



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

In the Crown Court at Stafford

19 December 2013

The Queen
v
Jamie Reynolds

Sentencing Remarks

Mr Justice Wilkie:

Georgia Williams was 17 years and 9 months when she was murdered on 26th May 2013. She was an impressive young woman who brought light and joy into the lives of her family and friends. She had shown strength of character in overcoming early difficulties at her junior school and had undertaken leadership roles at college as a mentor, student councillor and head girl. In those roles she focussed on counselling victims of bullying. Her commitment to fairness was clear to all. She was a role model for her fellow pupils. She was an all round sportswoman, was involved with the RAF Air Cadets and looked forward to a career in the RAF.

Her cruel and evil death has left her family crushed, devastated, absolutely broken hearted. The fact of her death, the way in which it was conceived, planned, and executed, and its unspeakable aftermath has almost overwhelmed them. I have heard from Georgia's father, in impressive and brave evidence the victim personal on behalf of her family about the joy Georgia brought to their lives, the devastation caused to each of them by her death and their loathing for the perpetrator. Their dignity and restraint during and in the lead up to this hearing, in which they have been exposed, for the first time, to distressing details of her death has been admirable. Nothing that this court can do or say will enable them to come to terms with what has happened. One can only hope that the conclusion of this trial will contribute in some small way to whatever recovery they can, in time, manage to achieve.

The only sentence I am empowered to pass is one of life imprisonment and I do so. My next task is to consider whether this is a case which calls for a whole life term and, if not, to fix a minimum term before the expiration of which you, Jamie Reynolds, will not be considered for release on license.

The instant offence

In order to do so I must first review the context and circumstances of the commission of this offence. Quite properly, the Prosecution has presented its case in some detail over a number of hours. That is because the full flavour of what you have done, and how it came about that you committed this evil deed, needed to be gone into in order that all those in court, and those who may have to consider it hereafter, may appreciate how exceptional this offending, when seen in its proper context, is and why it clearly calls for the most severe punishment that this court can pass.

You had long conceived of committing an offence such as this. You had targeted Georgia Williams as one of a number of potential targets. You had written story lines, over forty of them, where the predominant theme was a fatal assault on a young woman followed by acts of sexual violation. Many of the victims in your stories were real young girls whom you knew and named, including Georgia Williams. In her case the story you wrote described her entrapment, her death by hanging and, thereafter, the sexual violation of her body in graphic detail displaying huge relish in and enjoyment of the dreadful events you were describing. One of the most shocking features of what you did is that it was in large measure foreshadowed in your storyline about her. You prepared meticulously for killing her in this way and for getting away with her murder. You pre-purchased the clothing in which she would be dressed, the rope which you would use to hang her, the handcuffs with which you would restrain her and make her helpless. You considered in detail, and prepared for, how you would assemble a means for hanging her from the loft aperture in your home; the noose being slung over an oar placed across the opening and tied at one end to the banisters. You lured her to your home, when your parents were away for a week, and secured her co-operation in placing herself at your mercy by pretending to be engaged in a photographic project involving a simulation of a hanging. In that way you persuaded her to dress in clothes you had chosen, to stand on a box underneath the loft aperture, to have the noose placed round her neck, to submit to being restrained by the use of handcuffs, all the while taking photographs using your step-father's camera, both to encourage her in the pretence, and to make a record, to enjoy secretly and privately, after the event. Seeing those photographs of her, totally trusting and helpless, unknowing of what you were about to do to her has been almost unbearable

You then suddenly pulled the noose tight, using considerable force to do so, securing her death by hanging by forcing her backwards, using your knee in her back as a lever and, no doubt, kicking away the box on which she had been standing. You then, as you had envisaged, enjoyed the spectacle of her final ghastly minutes as she struggled for life knowing that she had been betrayed and that she was facing death.

Within minutes you were taking photographs of her lying dead on a bed. You took further photographs of her being sexually assaulted by you. Thereafter, for a period of almost an hour you engaged in invasive sexual activity with her dead body before transporting her downstairs into the living room and, it would seem, over a period of hours, engaged in a variety of sexual violations of her body in the course of which you took photographs of her when she was naked and so were you.

