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Do dziś nie wiadomo, kto stał za zbrodniami przypisywanymi Kubie Rozpruwaczowi, mordercy prostytutek z londyńskiego East Endu końca epoki wiktoriańskiej. Paul Begg rozważa kilka równorzędnych hipotez. Jego opowieść o zagadce seryjnego mordercy różni się od innych księzek na ten temat wyjątkowo skrupulatnie przedstawionym tłem historycznym i społecznym, na którym rozegrały się opisywane wydarzenia. Dzięki temu poznajemy tajemnice cieszących się złośców dzielnic dziewiętnastowiecznego Londynu, zasady pracy i techniki dochodzeniowe brytyjskiej policji oraz szczegółowe portrety ofiar mordercy. Autor dowodzi, że Kuba Rozpruwacz zostałby prawdopodobnie zapomniany, gdyby mordował gdzie indziej, za East End byłby sceną gotową na to, by rozegrały się na niej jakieś sensacyjne wydarzenia.

Kuba Rozpruwacz Details

Date : Published 2010 by Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy (first published November 21st 2002)

ISBN :

Author : Paul Begg

Format : 384 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Crime, True Crime, History, Mystery, Biography

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Ryan says

I'm not sure what I was expecting, but I guess this delivers exactly what the title says it will: an almost painfully detailed history of the Ripper slayings and every socio-economic, political and historic tidbit that can be even vaguely appended to them. The author provides a history of London's East End back to the Early Medieval era, contending that that piece of geography had always had a troubled history. I was hoping for some sort of new or alternate theories but none were forthcoming.

Louise Ludbrook says

When I looked over the library shelves for a book on JtR this was the one that appealed to me the most. I don't know why that was, but I got it anyway and read about 50 pages of it, then flicked through to parts that interested me. I'm a little annoyed with myself for not reading the entire book but the buildings etc of JtR's time just doesn't interest me whatsoever.

Katherine Addison says

Begg can't bring himself to let go of Sir Melville Macnaghten and especially not of Sir Robert Anderson, despite the fact that neither one of them stacks up well when you stop and think it over. This book has some very good chapters on the social history surrounding the murders--although his chapters on the murders themselves aren't as well-organized as Rumbelow's (Jack the Ripper: The Complete Casebook)--and I give him credit for keeping the theories about the murderer out of the discussion of the murders. But I find his hobby horse frustrating.

Sara says

E ben, sono in ferie. Giorno uno di ferie, libri due finiti. Però ho anche pulito la casa, quindi la coscienza (pure quella) è pulita. E questo è un altro dei tomi che servono in vista del giro a Londra, gentilmente prestatomi da chi viene con me, ma non aveva voglia di finirlo. Non è malaccio e questo Begg si è sicuramente dato da fare un sacco per stanare tutti i resoconti della polizia, i referti medici, gli articoli di giornale. Solo che è un po' asettico, leggermente pedante e fin troppo ricco di particolari. Il picco dell'interessante sono le foto al centro, nelle quali si ritraggono le vittime, vive o all'obitorio, e il luogo del ritrovamento, oltre al racconto minuto per minuto delle ultime ore di esistenza delle sventurate. Tutta gente proveniente dagli strati più sottoterra della società, prostitute anche occasionali che vagavano impavide(perchè ubriache) alle due di notte intorno a quelle tre/quattro strade dello Squartatore. Che mai più si capirà chi sia stato - forse forse un ebreo polacco, uno con un berretto floscio, magari un macellaio. Di certo c'è che all'epoca - e non solo per quanto riguarda la vicenda di Jack, c'era un grande interesse per gli uteri e i medici ne cercavano in grande quantità, anche andando contro la legge, freschi o in salamoia. Poi del gran sensazionalismo, una curiosità morbosa verso il sesso soffocata dai dettami della pudicizia vittoriana e una miseria quasi inumana. Bello per chi ci volesse fare una tesi sopra.

Lightreads says

This book distinguishes itself from the mass of Ripper scholarship by offering up a great deal more social and political context in an effort to explain why the Ripper story has endured and flowered in cultural consciousness. At least that's what it says, and it's mostly true -- between the chapters on each of the canonical Ripper victims there's a wealth of material on police procedure and internal politics, the rise of the Victorian social conscience, and the explosive growth of the news media. It's all thoroughly researched and logically presented, if a bit dully exhaustive at a few points, and there's a refreshing lack of the ubiquitous Ripper conspiracies.

