Death becomes her. Journalistic portrayals of murdered women and their bodies as subject, object and abject in Swedish high profile murder cases

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Abstract

This thesis concerns how murdered women and their bodies are represented through written and visual language in tabloid crime journalism. Two Swedish high profile murders were chosen through a purposeful sampling, and 436 articles from Sweden's two largest tabloid newspapers, Aftonbladet and Expressen, were thematized through Thematic Analysis. After that, a smaller sample was analyzed in depth through Critical Discourse Analysis and Multimodal Visual Analysis. The results show that murdered women and their bodies are represented as both subjects, objects and abject. However, when constructed as a social subject through personal traits and agency, the personalities of the murdered women were also used to establish a normative objectification of how women ought and ought not to behave. Furthermore, the material body as an object was visually absent from the material but made visible through detailed and repetitive descriptions of violence and interdiscursive connections to popular culture. Consequently, the abject body produced fear within society, but also provided an arena for a shared identity and the restoration of social order, through extensive portrayals of public grief and thorough media coverage of the legal process.

These results contribute both new knowledge and the suggestion of a suitable theoretical framework for further academic research. Hopefully, these findings will also result in an academic, as well as a professional, discussion regarding the current mediated discourse within crime journalism.

Keywords: media representation, crime journalism, objectification, abjection, murder, Thematic Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, Multimodal Visual Analysis, grief journalism, media and communication studies
Abstract

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1. Introduction

It is hardly an overstatement to claim that death and murder are tremendously popular themes within both popular culture and news media and that we live in a society that is oversaturated by images and imaginary of dead bodies. These bodies evoke simultaneous feelings of fear, disgust, allure, and guilty pleasure, what Kristeva refers to as abjection (1982: 1ff). Previous studies also show that our perception and opinions of crime are shaped by those media representations (Foltyn 2008, 2016; Jeanis & Powers 2017; Jewkes 2004; Greer 2007). It also becomes evident that some bodies are assigned a higher level of newsworthiness than others, thus establishing a hierarchy of bodies and their possibilities for representation. These bodies are most commonly white, young, from the middle class, and, when it comes to murder, subjected to unusual or extreme forms of violence. They are also predominantly female, even though women constitute a minority of the murder victims in Sweden (Brå 2018; Gekoski et al. 2012; Stillman 2007).

Plenty of research has explored the representation and objectification of women (Fasoli et al. 2018; Fredrickson & Roberts 1997; Gill 2007) and the news framing of femicide as a criminal offence (Bourzedan & Whitten-Woodring 2018; Gilchrist 2010; Zara & Gino 2018) in media. They all conclude that media images that objectify women's bodies have a negative effect on women's wellbeing and how others perceive women, and that crime journalism often fails to connect individual cases to structural explanations. It has also been argued that the portrayal of violence that female bodies are subjected to offers the audience both voyeuristic pleasure and a possibility to de-individualize the victim (Bronfen 1992; Foltyn 2008, 2016; Young 1996).

However, most of these studies have focused on the living female body. News journalism allocates an increasing amount of resources to crime journalism, but portrayals of murdered women and the dead female body in this media genre remain understudied. In a context where dead and murdered women and their bodies permeate our visual and linguistic culture, it can be assumed that these representations produce, reinforce and affect attitudes, norms and ideals connected to female bodies. Considering the present objectification of women in news media and its effects, it also becomes relevant to study how dead women are constructed as social subjects and material objects in crime journalism (Frederickson & Roberts 1997; Gill 2007). One might argue that a dead body, regardless of gender, is an object, since it is robbed of its agency. Although this might be correct from a linguistic point of view, I will argue that there is a difference between the murdered female body as an object
and the objectification of the murdered female body (ch. Kristeva 1982:4f). While the first one is a circumstantial description, the latter is charged with social meaning. In this process, the body stops being 'just a body' and becomes an arena of discursive struggles of meaning. Consequently, there is a significant need to explore further how murdered women and their bodies are portrayed in crime journalism from a media- and communications perspective.

1.1 Aim and research questions
This study aims to explore how murdered women and their bodies are discursively constructed as subjects and objects in journalistic crime news articles. Furthermore, the aim is to explore how these written and visual representations produce, reproduce and/or challenge ideals and expectations that concern all women and the female body. This will be connected to how the dead female body is established as an abject body, and how this body create emotions of fear while simultaneously offer an arena for public grief, shared social identity and the restoration of social order.

