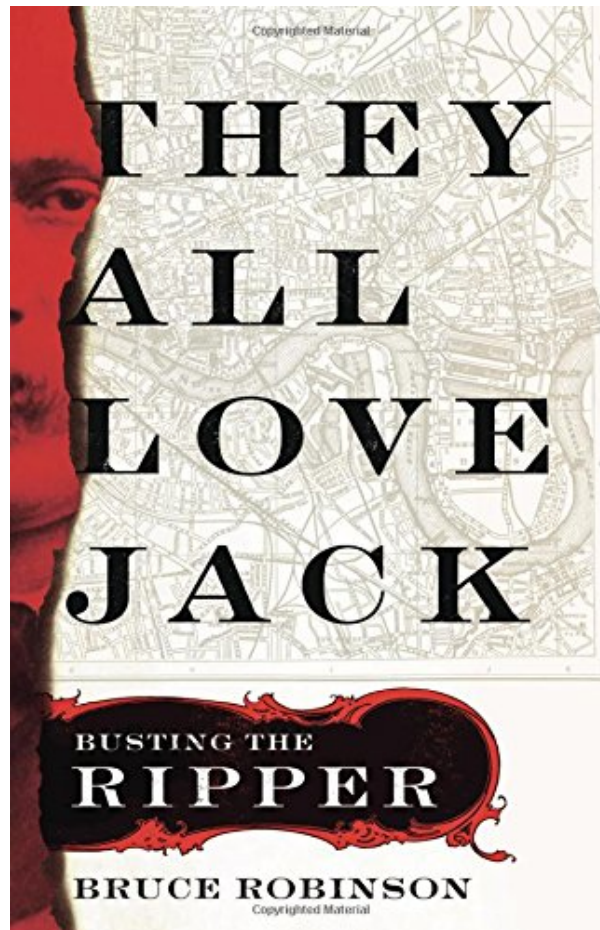
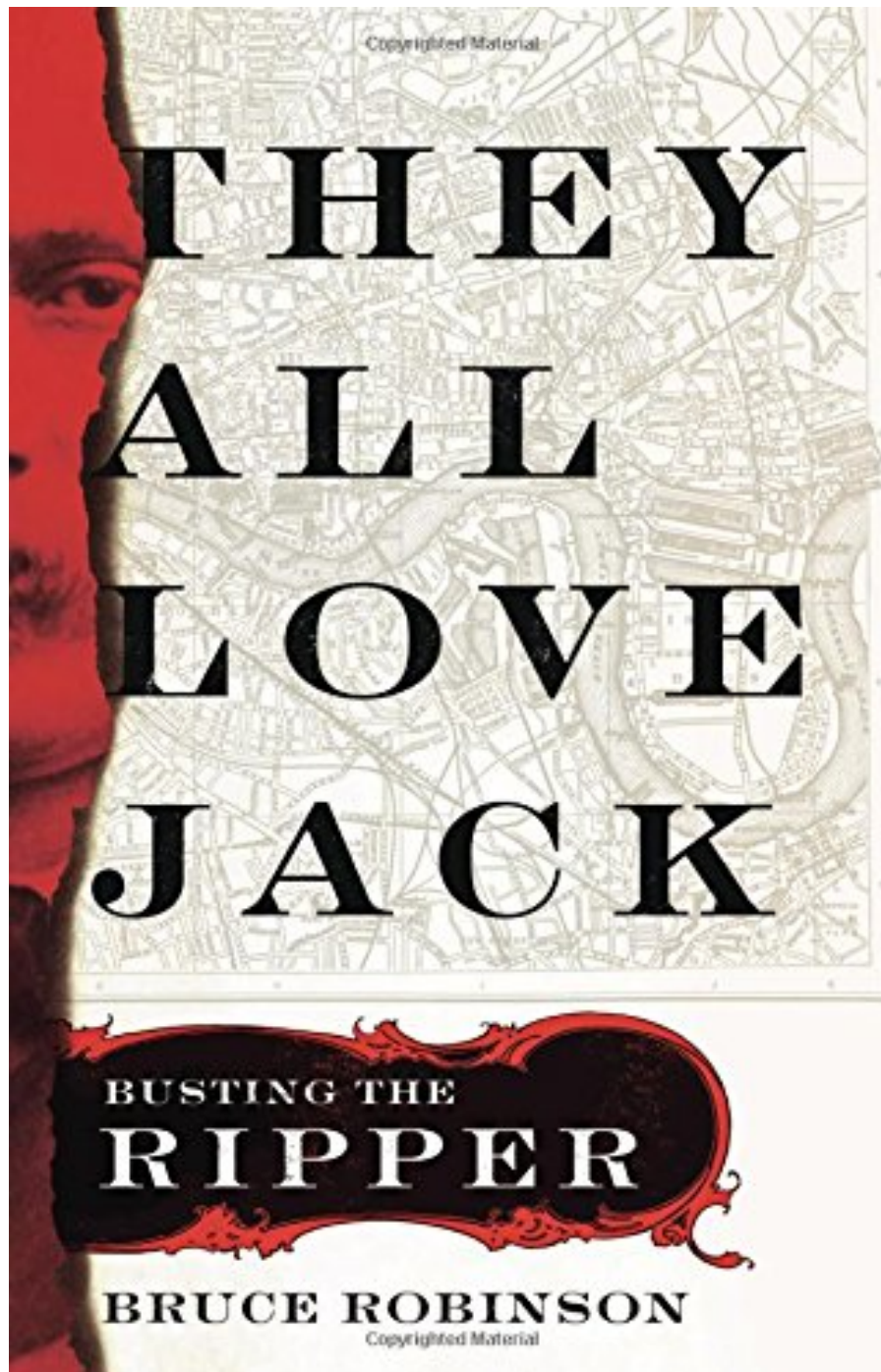


