

tal health experts, such as the oftentimes awkward task of testifying about or in opposition to one's colleagues, harassment by disgruntled examinees, ethics boundaries, and countertransference.

The book has many strengths, but two in particular are worth mentioning. First, each chapter contains abundant quotes taken directly from real-world testimony. The authors use these quotes to illustrate flawed testimony and potential pitfalls. They follow up such cases with alternative, word-for-word, easily understood suggestions to assist experts with avoiding such snares. For instance, in Chapter 3, which addresses some of the perils of cross-examination, the authors provide concrete examples of how an expert might best respond to an attorney's request that answers be limited to yes or no.

Second, the authors tackle concerns that commonly arise in forensic mental health work and that are rarely formally addressed in the literature. Where else can one find a collection of thoughtful commentaries on waffling, fears of disappointing retaining attorneys, getting paid up front, and the embarrassing and potentially serious mistake of confusing the details of a past case with those of a current one? Although forensic mental health colleagues are invaluable, irreplaceable resources, they may not always be available to confer. A textbook, in contrast, is limitlessly accessible and is uninhibited by scheduling constraints.

It is difficult to identify any major weaknesses of the text because it covers an array of interesting subjects. There are times, however, when additional information would have been useful. For example, the authors could have discussed billing in greater detail. Newcomers to forensic mental health may appreciate Gutheil and Dattilio's perspective about factors to keep in mind when establishing one's hourly rate, whereas more experienced practitioners might enjoy a more lengthy discussion of how to manage disputes over fees.

Although the text may seem brief for its cost, \$74.95 is a considerable bargain when compared with what a highly esteemed forensic mental health expert might charge for around-the-clock consultative services that address the same subjects. *Practical Approaches* is a user-friendly, succinct, entertaining book that tackles some of the most challenging (yet rarely officially addressed) aspects of forensic mental health consultation. This book is a must have for

forensic mental health practitioners who engage in expert witness testimony.

## The Human Predator: A Historical Chronicle of Serial Murder and Forensic Investigation

By Katherine Ramsland, PhD. New York: Berkley Books, 2005. 320 pp. \$14.00 (paperback).

Reviewed by D. Clay Kelly, MD

Katherine Ramsland, PhD, has authored 25 books. Although she has written numerous publications about Anne Rice and vampires, her expertise in forensic psychology has afforded her opportunities to publish more than 300 articles and books about forensic psychology, forensic science, and serial killers.

*The Human Predator: A Historical Chronicle of Serial Murder and Forensic Investigation* should be issued with a warning: even among the desensitized, Ramsland's book is a harrowing read. Serial murder is a repulsive, yet compelling, topic. Similar to our response to an accident on the side of the road, we empathize, but can't look away.

The book opens with the description of a group of accused cannibalistic killers who terrorized the Scottish countryside in the 15th century. Although later historians have doubted this tale of "killer zombies," as in *Dawn of the Dead*, the societal response to this phenomenon highlights one of the book's more challenging aspects. How should such individuals be understood and explained? This introduction includes a definition of serial murder that distinguishes it from spree killing and mass murder.

Ramsland's book recounts the known history of serial murder. Brief summations of trends in world history and the evolution of forensic science are woven into the narrative. Society's attempt to bring the serial murderer to justice is also examined.

The first chapter debunks the common misconception that serial murder is a modern phenomenon. Although it has largely been regarded as a male-dominated activity, Ramsland identifies Locusta, a

woman born in Gaul, as the first documented serial killer. Locusta was a necro-entrepreneur, serving the Roman aristocracy as a hit-woman. She dispatched the political rivals of her elite patrons, a group that included Nero, and was afforded their protection in return. Using herbal concoctions, she poisoned several Roman officials and even managed to trick the emperor Claudius into poisoning himself with a feather.

