



**London's Shadows:
The Dark Side of
the Victorian City**
by Drew D Gray
(Bloomsbury, £14.99)

Victorian society had never before experienced anything like the series of brutal killings of prostitutes that became known as the Whitechapel murders. Not that murder was uncommon in London; in the same year, 1888, four men were sentenced to death for murder. But the mysterious and savage killer who was nicknamed Jack the Ripper was the first British serial killer and he came to embody all that Victorians feared most about the urban, industrialised society that they had created, with its appalling poverty, prostitution and crime. As Drew Gray says, Jack became for them “a phantom born out of the filth and degradation of Godless communities”. Wisely, however, Gray does not attempt to solve this most famous of all cold cases. But he does illuminate the shadows of Victorian London by placing the murders into a fascinating historical context of sensationalist newspaper reporting, social problems and inadequate policing. The result exemplifies the best kind of academic publishing: authoritative, intelligent, and well-written. **PD Smith**