



I18 The Psychopathological Profile of the Female Serial Killer: From Homicide to Cannibalism — The True Story of the “Soapmaker of Correggio”

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the role of the psychopathological profile in female serial killers and, in particular, the role that gratification plays in inducing the serial killer to commit murder.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by highlighting that, for the female serial killer, a psychopathic personality and child sexual abuse are common features.

In most cases reported in the literature, serial killers are men. This study sought to analyze cases of female serial killers. A literature review was performed using the Pubmed NCBI search engine with “female serial killer” as the key word. There are few cases in the literature concerning female serial killers. This work seeks to tell the story of a female Italian serial killer.

An investigation of the mental processes with the analysis of her memoir, *Leonarda Cianciulli, An embittered soul's confessions*, attributed to this serial killer, was performed and the data compared. This study reports the case Leonarda Cianciulli. She was born in 1892, in Mantella, Italy. Her childhood was difficult: “I was a weak child ... my parents treated me like a weight ... I attempted to hang myself twice” She had 17 pregnancies, but only four sons survived. These children became an obsession with her.

Cianciulli attended three friends, who were single, middle-aged women. The first victim was Faustina Setti. Leonarda told her she had found a husband for her. Since Faustina was semi-literate, Leonarda volunteered to help her write a letter. The same day, she killed her friend with an ax, then dissected the corpse. She wrote, “I threw the pieces into a pot ... I made a lot of pastries ... also Giuseppe (her son) and I ate them.” The second victim was Francesca Soavi, who wanted to find an occupation. Cianciulli claimed to have found her a job and convinced her friend to write to her acquaintances regarding her departure. Leonarda rushed the woman with an ax and killed her. The third victim was Virginia Cacioppo, an opera singer who lived in poverty. Leonarda claimed to have found her a job. About her, Cianciulli said, “She ended up in the pot, like the other two ... after a long time on the boil, I was able to make some most acceptable creamy soap. I gave bars to neighbors and acquaintances.”

After numerous investigations (victims' blood and dentures were found in her home), it was considered certain that the woman had committed the crimes. She was sentenced to 30 years in prison and 3 years in a criminal hospital. The woman, in the Aversa mental hospital, said, “I killed ... only for mother's love.” Cianciulli died of cerebral apoplexy in prison.

From a psychiatric point of view in serial killing cases, the murders are premeditated, based on obsessions that become an irresistible impulse to kill. The necessary conditions for homicide are the fantasy, the symbolism, the ritualism, and the compulsion. The killer takes with him/her something belonging to the victim. In fact, Cianciulli confessed that she killed the women, destroyed the bodies by boiling them, made soaps, and kept the blood to mix with milk and chocolate to make cookies for her sons, believing this would save them from a mysterious death. Leonarda identified herself with the goddess Thetis, who wanted to give her sons immortality. The victims always have features in common. The perpetrator has a criminal record and prefers victims who are geographically close. According to scientific studies, serial killers are victims of childhood traumas. In these murderers, psychopathological personality disorders, a desire for control, delusions of omnipotence, and sexual motives are common denominators.

This historic case is unique for manners; the sexual motive is absent, but it clearly represents a profile of the female serial killer. The feelings of parental abandonment and the sons' deaths caused frustrations and a desire to control of events. The choice of weapons, such as hatchets or axes, was related to her constitution of being a small woman who needed harmful weapons. The dissection of the bodies was performed for two reasons: to dissolve the traces and to retain fetishes as rituals.

Forensic Science, Female Serial Killer, Homicide