A good book, really, though I can't help holding the oxymoronic title against it. Especially considering that from where I'm sitting, you simply cannot have a "definitive" discussion of a serial killer without ever even approaching the topic of psychology. Begg is only marginally more informed on criminal behavior than the police of 1888 were. He describes, for example, the controversy over the authenticity of the "dear boss" letters ostensibly written by the killer (who named himself Jack the Ripper in his signature) and sent to the papers. It's a thorough discussion, but it completely overlooks the fact that the Ripper is a classic disorganized offender -- impulsive, violent to the point of extreme overkill, opportunistic -- and that his type is exactly the sort to write to the papers and otherwise inject himself into an investigation.

Anyway, griping aside, you can't cover everything. The book does offer some fascinating discussions of issues vital to the time period, like the upper-class British response to the white slave trade in young girls and the slow groundswell of socialist feeling. The thesis is logical, and Begg does a pretty good job in describing the ripe hotbed of social unease in which the killings took place, though a bit less so regarding what it meant for the future of London's poor. And the recitation of the recoverable facts from the police investigations has a wonderfully charming familiarity, reminding me that the basic principles of investigation have and will remain the same over the centuries.

A good overview of the issues free from a lot of the Ripper hysterics and elaborate theories. It doesn't entirely do what it set out to accomplish (Begg never accounts for the fact that Ripper-mania has really only flourished in the past fifty years, not endured straight through) and the writing is rather boring sometimes, but still worth it, if this is your thing.

Ron says

I think this book is as important as Sugden's work. I consider both to be the two most unbiased and authoritative sources to date. What's more, while they essentially cover the same ground, there are some things mentioned in Begg's book I did not recall from Sugden's. I plan on re-reading them both in opposite order when I have the time to see if the same is true in reverse.

Gary Scott Gebert says

Full of Insight

The Ripper case has been an interest of mine. I always wanted to know more than the movies depicted. This book is that which did just that. A clear picture of the time and circumstances surrounding the case is fully described in this in-depth look at Jack The Ripper.

Read it.

Ed Eleazer says

Begg's history is, beyond a doubt, definitive. It covers not only the five canonical Ripper murders in detail, but also the two earlier ones —Emma Smith and Martha Tabram — with which the police Ripper file begins. Begg does not follow all the murders in said file, which ends with the murder of Frances Coles in 1891, but rather, ends with the vivisection of Mary Ann Kelly, then concludes with two chapters of speculation concerning the Ripper's identity. It is at this point that Begg's book transcends the typical Ripper text, since Begg argues up front that this mystery will most likely never be solved. He investigates the theories extant at the time and subsequent theories of the Ripper's identity, showing both the likelihood and unlikelihood of all suspects. The text provides a solid historical description of the milieu in which the murders occurred drawing almost exclusively from primary sources. Chapters describing the East End (particularly Whitechapel and Spitalfields), the politics of the era, prostitution in England in the nineteenth century, and the state of the media are well drawn and effective. This is the best book I have ever read on the Ripper —and I have read many.

Ann says

Currently rereading this book. Every autumn I like to reread one or more of the Jack the Ripper books I own, mainly because I find the subject endlessly fascinating. This 'History' gives a great deal of social and political background to help understand how Jack the Ripper's crimes impacted Victorian London, and indeed, why we are still discussing the case today.

This book is useful and informative both to the newcomer and to seasoned Ripperologists. I can;t recommend it enough.

Allison Barilone says

I really enjoyed this book. Finished it last night. It took me a while to read but was worth it in the end. I didn't like the commentary on who said what, who did what...it got a little annoying sometimes. And of course, speculation is a major part of the mystery. So, although I still don't know who killed those poor women, I want to read more. I don't think I'll ever be satisfied.

Stacy says

This book was perfect for writing a research paper on Jack the Ripper, because it doesn't focus on the mind-numbingly boring "cold hard facts" of the case, but rather focuses on the context of the murders instead,

which is what truly makes the Whitechapel murders interesting. My only beef was that it didn't go much into the legacy of Jack (after all, his "history" is ongoing into the present), but that is a personal complaint based on what I have to write for my paper.

