

CASE REPORT**PSYCHIATRY & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES**

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The Myth of Virginity: The Case of a Franco-Belgian Serial Killer*

ABSTRACT: This article provides an in-depth description of the case of Michel Fourniret (MF), a French serial killer who, with his wife Monique Olivier (MO), confessed to kidnapping, raping, and murdering at least nine girls during the 1980s and 1990s. Using information from writers, witnesses, trial experts, and regarding current forensic literature, we utilize this case to discuss sexual homicide from both the forensic and neuropsychiatric perspectives. Interview, psychometric, and forensic data from the trial were used to explain and shed light on MF's and MO's personalities and psychosexual proclivities. In the final section, we propose and discuss several theories and specific areas of potential exploration that, in light of the murder couple case story, may prove fruitful in the study of violent attachment and murder pacts.

KEYWORDS: forensic science, forensic psychiatry, paraphilias, sexual homicide, psychopathy, antisocial personality disorder, violent attachment, murder pact

On August 15, 1996, police raided Marc Dutroux's house, where they discovered a soundproof concrete dungeon in the basement. Within the dungeon, they discovered two young girls who were alive but had been sexually abused. Both girls admitted to being sexually assaulted and filmed pornographically by Dutroux. Police found further evidence, including at least 300 child pornography videos. A few days after the discovery of the two young girls, police exhumed the bodies of two other girls who had not managed to survive in Dutroux's dungeon. These two 8-year-old friends, who disappeared together in June 1995, were found buried in the backyard of another of Dutroux's houses in Sars-La-Buissière. While in police custody, Dutroux and his accomplice, Michel Lelievre, allegedly admitted to kidnapping two additional girls who had gone missing a year earlier from a camping trip at Ostend, a Belgian resort. The bodies of these two girls, ages 19 and 17, were found at another house owned by Dutroux several weeks after the discovery of the first two bodies. The two older girls had been buried under concrete in a shed next to Dutroux's house.

On October 20, 1997, just a short time after the Dutroux affair, Belgian authorities in Brussels charged Andras Pandy, a 70-year-old Protestant pastor from Hungary who moved to Belgium to escape Communism, with the murder of two of his ex-wives and four of his eight children. His 40-year-old daughter Agnes, who claimed that her father had sexually abused her since the age of 13, confessed to helping to kill five family members and was charged as an accessory to the murders. On March 6, 2002, a Belgian court convicted Pandy of murdering two of his wives and four of his children and dissolving their bodies using chemical drain

cleaner. He was also convicted of raping Agnes and another daughter. Like Marc Dutroux, he was sentenced to life in prison. Agnes Pandy received a 21-year sentence for acting as an accomplice to five murders and one attempted murder.

Between 1993 and 2001, five women were murdered in Mons, a town in the south of Belgium near the French border. All of these homicides were attributed to one person (known as "le dépeceur de Mons"), who, despite several suspects and trials, remains at large.

Together, these events are beginning to make this sleepy northern European nation look like an incubator of serial mayhem. As a direct consequence, serial killing has become a topic of great interest and intensive discussion in Belgian scientific circles.

This work presents an in-depth description of the recent case of Michel Fourniret (MF). MF is a French serial killer who, with his wife Monique Olivier (MO), confessed to kidnapping, raping, and murdering at least nine people during the 1980s and 1990s (i.e., during the same period as the Dutroux affair) in both Belgium and France. We discuss the case of MF from developmental, neuropsychiatric, and forensic perspectives. Then, in light of this case, we also discuss current forensic theories on sexually violent predators (SVPs), violent attachment, and murder pacts.

Case History

Table 1 illustrates the main and criminal events in MF's life. In the following section, we discuss the precise aspects of his life that are important for the case study.

Michel Fourniret's Childhood

Owing to the limited cooperation of MF with this investigation, we do not have a great deal of information about his childhood and adolescence. However, we used the available information from experts, writers (1), and several witnesses.

Michel Fourniret was born on April 4, 1942 in Sedan, northeast France (1). He grew up in the French Ardennes Department,

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*Presented at the 40th Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, October 29–November 1, 2009, in Baltimore, MD.

Received 27 Dec. 2009; and in revised form 16 May 2010; accepted 16 May 2010.

TABLE 1—Importance and diversity of Michel Fourniret (MF)'s criminal career and the escalation of his violence.