Not only had you meticulously planned how to lure her to her death, you had also laid plans to enable you to distance yourself from her disappearance and death and to get away with her murder. In addition, you planned to preserve and enjoy a record, and trophies of what you had done. I have no doubt that, but for your being apprehended, as Professor Peckitt has written, you had the potential to go on to plan and commit further similar crimes.

You had managed to obtain Georgia's telephone password and, after you had killed her, you used it to text her mother from her phone, in an elaborate deceit, to give the impression that she had left your home voluntarily and safely and had gone elsewhere for the night. When her mother, the following morning, texted her to find out where she was, you responded, pretending to be her, that she was staying at friends and would be home that night. You also responded by text to her sister with a pretence of concern and offer to assist locating her and you texted her phone carrying on that pretence. Your final text to Georgia's mother supposedly from Georgia, contains what can only be described as a veiled reference to what you knew had happened to her. Thus, not only were you seeking to avoid detection by feigning innocence and postponing her family reporting her to the Police as missing, I can only conclude that you were playing games with them.

During the immediate aftermath, whilst you were taking photographs of her, you had the presence of mind to communicate with 2 other young women, whom you had lined up as prospective victims, to cancel arrangements for them to come to your house the following day, no doubt for the same purpose.

You had planned what you were going to do with her body. You used your step father's van. You loaded it with her body, her own clothes, her jewellery, and the clothes that you had dressed her in and you waited, until after your sister had made a prearranged visit the following morning when you gave her the impression that you were acting perfectly normally. You deleted the incriminating photographs from your step father's camera and transferred them to an external hard drive on which there was other extreme pornography. You took that with you in the van and it was found when you were arrested. The other items, connected with Georgia, have never been found. The clear implication is that you secreted them with the intention of returning to them, along with the photographic record which you had assembled on the external hard drive, to relive, for your pleasure, the events of that night.

You knew what you were going to do with the body. You drove to a remote area in North Wales. You took camping equipment to support the cover story that you were off on your own, for a few days camping. You disposed of her body in a remote area; naked, lying on the surface, vulnerable to all the forces of nature such that when, only a few days later, her body was discovered, it had been damaged in a way which caused even more distress to her grieving family.

Your meticulous planning, however, did not take account of the fact that that the van got stuck in some mud near to where you had deposited the body. You had help to move it and a photographic record was taken. You, therefore, sought to put even more distance and time between you and what you had done by driving to Glasgow where, on the Wednesday morning, having made some purchases to give colour to your story of wishing to do away with yourself, you were found. You behaved, apparently, in a

perfectly normal way. You purchased a new watch, you went to the cinema, you checked in to a hotel for the night. Georgia's family, fooled by the bogus texts and your lies, had contacted the police only on the Tuesday. Georgia's body remained undiscovered until the Friday afternoon.

In the course of your interviews you told a series of lies using lines of deflection and diversion which you had used before. You stood by the story you had deployed to Georgia's family, you claimed your plan was to go north and kill yourself. When the police revealed they had recovered the photos of her alive and then dead on your memory stick you claimed total memory loss. When the police disclosed that there were photos of you and your van being pulled out of the mud and you realised they were close to discovering Georgia's body, you claimed to have little flashes of memory eventually remembering half dragging her into the woods.

At no stage, until five days before the date set for the start of this trial, did you formally accept any responsibility for the death of Georgia Williams. Not even on the basis of diminished responsibility. Georgia's family were left for 6 months to anticipate having to endure a full trial. At no stage have you expressed any genuine remorse for your horrific actions. It follows that, whilst your plea of guilty has in fact saved Georgia's family from having to endure a trial, in the context of this case, where the evidence against you was so overwhelming, that, as a mitigating factor, is of little significance.

Previous incidents

Unhappily, these events were not a one off, or an aberration, nor can they be characterised as the product of immaturity giving rise to an outburst of social or sexual rage arising out of Georgia's clear message that she did not see you as anything more than a friend. Rather, what you did to Georgia Williams is very much in character. You have, for at least 5 years, been obsessed with sexual violence against women, particularly in the form of hanging, or strangulation, and by sexual violation of them in death. Repeatedly you have sought to engineer situations where you were not simply the viewer of fictional fantasies but were the real life assailant.