High profile murder cases offer rich material, both in matters of scope and reach, due to their assigned newsworthiness. However, the coverage of these cases is mainly located in the tabloid press. This study will, therefore, examine news articles published in Expressen and Aftonbladet about two high profile murder cases in Sweden: Lisa Holm (2015) and Tova Moberg (2017). These cases have been chosen both for their traits but first and foremost because of their position as part of a broader media phenomenon. The material will be structured through Thematic Analysis, and then a smaller sample of specific themes will be analyzed through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Multimodal Visual Analysis. This will result in a deeper understanding of both written and visual texts and the socio-cultural environment in which they are produced. The intended outcome is to contribute new knowledge regarding the representation of women in news media and to encourage an academic as well as professional discussion about the current situation, its effects, and how it could improve.

Furthermore, I will also outline a theoretical framework to analyze this topic, with a specific focus on the interaction between popular culture and crime news journalism. In order to reach these results and fulfil the aim, the following research questions were constructed:
What are the discursive functions of murdered women and their bodies? How are they used to express or challenge gendered normative ideals in connection to societal structures of desirability and normality/deviancy?

The discursive function is here understood as the role assigned to agents, or objects, within a discourse in order to communicate/mediate certain ideological meanings. In the current study, this means how journalistic representations of murdered women and their bodies embody or challenge certain norms and ideals that apply to all women. Those questions will be used as overarching theoretical questions and specified into the following empirical questions:

- How are murdered women and their bodies portrayed through written and visual language within the material and what attributes are assigned to her?
- How does the abject body function to create fear within society and what role does it play in manifestations of public grief and the restoration of social order?

Both questions will be approached by a combination of Critical Discourse Analysis and Multimodal Visual Analysis. The former question will include excerpts of text and images, from both newspapers and cases, regarding personal traits, agency and the physical body. This is to gain an understanding of how implicit and explicit representations are presented in the material and how those meanings can be interpreted. The themes will be labelled the Victim as Social Subject and the Victim as Object.

The latter question includes expressions of fear, e.g. in interviews, manifestations of public grief, e.g. through vigils, and the restoration of social order through the legal process against the perpetrator. This theme will be labelled the Victim as Abject and will address the implications and/or ideological functions that the representation of murdered women and their bodies are assigned. All themes will be further described in the methodology chapter.

1.2 The Swedish media context

The legal terms for the Swedish press are stipulated in the Press Act, Tryckfrihetsförordningen, that regulates the relationship between the printed press and public institutions, such as the state. This includes the prohibition of censorship, the requirement of a publisher, the freedom of establishment and specific guaranteed protection of journalistic
sources. The printed press is covered by specific laws, such as defamation of individuals and breach of national security, that are tried in a special court of law (Weibull & Wadbring 2014: 106ff). Additionally, there are ethical institutions established voluntarily by different actors within the media environment, such as publishers, editor's and the journalist's trade union. The primary objective is to promote quality journalism, which includes a critical approach to information, the inclusion of a multitude of voices, and the protection of private integrity through careful consideration of whether or not to publish names and/or images. The public can report perceived breaches of these guidelines to Allmänhetens Pressombudsman. Furthermore, Pressens Opinionsnämnd monitor and initiate investigations of specific media content (ibid. 111ff). This is highly relevant for the present thesis since the material is comprised of articles and images from crime journalism.

The media landscape includes daily newspapers (both metropolitan and local), tabloids, low-frequency newspapers often distributed a few days a week, and newspapers that are free of charge. Tabloids do not sell subscriptions and are instead dependent on single copies, advertisement, paywalls for some online content, press subsidies from the state, and lower VAT rates (ibid. 113ff, 143, 148ff). Tabloids are distinguished by the newsworthiness they assign different topics and a higher focus on sensationalist news. However, the tabloid press in Sweden is not the same as the tabloid press in the Anglo-American countries. Here, the same ethical framework as mentioned above is implemented, and as a consequence, the publication of crime journalism is expected to be restrictive, ethical and truthful. This is a stark contrast to what is defined as tabloids, e.g. in an American context (cf Foltyn 2008, 2016). There are two major tabloid newspapers, *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen* (that also includes *GT* and *Kvällsposten*) which will constitute the sources for this thesis, due to their reach and higher focus on crime journalism. This will be expanded on in the material chapter below.
2. Previous research and theoretical framework

This chapter will introduce the theoretical framework of the study. It will be divided into three significant parts. First, a brief introduction to media representation will be made. Secondly, previous studies on newsworthiness and crime journalism will be discussed. Finally, murdered women and their bodies as a subject, object, and abject will be introduced and connected to representations of death and femininity in media.