Event	Observation
April 4, 1942	MF's birth in Sedan, France
1942–1966	Childhood (Sedan, France), schooling, college (Charleville-Mézières, France), military service (Algeria), and the beginning of his professional life as a worker
1964–1967	First marriage/First child
1966 (25 years old) (*)	Abducts (first time) an 11-year-old French girl. Lets her go without raping
1966 (*)	Charged with voyeurism and violence in France. Sentenced to 8 months in jail (deferment)
1970	Second marriage/3 children
1973 (*)	Charged with sexual assaults in France. Sentenced to jail (deferment).
1984 (*)	Charged with violent rapes on minors in France. Sentenced to jail (Fleury-Merogis, France)
1986	During his sentence in jail, MF begins to correspond with and then meets Monique Olivier (MO)
June 26, 1987	Sentenced to 7 years in jail in France (in which 2 as suspended sentence and 3 years of probation) for multiple sexual assaults. Released on bail shortly after the process because he had already served most of his time in custody (since March 1984)
October 22, 1987	Released from the Fleury-Merogis (France) jail and takes a place in Saint-Cyr-les-Colons (Yonne, France) with MO
December 11, 1987 (***)	Kidnaps, rapes, and strangles Isabelle Laville, a 17-year-old French girl (first murder)
December 1988	MO and MF leave Saint-Cyr-les-Colons and take a place in Floing (French Ardennes, France)
1989	MF marries MO
August 3, 1988 (***)	Kidnaps and kills (gunshot) Fabienne Leroy, a 20-year-old French girl (Châlons-en Champagne, Marne, France).
March 18, 1989 (***)	Kidnaps, rapes, and strangles Jeanne-Marie Desramault, a 22-year-old French girl
December 20, 1989 (***)	Kidnaps in Namur (Belgium), rapes and strangles Elisabeth Brichet, a 12-year-old Belgian girl
November 21, 1990 (***)	Kidnaps, rapes, and kills Natacha Danais, a 13-year-old French girl
1990 (**)	Kills Farida Hellegouarch, the girlfriend of one of the members of the "Gang des postiches" (a gang of bank robbers), who was a former cellmate of MF. Fourniret has access to the gang's funds and buys his castle in Belgium (Château de Sautou)
1990–1992	MF and MO live in the Sautou Castle, in Donchery (French Ardennes, France)
1991 (**)	MF burglarizes a police Department in Givet (France) and steals 6 gunshots
1992–2003	MF and MO move to and live in Sart-Custinne (Belgian Ardennes, Belgium)
January 1995 (*)	Attempts to kidnap a woman in Namur, Belgium
1998 (**)	Shoots a man on a highway in France in a robbery for some quick cash
February 2000 (*)	Attempts to kidnap and rape a 14-year-old Belgian girl in Gedinne, Belgium
2000 (**)	Sentenced to 6 months in jail (Bar le Duc penitentiary, France) for violent robbery of a woman

TABLE 1—Continued.

Event	Observation
April 19, 2001 (*)	Attempts to kidnap a 20-year-old girl in Belgium
May 5, 2001 (***)	Kidnaps (France) and kills Manyana Thumpong (18 years old). Her body was found in March 2002 in Belgium
August 2002 (*)	Attempts to kidnap a 9-year-old girl in Belgium
June 26, 2003 (*)	Attempts to kidnap Marie-Ascension, a 13-year-old girl in Belgium. The girl escapes by leaping out of his car
June 2003	MF is arrested and jailed in Belgium after a failed attempt to kidnap Marie-Ascension
June-July, 2004	MO confesses and charges her husband of at least 10 murders
March 28, 2008–May 28, 2008	The Fourniret trial in Charleville-Mézières (France)
May 28, 2008	MO and MF jailed for life

* sexual assaults without homicide/attempts to kidnap.

** various violent offenses/nonsexual homicide.

*** sexual homicide.

Champagne-Ardenne region (1). He was the youngest of three children. His mother, Lucienne Manfey, was a housewife, and his father, Jules Fourniret, was a factory worker (1). As is the case with many criminals (2), his childhood was less than perfect (1). According to MF himself, his father suffered from alcohol dependence and was generally absent (1). When asked to describe his mother, he asked the investigators to read two classical French novels, *Poils de carotte* by Jules Renard and *Vipère au poing* by Herve Bazin (3). The mothers in both novels (4,5) appear despotic, humiliating, and mentally unstable. Moreover, MF confessed that his mother abused him sexually when he was between 4 and 6 years old (1,3). After a few years (and essentially because of the mental health problems of the mother), the Fourniret parents divorced, and the father took care of the three children (1,3).

Michel Fourniret was considered very intelligent as a child, but, despite being one of the best students, he was never interested in school (1). Otherwise, MF is described by his classmates as being shy and isolated, as well as fallacious, dishonest, and deceitful (1). He stole pens and wallets. Because of his behavior, he was regularly beaten by his classmates (1). He also admitted to being maliciously cruel to animals as a child (1).

