

Jack the Ripper Case Study : “From Hell” Film Preamble

Warning: Viewer discretion advised! (You can opt for the alternative assignment in the library if you want.)

Rationale Jack the Ripper was modern Western civilization’s first serial killer. If the theory in this movie is correct, he is not a typical serial killer. If this theory is not correct, he is. Either way we can use this movie as a bridge to further understanding why serial killers exist in our society, and what we can do to diminish them.

We will also practice our profiling skills with the assignment that accompanies the movie.

Historical Truth in the Movie (facts)

- the murders of the 5 prostitutes, their names, the positions the bodies were found in and the specific mutilations done to them
- the prostitutes were all intoxicated when killed
- the investigators (Inspector Abberline)
- the members of the Freemasons and the structure of the organization at the time
- the letters from the Ripper (signed “From Hell,” and one sent with a kidney from one of the victims)
- the social conditions of Whitechapel (East London) in 1888 (poverty, prostitution, alcoholism, violence, etc.)
- the profile of Jack the Ripper presented throughout
- Queen Victoria’s grandson Albert stayed at painter’s Walter Sickert’s flat “undercover” and probably at least met Anne Crook (and maybe more...)
- religious overtones (Protestant v.s. Catholic)
- the “Elephant Man” John Merrick
- the level of anti-semitism in Europe at this time
- the message written on the wall of the apartment after one of the murders (“The Jewes are the men That Will be blamed for nothing”)
- Police Commissioner Sir Charles Warren ordered the message to be erased before sunrise, destroying its value as evidence (the reason he gave was fear of riots against London’s Jewish minority- but did this message refer to the Jewish religion, or something else ?...)
- a leather apron was found after one murder
- only one witness actually saw and described the Ripper
- the police “stood down” after the 5th murder, meaning they must have thought the Ripper was out of commission (in jail, a mental institution or dead)

Interpretations/Theories/Dramatization in the Movie (opinion)

- Inspector Abberline’s visions and opium addiction
- the Ripper’s identity
- the Abberline/ Mary Kelly storyline
- the prostitutes knew each other

Jack the Ripper Case Study : “From Hell” Film The Assignment

After discussing the above and viewing the film, complete the following:

1. Using your knowledge of profiling from Unit 1 and Serial Killers from this unit, create a profile of the “Jack the Ripper” suspect based on the facts of the case using the following categories and give a reason for each speculation:

Gender

Age

Occupation

Education

Lifestyle

Personality Type

Motivation

One Other Category (your choice)

2. Analyze the theory regarding the Ripper’s identity and motivations presented in the movie. Is it feasible ? Why or why not ?
3. Describe the social conditions in Whitechapel (East London) with examples from the film. Has modern Western society changed in this regard ? Explain.
4. Prostitutes are the main victims of serial killers. Why do you think this is the case ? Give at least two reasons.

Jack the Ripper Case Study : “From Hell” Film Debriefing

- see preamble overhead again

The Theory Presented in the Film (if this is true the Ripper is not a typical serial killer)

The [Duke of Clarence](#) marries and fathers a child with Annie Crook, a shop worker from the East End of London; she is unaware of her husband's royal position. [Queen Victoria](#) becomes aware of the marriage, and has Albert separated forcibly from his wife, whom she then places in an [asylum](#). Victoria then instructs her royal [physician](#) Sir [William Withey Gull](#) to impair Annie's sanity, which he does by damaging or impairing her thyroid gland (Gull was the first to describe the state of hypothyroidism, calling it a 'cretinoid condition in adult women'.) The potentially scandalous matter is resolved, until a group of [prostitutes](#) - Annie's friends - who are aware of the illegitimate child and its royal connections, attempt [blackmail](#) in order to pay off a gang of thugs who are threatening them. Gull is once again enlisted, this time to silence the group of women who are threatening the crown. The police are complicit in the crimes - they are granted prior knowledge of Gull's intentions, and are adjured not to interfere until the plot is completed.

Gull, a high-ranking [Freemason](#), begins a campaign of violence against the five women, brutally murdering them with the aid of a carriage driver called John Netley. While he justifies the brutal murders by claiming they are a [Masonic](#) warning to an apparent [Illuminati](#) threat to the throne - the Illuminati were blamed, in some quarters, for the [French Revolution](#) - the killings are in actuality part of an elaborate mystical ritual to mirror the executions of Jubela, Jubelo and Jubelum for killing Master Mason Hiram Abiff (throats cut from left to right, mutilation, etc.) It is revealed that Gull suffered a stroke a year previous to his killings in the East End; during this episode he was afforded a vision of Jah-Bul-On, a masonic deity. Apparently, it was this vision that prompted the later murders, and its accompanying masonic designs.

Gull takes [John Netley](#), his coachman, sole confidant, and reluctant aide, on a tour of [London](#) landmarks (including [Cleopatra's Needle](#) and [Nicholas Hawksmoor's](#) churches), expounding about their hidden mystical significance, which is lost to the modern world. Later, Gull forces the semi-literate Netley to write the infamous "[From Hell letter](#)" which lends the work its title.