2.1 Representation matters

The concept of gendered representation is fundamental for this thesis, that aims to explore how murdered women and their dead bodies are portrayed in crime journalism, as well as what norms and ideals regarding gender that are expressed through said bodies. However, representation can carry a lot of different meanings, and therefore, a definition of how the concept is understood and will be applied in this study is necessary.

The social constructionist approach to representation is probably one of the most influential in media studies. Stuart Hall (2013a, 2013b) writes that representation cannot be understood as separate occurrences but needs to be put into a social context and connected to both historical and contemporary patterns of social categorization. Language enables spoken, written and visual acts of communication about the world. By negotiations through language, we create and agree upon meaning and meaningful practices. He argues that people structure their world through concepts, shared mental representations of objects, events and people in order to arrange, cluster and classify them, which enable us to interpret and make sense of the world (Hall 2013a: 1-11). It establishes their meaning and difference from other concepts and enables processes of inclusion, community, identity, and exclusion. Hall divides these processes into typing and stereotyping. Typing is the necessary process to make sense of the world described above. It is an automatic division of concepts into mental categories where our social context tells us they belong. Stereotyping is different since it reduces a complex person or group into a few characteristics that are then exaggerated and portrayed as fixed by nature, in order to emphasize difference and to maintain a specific social and symbolic order (Hall 2013b: 247). Stereotyping is therefore always a process of exclusion, the Others, and inclusion, Us, that establish what is abnormal and normal in matters of the material world, mental concepts and normative behaviour.

Representation is also the production of social knowledge that affects social practices, and consequently, material bodies, within relations of power (Hall 2013a: 28-36). Individual
incidents of visual and/or written representations are clustered together into discourses of different phenomenon that "operate across a variety of texts [and establish] areas of knowledge about a subject which have acquired widespread authority" (Hall 2013a: 27). Stereotypes do not originate in one specific image or text, but in a dialogical relationship that aims to communicate the same type of meaning, or alter how individual representations are 'read'.

Teresa de Lauretis argues that gender cannot be understood only as sexual difference, even though it has often been constructed in the binary oppositions of Woman and Man. This conceals differences within these categories and instead assign them stereotypical traits. Women have thus been portrayed as passive, indecisive, submissive and dependant on men. Therefore, the feminist understanding of gender risk to be "confined within the epistemological boundaries established by patriarchal structures" (de Lauretis 1987:2, also van Zoonen 1994: 17). Gender, like other social categories, is not something inherent in the human body, but consist of different social conditions applied to these bodies through ideological choices. Similar to Foucault, de Lauretis argues that these ideological choices are not only active in an oppressive top-down system. Instead, gender should be understood as relational, a system of inclusion and exclusion in which all humans are placed. Gendered bodies are then discursive and ideological bodies, never neutral or objective, that functions as a surface for the projection of different political, social and economic ideas. Their meaning can never be finally fixed, but will arise, change, evolve and/or disappear over time (de Lauretis 1987: 5; Hall 2013a: 7ff, 27, 2013b: 222). Furthermore, these ideological patterns of dominance and privilege alter in different situations, since gendered discourse overlaps with other discourses. If one is constructed as inferior due to the identity of Woman in one context, one can still be dominant as White or Upper-class. Richard Dyer exemplifies this with how white bodies can be considered as uncoloured, neutral and universal, with the potential to act as representative for all human beings (1997:45ff).

Because of this, feminist scholars have called for a broader understanding of gender and its interaction with other social categories, theorized as intersectionality. If we understand texts as polysemic when we examine media content we can "unravel both the dominant and alternative meanings of gender encoded in media texts, and their articulation with other discourses such as for instance, ethnicity, class and sexuality" ([sic!] van Zoonen 1994: 66; see also de Lauretis 1987:2f). Intersectionality is not to be understood as an additive perspective, but an intra- and inter-dependable system of social relations. The aim is to
problematize structures and asymmetric power relations, in order to acknowledge complexity both within and between different social identities (Roosvall & Widestedt 2015: 40ff). This intersectional framework becomes relevant in the present study, as the privilege to be featured in the news and the potential body for collective identification, as discussed below, is unequally distributed, not only along the lines of gender but also concerning ethnicity, class and age.

