



## A Murder Without Motive: the Killing of Rebecca Ryle

*Martin McKenzie-Murray*

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## **A Murder Without Motive: the Killing of Rebecca Ryle** Martin McKenzie-Murray

In 2004, the body of a young Perth woman was found on the grounds of a primary school. Her name was Rebecca Ryle. The killing would mystify investigators, lawyers, and psychologists – and profoundly rearrange the life of the victim's family.

It would also involve the author's family, because his brother knew the man charged with the murder. For years, the two had circled each other suspiciously, in a world of violence, drugs, and rotten aspirations.

*A Murder Without Motive* is a police procedural, a meditation on suffering, and an exploration of how the different parts of the justice system make sense of the senseless. It is also a unique memoir: a mapping of the suburbs that the author grew up in, and a revelation of the dangerous underbelly of adolescent ennui.

## **A Murder Without Motive: the Killing of Rebecca Ryle Details**

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Author : Martin McKenzie-Murray

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## **From Reader Review A Murder Without Motive: the Killing of Rebecca Ryle for online ebook**

### **Sean Kennedy says**

(3.5 / 5)

Some people may be disappointed in this book, thinking that it is your usual true crime rehash of gory details and torture porn. It isn't. It's more of a memoir, of someone associated on the periphery of the killer and his friends, and how this case haunts him until he contacts the family and wants to talk to them about writing a book. As such, the author often inserts himself into the book, sometimes successfully and sometimes not (when it becomes a little egocentric). I could have done without his interpretation of what happened the night Rebecca Ryle was killed - the killer has never given a motive nor completely explained his actions so it is all just conjecture. That was the only time I felt the book strayed uncomfortably into the torture porn genre, and it was completely unnecessary. As it came towards the end of the book it marred all the good work that had come before it.

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### **Tania says**

I found this book to be more about the author and his life and I found it jumped around a lot I also found he wrote about things that had nothing to do with the murder case I found this book to be very boring

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### **Xanthi says**

There were a few things about this book that prevented me from giving it a higher rating. Firstly, whilst I don't mind it when an author includes himself in the story, I felt that in this case, the author overstepped the mark and just rambled on too much about his past life and experiences. Yes, he lived in the area where the victim, her family, and the murderer lived. And yes, his brother was an acquaintance with the murderer. But the endless reflection on the setting, its occupants and the over intellectualising all gets a bit too much in the end. Where were the details about the courtroom proceedings ? They were fairly scant. And whilst it is interesting to get a background on the victim's family and also on the impact the murder had on them, was all the detail about them really necessary?

In the end, this book ended up feeling scattered. Was it true crime? Auto biography? Biography? Social commentary? Who was the central 'character'? What was the focus of the book? I know who and what it should have been, and yet it wasn't.

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### **Josh says**

More an author memoir than true crime, A Murder Without Motive: the killing of Rebecca Ryle is not what I expected - in a bad way. Rather than writing a book about the murder, investigation, court room battles, and interviews with subject matter experts close to the crime, the author launched a self indulgent tirade which lacked relevance to the subject matter and bored this reader with a tale of a stock standard middle-income

male growing up in suburbia, moving away then boasting an intellectual superiority to his peers when he returns of which he also casts the murder victim, Rebecca Ryle (who happens to be the core of the book, though the reader wouldn't know it) among his ilk despite not conversing or KNOWING her aside from third party information.

This book is about the way the author felt about the murder and his own perception and conclusions in-conjunction with his brothers thoughts and insights (him, having known the killer in a somewhat limited capacity) - some eight years after the tragedy.

It's not until the Afterword that the author mentioned he wanted to write a true crime book that emphasized the family aspect and the hardships of moving on as opposed to the crime itself that the theme started to make sense. Had this been consistent, and not derailed by the authors free rein to talk about himself, I may have felt differently - may have.

What the Afterword doesn't do, is justify the need to write about the author listening to NWA, picking fights with kids 4 years his junior, touching upon Perth's race gangs, attending or commenting on teenage house parties, or why including the his own correspondence with the Ryle family via Facebook was necessary (it didn't add any context or substance).

I also found the over stimulated vocabulary a constant blight that served no purpose other than to impress upon the reader, the author's ability to over-use and under sell his sentences. Rarely does a book leave me feeling so underwhelmed.

I was given a copy from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Keen says**

### **4.5 Stars!**

I had never heard of this case before, but I was drawn to it having spent some time in Perth and WA. The author's analysis and assessment of Perth's northern suburbs is absolutely spot on and had me smiling in recognition.

There are a few times when this seems to be as much about the author as the victim, when he goes on for many pages about his adolescence, but this is actually relevant, as it is in context and gives us insight to the area that he would have inhabited at the same as the victim, who was growing up in the same suburbs, and was roughly the same age, although they moved in different circles.