Michel Fourniret's Early Adulthood and First Sexual Aggression

The only information that MF provided about his early adolescent period was his burgeoning obsession with virginity (1,3). He told investigators that this obsession was because of his mother, who was completely obsessed with Christianity and the Virgin Mary (1,3). He confessed that, during this time, he was already searching for young virgins.

Michel Fourniret was manually gifted and able to do a great deal with his hands (1,3). As an adolescent, he made superficial contact with others but was viewed by his peers as isolative and socially inept. Several witnesses described him as being discreet, isolated, and shy but always ready to work and never intimidated by the quantity of work he had to do (1). During his technical studies in France, as a worker, and throughout his professional life, all of the witnesses in the case agreed that MF was very professional, serious, and diligent. However, one consistent and strange feature of these accounts was that many said it was difficult to understand

MF's past because he frequently lied about it (1). Finally, MF was also described by some witnesses as being very impulsive and violent. For instance, he once shot his dog for being disobedient.

Based on the facts that we know today, MF was 25 years old and was still in his first marriage when he first attempted to abduct an 11-year-old French girl in Charleville-Mézières in the North of France in 1966 (1,3). At this time, he had already established his *modus operandi*: gaining the girl's trust and asking her to get into his car to show him the way. After trying to abuse her sexually in the woods, he became afraid and let her go without raping or killing her. After this first documented sexual attempt, he began to spend time driving in his car at night to feed his paraphilia of voyeurism (1,3). It is difficult to know exactly how many girls he assaulted between 1966 and 1984, but it is clear that MF committed several sexual assaults and other offenses, such as burglaries, during this period (Table 1). Unfortunately, we do not know whether MF was already killing girls during this period. The only definite fact is that during this time, MF had already become a serial sexual offender.

Michel Fourniret's First Confessed Murder

Isabelle Laville, a 17-year-old French girl, was MF's first documented murder (1,3). She was abducted from Auxerre in December 1987, and her body has never been found.

Michel Fourniret's *modus operandi* was already well known; however, by the end of 1987, MF and MO were a couple, and MO decided to help him in his quest (1). During the first known incident, MO was alone in the car, and she approached the teenager to ask her for information about an itinerary. MO then asked the girl to get into the car and show her the way. A half mile later, MO stopped the car to pick up MF, who was pretending to be a hitchhiker. He immediately beat the young girl and drove her to their house in Saint-Cyr-les-Colons, where MF beat her again, tried to rape her, and finally killed her by strangulation (1,3). This incident is the first of many other known killings, and additional victims likely exist but are not yet known (Table 1).

Michel Fourniret's Arrest and Sentence

On June 26, 2003, 13-year-old Marie-Ascension was abducted in Ciney (Belgium) (1,3). After being loaded into a lorry, she was bound and raped by a man who told her, "I am worse than Dutroux." The young teen managed to free herself and escape from the lorry into a swamp. She was then rescued by a motorist and recognized the lorry on the way. Based on the lorry's registration plate, Fourniret was arrested the next day (1,3). At that time, little was known about Fourniret in Belgium. His past French criminal record had not been communicated to the Belgian authorities, not even the crimes for which he was then being tried (1,3). The day after the verdict in the Dutroux case, MO revealed the extent of her husband's behavior during an interrogation by Belgian police and accused her husband of the murders of at least seven young women. MF, then in custody in Dinant, confessed to these crimes (1,3).

In total, MF confessed to committing nine murders (1,3). His wife, MO, a 59-year-old nurse, was accused of helping MF to trap his victims since meeting him in 1986. She was charged with the murder of one of the young women and with complicity in three other killings. She expressed remorse at the end of the trial, telling the court, "I regret everything that I have done. That is all."

After several discussions between Belgian and French authorities, the trial was conducted in Charleville-Mézière, France. On May 28,

2008, MF and MO (described as the cruelest criminals France has ever known) were given life sentences for the rape and murder of eight girls and women during an obsessive 17-year quest for virgins (1). At the end of the trial, which stunned even the most hardened of observers, MF, 66, was barred from seeking parole under a verdict designed to ensure that he will die in prison (1).

To the best of our knowledge, MF became only the fourth person in French legal history to receive a full life term. MO, his wife and accomplice, will not be able to request parole until 2036. French investigators said that they would reexamine 30 unsolved disappearances and murders to determine whether there are any links to MF. The Belgian police said that they are looking for links between MF and the disappearances of at least 15 other girls over the past 20 years. In addition, MF is also suspected in, but has yet to stand trial for, at least three other cases in both Belgium and France (including the 1990 murder of Joanna Parrish, a 20-year-old British woman who worked as a teaching assistant in the city of Auxerre in central France) (1,3).