Ramsland opens her discussion of forensic science with Sung Tz'u's work, *Hsi Duan Yu*, published circa 1247 AD. (This tome is generally considered the first extant work on forensic science.) Sung Tz'u gave instructions on how to distinguish between suicide, homicide, and natural death. These ideas segue into a discussion of the "Holy Monster," Gilles de Rais. The category of the narcissistic, aristocratic killer is well illustrated by the discussion of de Rais' life. A close confidant of Joan of Arc, de Rais' killing rampage may have been sparked by her martyrdom. He may have killed as many as 140 children. Like the aristocratic killers who followed him, de Rais did not consider his peasant victims to be fully human, a theme of dehumanization that served as a credo for serial killers to come.

Ramsland's discussion of serial murder in the medieval age sheds light on the animistic belief in werewolves and other beastly half-men. These fantastical monikers were a public response to the serial killers' behavior, which was thought to be inhuman. Perpetuating these labels, those who engaged in serial murder often took on the accoutrements of wild animals. That is, they donned skins or made their murders appear to be the work of wild animals.

Spanning the course of history, Ramsland's work details the varied methods and exploits of habitual murderers. From the Revolutionary War era came the account of the Harp brothers, British Army deserters who went on a killing spree across frontier America.

As the story enters the 19th century, Ramsland describes the attempts by alienists to gain a better understanding of criminal insanity through phrenology and early classification schemes. Ramsland summarizes the work of Cesare Lombroso, who asserted that criminal behavior was due to atavism. Criminals represented reversions to a more primitive and savage form of man. She closes her survey of the 19th century by detailing the savage behavior of Jack the Rip-

per, whose identity has never been conclusively determined (although some evidence indicates that he may have been a doctor).

In her discussion of the 20th century, Ramsland asserts that war and its sequelae create a fertile environment for serial murder. Fritz Haarmann, a German butcher, employed a male prostitute to lure young men whom Haarmann then sodomized, dismembered, and consumed. Haarmann claimed that he sold some of the human flesh in the butcher shop, causing some Germans to succumb to *menschenfleischpsychose*.

The book includes a commentary of several psychiatrically disturbed serial killers who were convicted nonetheless. One vignette describes a U.S. serviceman, serving in Australia during World War II, who felt compelled to kill women so that he could "capture their voices." He had a strong family history of mental illness but was convicted and hanged. Conversely, several case examples describe serial killers who received insanity acquittals and were sent to mental hospitals. Some were later released and proceeded to kill again.

Interwoven with the tales of serial murder are descriptions of breakthroughs in forensic science that improved society's capacity to detect and apprehend serial murderers. Most of the early discoveries were scientific in nature, such as the development of the microscope, fingerprint techniques, and the evolution of chromatography. In later sections, Ramsland focuses on the development of profiling and other psychological techniques. The book focuses on the Behavioral Sciences Unit (BSU) at the FBI and their attempts to use "rational means against an irrational foe." Eventually, the BSU developed the idea of a signature, which is an individualizing personality quirk used to identify and track serial murderers. The signature is a type of psychological fingerprint useful in sorting out crimes and perpetrators.

In later chapters, which deal with more recent and notorious serial killers, the author addresses subjects of great interest to psychiatrists today. One theme of note is the debate about the normality of serial murderers. The controversy grows out of the rejection of Lombrosian atavism. The author challenges the stereotype of primitive savage serial killers by examining seemingly nontraditional serial killer profiles, such as those of Ted Bundy and Kenneth Bianchi. These notorious repeat offenders present an uncomfortable anomaly to the typical serial killer image. Unlike

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most of their predecessors, these perpetrators exhibited surface behavioral patterns that made them less identifiable as monsters. Seemingly respectable, average citizens who seem incapable of committing heinous crimes pose a difficult question: how should forensic experts regard such individuals? Should these distinctive serial murderers be considered com-

partmentalized killers—modern-day Jekylls and Hydes—or a new breed of monster, entirely?

This book will interest readers who want to have a better appreciation of the history of serial murder, but readers should be prepared to be immersed in the graphic detail that Ramsland uses to bring the topic to life.