This was one of those true crime books which was unputdownable, and I devoured it over many contented hours on a sunny Sunday afternoon. Not only do we get the background to the case, but we also get the compelling back stories to the victims, which really help give this a well-rounded feel.

McKenzie-Murray's writing reads really nicely and his style is crisp, sharp and he makes some really well-made points. He asks difficult questions whilst still remaining sensitive to the victim's family and draws some interesting conclusions about the murder and his motives, and this book serves as a fitting tribute to the life and memory of the victim.

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## Di says

I've enjoyed M-M's journalism in *The Saturday Paper*, published in Melbourne. This is his first book and it is an outstanding debut.

He explores the many facets surrounding the murder of a young woman, Rebecca Ryle, in 2004 in a northern suburb of Perth. M-M grew up near where the murder took place and was loosely connected with some of the people involved - everyone knew everyone - or others like them, in the area.

This story gathers power from the author's personal connection because it is, in part, an exploration of his own growing up and the forces that shape young men especially in Australian cultures. But it is a lot more beside; M-M digs deep into the responsibility of the journalist following a story like this one. He foregrounds the dignity of the victim and her family while explicating the details of their stories; he respects the effort and the humanity of the police officers and those in the legal system who do the hard, tiring, excoriating work of tracking down criminals and bringing them to justice in an imperfect system; he illustrates the culture of the suburb and the lives of its young people, especially young men with telling, resonant detail about violent teen parties, drinking and drug culture, surf culture, tagger culture and more. The questions he explores, such as the line between Aussie male inarticulateness and the emotional wasteland it creates inside people, affect everyone living in the culture to a greater or lesser degree. His exploration of survival and enduring dignity in the face of terrible loss affects us all because we are human.

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## Kimbofo says

*Murder Without Motive: The Killing of Rebecca Ryle* is right out of the Helen Garner and Janet Malcolm school of true crime reportage. It looks at the case of Rebecca Ryle, a 19-year-old British immigrant, who was found murdered in the grounds of a primary school opposite her family home in Perth, Western Australia, in 2004, and places that crime in a wider social context. Why did the man who was charged with her murder, 19-year-old James Duggan, do it? And what was the effect on Rebecca's family and the community at large? How did those closest to her make sense of her loss?

To read the rest of my review, please visit my blog.

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## Carol - Reading Writing and Riesling says

A very personal look at a senseless crime

My View:

A very personal look at a senseless crime.

A community in shock, two families' lives for ever changed; a teenager the victim of a senseless murder, her death impacting on the psyche of those who knew her, those who were in her orbit and even those who knew her only because of the media attention surrounding her death. The murder of Rebecca Ryle was to have a profound influence on so many including the young man soon to be journalist Martin McKenzie-Murray.

The proximity of her death eclipses the innocence of this young Martin McKenzie-Murray; the author lived

close to the Ryle's and was familiar with the everyday places of Rebecca's life, the personal 'second hand' knowledge existing because the author's brother had at one point associated with a social group that included the perpetrator of the crime as a member, and because of the similarity in ages between the writer and the victim, this death weighed heavy on the mind of the author. Eight years later the author is still haunted by Rebecca's death and seeks to discover how "the psychic bruising of the suburbs" contributed/affected her life and ultimately led to her death. This book is the result of his discoveries, personal interviews, research, theories regarding urban society and its social constructs. This book is more than a dry summation of facts or court or police records, this is an intensely personal study of the effects of one young person's death on a community and on the writer of this book.

This is a very personal look at a senseless crime – I keep repeating the word senseless, this crime makes no sense; occurring just 50m from Rebecca's home, a life ending for no apparent reason and the perpetrator with no recollection of his motivation for causing her death (or one that he is willing to share), this crime stunned so many. If you lived in Western Australia around the time of Rebecca's murder you will have your own memories of this event, memories that cannot be erased.

Martin McKenzie-Murray has written a thought provoking and intense narrative. As someone involved in the documentary industry this books reminds me so much of the process of documentary making - the gathering of facts, the research, the interviews, the connections you cannot help but make with the subject of the documentary (book) and those close to your subject. As in documentary making your life becomes entwined with those in your film (book), you relate to them and their feelings. The documentary is a journey (you have made a personal journey in this book). Thank you for sharing your journey; this incident perhaps weighs more heavily on me now than it did at the time because of your book.

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### **Derek Pedley says**

The cookie-cutter title belies the true worth of this masterful debut, which blends memoir with police procedural, to create a unique and compelling portrait of the origins and consequences of a suburban murder.

The author's coincidental connection to a killer lures him into the story of 19-year-old Rebecca Ryle and her murder, just metres from home, in 2004. McKenzie-Murray delivers a deeply insightful - and personal - exploration of the banal and often dangerous teenage culture in Perth's northern suburbs, while also expertly assembling the nuts-and-bolts police investigation.

But the book's emotional heart is the author's relationship with the victim's parents. Their rapport – cultivated by his honesty and sensitivity (and a shared lager or two) - is such that he is able to delve deeply into their pasts, their pain and their extraordinary resilience.

