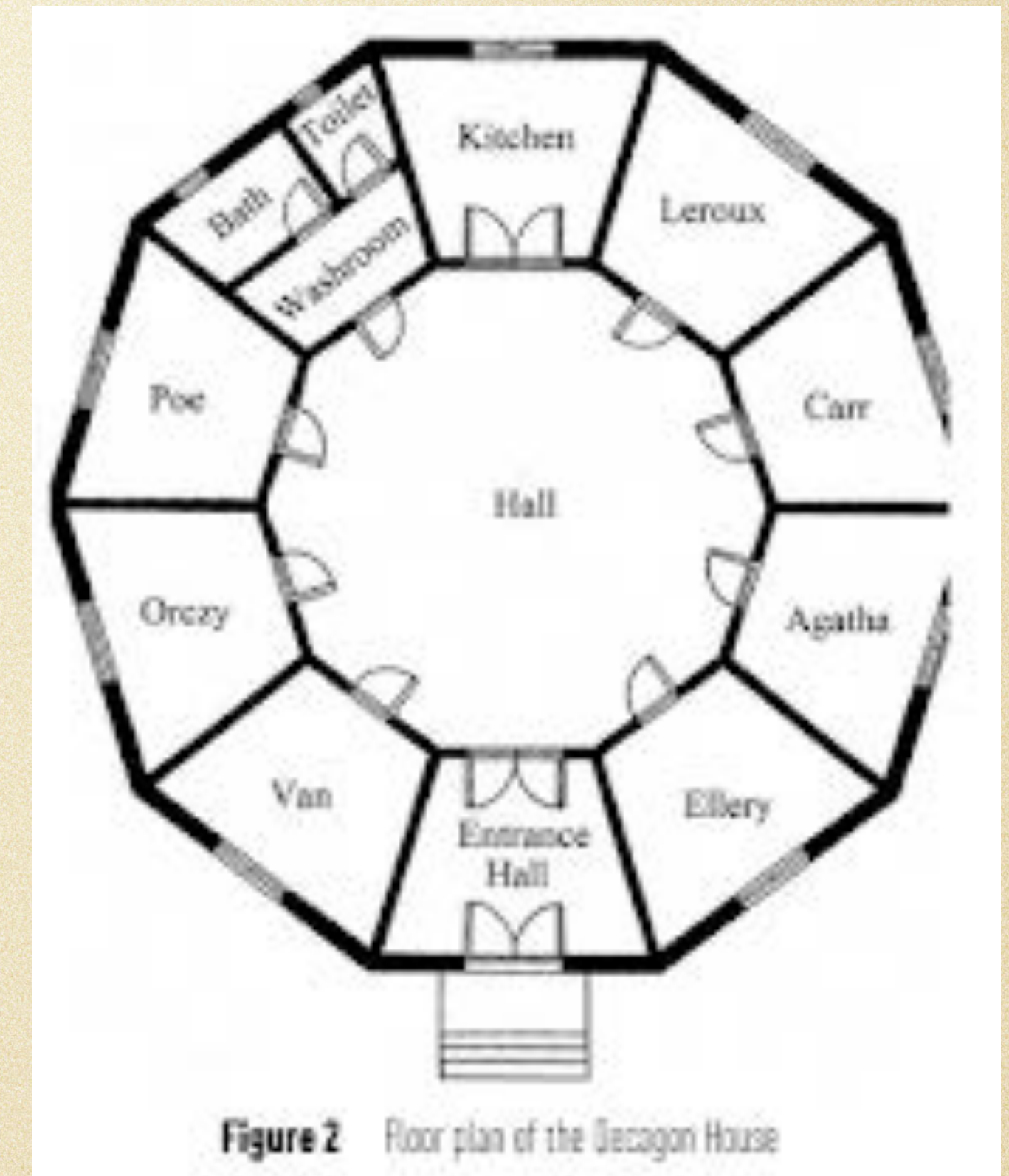


Figure 2 Floor plan of the Decagon House

Maps from Yukito Ayatsuji's *The Decagon House Murders*  
(Jūkakukan no satsujin, 1987)