By May 2013 you had an electronic library of in excess of 16,800 images and 72 videos of extreme pornography. You had written some 40 story lines where the predominant theme was fatal assault on a young woman followed by acts of sexual violation. The method of death was, almost invariably, strangulation or asphyxiation, most commonly by hanging using a rope and noose.

In January 2008 you lured a young woman, female 1, to your home to pose for photographs to illustrate what you, falsely, claimed was a media project based on a book which had factual similarities to the death of Georgia Williams.

When she declined to go upstairs, or into your kitchen, you attacked and attempted to strangle her. She only escaped by fighting you off. She had swelling and red marks to her neck and the police were called. At that time you already had in your bedroom photographs of unknown, naked, females being strangled and suffocated and two pictures to which, digitally, a noose around the neck of female 1 had been added.

You sought to deflect your responsibility by claiming not to remember much about the day or the attack and claimed, falsely, no longer to wish to access pornography and to dismiss thoughts of strangulation.

Although in retrospect this incident was extremely serious and, in the light of what we now know, potentially fatal, at the time, although it was considered carefully, it was dealt with by way of a final warning.

In August 2011 having had your advances rebuffed by a work colleague, female 2, you persisted until she confronted you, at which you deliberately reversed your car at speed straight in to hers. She featured as a victim in one of your story lines and appeared on a pseudo image with the addition of a rope around her neck.

Another young woman, Female 3, was lured by you to your family home in February 2013, when your parents were away for a week. Two days before, you had modified a Facebook photo of her to show a rope round her neck, her hands and ankles bound and sexual violation of her face. At that time you were also trying to lure Georgia Williams to your home but, on that occasion, she did not succumb to your persuasion. Female 3 did. After she had arrived you locked the doors and claimed that you did not know where the keys were. She was trapped in the house for about an hour. You tried to persuade her to stay the night. She refused. At one point she was screaming, shouting, threatening to climb out of a window and at that point you pretended to find the keys.

On that occasion you had prepared to hang her. You left a note to remind yourself to remove the oar from the loft, the cable ties out of the drawer and to put the trousers back in the wardrobe, all of which must have been ready for that purpose.

On 26th April you began writing a short story with Female 3 as the subject, entitled "Taxi Strangler".

There were other young women, whom you knew, and who were the subject of imaging by you involving a rope around their neck and/or sexual violation, Females 4, 5, 6 and 7 to whom reference was made in the opening.

In the lead up to the 26th May, when your parents were going to Italy for a week and your sister was at her boyfriend's, you sent messages to about 16 young women, whom you knew, inviting them to come alone to your house to participate in a photographic shoot involving simulating hanging, making it sound like harmless fun in which you would take a few photos for use in pursuit of a fictitious career in photography. Two or three of them showed interest and you had lined them up for later in that week if, for some reason, your plans for Georgia Williams were not realised.

Psychiatric evidence

I have read the extensive forensic psychiatric reports of Professor Peckitt. Whilst, in your early childhood you witnessed domestic violence and abuse of your mother and suffered some physical and emotional abuse yourself at the hands of your natural father, your mother, by her own efforts, escaped with you from this relationship and

managed to make a new life with your step-father who has been a loving father to you and your sister. Your mother and step-father provided a comfortable and supportive home and lifestyle, setting appropriate standards for behaviour. The professor's opinion is that you did not have a sufficiently disturbed upbringing to account for your adult behaviour. Nor is there anything to suggest that you displayed any symptoms of psychosis until recently in custody.

Professor Peckitt is of the opinion that you do not suffer from a recognised mental disorder nor do you have an abnormality of mental functioning. The only narrative that stands up to examination is that you wanted to hang a girl and have sex with her corpse to fulfil a long standing necrophiliac fantasy. He has expressed the opinion that you are intelligent and plausible, are capable of learning new tactics and strategies and had the potential to progress to being a serial killer. Whilst you pose an ongoing risk to your own life, you also pose a grave risk to women and will continue to do so for the rest of your life.