Psychiatric Evaluation and the Question of Sanity

Under Belgian and French law, the courts seek to determine whether a child or mentally ill person can differentiate right from wrong (in the global sense) when determining whether the accused should be held responsible for an illegal act (6,7). Although MF never asked for psychological evaluation, he was periodically evaluated by psychologists and psychiatrists because of the law that was in place, mostly during and around his different stays in jail (1). Every time that he was released, MF quickly stopped the psychotherapeutic treatments that were requested by the courts (1).

To the best of our knowledge, MF was psychiatrically evaluated for the first time during his condemnation in France in 1987. At that time, MF was described as being strongly antisocial, impulsive, manipulative, and completely locked into an idiosyncratic view of the world entirely focused on virginity and the Virgin Mary (1,3). He told the investigators that the biggest drama in his life was the fact that he had married a woman who was not a virgin. During this period, he justified his quest for young virgin girls, who he cynically referred to as "membrane sur patte" (membranes on legs).

During various interviews, MF was perceived by experts as cool-headed, nonanxious, and very polite. He was cognitively intact and had a quick mind. He was also arrogant and highly manipulative, and he spoke rhetorically and regularly cited great French writers and philosophers. While he was not afraid to speak about the murders, sometimes in great detail, he regularly mixed the truth with lies about the murders and the bodies. He was mostly uncooperative concerning his life story, especially his childhood.

Psychopathy was an important factor to consider during the trial. Based on the work of Cleckley (8) and Hare (9), psychopathy has been found to be a significant factor in the behavior of violent criminals. The Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R), a 20-factor instrument, was administered to MF because of its widespread acceptance within the academic community, its relative ease of use, and its high levels of reliability and validity in assessing psychopaths (10). Based in part on his criminal history and violent behavior, MF scored a 27 on the PCL-R in 2005, almost meeting the diagnostic criteria for psychopathy in Europe (11). Other psychometric tools were used during additional evaluations, including the AMDP system ("Manuel de documentation et de quantification de la psychopathologie") (4,5,12), a global psychopathological scale focused on present psychiatric and somatic data, and the "Psychischer und Sozialkommunikativer Befund" (PSKB) scale, an instrument for the description of standardized neurosis (13). With the

exception of a hyperthymic profile, each of these scales excluded any form of mental disorder or any pathological dissociation in MF.

Monique Olivier was also evaluated by several experts. The Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS, 17 Items) showed any signs of major depression (score of 6), but the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI-y) showed higher levels of state and anxiety traits (≥ 94 –99 percentile) (14,15). To psychologically test MO, experts also used the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2) and the Rorschach test (16–18). The overall impression from the MMPI is that of a character-disordered woman who is anxious, quite introverted, and prone to form impulsive and dependent attachments to individuals who will mistreat her. MO's Rorschach indicates: (i) a personality structure that is marked by affective instability and contradiction yet not in a state of emotional distress, (ii) dependency on others and disinterest in them, (iii) pathological narcissism and the expectation of cooperativeness, (iv) personal isolation and normal stress tolerance, and (v) unmodulated affects and normal controls.

Finally, the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, revised version (WAIS-R), was used to test MO (19). Her IQ was 99 (47th percentile), excluding any form of mental retardation (19). The experts concluded that there was no evidence of mental illness, either at the time of the evaluations or at the time of the offenses. MO and MF were not found to meet the legal definition of insanity (which usually means frank psychosis). They both knew right from wrong when they killed the girls, were found guilty, and were sentenced to life in prison in France.

Discussion

A "Serial Killer Syndrome"

Michel Fourniret best typifies what Joel Norris described in his book as "serial killer syndrome" (20). MF was a time bomb whose fuse had been lit very early in his childhood, mostly by his mentally unstable and abusive mother and by his addict father. According to Norris' theory, time bombs are people who are programmed by the complex interaction of biological, psychological, social, and spiritual forces to commit crimes so heinous that even the police are confounded by the depth of the hatred they display toward their victims (20). These killers give off clear "warning signs" about the impending danger they pose long before they erupt and commit their first murder (20). In our case of interest, the warning signs were as follows: (i) voyeurism, (ii) the killer's obsession with virginity (which was prevalent since his early adolescence), (iii) his early manifestations of sadism and conduct disorders, and most of all, (iv) his increasing number of sexual assaults against minors, beginning in 1967. The difficulty in appreciating warning signs lies in understanding what the true early warning signs of violence are and where the violence begins or could begin in a specific person (20).