# THEY ALL LOVE JACK: BUSTING THE RIPPER BY BRUCE ROBINSON



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## Review

“Robinson’s achievement isn’t in revealing the Ripper but in writing the most involving, audacious, and wonderfully bonkers book of the year.” (Irish Times)

“A strange, mind-boggling mixture.... Anyone coming blind to the book might think it a collaboration between Dr. David Starkey and Johnny Rotten.” (Mail on Sunday)

“Rarely has a book on Jack the Ripper been written with such visceral anger: anger at Jack, at ‘Ripperology’, at the establishment, and anger at the police cover-up that allowed one of the world’s most infamous serial killers to remain free...Robinson’s...research is undoubtedly impressive.... A bloody good read.” (The Guardian)

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But what if there was never really any mystery at all? What if the Ripper was always hiding in plain sight, deliberately leaving a trail of clues to his identity for anyone who cared to look, while cynically mocking those who were supposedly attempting to bring him to justice?

In *They All Love Jack*, the award-winning film director and screenwriter Bruce Robinson exposes the cover-up that enabled one of history's most notorious serial killers to remain at large. More than twelve years in the writing, this is no mere radical reinterpretation of the Jack the Ripper legend and an enthralling hunt for the killer. A literary high-wire act reminiscent of Tom Wolfe or Hunter S. Thompson, it is an expressionistic journey through the cesspools of late-Victorian society, a phantasmagoria of highly placed villains, hypocrites, and institutionalized corruption.

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The iconoclastic writer and director of the revered classic *Withnail & I*—"The funniest British film of all time" (*Esquire*)—returns to London in a decade-long examination of the most provocative murder investigation in British history, and finally solves the identity of the killer known as "Jack the Ripper."

In a literary high-wire act reminiscent of both Hunter S. Thompson and Errol Morris, Bruce Robinson offers a radical reinterpretation of Jack the Ripper, contending that he was not the madman of common legend, but the vile manifestation of the Victorian Age's moral bankruptcy.

In exploring the case of Jack the Ripper, Robinson goes beyond the who that has obsessed countless others and focuses on the why. He asserts that any "gentlemen" that walked above the fetid gutters of London, the nineteenth century's most depraved city, often harbored proclivities both violent and taboo—yearnings that went entirely unpunished, especially if he also bore royal connections. The story of Jack the Ripper hinges on accounts that were printed and distributed throughout history by the same murderous miscreants who frequented the East End of her Majesty's London, wiping the fetid muck from their boots when they once again reached the marble floors of society's finest homes.