This view is broadly consistent with that of Dr Katina Anagnostakis a consultant forensic psychiatrist who has provided two reports dated 30 August and 18 November. She describes you as experiencing recurrent intense sexual fantasies involving violent sadism. You have a propensity to access such material through the internet, by writing stories and by seeking to enact them. Whilst you have described having certain psychotic symptoms they are very closely linked to your sexual preoccupations and are not accompanied by any other psychotic symptomology so that no diagnosis of a psychotic illness can be made, though she does not discount the possibility of the emergence of a psychotic illness in years to come

The Statutory Scheme.

Section 269 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 provides that, for an adult offender, where the Court is of the opinion that the offence is so serious that no order should be made providing for the possibility of release, once a specified minimum term has been served, the Court must make a whole life order.

In considering the seriousness of the offence, the Court must have regard to the general principles set out in schedule 21.

Schedule 21 defines a child as a person under 18 years.

It provides that if the Court considers that the seriousness of the offence is exceptionally high and the Offender was aged 21 or over, the appropriate starting point is a whole life order. It describes cases that would normally fall within that category as including:

(a) the murder of two or more persons, where each murder involves any of:

(i) a substantial degree of premeditation or planning,

or

(ii) sexual or sadistic conduct;

or

(b) the murder of a child involving abduction or sexual or sadistic motivation ...

This offence falls within the second of those descriptions.

Although it involves the killing of one and not two or more victims it involves each of the two defining features I have mentioned, any one of which would, otherwise, normally make the offence fall within the other relevant description of exceptionally high seriousness.

I also have to take account of your past conduct insofar as it is relevant to this issue

I have been referred to, and have had regard to, a number of relevant Court of Appeal decisions offering guidance on how schedule 21 applies. In *R v Jones* [2005] EWCA Crim 3115, it was said that a whole life order should be imposed where the seriousness of the offending is so exceptionally high that just punishment requires the offender to be kept in prison for the rest of his or her life. Usually, where such an order is called for, the case will not be on the borderline. The facts of the case, considered as a whole, will leave the Judge in no doubt that the offender must be kept in prison for the rest of his or her life. If the case includes one or more of the factors set out in paragraph 4 it is likely to be a case that falls to be a whole life order but the Judge must consider all the material facts before concluding that a very lengthy finite term such as 30 years will not be a sufficiently severe penalty. Where a whole life order is called for the case will not be on the borderline. If the Judge is in doubt this may well indicate that a finite minimum term, which leaves open the possibility that the offender may be released for the final few years of his or her life, is appropriate.

In the case of *Oakes and Others* [2012] EWCA Crim 2435, the Court of Appeal reminded Judges that a whole life minimum term is a draconian penalty. It is the order of last resort reserved for cases of exceptionally serious criminality. It is reserved for the few exceptionally serious offences in which, after reflecting on all the factors of aggravation and mitigation, the Judge is satisfied that the element of just punishment and retribution requires the imposition of a whole life order. If that conclusion is justified the whole life order is appropriate, but only then.

I have been referred to a number of cases in which a whole life term was made or considered. One such is *Mullen* [2008] EWCA Crim 592 where the offender was aged 22, the victim was his very young niece and he had entered an early guilty plea. A whole life term was not ordered in that case. I regard what the Court said on that issue at paragraphs 19 and 20 as particularly relevant to my task in the present case.

I also have to consider, whether, if I were of the view that a whole life order or otherwise were appropriate, it would be lawful to pass one in the light of the decision of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in *Vinter* delivered on 9th July 2013.

It is, as a matter of UK precedent, established that the whole life term regime provided for by the 2003 Act is compliant with, and does not breach, Article 3 of the

European Convention of Human Rights (see *Bieber* [2008] EWCA Crim 1601 endorsed by the House of Lords in *R (Wellington) v SSHD* [2009] UKHL 72).

In *Vinter*, the Grand Chamber of the ECtHR decided i. that an irreducible whole life sentence would violate Article 3 if there was no mechanism for a review to consider whether continued detention could no longer be justified on legitimate penological grounds, ii in such a case a violation of Article 3 arises at the time that the sentence is imposed, iii by virtue of the lack of clarity on the operation of Section 30 of the Crime Sentences Act 1997, which gives the Secretary of State power to release an offender on compassionate grounds, whole life terms imposed in England and Wales cannot be regarded as reducible so that passing one involved a breach of Article 3 of the ECHR..

