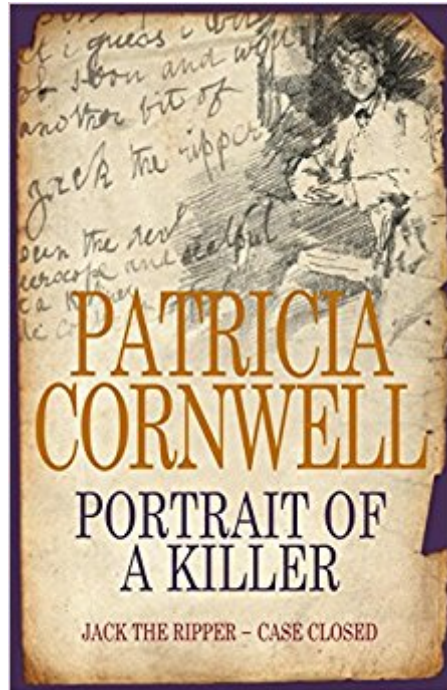


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Portrait Of A Killer: Jack The Ripper - Case Closed



Synopsis

America's top crime writer solves the infamous case that has baffled experts for more than a century. Unabridged, twelve cassettes, 18 hours --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Authors, A-Z > (C) > Cornwell, Patricia #1635 inÂ Books > History > Historical Study &

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Customer Reviews

This is without a doubt the worst book on Jack the Ripper that I have ever had the misfortune to read. And, masochist that I am, I struggled through 342 pages, hoping to find some redeeming quality--some sort of smoking gun...er...bloody knife, that is, that could give this work some grounds for its pretentious "Case Closed" title. Why was it so bad? Because the way Pat Cornwell jumps to conclusions about gave me whiplash. Her favorite words, apparently, are 'could' and 'perhaps'. As in, (paraphrasing), "He could have worn disguises." Nothing to back it up, mind you, just a 'could have'. And that 'could have' becomes gospel truth for the rest of the book. He could have done this, he could have done that. Perhaps he did this, perhaps he did that. Where is the evidence? Where is objectivity? Granted, evidence is scarce in the Ripper case, and so much has been poured and sifted through many, many times before. But as I read this book, I got the strong, overriding impression, that Cornwell found her suspect first--and *then* built a case to fit, rather than examining the case to find a suspect. And all of the gaps of logic, leaps of faith, could have's, and perhaps's fill in the gaps, otherwise she wouldn't have had a book. The much hyped DNA evidence she depends on basically relies on letters that flooded London in those days, both to police and newspapers and others. The vast majority are thought now, and were thought then to be hoaxes.

Many different handwritings, pieces of stationary, locations the letters were sent from. Pat believes that all, or nearly all of them, are real, and all of them come from her favored suspect, Walter Sickert. Apparently Mr.

Patricia Cornwell's investigation into whether British painter Walker Sickert was in fact also infamous murderer Jack the Ripper has been fascinating to follow in the media over the last year. As the essence of any good investigation is clear, accurate perception, precision, and a rigorous search for the facts and truth by objective methods, it is by these standards that Cornwell's book must be considered. The author has accumulated an enormous amount of circumstantial evidence against Sickert, but 'Portrait of a Killer' is amateurishly written, sloppily executed, and poorly edited. For a famous crime writer, Cornwell has produced a weak book unlikely to stand up to scrutiny or survive the brunt of attacks by Ripperologists the world over, written as it has been for the uncritical light reader. Every facet of 'Portrait of a Killer' seems rushed, as though Cornwell wrote with little consideration for structure and then submitted the manuscript without rereading, rewriting, or thinking it through as a whole. The awkward title alone suggests Cornwell's hesitations: 'Portrait of a Killer / Jack The Ripper / Case Closed.' Why not 'Walter Sickert: Portrait of a Killer,' or 'Walter Sickert: Jack The Ripper?' Why the reservation about damning her subject in the title, as she does so heartily in the text? For Cornwell damns Sickert before she's made her case, and from the first page. She immediately refers to Sickert as a killer as if this were an objective fact, and as a 'psychopath,' a phrase she bandies about loosely and without proper definition throughout the book. By contemptuously referring to his rented East End studios as 'ratholes' upon their first mention, Cornwell makes her biases entirely clear.

It's almost funny, Patricia Cornwell has conned a lot of critics and her publisher - but the reviewing public here at sees right through the garbage. Cornwell's theory about poor old Walter Sickert is so full of holes that I frequently found myself chuckling as I read. Only allowed a thousand words here so I can't tear this book apart line by line. But here's a fun example: Cornwell points out that Jack the Ripper often used horse racing slang in his letters, even gave the cops tips on the ponies! The tie-in to Sickert is clear she says - the Ripper once referred to "Bangor Street" in a letter and there is no Bangor Street in London. But don't go away now, there is a city called Bangor in Wales which has a racecourse! Stay with old Patty now, here's the clincher, and I quote: "While I have no evidence that Sickert bet on race horses, I don't have any fact to say he didn't". CASE CLOSED, as the cover says. Hey, while I have no evidence that Patricia Cornwell wears men's size 12 Bruno

Magli shoes, I have no proof that she doesn't either - call Mark Furman. It only gets better. Cornwell finds a guest book at some obscure coastal England bed and breakfast. The guest register was defiled and doodled in by a guest Cornwell assumes to be the Ripper many years after the Ripper murders. She points out that poor old Sickert was never seen there (he was semi-famous), and never registered there. But she's happy to spend a chapter assuming that he registered there under an alias, and disguised, decades after the Ripper murders because it was the kind of place he would have liked. CASE CLOSED! You want evidence of a crime, folks, it's on page 184. Old Patricia found evidence that she thought might point to a London cop, not Sickert.

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