

## BOOK REVIEW

*Irwin N. Perr,<sup>1</sup> M.D., J.D.*

### A Review of *Luke Karamazov*

---

**REFERENCE:** Hilberry, C., *Luke Karamazov*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, MI 48202, 1988, 189 pp.

*Luke Karamazov* is a report of 189 pages written by a professor of English at Kalamazoo College in Kalamazoo, Michigan about two brothers who are multiple murderers. One brother killed five people, mostly gas station attendants, in the course of a robbery. The other brother was involved in the rape and murder of four young women.

Some of the background of the two men is presented. Curiously each had been involved with the same woman. This woman in turn married both brothers and ultimately separated from both. The competitiveness between the two brothers and their independent courses of social dysfunction are described.

One brother, Tommy, has maintained his innocence—apparently in the face of considerable evidence and his own plea of guilty to some of the charges. The other, Luke, more openly and brazenly and without much feeling, details his exploits. One, Luke, is described as a psychopath; the other, Tommy, is not described at all in psychiatric terms. Some reference is made to an article on rapists but apparently not specifically to rape-murder.

The author became interested in these local crimes because of the unique circumstances in which two brothers, acting independently and in different types of behaviors, became mass murderers. He interviewed both, one extensively. One brother was not particularly forthcoming in giving information; the other while extremely verbal, remains somewhat of an enigma. The book describes, it does not explain; and even the description has limitations.

A major part of the book deals with the behavior of the more verbal, aggressive brother, Luke, within the penal system, and assumption of power in the prison environment is noted. Utilizing a particular concept of psychopathy, Hilberry describes this brother who has taken the name, Luke Karamazov, in “heroic” terms.

The author seems intrigued by the striking nature of the antisocial behaviors and the lack of concern, sensitivity, or empathy shown by the brothers. Psychiatrists who deal with such criminals will not be surprised or exposed to new information or concepts. Motivation and the basis for value systems remain a puzzle. I guess that those who like books about crime will like this one; I did not find it as informative as I might have wished; other readers might not be as jaded as I.

The book is not a research book nor is it a survey of either psychopathy or mass murder. It is a story about two people in one family who engaged in frightful antisocial behaviors. Tanay, in his forward, states that the story is both entertaining and an interesting study of a pathological family. I am sure that for many readers his appraisal will be correct.

<sup>1</sup>Professor of psychiatry, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, 675 Hoes Lane, Piscataway, NJ 08854.