



IN THE CROWN COURT AT LINCOLN

THE QUEEN V. ANDREI MIHAI SIMION-MUNTEANU

13 FEBRUARY 2020

SENTENCING REMARKS OF THE HON. MR JUSTICE PEPPERALL

1. Andrei Simion-Munteanu, you have been found guilty by this jury of the murder of your mother, Premm-Leela Monti, and her partner, Robert Tully.
2. After 11pm on 29 July 2019, you called your mother into your bedroom saying that you had a surprise and offering her a massage. As she lay face down on your bed, you placed your left hand in an oven glove and pressed it firmly over her mouth and nose to prevent her from screaming. You then strangled her with the crook of your right elbow. I am satisfied that while Dr Monti would have lost consciousness quickly as you cut off the supply of oxygen to her brain, you maintained the pressure for some minutes in order to ensure that she was dead. Six hours later, you bludgeoned Mr Tully to death with a hammer. Mr Tully collapsed to the ground and still you continued your frenzied attack raining some half a dozen blows to his head and shoulders with the hammer to be quite sure that he was dead. Mr Tully died from a severe traumatic brain injury.
3. This jury have rejected your defence that these offences were committed in the grip of a psychotic delusion such that your responsibility for these killings was diminished and, rightly in my judgment, concluded that you are guilty of murdering both of your victims. Why you killed is not clear. You had minor grievances with your mother, but nothing that would begin to explain your actions. Further, you had no obvious reason to wish Mr Tully harm. Despite Mr Campbell-Tiech QC's eloquence, I reject the suggestion that you killed under the grips of a psychotic delusion that nevertheless did not amount to the partial defence of diminished responsibility.
4. I accept that you had become depressed over the preceding 18 months as your university studies started to go wrong and you realised that you are not as clever as you thought you were. Indeed, your depression was sufficiently serious that you entertained suicidal ideation, inflicted some minor deliberate self-harm and required formal treatment, including a period of in-patient treatment at an American psychiatric hospital. You appear to have been vulnerable to depression in part because of your difficulty in personal relationships and your consequent feelings of social isolation and in part because things were not going well in your studies. Depression, however, is usually associated with self-harm and not with extreme violence to others. It does not start to provide an explanation for these callous murders.
5. It is, ultimately, unnecessary to determine why you killed. I conclude, however, that your fascination with extremely violent internet footage of accidents, suicides and terrorist beheadings taken together with your conviction that there was no meaning or value to life, led you to wonder whether you would yourself be capable of murder. In reaching that view, I am fortified by your remark to the police upon your arrest that you wanted to see if you could do it. In my judgment, such thoughts combined with your feelings of worthlessness arising from your difficulties with social interaction and the prospect that your university career appeared set to end in failure, and your disproportionate sense of grievance at minor upsets, to lead you to become a killer.

6. I accept your own evidence that you carefully planned and researched these killings. These were premeditated offences, planned in chilling detail to ensure that you would succeed in killing both Dr Monti and Mr Tully and to reduce the risk that your victims would be able to foil your murderous intent.
7. Dr Monti and Mr Tully were an accomplished couple. She was a much-respected psychiatrist, while he was a successful retired businessman with a love of people and travel.
8. Since these murders, you have maintained that you neither loved nor hated your mother. You plainly failed to appreciate the sacrifice that Dr Monti had made in coming to England to work as a doctor in order to support you and your brothers. Indeed, I suspect that you resented the fact that she left Romania. Despite your indifference, I am satisfied on the evidence I have heard that she loved you, that she was concerned about your mental illness and that she wanted you to succeed in life. To others, she was a much-loved mother and colleague; someone who was full of life, friendly and positive.
9. With enormous dignity and bravery, Robert Tully's sister lovingly described him to me as an insatiably curious man who revelled in intellectual debate. An avid traveller and photographer, a voracious reader and a keen creative writer who plainly took great delight in his family and in his wide and international circle of friends. It was Mr Tully who kindly arranged your internship in Albuquerque in the summer before you murdered him. And it was Mr Tully's family who so generously welcomed you into their home during your time in the United States.
10. Despite the love that they showed you, I am satisfied that you had no empathy for this remarkable couple as you cruelly snuffed out their lives. Further, you gave no thought to the enormous holes that your selfish actions would leave in the lives of their families and friends.
11. I am required by law to pass a sentence of life imprisonment on each count and to fix the minimum term, being the period that you must serve in custody before you can apply to the Parole Board to be considered for release. Even after serving the minimum term, you will only be released from prison when the Parole Board decides that further imprisonment is no longer necessary for public protection. Accordingly, it may be that you are never released from prison. If you are released, you will remain under supervision on licence for the rest of your life and may be recalled to prison at any time.
12. In setting the minimum term, I take into account the totality of your offending. I must have regard to schedule 21 of the *Criminal Justice Act 2003*. By paragraph 4(1), I am required to pass a whole-life term in the case of an offender aged 21 or over at conviction where the seriousness of the offence is exceptionally high. Parliament has identified that the seriousness of the offending should be regarded as exceptionally high where, among other cases, an offender commits two or more murders and each murder involves a substantial degree of premeditation or planning. As I have already made clear, I am satisfied that these murders did involve a substantial degree of premeditation and planning. Accordingly, the starting point is that the court should pass a whole-life term.
13. I turn then to mitigation. You are only 22 and have never been in trouble with the police before. I also accept that you have been remarkably frank in admitting your actions. I have more difficulty in identifying any genuine remorse; indeed, you appear to have very little empathy for your victims. I take into account your mental health but, having rejected your case as to a psychotic delusion, I find that there is no substantial mitigation to be found in your depression. Furthermore, this is a case where your intent was clearly to kill.

14. Taking into account both the aggravating and mitigating feature of this case and the principle of totality, I conclude that, while this is an exceptionally serious case, a whole-life term is not appropriate, principally in view of your youth and lack of previous convictions. The case does, however, require a very significant minimum term of imprisonment. In my judgment, the appropriate minimum term in this case is a period of 32 years. You will also pay the appropriate victim surcharge.
15. Stand up Mr Simion-Munteanu. I therefore sentence you to life imprisonment on both counts 1 and 2 of this indictment. I direct that you will serve a minimum term of 32 years before you are eligible for parole. My sentence is passed concurrently on both counts. Further, I direct that in the calculation of the minimum term, you should have full credit for the time spent in custody since your arrest on 5 August 2019. You may go down.