Supported by primary sources and illustrated with 75 to 100 black and white photographs, this breathtaking work of cultural history dismisses the theories of previous "Ripperologists." A Robinson persuasively makes clear with his unique brilliance, The Ripper was far from a poor resident of Whitechapel . . . he was a way of life.

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#### Most helpful customer reviews

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful.

##### Ripping Away The Shadows

By John D. Cofield

In the fall of 1888 Britain was transfixed by a series of gruesome murders in the Whitechapel district of London, a teeming slum packed with desperate people only a short cab or bus ride from some of the most elegant neighborhoods in what was then the wealthy capital of the greatest empire in the world. Prostitutes were murdered and eviscerated, their wombs and other body parts stolen, ambiguous references to "Juwes" were smeared on walls, and taunting messages were sent to the police by the murderer, a monster who called himself Jack the Ripper. It was terrifying, but then the murders stopped. After a few months it was assumed that the Ripper had committed suicide, and the matter was laid to rest, more or less, by the authorities. Over the years since there have been innumerable theories as to the Ripper's identity, ranging from the Heir Presumptive to the Throne all the way down to the most miserable denizens of the slums. Now Bruce Robinson, who is no historian but a talented screenwriter, director, and author, has produced a massive 800

page indictment not only of the real Ripper but of the secret society and corrupt Establishment that covered up his identity for its own protection.

If Robinson is to be believed, and he's marshalled considerable evidence to back up his claims, Jack the Ripper was actually Michael Maybrick, a prominent composer and songwriter under the name Stephen Adams. Maybrick was also a Freemason who had risen high in the secret society's hierarchy. Being a Mason meant that he was connected with most of the prominent political and economic leadership of Victorian Britain, including the Prince of Wales. When the Ripper began his murder spree he was careful to leave clues and signs of his Masonic connections that Scotland Yard's leadership, who were also Freemasons, would recognize and take steps to obscure from public knowledge. This conspiracy spread into the highest levels of government as the Ripper kept killing, doing away with many more victims than is usually believed. Now Robinson's difficulty here is that the evidence against Maybrick, startling and compelling though much of it is, must remain circumstantial. But Robinson does a good job of explaining how Maybrick could have done it. His busy schedule as an entertainer kept him on the road throughout Britain and sometimes beyond, and at times his concerts coincided with dates and places from which the Ripper is known to have mailed some of his taunting letters to Scotland Yard. Some of those letters supposedly were sent from the United States, but Robinson has an easy explanation for how that could have been done as well (in those days a well dressed man in Liverpool or other British ports could stroll on board a ship that was about to depart, idly drop a letter in the ship's post box, and know that it would eventually reach its intended recipient with a New York or other American postmark.) Most intriguing of all, whether or not Maybrick was the Ripper, he was definitely connected with another sensational murder case at about the same time period. His brother James Maybrick, a wealthy man with an unfaithful wife, died from what appeared to be arsenic poisoning in 1889. Mrs. Maybrick was accused of his murder by her in-laws and then tried and found guilty by a biased judge and corrupt court system which was part of the same Establishment that protected the Ripper.

*They All Love Jack* is an immensely complicated and often convoluted and repetitive read. Robinson found a lot of fascinating information about Freemasonry, the foibles and criminal acts of the British Establishment, the ins and outs of the late nineteenth century transportation and communication networks, the sad and sordid lives of the residents of Whitechapel and other British slums, and much more, and he packed it all into this one book. His writing is vivid and colorful in the extreme, not hesitating to drop numerous f-bombs and freely scatter a-, b-, c- and other words throughout his pages, while using inventive (and funny) nicknames to refer to some of his more prominent targets. There is a justifiable air of righteous indignation throughout the book that may explain some occasional mistakes here and there: he always incorrectly refers to the Prime Minister as "Viscount Lord Salisbury," for example. Some of the material he includes has only a tangential relationship to anything else: a long appendix about Charles Stewart Parnell (oddly headed "The Maybrick Mystery" in my copy) is apparently there just to provide further evidence of the corruption and crassness of the British Establishment.