Therefore, when exploring the discursive function of murdered women and their bodies in relation to their assigned attributes and normative ideals, it becomes necessary to discuss the division of women into their social selves (subjects) and their materiality (object). The physical body is indeed an object, both in life and death, but there is a difference between the body as an object and the objectification of the body, where the latter is a stereotyping. Simply put, objectification reduces a woman to her body, which is then treated as an object that exists for the pleasure of others (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997; Gill 2007: 53).

Media are powerful contributing agents in objectification processes through their provision of images and texts that subject the female body to gendered norms, ideals and expectations of physical appearance and behaviour. Even though the body is not always subjected to this gaze or acts of violence, the potential for objectification is always present and therefore functions as a regulating factor on women's actions and self-perception. Objectification forces women to take an observer's point of view on their bodies, at the same time as they are, and want to be perceived as, subjects (Berger 1972: 46f; Fasoli et al. 2017:339f; Fredrickson & Roberts:174-184). Fredrickson & Roberts argue that in criminal acts such as rape or murder "a woman's body is literally treated as a mere instrument or thing by her perpetrator", subjecting her to a violent form of objectification that also affects and regulate the lives and behaviour of other women (1997: 186).

Multiple studies have shown that this combination of external and internal objectification affect women's psyche and enhances the risk of mental illness and self-harm (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997; Young 1990:146; Szymanski et al. 2011). However, previous research on objectification practices only discusses the living female body. It remains unclear whether these processes carry on even after death, and how large media genres such as crime journalism portray women's dead bodies, which this study aims to address.
2.2 Making headlines: Newsworthy victims and crime journalism

Journalistic news reports and different forms of popular culture shape our perception and fear of crime. It also affects our understanding of the social identities of criminal offenders, the frequency of specific crimes and opinions on suitable punishments. Lundman writes that journalists isolate newsworthy events using typifications that reflect existing social structure, appear logical in terms of common sense understandings of the way the world operates, sounds, and feel, and mesh easily with existing stereotypes, including those grounded in the belief systems that reflect and nourish race and gender stratifications (2003: 360).

According to rarity theory, editors and journalists within crime journalism establish a hierarchy of different victims. The probability to be featured in the news, the assigned newsworthiness of a case, drastically increase if the victim is white, young, female, middle-class, heterosexual, and/or subjected to unusual types, or excessive amounts, of violence. This is described as the creation of the ideal victim. However, Dowler et al. argue that "this newsworthiness is contingent on the victim's social status: victims must be judged innocent, virtuous, and honourable" (Dowler et al. 2006: 840f; also Gekoski et al 2012; Hanusch 2010: 53; Jeanis & Powers 2017: 669; Jewkes 2004: 38ff; Lundman 2003: 379). Furthermore, women that are deemed physically beautiful and/or go missing prior to being murdered, the (pretty) missing white girl syndrome, also tend to invoke greater amounts of attention, as well as involvement, from audiences. The old aphorism 'if it bleeds it leads' is therefore only accurate to a certain extent. The potential for a theatrical framing of events in the media bring the victim into the public imagination and therefore promote action (Stillman 2007). In this narrative, death is not the end but the very beginning of a story.

High profile murder cases are exceptional and unusual incidents, where the dead body and its death become a public domain and create a sort of subsequent fame, what Hanusch calls "the public death of private individuals" (2010: 19; also Foltyn 2008: 166). Since high profile murder victims only become 'famous' due to the circumstances of their demise, this incident becomes inseparable from their person. They are their death, and because of this the victims' life, personality and, naturally, the circumstances of her murder, will be scrutinized, interpreted and understood in the light of her death (Nygren 2008: 49ff, 68). During exceptional incidents such as homicides an intense need to make sense of the occurrence arise, both on an individual and a societal level, and the media is an influential source in this
One of these functions is to mediate feelings of public grief, which may be defined as occasions when family, friends, and/or members of the community gather in public places to commemorate a victim. These expressions define and reproduce rituals of the socially desirable way to understand and express grief, such as crying, lighting candles, bringing flowers and tell stories of the victim (Forsberg 2012: 34-42). Anette Forsberg argues that these rituals follow a specific narrative structure, which reaffirms 'our' sense of community and shared identity. Within this narrative, the victim is always an innocent person close to perfection, a role model destined for greatness, even when the victim possesses less desirable characteristics. This is important for the motivation and legitimacy of public grief, in order to evoke sympathy and the possibility to identify with the victim and 'our' shared values (ibid. 36f, 43ff).