An Organized Murderer

Tables 2 and 3 present differences between the profiles and crime scene characteristics of organized versus disorganized murderers (21).

Similar to most organized antisocial offenders, MF had a highly structured personality that was reflected in his lifestyle, home, automobile, and personal appearance. This kind of offender may suffer from some type of obsessional personality trait or obsessive-compulsive disorder (22). For instance, MF was very organized in his

TABLE 2—Characteristics of organized and disorganized murderers.

Organized Murderer	Disorganized Murderer
Good intelligence	Average intelligence
Socially competent	Socially immature
Skilled work preferred	Poor work history
*Sexually competent	Sexually incompetent
*High birth order status	Minimal birth order status
Father's work stable	Father's work unstable
Inconsistent childhood discipline	Harsh discipline in childhood
Controlled mood during crime	Anxiety during crime
*Use of alcohol or other drugs with crime	Minimal use of alcohol or other drugs
Precipitating situational stress	Minimal situational stress
Living with partner	Living alone
Mobility	Lives or works near crime scene
Follows crime in media	No or minimal interest in media
May change jobs or leave town.	Minimal change in lifestyle.
Nomadic lifestyle	Sedentary lifestyle

Except for a few criteria (marked with *), Michel Fourniret can be considered an organized serial killer.

TABLE 3—Crime scene differences between organized and disorganized murderers.

Organized Murderer	Disorganized Murderer
Offense planned	Spontaneous—acute offense
Victim a targeted stranger	Victim or location known
Personalizes the victim	Depersonalizes the victim
Controlled conversation	Minimal conversation—contact
Crime scene reflects overall control	Crime scene is random and sloppy
Demands submissive victim	Sudden violence to victim
Restraints used	Minimal use of restraints
Aggressive and sexual acts prior to death	Sexual acts after death
Body hidden	Body left in view
Weapon and evidence absent	Weapon and evidence often present
Transports victim and/or body	Body left at death scene

professional life, where this characteristic was much appreciated. For such an individual, there is a place for everything, and everything must be in its place. MF said that he was able to plan and wait several hours for his victims to get the best opportunity to abduct them. He had the same basic *modus operandi* since his first offense and likely would have found it very difficult to deviate from his accustomed way of doing things (21,22).

Similar to many serial killers, his nonsocial side was hidden behind a mask of sanity, as was well described by Hervey Cleckley (8) in his famous book first published in 1941. His appearance of sanity and normality was reinforced when MF formed a relationship with his third wife MO in 1987, which is quite unusual for this kind of offender. In fact, to commit their antisocial acts, most organized offenders are solitary and remain solitary throughout their criminal careers (see below) (21,22).

The organized offender feels comfortable venturing away from his home (22). Generally, he is able to work and carry on personal, although superficial, relationships (21,22). In the same way, he is able to change employment as often as he chooses because he generally makes a good impression. He is also psychologically able to widen his network of relationships and can travel an increasing distance away from his home and work to cruise for victims to hinder his apprehension. In our specific case, it is evident that MF had some difficulties with making friends and building social networks. He was generally described as discreet, shy, and sometimes

reclusive, both as a child and as an adult. He was also perceived as being emotionally distant and sometimes “disconnected” from his third wife, MO.

With a positive self-image bordering on egomania, the organized nonsocial offender may be said to have a personality disorder (22). Commonly, he is termed a full-blown psychopath (22). He believes that he knows best, not only for himself, but also for everyone else. Because he feels that he is always right, he is reluctant to accept criticism even when it is meant constructively. This offender perceives any kind of criticism to be destructive, as was the case with MF.

The Myth of Virginity

Motivation is a difficult factor to judge because it requires dealing with both the inner thoughts and the behaviors of the offender (23). Motivation can always be easily determined in the organized SVP, who by definition premeditates, plans, and has the ability to carry out a plan of action that is logical and complete (23). Moreover, the motivational forces at work in serial sexual killers can be indirectly assessed through their psychiatric diagnoses (24).

Most serial sexual killers are characterized by at least some degree of sexual sadism (24–27). Krafft-Ebing (28) defined sadism as follows: “Sadism is the experience of sexually pleasurable sensations, including orgasm, produced by acts of cruelty. It may also consist of an innate desire to humiliate, hurt, wound, or even destroy others thereby to create sexual pleasure in one’s self.” Over 100 years later, we see that our present definition of sexual sadism, as defined in DSM-IV-TR, has not fundamentally changed from Krafft-Ebing’s definition (29). A diagnosis of sexual sadism requires: “Over a period of at least 6 months, recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors involving acts (real, not simulated) in which the psychological or physical suffering (including humiliation) of the victim is sexually exciting to the person.” Neither the original Krafft-Ebing definition nor the DSM criteria mention power, control, or anger as elements of sexual sadism. Instead, these definitions speak to the sexually exciting qualities inherent in cruelty and the suffering of others (24,28,29). During MF’s trial, experts said that he mostly killed because he feared being caught by the police if he let his victims go free. Additionally, MF generally found real pleasure and excitement in dominating and killing his young victims, especially when he did it by strangulation (1).