I'd call this book more "expose" than "history," so intent is Robinson on illuminating the shadows that hid not only the Ripper's identity but also a host of other criminals and sordid acts of judicial and political misconduct in Victorian Britain. It's a long and arduous read that will sometimes leave your head spinning trying to keep track of who was doing what to whom, but it's definitely revelatory. Michael Maybrick may or may not have been the Ripper, but he was definitely a curious man, as was the Society of which he was a part for so many years.

15 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

Should probably be subtitled: "Busting the Victorian Establishment and Modern Ripperology."

By Lee Freeman

Chutzpah is right. While making some interesting, and I believe valid points, Bruce Robinson's massive, 850



page \*They all Love Jack: Busting the Ripper\* at times reads more like a rant against what he sees as the hypocrisy of the Victorian establishment and modern-day Ripperology than a dispassionate examination of the 1888 Ripper murders with an eye to outing the Ripper. Robinson's disdain for the Victorian upper-class (from Queen Victoria on down), as well as the London Police in general, Sir Charles Warren in particular, literally drips from his pen. Nor do household names in Ripperology, such experts as Martin Fido, Stewart Evans, Melvin Harris, Keith Skinner, Philip Sugden, and even Donald Rumbelow, escape unscathed: though repeatedly saying that he has no beef with individual Ripperologists, Ripperology in general and several noted scholars of the JTR case in particular (especially the late Melvin Harris), come in for Robinson's ire, as he accuses them of blindly accepting the 1888 establishment verdict that the Metropolitan Police and Scotland Yard were doing everything in their power to catch "Jack." Apparently, modern Ripperology is continuing Sir Charles Warren's original goal of obscuring the true identity of the Ripper. "Bro. Charles," as Robinson calls him (every government or police official who was a Freemason Robinson likes to refer to as "Bro.") and the police weren't interested in the truth. Why? Because "Jack" was not only a member of the Victorian London establishment but he was also a Freemason, and as most of the key players such as Warren, Coroner Bagster Philips, etc. were also Freemasons, they were bound by the bonds of Masonic fraternity and fidelity to the Craft to obscure his identity:

"But justice wasn't what Warren was about. The last thing anyone wanted was an arrest, God forbid. It would have put an entire (and clandestine) ruling elite in the dock - its morals, its monarchy - and would possibly have had the cataclysmic side-effect of extirpating Freemasonry from the judiciary, the police and the royal family for all time. "

Speaking of professional Ripperologists, Robinson says on pp. xii-xiii:

"There's a hybrid of Ripperology responsible for a dizzying variety of publications over the last half-century. By a process of attrition and endless industry, this coterie of authors has come to 'own' this history. They are self-appointed 'experts' and guardians of flat-earth thinking. Under constrictions of the herd (and by some by [sic] design) they have constructed a formidable camouflage around this criminal. It is necessary to break through it before there is any possibility of discovering the identity of our Victorian psychopath.

"Busting Jack entails an unraveling of the root-system that is way beyond the constipated strictures of Ripperology."

And on p. 16:

"They think like Victorians, and they think like each other. If a supposed 'authority' said it, irrespective of any possible agenda, they gobble it up like the universal quack remedy Fowler's Solution. . . . I can only speak for myself, but I decline to swallow such nostrums."

On p. 156:

"With one or two notable exceptions (and they know who they are), I'm reticent about having Ripperology accompany me further into this enquiry, and look forward to being free of it once I move beyond the 'canonical' murders. I tire of its blindness, constipated thinking and phony academia. I tire of its 'shameless manipulation.' Ripperology is like a gang of shagged-out seagulls in the wake of a phantom steamer. From time to time something might come over the side: 'Quick, boys! Dive! Dive! It might be a "marginalia," or even another Jew!' Squabbling and counter-squabbling ensue, squawking from those known for it, those parsimonious smiles from those who know better, and the HMS \*Canonical\* ploughs on."

