Book Reviews

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Remington, R. and Zickefoose, S. (2010). Runaway Devil: How Forbidden Love Drove a 12-Year-Old to Murder Her Family. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd.

Reviewed by: Jessica Cantos, MacEwan University

Journalists, Robert Remington and Sherri Zickefoose, plunge readers into the experience of one of Canada's notorious multiple homicide cases in their book, "Runaway Devil: How Forbidden Love Drove a 12-Year-Old to Murder Her Family." This non-fiction book follows the gruesome love story of preteen "JR", and her lover, 23-year-old Jeremy Steinke, in their master plan to murder JR's middle-class picture perfect family. Remington and Zickefoose brought to attention a new truth from a fresh angle that synthesizes streams of sociologically and criminology while placing the crime into a broader context that would otherwise not be represented in streamed news outlets. The journalists took a holistic approach through investigative journalism and serves the following three purposes: (1) to apply interdisciplinary theories in humanities and sciences on issues Canadians have never dreamed of having to fear; (2) to shed light in a discussion about why understanding these cases are important; and (3) to compare and contrast this case with similar Canadian case studies in the hope of finding a pattern that may predict future cases or provide a clear explanation for these crimes.

Remington and Zickefoose reveal how family structures can extend beyond the sociological expectations and predicaments in society. JR was raised with parents who have made a "steady progression in their lives" and have successfully graduated from rehabilitation programs that helped them grow out of their addictions (p. 16). Neighbors marveled at the parenting styles of JR's mother and father who "treated each other and their kids with respect

Book Reviews

and love that most people would envy” (p. 16). Although the small community of Medicine Hat seemed a perfect prairie landscape to raise a young family, it was not the case for the “slums” of the trailer park community that raised high school dropout Jeremy Steinke (p. 16, 21). According to his single, alcoholic, and domestically abused mother, “Jeremy was abused by an alcoholic father and two subsequent stepfathers” (p. 32). Two individuals raised in opposite class systems may have used their desire to escape as a driving force to murder the nuclear family that was built on a foundation of love. Research indicates that “homicides are the acts of the poor, disenfranchised and the oppressed ... however, an analysis of all available cases shows clearly that familicide is most likely to occur in ambitious, even prosperous families” (p. 254). The inability to pinpoint an impeccable parenting style that raise orderly children causes Remington and Zickefoose to analyze the friend groups that have become a new family to the pair of criminals.

The journalists introduce the reader into the world of the “dark, brooding members of the local goth community” that served as the perfect outlet for JR and Jeremy (p. 26). “Alcoholics at 18. Drug addicts. Dropouts. Runaways. Suicidal cutters” were a stark contrast against “JR’s obedient well-groomed 14-year-old girlfriends” she had in her Catholic school (p. 205). The journalists break the goth stereotype using an insider perspective on what this group offers, which is, “a friendship that does not discriminate on age” (p. 27). Perhaps the loyalty attained from the tight-knit community with members who turned their eyes to atrocity is what made the early planning stages of the mass murder an inevitable.

The crime story is strengthened by Remington and Zickefoose’s analysis of the personalities and accompanying psychological disorders that JR and Jeremy bring into their relationship. According to his mother, Jeremy has long suffered from attention hyperactivity

Book Reviews

disorder (ADHD) since childhood (p. 35). Psychiatrists have coined a term for Jeremy's fantasies of becoming a werewolf as "Lycanthropy," a "rare phenomenon associated with schizophrenia" (pp. 44-45). Research to describe JR's behavior states, "girls who reach early puberty are at risk for delinquency and aggressive behavior ... [and are] more likely to be depressed, socially withdrawn, moody, and sexually active" (p. 24). JR's early maturity influenced her hypersexualized attire of short black skirts that defied the rules in her school (p. 26). In time with court trials, psychiatrists determined that JR suffered from conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), a "blanket term" for psychopathy or sociopathy" that "[i]n the extreme...is manifested by an ongoing pattern of disobedient, hostile, and defiant behavior toward authority figures, such as parents, that goes beyond the bond of normal behavior of childhood" (p. 225). The discipline of psychology shows an in-depth analysis of the development of a teenage brain. In fact, "kids aren't deterred like adults and don't have the formative notion of criminality like adults do. They know right and wrong, but in a different sense" (p. 230). Remington and Zickefoose supplement these mental disorders and showcase how these psychological issues have come into play when merged together to form an intimate relationship.