They divulge far more than most writers could ever hope for, allowing McKenzie-Murray to stretch his considerable talents as both a thinker and a writer and deliver a story that is a welcome antidote to the typically weary, gratuitous world of crime reportage.

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### **Zora says**

I'm a fan of the author from his writing in The Saturday Paper: he always brings a fresh and considered perspective to whatever topic and he's certainly drawn to the dark stuff. A brave and sensitive account and analysis of a senseless crime, and it read as something he needed to get out of his system, having grown up in the parts of Perth where this happened. It was refreshing to read a bloke take on toxic masculinity too. I am keen to see what he does next.

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### **Michael Livingston says**

A thoughtful book that belies its generic title, McKenzie-Murray artfully blends memoir and sociological theorising with a clear and insightful discussion of an utterly senseless murder. Even with the best of intentions, there were times where this all felt a bit ghoulish, but I guess that's impossible to avoid. Perfect length for a Sydney->Melbourne flight too - I finished it right as we got to the gate.

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### **Hilary Campbell says**

Proposed re-write of the blurb: "A white middle-class dude bro writes a self-indulgent memoir using every ten dollar word he knows under the guise of writing about a horrific murder that destroyed a family."

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### **Amy McQuire says**

Beautifully written insight into the grief of losing a child. I had a few complaints, but they are mostly to do with my own personal interests. I felt the book was lacking in that there was no access to Duggan. I didn't feel like we knew enough about him to even begin to understand, but that's not the author's fault. I also felt there could have been a better examination into policing in Western Australia - particularly the bit about Duggan's confession. Overall though, amazing book and definitely a welcome departure from the usual true crime book.

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### **Tilda says**

I want to preface this review by saying that I am an enormous fan of Martin McKenzie-Murray. I routinely dive into his columns in The Saturday Paper, and like many Victorians, enjoyed his eloquent prose via former Chief Police Commissioner, Ken Lay. He is, in fact, one of my favourite Australian commentators on matters of policy and current affairs (this absolutely slam dunk piece on family violence being a prime example: <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/n...>).

So, it is with a heavy heart that I report that this book sucks.

I think when you take on a true crime story without having access to the key players (in this case, the killer, his family and a key witness from the night) you not only face significant obstacles in making your book

credible and worth publishing, you also confront significant additional responsibilities to glean absolutely every crumb of information you can to justify your inevitable need to fill gaps with speculation. It demands discipline in maintaining an open and impartial mind and resisting the temptation to warp your interpretation based on the narrow access that one does gain (in this case, the victim's family). I think Martin sadly failed on this front.

To me, this book read as absolute classic 'vibing' drawing disproportionately from Martin's own dramatised adolescence, his brother's (tenuous?) familiarity with the killer and the painfully obvious (albeit unashamed) empathy and rapport he developed with Rebecca's parents. The prose is overwrought but the substance undercooked - with boring tangents, the repetitious drilling of the themes of misspent youths and misdirected masculinity (lest you miss it!) culminating in the painfully embarrassing and inauthentic attempt of Martin to embody the killer's mindset at the end as he lays out his theory of events, which was basically the Crown case with no further insights. Le sigh.

It is a true shame as I believe Martin is a beautiful and incisive writer, commentator and speechwriter. He doesn't shy away from the difficult issues or the things that people don't like to acknowledge or talk about, which is why I was so disappointed to read a two-dimensional rendering of information largely already available on the public record, with a little bit of extra Perth yoof context and justifiable empathy for the family thrown in. His writing, which can be so beautiful and evocative, was overwrought, unnecessarily dense and had all the literary restraint of a sledgehammer. Helen Garner's successor he is not.

Despite this, I will continue to consume everything Martin puts out and hope he'll publish a second book that truly demonstrates his talents. It's a shame that his publisher didn't send him back to the drawing board to ensure his debut was the show-stopper it should have been.

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### **Edward Rush says**

I am from Perth and escaped to Melbourne as soon as I was able. I loved the city in my childhood for its brazen light (if McKenzie-Murray didn't use this term, it was something like this) and wild streak, but it was also a very rough place to be if you didn't fit into the bigoted mainstream. When I made it over East in 1991, I kissed the ground. Life had started.

I was fascinated by the prospect of this story. A young woman gets murdered by an aimless young bloke in the wind blasted northern suburbs. What could be said about the violent Perth masculine culture by way of explanation? McKenzie-Murray offers some conjecture, but he never really cuts through.

I think I missed the point of this book. It was well-written, but it seemed a bit callow, and I judged it poorly in comparison to Robert Drewe's "The Shark Net" (probably an unfair comparison). I wasn't too impressed either by the letter the author wrote to the murdered girl's parents. It seemed awkward and opportunistic and actually quite poorly written.

I think McKenzie-Murray's next book will be of a higher standard.

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