This means that a murder victim is transformed beyond her individuality, and instead is established as a reflective surface for public identity. She becomes 'everyone's daughter' through stories about 'an ordinary girl just like you and me' or 'our children', and through her death, she represents all of contemporary society. Due to this, grief and concern are shifted from the private sphere and become a public concern, and the legal process against the perpetrator becomes a process of restoration of social order (Forsberg 2012: 45; Gekoski et al. 2012; Lundström 2003; Nygren 2008: 50f, 74; Stillman 2007).

However, when the stark lines between reality and fiction are blurred, the audience's perceived knowledge of crime, the legal system, as well as forensics, will be affected by portrayals of crime in popular culture (ch. Close 2018: 16; Dowler et al. 2006: 837). With the rise of series such as *CSI*, *Dexter*, *Bones* and *Bron*, audiences imagine and form expectation on police work and forensics, and their potential to solve crimes, to such an extent that it has been dubbed *the CSI effect*. Popular culture then taps into scientific discourse, and emphasize that physical evidence such as DNA is essential to prove guilt due to its high credibility since it is based in the objective natural sciences (Dowler et al. 2006: 838; Foltyn 2008).

### 2.3 Dead women and their bodies in popular culture

Elisabeth Bronfen writes about the dead female body and how it has been used within art and literature throughout history to create meaning and reproduce ideas of the ideal Woman, as well as its social position in relation to the male body. However, she argues that there is a significant difference between the feminine dead body in art/culture and the real/material,
dead female body since representations of bodies are always misrepresentations and 
rearticulations of the imagined body, not projections of reality (Bronfen 1992: xi, 44f, 59, 65). 
Nevertheless, from a social constructionist point of view, art will be affected by and 
simultaneously affect the social context in which it is situated. That representations of the 
dead female body are not exact replicas of real bodies does not entail that we are unaffected 
by them. Alison Young writes that "the body is both real and a sign", not two separate or 
separable conditions, and that these "demonstrate the corporeality of the sign and the 
significatory power of the body" (italics in original, 1996:18ff).

Furthermore, representations of women in culture affect the norms and ideals within 
the real world, and therefore, the well-being of living women as well as other people's 
attitudes towards women's bodies and competence. Because of this, it becomes difficult to 
draw a stark line between the meanings of fictional representations of dead women and 
women's bodies in real life. With the increased popularity of representations of murdered 
women and the dead female body within different types of popular culture, such as true crime 
documentaries and films, art cannot be excluded as an influential cultural aspect (Dowler et 
al. 2006; Foltyn 2008). I will, therefore, use Bronfen's text differently than she advocates, 
although in a slightly modified way, since there admittedly remains a difference between 
news journalism and fictional representations.

Dead female bodies are constructed not only physically, but also culturally, in 
narratives of death, dying, and rituals that surround it. We inscribe bodies with meanings, and 
these connotations differ with historical context. Therefore, the dead female body is always an 
emotional body, since it requires interpretation, and interpretative processes can never be 
neutral (Young 1996: 18f). However, death and materiality remain inseparable and constant. 
Therefore, death becomes a transitional state between culture and order, nature and chaos, but 
also an example of the division between soul and body (Bronfen 1992: 7; Garpenhag 2008: 
81ff). The dead body occupies a position located between the role of an individual social 
subject and that of the decaying material body. Julia Kristeva defines this as the abject state of 
the body. This in-between-ness blurs the distinction between what is Self and what is Other. 
Death is the end of all individuality and identity, and therefore, it poses an existential threat to 
people by locating us in temporality (Close 2018: 14; Kristeva 1982: 1ff). This chaotic state 
invokes contradictory feelings within the living. We are torn between feelings of disgust, 
curiosity, and fear of our mortality. The appeal of crime journalism is then the contradictory 
feelings of fear and disgust, and the appeal of the enigma that needs to be resolved. This 
combination of fascination and fear allows us to experience death and dying at a safe distance,
where we die through another body but are allowed to return to the living (Bronfen 1992: x; 64). Furthermore, this proximity to the death of another brings us relief through the knowledge that we are still alive, which, consequently, might invoke feelings of guilt and shame (Bronfen 1992: 65-77, 103; Jewkes 2004: 56; Kristeva 1982: 1ff).