The journalists weave sociological standpoints and explanations together to understand how JR and Jeremy's forbidden love came to be. The age gap proved no barrier to the couple's shared delinquent behavior. Even though JR and Jeremy were almost 10 years apart, they were perceived as "emotionally" and "physically" equal (p. 254). The relationship was established through the cybernetic world of the internet that gave the couple permission to create an online identity and assume the persona of anyone whom they wished. Remington and Zickefoose brought the world of the internet, the goth community, and the members of Medicine Hat together to demonstrate what can happen when a young girl who is shy of her teenage years,

Book Reviews

longs to escape from her unhappy home situation and falls for a martyr who would go to extreme measures if it means that he will be loved (p. 78).

Throughout the narrative of the crime story, the individuals involved in the case wanted nothing more than a “tidy explanation for JR’s complicity in the deaths of her parents and brother” (p. 252). Remington and Zickefoose compared “Runaway Devil” to Canada’s most reviled female killer: Karla Homolka, who was convicted of manslaughter for the 1992 and 1993 murders of two Ontario schoolgirls with her husband. The infamous close-up photograph showing Homolka’s cold, squinting eyes, mirrored JR’s “empty” and “dead” eyes. JR also paralleled Homolka’s actions as both women willingly sacrificed younger siblings for their lovers (p. 221). Remington and Zickefoose’s textual analysis offers an adequate explanation for the motive of females involved in this type of crime.

Remington and Zickefoose continue to embark on the curious social process that emerge within the courts, police, press, and public, by incorporating the findings of experts across Canada which support the information gathered through testimonies in court. Elliot Leyton, a recognized expert in the psychology of the multiple killer (pp. 252-253), reached one remarkable conclusion drawn from his extensive case studies: the annihilation of families by children is a uniquely middle-class crime (p. 253). The book also welcomes women studies in criminology through the newly alarming trend of an increase in youth crime and attitudes of violence and aggression rising in young women (p. 256). These standpoints put sociological and criminological theories directly into practice in Canadian context.

The text is rich in detail from recollections of carefully selected Medicine Hat locals who have interacted with the family and several emergency response units ranging from “police investigators, court authorities, and legal experts” who all work together to find a definite reason

Book Reviews

for the massacre (p. XXI). In the author's note, the journalists admit "some conversations and dialogue have been recreated from court proceedings and interviews" and are merely the "best recollections of those involved", which does not guarantee an accurate depiction of events (p. XII). The complexity of a human mind has made it difficult for sociologists, psychologists, and criminologists to understand an individual's decision making process on the journey to murder. Remington and Zickefoose did their best in unravelling evidence in chronological order, yet the inevitability of writing in a narrative cannot eliminate the romanticized tone of the story.

Remington and Zickefoose put into words what others have been struggling to face and illustrates the damaging effects from the aftermath of the disreputable homicide that will forever haunt the small town of Medicine Hat and Canadian history. This story builds onto existing literature and challenges multi-disciplinary theories in sociology, criminology, and psychology. The case may also prove beneficial to other academic audiences include woman studies, forensics, psychiatry, law, history, social work, and communications or journalism studies. It has been a pleasure to read the thought-provoking book, "Runaway Devil: How Forbidden Love Drove a 12-Year-Old to Murder Her Family", as it allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of different structures and relationships in society. I would recommend this read to anyone interested in the topic of family, interpersonal relationships, and criminal law.