Gull has a number of [transcendent](#), [mystical](#) experiences in the course of the murders, culminating with a vivid vision of what London will be like a century after he apparently kills [Mary Jane Kelly](#). Unknown to Gull, the Mary Kelly he has killed is actually another woman who was sleeping in her lodgings. Nevertheless this oversight does not impede the magical aspect of Gull's plan, and it is implied that, through his grisly activities, male dominance over femininity is assured, and the twentieth century is thus given its dominant form

Gull is tried by a secret Freemasonic council, which determines he is insane; Gull, for his own part, refuses to submit to the council, informing them that no man amongst them may be counted as his peer, and may not therefore judge the 'mighty work' he has wrought. A phony funeral is staged, and Gull is imprisoned under a pseudonym 'Thomas Mason'.

The Other Three Main Suspects (if one of these men is the Ripper, than he is a typical serial killer)

1. Aaron Kosminski

Aaron Kosminski (1865– 1919). A member of London's Polish-Jewish population, Aaron Kosminski was born in Kłodawa, Poland, in 1865. He was transferred to [Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum](#) in February 1891. He was named as a suspect in Chief Constable Melville Macnaghten's memoranda, which stated that there were strong reasons for suspecting him, that he "had a great hatred of women, with strong homicidal tendencies", and that he strongly resembled "the man seen by a City PC" near Mitre Square. (This is the only mention of any such sighting, and it has been suggested by some authors that Macnaghten really meant the City Police witness Joseph Lawende, though others suggest alternative explanations.). Written comments by former Assistant Commissioner [Sir Robert Anderson](#) and former Chief Inspector Donald Swanson claimed that the Ripper had been identified by the "only person who had a good view of the murderer", though many authors express skepticism that this alleged identification ever happened, for a variety of reasons. Anderson and Swanson further stated that no prosecution was possible because the witness was not willing to offer testimony against a fellow Jew. In marginalia in his copy of the memoirs, Swanson said that this man was "Kosminski", adding that he had been watched at his brother's home in Whitechapel by the City police, that he was taken to the asylum with his hands tied behind his back, and that he died shortly after. These last two details are quite untrue of Aaron Kosminski, who lived until 1919. His insanity took the form of auditory hallucinations, a paranoid fear of being fed by other people, and a refusal to wash or bathe. Kosminski also meets many of the criteria in the general profile of serial killers as outlined by [John Douglas](#) and Robert Ressler, including compulsive masturbation, unsteady employment, and absence of a biological father (his father died when Kosminski was 8 years old). He also lived close to the sites of the murders. He was described as harmless in the asylum, although he had once brandished a chair at asylum attendants. He was previously reputed to have threatened his sister with a knife. These two incidents are the only known indications of violent behavior. The copy of Anderson's *The Lighter Side Of My Official Life* containing the handwritten notes by Swanson was donated to [Scotland Yard's](#) Crime Museum in 2006.

2. Francis Tumblety

"Dr." **Francis Tumblety** (c. [1833–1903](#)). Seemingly uneducated or self-educated American, he earned a small fortune posing as an expert doctor throughout the [USA](#) and [Canada](#) and occasionally traveling across [Europe](#) as well. Perceived as a [misogynist](#), he was connected to the deaths of some of his patients, though it is uncertain if this was deliberate or not. Francis was in England in [1888](#). He was arrested on [November 7, 1888](#), "on charges of gross indecency", apparently for engaging in homosexual practices. He was released on bail on [November 16, 1888](#). Awaiting trial, he instead fled the country for [France](#) on [November 24, 1888](#). It has been suggested that he could have been released in time for the murder of Mary Jane Kelly (on [November 9](#)), though there is no evidence of it having happened. Notorious in the United States for his scams, news of his arrest led some to suggest he was the Ripper. Whether he was a killer or an eccentric regarded with unjust suspicion is a matter of debate. Tumblety was mentioned as having been a Ripper suspect by a member of the Metropolitan Police in a letter to a journalist many years after the murders, but this official was not known to have been directly connected to the Ripper investigation. Claims that Scotland Yard sent an officer to the United States in 1888 to try to bring Tumblety back in connection with the crimes have been disputed by recent research. One common objection to Tumblety's viability as a suspect lies with his alleged homosexuality, since in general male homosexual serial killers kill other men and not women.

3. Montague John Druit

Montague John Druit ([August 15, 1857–December 1, 1888](#)). Druit was born in the town of [Wimborne Minster, Dorset, England](#), the son of a prominent local physician. Having received his B.A. from the [University of Oxford](#) in [1880](#), he was admitted to the bar in [1885](#). From this time he practised as a [barrister](#) and a special pleader until his death. He was also employed as an assistant schoolmaster at George Valentine's boarding school, 9 Eliot Place, [Blackheath](#) from [1881](#) until he was dismissed shortly before his death in [1888](#). He was an avid sportsman and was an amateur [cricket](#) player. His body was found floating in the [River Thames](#) at [Chiswick](#) on [December 31, 1888](#). Medical examination suggested that his body was kept at the bottom of the river for several weeks by stones placed in his pockets. The [coroner's jury](#) concluded that he committed [suicide](#) by [drowning](#) "whilst of unsound mind." His mother suffered from depression and died in an [asylum](#) in [1890](#). His disappearance and death shortly after the fifth and last canonical murder (which took place on [9 November 1888](#)) and alleged "private information" led some of the investigators of the time to suggest he was the Ripper, thus explaining the end to the series of murders. More recently some have expressed doubts if he committed suicide or was himself murdered. Recent research shows that between the Kelly murder and his death he had been involved as legal representation in a court case and, according to the judge, argued his side well. Some people suggest that this counters the notion that Druit had broken down mentally after the Kelly murder. Inspector [Frederick Abberline](#) doubted Druit as a serious suspect.