Perhaps the best method for determining the motivation of serial sexual murderers is through their self-reports, provided that one is confident that their renditions are genuine and have not been influenced by external factors (24). Such reports on what propelled them during their acts commonly implicate a state of sexual arousal and excitement. Concerning the sexual sadism of MF, another important motivational element that was a driving force is what we propose to call “the myth of virginity.” Since childhood, MF was obsessed with virginity and with everything related to the Virgin Mary. Indeed, MF told his wife that he wanted to experiment with and experience the loss of virginity.

Victim Profiles and Modus Operandi

For a murderer with a conscious plan or fantasy, selecting a victim begins the acting-out level of behavior (30). The previously constructed plan or fantasy may call for a victim who meets certain criteria, and many organized murderers have been known to seek out a victim who is exactly right for the fantasy (30).

Of the nine victims MF was charged with assaulting and killing, eight were female. Of these, seven ranged in age from 12 to 20.

The last female victim was older and was killed primarily for money, not because of her virginity. The final victim was a man whom MF shot for quick cash (Table 1).

Michel Fourniret had a fairly consistent *modus operandi*, but he had various ways of gaining a victim’s trust. Generally, with his wife MO, he would feign that they were lost. Sometimes, he would say that they had to go to the hospital because their baby was ill and would ask the girl to get into the van to show them the way. At least twice, MO attracted the young girls by playing the role of a normal mother. Once, she even used her son to attract a victim by pretending to be looking for a doctor for her sick child. MF and MO had a remarkable advantage in that MF’s facial features were not very attractive and not especially memorable. Moreover, MF was usually with his wife and son, presenting the appearance of an ordinary, trustworthy family. After luring a victim into his van, MF would hit her in the head with a crowbar he had placed underneath the van or hidden inside it. Table 4 illustrates the *modus operandi* and signature aspects of MF’s crimes.

A Ballad of 17 Years

Between 1987 and 2003, and despite his criminal history before his first murder in 1987 (Table 1), MF stalked and killed virgin girls and young women without being apprehended or even approached by Belgian or French authorities. Moreover, he succeeded as an educator in a school in Belgium. Different factors could explain these facts. First, MF stalked and killed in two different countries (Belgium and France) with different laws, different procedures for homicide investigation, and a lack of communication between authorities across the border. There are many examples in the USA (e.g., Ted Bundy, Henry Lee Lucas, etc.) in which SVPs killed in different states, making the investigators’ work more complicated (31). Second, MF killed in several different places, sometimes far from each other (e.g., French Ardennes, Belgian

TABLE 4—Forensic data.

Victim Profile: a “virgin-hunter”
1. Sex: female
2. Age: between 12 and 20 years old
3. Virgin only
Motivation: a “virgin-hunter”
1. Totally obsessed by the virginity and by everything related to the Virgin Mary
2. Quest of his life: to live “the loss of virginity experience”
<i>Modus Operandi</i> : An efficient murder team dynamics
Michel Fourniret (MF) had a fairly consistent <i>modus operandi</i> but had various ways of gaining a victim’s trust
1. MF would feign that he was lost and asked the girl getting in the van to show the way
2. MF would feign they were lost and had to go to the hospital because their baby was ill. They asked the girl to get in the car to show the way
3. At least twice, it was Monique Olivier who attracted the young girls by playing the role of a normal mother. One day, she even used her son to attract a victim by pretending to be looking for a doctor for her sick child
4. After luring a victim to his van, MF would hit her on the head with a crowbar he had placed underneath his van or hidden inside it
5. Generally, MF killed the girl in the following hours or following days after sexual assaults
Signature: A ballad of 17 years
1. No “specific” signature. No specific signs on bodies
2. Used different ways to kill: hands-on weapons (most of the time), knives, and guns
3. Stalked and killed in many different places in two different countries (Belgium and France) where other important trials (Marc Dutroux in Belgium and Emile Louis in France) were ongoing

Ardennes, Yonne, etc.), and understanding the links between the different disappearances was challenging. Several of MF's victims were transported a considerable distance from where they disappeared. A few times, he killed in France and the bodies were found in Belgium. Moreover, MF's "signature" was not specific, and he killed his victims in different ways, such as with hands-on weapons (strangulation), firearms, and knives. Third, other SVP trials were ongoing at that time for Marc Dutroux (Belgium) and Emile Louis (Yonne, France), and several disappearances were hastily and incorrectly attributed to these other two SVPs. This fact raises the possibility that MF deliberately killed in these regions to confuse the investigators. Finally, unlike other countries such as the United States, we could posit that Belgium was not familiar with this specific kind of criminal. Figure 1 illustrates the criminal mapping of MF.

