



Jack the Ripper: The Simple Truth

Bruce Paley

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"THE BEST JACK THE RIPPER BOOK OF THEM ALL...Ripperology with a human face." REVISED EDITION WITH NEW AFTERWORD AND INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR, & CORRECTIONS OF CORRUPTED TEXT

Bruce Paley's book has been hailed as a classic of the genre for many reasons. Not only does he build a powerful case against his suspect, Joseph Barnett, but Paley probably did more research than anyone else, with the result that his depiction of the East End of London c. 1888 is second to none, and has been singled out for its unrivalled richness and vividness. Paley has also been praised for his studious, unsensational account of the crimes, and his compassionate portraits of the Ripper's victims. This is what some of the critics had to say. Writing in *The Daily Mail* (25/11/95), Val Hennessey wrote: "Bruce Paley's excellent book convinces me, for one, that Jack the Ripper has at last been nailed...Apart from convincingly identifying the Ripper, Paley's book paints an extraordinarily vivid picture of late 19th century London. It opens your eyes to the hopeless, harsh lives endured by single and deserted women, especially those with children, in the days before job opportunities and full time education." As such, Hennessey echoes the words of the esteemed writer Colin Wilson, who wrote in the foreword to Paley's book: "If I had to recommend a single book on Jack the Ripper to someone who knew nothing about the subject, I would unhesitatingly choose this one. Bruce Paley has captured the atmosphere of Whitechapel at the time of the murders - and indeed, London in the late 19th century - with a sense of living reality that no other writer on the case has achieved...[It is] the most evocative book on the period that I have ever read."

Writing in the *Guardian* (22/11/06), Nancy Banks-Smith wrote: "[Jack the Ripper] was almost certainly Joseph Barnett, the live-in lover of the last victim, Mary Kelly, a theory convincingly argued by Bruce Paley in his book *Jack the Ripper: The Simple Truth*." Some years later, Adrian Morris, the editor of *The Journal of the Whitechapel Society*, declared Paley's book to be the best Jack the Ripper book of them all. "The immense strength of Paley's book," Morris wrote in February, 2010, "is that his suspect Barnett is perfectly placed to act as an almost unknowing device to explore the milieu of the East End with its poverty, exploitation and vice, whilst also drawing the reader into the soulless world of the victim...This Paley does brilliantly. His prose is powerful and, dare I say it beautiful. In Paley's words the Nietzschean hordes that are measured and understood as a value of history become material to act within a story that explores the full tragedy of the East End. Paley really does understand the East End A.D.1888, his words map out its DNA, his sentences tap out the arithmetic of existence. For one to understand the Whitechapel murders, one must understand the times. Nowhere can one do this better than in the chapters Paley devotes to this historical sociology. For Paley understands that while the Ripper was killing its womenfolk (albeit destitutes), the East End itself was eating its children in the jaws of poverty. Paley's excellent and wide ranging research underpins his descriptions. This is history with a poetical syncopation that adds to the subject matter in the mind of the reader. Paley describes the environs of Dorset Street and Miller's Court that takes some beating and is redolent of an informed approach that makes you feel he must have known the old place...I can only amplify [Colin Wilson's] endorsement uttered on the book's 1995 release by adding, without wishing to seem overly unctuous, that when compiling a booklist of authors that one would like to proffer to the uninitiated, soon-to-be initiated or just plain curious on the subject of the Whitechapel murders, I would advise that the list starts with 'Bruce' and ends in 'Paley'! Paley's book is truly Ripperology with a human face."

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Kayla Wilson:

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