# Columbo's "Howcatch'em"



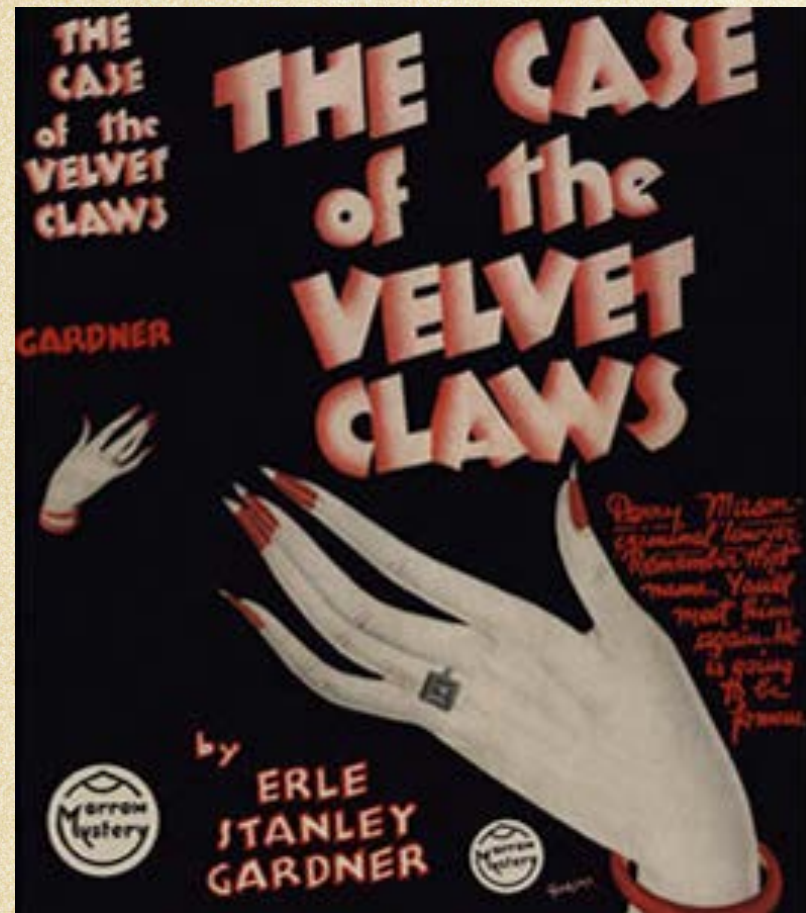
“The real fun behind mystery stories lies in the logic when you connect all the hints and solve the mystery. Inverted mysteries on their turn have their chance to shine because they're the outliers. [...] I'd also love it if people would watch the TV drama *Columbo* once again.”

“A Never-ending Love for Columbo” / 「終わりになき“コロンボ愛”」

Source: Kono Manga ga Sugoi WEB

<https://konomanga.jp/interview/37565-2>

# Perry Mason



*Perry Mason TV Show*



Ace Attorney Courtroom  
(Titles 1-3)



# Perry Mason Characters



Perry Mason



Della Street



Paul Drake



Lieutenant  
Tragg



Hamilton Burger

# The Perry Mason Plot

1. The case is introduced
2. Mason investigates
3. Client is wrongly arrested
4. Further investigation
5. Trial Begins
6. Mason reverses the case by introducing new evidence
7. The true culprit is exposed in court.



# Conclusion

- *Ace Attorney*, in spite of its title, is a detective game series
- Part of its endurance and its success comes from its cross-cultural hybrids, a mix of Western and Japanese mysteries across media (novels, television)
- The “formula” of the series allows for endurance, but also to introduce variations that will surprise players.

# Thank you!

clara.fernandez@nyu.edu

Twitter: @clarafv

Mastodon: @clarafv@mastodon.social

Website: clarafv.net