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BOOK REVIEW

ANATOMY OF A MURDER. By Robert Traver. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1958. Pp. 437. \$4.50.

Robert Traver is a literary alias for a Michigan Supreme Court Justice who has written an entertaining book about the defense of a rape-provoked homicide. For the lay reader, the entertainment lies in the action — rape is seldom boring — but for the lawyer, undoubtedly the greatest pleasure stems from the author's obvious competence in, and love for, the law. Here is no casual observer of the law, no legal dilettante writing *about* the law. The book is studded with frank and candid pictures from an album of Actual Practice.

The story is about a G.I. who terminates the scisin on life for the raper of his mate. Ex-District Attorney Biegler, seeking some beneficial advertisement, defends the disseisor. The rape and homicide charged atmosphere of Michigan's upper peninsula is adroitly utilized to lure the reader into the problem of insanity and criminal responsibility which is the theme of the book. The reader is compelled to *listen* to the story, then later, to *think* about its deeper meaning. McNaughten and all the old arguments return to haunt the conscience. How long must the old dilemma and the legal frauds of circumvention be tolerated?

The book is not quite perfect though. Only three characters are technically convincing — Biegler, the trial judge (a gem of characterization) and the really-too-true-to-be-true Sheriff. All others are two dimensional, ersatz and stereotyped. Sequence and continuity should have been improved. The defendant's farewell is superfluous and detracts from the quality of plot. However, these are criticisms of the flyspecker. The book should definitely be read (and probably will be by a million or two), and by men of public influence, in conjunction with "Crime and Insanity" by The Philosophical Library.

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