An Efficient Murder Team

Owing to the psychopathic nature of the serial killer, and because MF was of the organized nonsocial offender type, it was unusual for him to have had accomplices (21,22). Generally, when a serial killer chooses to pair up with someone else to commit serial murder, he tends to select a person who will complement him or do his dirty work (21,22). Sometimes, the partner is coerced by the alpha or dominant killer because of circumstantial association; the partner may be a lover, wife, relative, or simply an individual who was at the wrong place at the wrong time and grew into the role (21,22). MF's criminal background shows that MO

played a major role in the escalation of his criminal behavior, especially in committing his first murder in 1987 (Table 1). Thus, her role may have been that of a catalyst.

When discussing their first murders, most SVPs who have been interviewed generally indicate that something happened to move them either to act out their fantasies of killing or to murder to preserve other fantasies (30). Before meeting MO in 1986, MF had been convicted of several sexual assaults but never of murder. Shortly after the first correspondences between MF and MO, while MF was still in jail, the two wrote a letter (shown during the trial) creating a murder pact, a killer association in which MO would help MF abduct young virgin girls if MF agreed to kill her abusive ex-husband (which he tried but failed to do). As with other killer couples, MF and MO rapidly became an efficient team. Sometimes, MF stalked his victims alone, but when MO was present, she often helped him. At times, she brought along their son, whose presence was reassuring to the young girls and often convinced them to get into MF's van.

As mentioned above, serial killers generally act alone, but the criminal literature shows that couples do commit serial murders, as in this case. Although such murders have not been common enough to become entrenched in the public psyche, they have occurred with some regularity over (at least) the past 30 years. Probably, the most notorious of these cases is that of Paul and Karla Bernardo, an attractive young Canadian couple who, in the early 1990s, kidnapped, drugged, raped, and/or killed a number of women and carefully captured many of their perverse exploits on video tape (32). The furor over the Bernardos' actions, precipitated



FIG. 1—Criminal mapping of Michel Fourniret (MF). • indicates where the victims were kidnapped and/or crime occurred. The bottom left panel illustrates the Sautou Castle, where MF killed and buried several of his victims.

by their arrests and Paul Bernardo's subsequent trial, coincided roughly with shocking revelations from Gloucester, England regarding Fred and Rosemary West (33). Over many years, the Wests murdered several women and girls, including some of their own children, and buried the bodies in various locations in their house, garage, and garden (33). Other interesting examples that were fairly similar in nature to the MF/MO case are the Birnie murders (David John Birnie and Catherine Margaret Birnie) and the Moors murders (Ian Brady and Myra Hindley) (34,35).

At the beginning of their story as a couple, and despite the fact that MO and MF rapidly made a murder pact, they quickly evolved and showed what Heinrich Racker called complementary identifications (36,37). In Racker's model, complementary identifications are formed when the analyst identifies with the patient's internal objects and are often the opposite of what is consciously felt to be a part of the self by the patient but, nevertheless, may recapitulate a relationship to an early actual object that has now been internalized (36,37). For instance, the analyst might portray a characteristic of the biological parent, such as passive and submissive, and the patient might consciously behave in an active and dominant manner. Intrapsychically, the analyst has identified with the passive parental introject of the patient that has been projected onto the analyst. The most common complementary identification with the psychopath, and the one that fits our case, is the masochistic identification (36,37). This identification is apparent in the behavior of the individual who appears to seek and derive pleasure from suffering at the behest of the psychopath. MO's masochistic attitude fits MF's characterological sadism of the primary psychopath the way a glove fits the hand. It gratifies his continual wish to devalue, control, and injure objects that are perceived as good and consequently a threat to the bad identifications that are conscious for the psychopath. Novick and Novick proposed one of the clearest definitions of masochism that can be applied in MO's case, "Masochism is the active pursuit of psychic (moral masochism) or physical pain, suffering, or humiliation in the service of adaptation, defense, and instinctual gratification at oral, anal, and phallic levels" (38). More precisely, and for those women (as for MO) who are more regressed in their personality organization, the psychopath may represent a source of real danger and a source of aims and purposes that are exciting (36,37). This aspect of the complementary identification of masochism is most often evident in women, like MO, who are organized at a borderline level of personality. Their excitement is usually erotically tinged and may be linked with the witnessing of violence. Often, the predatory nature of the psychopathic character, clinically observed in his instinctual, threatening stare, will be experienced by this woman as bewitching and mesmerizing. In this context, such a woman may help this psychopath abduct, rape, and murder young girls.

