

# deliverance in White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings.

## Jack the Ripper, the Dialectic of Enlightenment and the Search for Spiritual Deliverance in White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings



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**Abstract**

**PDF**

Jack the Ripper is purported to have claimed: 'I gave birth to the twentieth-century.' In what follows I want to suggest that what Jack the Ripper 'gave birth to' was little more than a perpetuation of the paradox that lies at the heart of Western civilization: the dialectic of enlightenment. The rationalising impulse that led to the liberation of the modern subject from the tyrannical faith in myth, superstition, and sovereign power, and their embodiment in the objective world is, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, also responsible for its negation by reducing it to the status of that objective, or natural world from which it was attempting to liberate itself. A reading of Iain Sinclair's 1987 novel, *White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings*, in relation to contemporary theorisations of modernity, such as that of Alain Touraine, suggests that any escape from the Ripper paradox, any 'spiritual deliverance' through historical investigation, requires a reconceptualisation of the relationship between subject and object, past and present – in short – a reappraisal of the project of modernity.

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