Robinson writes on p. 247:

“For what it’s worth, I’ve been a professional writer for the best part of forty years. I’ve researched widely, from the Manhattan Project to the Khmer Rouge, but until confronted with Ripperology I had never labored through such an expulsion of syncopated crap masquerading as history in all my life. It knows all the ‘facts,’ does Ripperology – knows the name of Elizabeth Stride’s home town in Sweden and the number of teeth in her upper jaw – but in respect of context, it hasn’t got a f\*\*\* clue.”

These are just a small sampling of Robinson's assessments of professional Ripperology.

As has been said in earlier reviews, there isn’t much of the disinterested scholar in Robinson’s book. Speaking of Warren’s removal of the “Goulston Street grafitto,” Robinson writes on p. 258:

Anyone who believes Warren’s riot bull\*\*\* would probably have difficulty with the plots of Enid Blyton.”

Metropolitan Police Officer Donald Swanson, author of the famed “Swanson marginalia” suggesting Kosminski as the Ripper, becomes “Donald ‘Shifty Nib’ Swanson.”

Of “Jack” himself, Robinson writes on p. xii:

“There’s a perverse, almost heroic status that has evolved around this pr\*\*\*, as though he were someone special, rather than the epitome of all that is cruel, and a God-d\*\*\* repugnance.”

These are just a few examples of Robinson's colorful prose. He especially favors "arse" and the "F" word. We’re treated to such “inimitably vivid and scabrous prose” (as its described on the inside front dust-jacket) throughout the book, and while Robinson in my humble opinion has obviously studied the JTR case and makes some good points, challenging the accepted received wisdom at certain key places, such as regarding the Goulston Street grafitto and the issue of whether there were grapes in the hands of the murdered Elizabeth Stride, Robinson’s writing style and obvious problems with professional Ripperology may make it hard for many readers to take Robinson’s views seriously. Not to even mention the overall thesis of the book, his conspiracy-theory that the Ripper was an upper-class Freemason and that the officials of the Metropolitan Police and Scotland Yard (such as Sir Charles Warren and Donald Swanson), many of whom were also Freemasons, felt compelled to cover up, both that fact, and the true identity of the Ripper.

So if you can wade through all of these issues, Robinson actually may make some valid points. The book’s subtitle, instead of “Busting Jack the Ripper,” should probably be “Busting the Victorian Establishment and Modern Ripperology.” In the meantime, I wouldn’t throw out my copy of \*The Jack the Ripper A to Z\* just yet.

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Historic homicides and wicked humor make one interesting long night...

By Elspeth G. Perkin

Being more accustomed to fictional imaginative twists of the infamous historic murder cases of Victorian England, in the beginning I simply came to They All Love Jack: Busting the Ripper with a dark curiosity but a primed open mind to traipse down more practical alleyways of facts, and to finally explore the known evidence and be confronted with an intense determined new voice of historical research. Well this narrative certainly accomplished all that and I’m happy to say I received my full money’s worth of specifics concerning one (if not the most) baffling murder mysteries the world has ever known along with gritty investigative writing that well explained many (and presented some very convincing) theories but also found

a devilishly amusing companion that had me laughing out loud and kept me eagerly leaned forward in my chair to hear more from night after night. I think it is safe to say, this is one of those books that depends entirely on finding the right reader for though. I can see where unwavering myths and beliefs collide with some surprising offensive disclosures in this intense work and some readers are sure to not like what they may see (or hear) in *They All Love Jack: Busting the Ripper*.

For this reader, I can't honestly say I loved *They All Love Jack: Busting the Ripper* but I did finish with my ears buzzing and mind twirling with lasting questions and respect for the research that was presented. Still after spending many nights with this impassioned title I also finished not entirely agreeing with this author's long list of arguments and found the disconnected tone toward the victims, the confusing beginning context, fixation of certain clues and disappointing discarding of others (after a huge buildup) my main negatives with this book. That all fully aside, I would still readily recommend this book (Audible version) to anyone who is prepared to explore the facts of the historic cases and the many gaslit alleyways of: elaborate conspiracies, mass corruption and sabotage, ancient society links, secret symbols and breakdowns of polite society all surrounding the greatest mystery that no writer could ever have penned or will probably ever correctly solve, but they sure are welcome to try and this reader will appreciate the effort.

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