Proposed Diagnosis

Integrating all of the investigator and expert information we compiled from the Fourniret trials, we propose a DSM-IV-TR multi-axial diagnosis for MF and MO in Tables 5 and 6, respectively (29).

According to a different classification system, the Crime Classification Manual edited by Douglas et al. (39) (a landmark book that standardized the language and terminology used throughout the criminal justice system), MF's behavior would be classified as Sexual Homicide (- code 130-), Organized (- code 131-), and Sadistic Murder (- code 134-).

From a forensic psychiatric point of view, most serial killers are psychopaths and/or sexual sadists or meet criteria for antisocial

TABLE 5—DSM-IV-TR multi-axial diagnosis for Michel Fourniret.

Axis I. Clinical disorders/other conditions that may be a focus of clinical attention
1. Paraphilia not otherwise specified (voyeurism and sexual sadism)
2. Sexual dysfunction not otherwise specified
Axis II. Personality disorders/mental retardation
1. Personality disorder not otherwise specified (with antisocial, narcissistic, obsessive, and schizoid personality disorder traits)
Axis III. General medical conditions
1. No major medical conditions
Axis IV. Psychosocial and environmental problems
1. Problems related to interaction with the legal system/crime
2. Problems related to the social environment
3. Occupational problem
Axis V. Global assessment of functioning
1. GAF 10 (highest level during year preceding his final arrest)
2. GAF 10 (at the time of his arrest and evaluations)

TABLE 6—DSM-IV-TR multi-axial diagnosis for Monique Olivier.

Axis I. Clinical disorders/other conditions that may be a focus of clinical attention
1. Dysthymic disorder
Axis II. Personality disorders/mental retardation
1. Personality disorder not otherwise specified (with narcissistic, dependent, and borderline disorder traits)
Axis III. General medical conditions
1. No major medical conditions
Axis IV. Psychosocial and environmental problems
1. Problems related to the social environment
2. Occupational problem
Axis V. Global assessment of functioning
1. GAF 10 (highest level during year preceding his final arrest)
2. GAF 10 (at the time of his arrest and evaluations)

personality disorder, depending on the circumstances of the homicide and what was done to the victim (40,41). Such a diagnosis is based on the information obtained from a review of the offender's developmental history and clinical interviews conducted with the offender by the mental health clinician. Most experts in the field believe that serial killers are rarely psychotic. These experts have confirmed that all clinical criteria for antisocial personality disorder and sexual sadism were met according to the requirements of the American Psychiatric Association (29,40,41).

Moreover, like narcissistic, schizoid, and obsessive traits, sexual sadism was a prominent diagnosis in this case, as well as in other sexual homicide perpetrator cases (25,42). In Langevin's study (43), voyeurism and fetishism were also reported more frequently in sexual homicide perpetrators when compared with (non-homicidal) sexual offenders, while the use of pornography was most likely associated with (nonhomicidal) sadism. Another important factor that must be addressed regarding sexual murderers is the strong relationship between sadistic and "psychopathic" traits (44). The MF case is consistent with the results of Porter et al. (45), who showed that nearly 85% of sexual homicide perpetrators scored in the moderate to high range on the PCL-R (9).

We argue that MO is a woman organized at a borderline level of personality with predominantly masochistic, dependent, and passive character traits. Her psychology is dominated by the centrality of dominance and submission. During her life, MO repeated the cycle of degradation in her family and with her violent ex-husband.

Conclusion

Over the past three decades, serial killers have been detected in many cultures around the world, and today, this heterogeneous

group of offenders constitutes a global phenomenon. For 15 years, Belgium, a small Western European country of 11,787 square miles with almost 11 million inhabitants, has had several incidents involving this type of offender. All of these murders and their trials, especially the one described in this paper, illustrate that we are unfamiliar with and somewhat powerless in the face of this type of criminal. Investigative psychology and profiling appear to be promising solutions. The form that an effective solution will take remains uncertain. However, improving communication within European countries, creating networks between police and authorities, and creating academic curricula and research projects to train specialists would radically improve the efficiency of investigations and the authorities' ability to apprehend SVPs.

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