Julie says

I picked up this book because I was going to visit a friend in London who lives in the Spitalfields/Whitechapel area of East London, which is where all the JTR events took place. The book was more than a re-telling of the gruesome events in the fall of 1888. He provided not only a great history of East London but also a detailed backdrop of London society (good and bad) at the time.

The only thing that kept me from giving it 5 stars is that he's pretty long-winded and almost too much so for my taste in certain parts. If I had not been visiting this particular area of London, I probably would have found it tedious to read.

All in all, a fascinating read for anyone interested in true crime, Victorian history or JTR in general. Enjoy!

Paul Barton says

This account is by a notable researcher and author so you'd expect top notch. Sadly I can't muster more than 3 stars because I found it boring.

I'm very familiar with the Whitechapel Murders and own about 25 books on the subject. This not a bad book by any means but it's a tiring read. Yes, the social and political history leading up to the late 1880s is highly pertinent in setting the scene and in explaining the terrible conditions (physical and psychological) that many East Enders found themselves living in.

In a murder story we want the author to be incisive, to cut to the chase. Begg doesn't do that but rambles on about the sorry relationship between government ministers and senior police officials.

For a more concise yet highly readable account which still touches on the social and the political, look no further than Sugden.

Dorota says

Well, it's definitely most complete account of social, historical and cultural context in Jack the Ripper killings. Truly fascinating!

And most scientific approach to the topic that really is impressive if you take into account how many people are still looking at Ripper's case for sensationalism.

Sarah says

What I like to read when I'm having fun being weird. I had to read this particular book for a history class. While obviously it appealed to the morbid side of me who is absolutely fascinated by criminology, it is an awesome look at dissecting culture and class conflict at that era in London, and does a great job of explaining why Whitechapel was as violently run-down as it was.

Jayson says

(A-) 80% | Very Good

Notes: A sometimes awkward and tangential contextual history, it nonetheless offers a new lens to view a worn-out subject.

Roy says

The G.B. Memorial has been condemned as unfit to use . I t was built as a memorial to the men who died in the 1 AND 2 World Wars but was not pooperely maintained as it should have been . That is where I have been borrowing my books since I retired . It may never open again as it was before , it was in a very poor location as it was . It may be relocated to another building in the town . So I have to look for another source for my reading material . My brother as a good collection of books in his library so I may go and borrow from him for the time being .

Sam says

A refreshing look at the Jack the Ripper killings that sets them into context with the political and social events of the time, including the increasing awareness and objection to the plight of British girls sold into prostitution in Europe and the subsequent change in attitude to prostitution as a whole. Between the chapters on the Ripper's victims Begg describes the changing political scene of the time, the changes in attitudes towards the working classes as a whole and toward prostitution specifically and the failures of the police investigation into these and other crimes.

Begg resists the temptation to discuss the many conspiracy theories concerning the identity of the Ripper instead focusing on the four main suspects of the time, providing evidence for and against and allowing the reader to make up their own mind (which is somewhat refreshing when it comes to Jack). He also discusses some of the more popular other suspects including Prince Albert Victor, and once again gives evidence for and against (with the evidence against far exceeding the evidence for in most of these). The only thing missing from this work is a discussion on the pyschology of the killer, however had this been included it may have clouded the issue further, as these kind of psychological profiles are only based on the information available, which in this case is conflicting at best.

Lloyd says

This, my second foray into the facts of Jack the Ripper, was not as readable as the first.

Don't get me wrong, the book had to have been meticulously researched and contained a wealth of ALL MANNER of knowledge from and about Whitechapel in the 1880s. But I think that was just it. I think the book strayed too far from the topic of the actual Ripper murders to hold someone's attention who is just getting into the whole subject and wants examinations of the cold facts.

Bottom line: This book is great at examining a lot of social, political, and cultural aspects of the time period and the area of the Ripper murders, but bogs down the person just looking for an examination of said murders.

Jo says

A relaying of the Whitechapel murders but put into their historical and sociological context. Begg doesn't rely on the sensationalism of other Ripper authors to convey the story. Interesting as a study of the late Victorians and not just the Ripper case.
