

## Fake Books

Literary forgeries are not very common fortunately but there have been some nearly successful attempts. Fake books can mean untold wealth for the forger and people want to believe that they are authentic. As with art forgeries, the correct materials have to be used and the style of writing is very telling.

The most infamous of all the known forgeries is probably the Hitler Diaries. These caused quite a storm when the German magazine, Stern published parts of the diaries in 1983. A journalist had discovered them and handed them over to experts, specializing in World War II, for their evaluation. The conclusion was that they were authentic and they were hailed as an amazing find. Respected British newspaper, The Sunday Times, also published extracts and boasted of their coup. They had all been fooled. It was very soon apparent that all sixty volumes were fake books, printed on modern day paper and using contemporary ink. It also became clear that there were inaccurate descriptions of historical events.

The publications involved and the experts who had been tricked suffered from damaged reputations for a long time. A conviction was brought against the actual author of the diaries and he was sent to prison. Another alleged diary has caused controversy but the authenticity or otherwise is the subject of debate. Experts disagree on the so-called Jack the Ripper diary, discovered by a fitter in Liverpool, England in 1992. As fake books go, this is cleverly done or it may even be genuine. The Jack the Ripper murders that took place in the East End of London in the 1880s remain the most notorious unsolved case in England's history. A series of prostitutes were killed and no arrest was ever made, although many theories abound as to the murderer's identity.

A Liverpool cotton trader, by the name of James Maybrick confessed to the Ripper murders in the diary. Was this a serious confession, a plea for fame or the result of mental illness? Criminologists, historians and police officers have all pored over the diary. Scientists have tried to date the material but cannot identify the time source of the ink used. Mysteriously, Maybrick died from poisoning, a year after the gruesome killings stopped.

There will no doubt, be future incidences of forged material. After the fiasco of the Hitler Diaries however, people are more wary of fake books, fearing for their reputations. It's easy to get caught up in the excitement but it needs a cool, objective mind to assess these things.