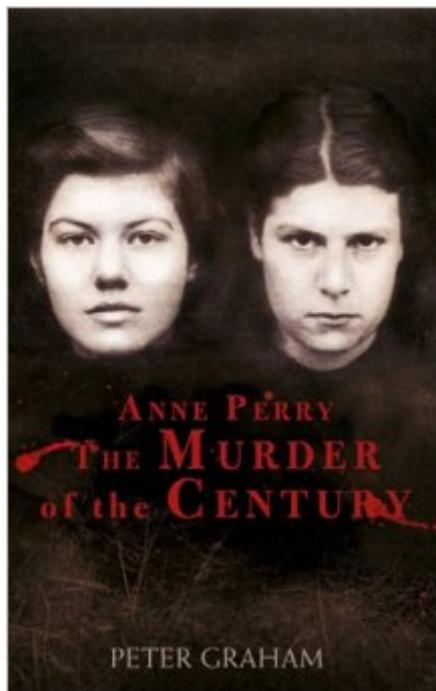


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Anne Perry And The Murder Of The Century



Synopsis

On June 22, 1954, teenage friends Juliet Hulmeâ "better known as bestselling mystery writer Anne Perryâ "and Pauline Parker went for a walk in a New Zealand park with Paulineâ ™s mother, Honora. Half an hour later, the girls returned alone, claiming that Paulineâ ™s mother had had an accident. But when Honora Parker was found in a pool of blood with the brick used to bludgeon her to death close at hand, Juliet and Pauline were quickly arrested, and later confessed to the killing. Their motive? A plan to escape to the United States to become writers, and Honoraâ ™s determination to keep them apart. Their incredible story made shocking headlines around the world and would provide the subject for Peter Jacksonâ ™s Academy Awardâ "nominated film, *Heavenly Creatures*. A sensational trial followed, with speculations about the nature of the girlsâ ™ relationship and possible insanity playing a key role. Among other things, Parker and Hulme were suspected of lesbianism, which was widely considered to be a mental illness at the time. This mesmerizing book offers a brilliant account of the crime and ensuing trial and shares dramatic revelations about the fates of the young women after their release from prison. With penetrating insight, this thorough analysis applies modern psychology to analyze the shocking murder that remains one of the most interesting cases of all time.

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Customer Reviews

I was 10 when Christchurch was shaken by the murder of Honora Rieper (Parker) by her daughter Pauline and Juliet Hulme, and my parents discussed it at length, so the case has always been with me. This book adds a great deal to our knowledge of it, especially about the relationship of the girls and the role of their parents. The Hulmes' coldness and neglect of Juliet accounts for a great deal in her personality. The Reipers were not blameless in their handling of Pauline, but they seem to have been much better than they were painted. While class was an important factor in 1950s Christchurch, both families made full use of the egalitarian aspect of New Zealand society to cross that divide, and the Reipers were not the clods they are sometimes painted. Juliet (Anne Perry) has made all the running in rewriting the history, turning herself almost into a bystander to the murder (as it may well now seem to her), but Peter Graham delves into her later life less sympathetically than more authorised biographers and interviewers. (Never has anyone whose life handed them such bitter lemons turned it into sweeter or more plentiful lemonade!) He finds a narcissistic personality, who welcomed Pauline's worship and may have taken a more active role in planning the murder and carrying it out than she now admits. She says the whole affair lasted little more than a day, but Graham indicates how circumstances built up over a period of months, the girls inseparable, the parents more or less intent on separating them, Henry Hulme clearly lying to Pauline that she could join Juliet in South Africa or England when he had no intention of letting that happen. As Graham implies, had the girls known their parents' true plans, it might not have been Pauline's mother who died.

I had hoped to find the definitive account of this famous case of the so-called "Heavenly Creatures." I'm not entirely sure this is it, though Anne Perry and the Murder of the Century is exhaustive and leaves little to the imagination. The writing is very regional, at times somewhat stilted, and many of the author's Britishisms will land with a thud at the feet of readers from other areas of the world, or soar completely overhead. Some of the background material, such as bios of minor characters and descriptions of places, seems unnecessarily detailed and slows down the narrative. The book, however, is far from poorly written, and the author is a great deal more successful in describing the crime itself and the events and thoughts leading up to it. The picture painted of the two teenage killers is quite chilling and often surprising--particularly the icy calculation that led to the murder of

Pauline Parker's mother. The motive for the crime, however twisted, is pretty clearly delineated and doesn't leave the reader wanting. And the case is so fascinating--and almost unfathomable in its more innocent time and place--it should keep you reading up to that point in the narrative. Also, the author's post-trial analysis of Juliet's and Pauline's characters is astute and avoids sensationalism. He rightly takes the adult Juliet (who now calls herself Anne Perry) to task for her convenient self-forgiveness and revisionism in painting herself as an unwitting child who was coerced by fear and guilt to take part in the crime, but he does so evenhandedly. Perry's comment when asked if she ever thinks about the woman she killed may tell the true story of her degree of contrition: "No. She was somebody I barely knew.

Some years ago, I stumbled across a film on television called "Heavenly Creatures." It was bizarre, chilling yet oddly fascinating. Essentially it was the true story of two teenage girls from Christchurch, New Zealand who, in 1954, murdered one of their mothers. It was Kate Winslet's first major film. She played one of the girls, Juliet Hulme, and the other young actress Melanie Lynskey played the friend, Pauline Rieper(nee Parker). It was Pauline's mother, Honora Parker whose skull was nearly crushed as the two took turns beating her head with a brick that had been placed in a stocking. This was during an outing arranged by Pauline for the three of them to Victoria Park; first having tea and cakes, then taking a walk into the woods. Much of the film focused on the imaginary world these two girls created for themselves. Juliet and Pauline were both "different" in their own way, and not long after they met, they became inseparable. (The possibility of the girls being lesbians was brought up). It was this intense desire to stay together that led to the idea of killing Pauline's mother, who stood in her way of going to live in South Africa with Juliet. The book picks up where the movie ends, filling in blanks in the film, like the almost immediate arrest of Pauline, and Juliet the following day. They were both imprisoned, as the film tells at the end, but Juliet eventually began a career as a successful writer under the name of Anne Perry. I found the book to be a "page-turner", one of those that you have to plan your day around. For anyone who's interested in highly unusual murders, I would recommend reading this book. I suggest renting the film and watching it first.

NOTE: Pauline also changed her name after her release from prison and became a recluse.

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