There is, therefore, a conflict between the European Court of Human Rights decision in *Vinter* and domestic authority at the level of the House of Lords, now the Supreme Court.

I am persuaded that the proper approach for this court is to apply the domestic authorities which are binding on me and to leave the issue of compliance with Article 3, in the light of *Vinter*, to be determined by the CACD and/or the Supreme Court. In so doing I am adopting the approach prescribed by the Court of Appeal in *R (Purdy) v DPP* [2009] EWCA Civ 92 at paragraphs. 50-54.

I therefore proceed on the basis that if, having considered the provisions of schedule 21 and having applied the approach identified in the relevant cases, I am of the view that this is a case which warrants a whole life order, then I should impose one.

Conclusions

In my judgment, there is no doubt that this offence is one that would normally fall within paragraph 4(1)(a) and (b) of schedule 21, namely an offence whose seriousness is exceptionally high. That is so because it falls within the description in paragraph 4(2)(b) the murder of a child involving abduction and/or sexual and sadistic motivation.

Furthermore, although only involving the murder of one person, it is a case which has a large number of aggravating factors as follows.

- a. The murder of Georgia Williams was long anticipated and carefully planned not only in its commission but in the steps taken for the avoiding detection including evasions and lies previously practised.
- b. The murder was anticipated and designed to give sadistic and sexual pleasure. You watched Georgia die in circumstances where you could have saved her, doing so was a central part of your pleasure.
- c. Georgia would not have died instantly but would have suffered horribly both mentally and physically knowing that she had been betrayed by someone whom she had trusted and into whose power she had given herself.
- d After the killing you took sexual pleasure by repeatedly violating her body.
- e. You then treated her body with contempt, dumping it in a remote spot, far from home, naked, without burial, intending that it should not be found for a long time during which it would be vulnerable to the ravages of nature.

- f. You intended to continue to derive sexual pleasure from having killed her by photographing the events immediate to her death, keeping them with you and secreting her clothing and jewellery as trophies to be enjoyed.
- g. This was not a one off, directed at one person. Your potential targets were cast wider. You had arranged for two other young women to come to your house the following day with a similar fate in mind had you not succeeded in killing Georgia Williams.
- h. Killing Georgia Williams was an expression of a long standing, recurrent, preoccupation with violent sadistic pornography of which you sought, not merely to be a consumer, but to be a participant, as evidenced by your writings, your doctoring of visual images of young women whom you knew and your conduct in relation to female 1 in 2008 and female 3 in February 2013.

Having carefully considered all of the circumstances of this offence in the context of your previous activities I have concluded that this is not a marginal or borderline case. I am in no doubt that the seriousness of your offending is exceptionally high so that a whole life order is the starting point

I take seriously the assessment of Professor Peckitt, not only that you will remain a danger to women for the rest of your life but that you had the potential to become a serial killer, but I have not had regard to this assessment on this issue because it is not relevant to my assessment of the seriousness of this offence.

In considering whether to make a whole life order, I have had regard to mitigating factors. The first is your plea of guilty. I have already referred to its timing and circumstances and have indicated why, in my judgement, it is of little significance on this issue.

I have also had regard to the fact that you are 22 years of age. That is potentially important in two respects. First, the impact of a whole life term will be much greater for someone of your age. Second, the Court must always be alive to issues of maturity, insight and understanding which may affect culpability when considering young adults.

In so doing I have paid particular attention to the psychiatric reports. I can find nothing in them which suggests that any of these issues arise in a form or to an extent which might lower your level of culpability. In fact the conclusions of Professor Peckitt, if anything, tend the other way.

I have had regard to your conduct since, at least, 2008. This was not an isolated incident but was consistent with a well established pattern of thinking and behaviour. After at least two previous attempts, you achieved what you had been obsessed with for at least 5 years. You planned how to get away with it, to remain at large, free to relive it through images and trophies.

My conclusion, having had regard to these mitigating factors, is that I am of the opinion that, because of the seriousness of this offence, no order should be made under Subsection 2 of Section 269 of the 2003 Act making provision for a minimum

term. The sentence I pass is one of life imprisonment. The early release provisions are not to apply to you. I make a whole life order.