All dead bodies, and especially the victims of crime, are highly abject, since "it draws attention to the fragility of the law ... but premeditated crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge are even more so because they heighten the display of [societal] fragility." (Kristeva 1982: 4). Because of this, murder is always a collective experience since we are kept together by fear of the threatening outside, but also by a shared understanding of a social contract where violators of the community will be brought to justice and punished. The legal process is then a ritual for the restoration of order and an indication of the survival of our shared society (Bronfen 1992: xi; Young 1996: 4f). Foltyn writes that throughout history "the criminal corpse has been harnessed for various judicial, political, medicinal and scientific purposes" (2016: 247). Consequently, "dead bodies are transformed into the cultural body, aesthetically displaying a group's common values, customs, social roles and social relations" (2008: 169).

As described above, high profile murder cases are mostly determined along the lines of gender, age and race. Both Young and Bronfen argue that the victimized body, as well as the shared social body, is female. The dead female body and images of this body become a site where cultural norms can be negotiated, reconfirmed and secured. This requires the construction of a virtuous and innocent woman, a saint or relic, in order to obscure individual women and instead create the societal ideal of Woman (Bronfen 1992: 49, 119ff, 181f, 191; Forsberg 2012: 34-54; Young 1996: 16). Portrayals of dead women in art are then "[r]epresentations involving a social sacrifice of the feminine body where the death of a beautiful woman emerges as the re-requirement for a preservation of existing cultural norms and values or their regenerative modification" ([sic!] Bronfen 1992: 181).

Bronfen argue that artists, in my case journalists, expropriate the dying and dead female body as an object to use in their narrative, that "the dying woman, her experience, her as a subject is displaced, subordinat ed to notions of the artist" and that this practice is a form of violence towards the subject (1992: 50; 53). In sensational crime journalism, the female victim and her body partially seize to be a subject. As part of a larger media phenomenon, she is no longer only a person, and neither is her body only a representation of herself, but of all murdered women, and by extension, of all women. Therefore, she embodies how society positions itself vis-a-vis the dead female body as an interchangeable sign and become a surface for projection. Bronfen concludes that "[i]n order to be 'sharable', her experience of
the death process has to be translated beyond the boundaries of her real body" (Bronfen 1992: 46; see also 64, 121 and Young 1996: 9).

However, crime is not only fear and disgust. Popular culture and crime journalism enable us to balance on the border between crime as experience, fear of crime, and crime as phantasm, the pleasure of crime. These feelings are both paradoxical and simultaneous. Murdered women and their bodies then offer the possibility of voyeuristic pleasure, both of real and imagined crimes, where we can be spectators in our desire to see without being seen (Young 1996: 13). Similarly, feminine death and beauty exist in a contradictory relationship where we turn our anxiety of death into desire towards the gendered female body. This seeing "leads to physical appropriation" of control over, a way to possess, the dead feminine body by the viewer. 'Beauty' can then be considered to possess both a physical and a normative dimension through its construction and affirmation of desirability (Bronfen 1992: 5, 62, 98ff,192). Bronfen argues that the spectator does not mourn the person that has died, but their desire for someone (or something) already dead. This turn murdered women and their bodies into 'media events' as a type of voyeuristic spectacle and de-individualizes them. This could be compared to journalistic portrayals of high profile murder cases that create sensational news out of the violence that a woman is subjected to. According to Bronfen, this is a form of violence in itself, although she describes the public viewing of dead female bodies in art exhibitions (1992: 47; also Foltyn 2008).

Compared to Bronfen, Lars Garpenhag focuses on how the material dead body is constructed through violence, rather than Woman as body and pleasure. Violence and power is the foundation of murder. Therefore it becomes highly relevant to understand how representations of violence influence the portrayal and interpretation of murdered women and their bodies within texts. Furthermore, violence is always engendered "because the meaning that a certain representation of violence assumes is dependent on the gender of the violated object being depicted" (Bronfen 1992: 50).

Garpenhag describes how the dead body is treated within forensic history, with a particular focus on visual representations during the late 19th and early 20th century. Therefore, his findings connect both to medical discourse, but also to crime. His material consists of the Rättsmedicinskt atlas (1898), and he concludes that there is a disproportionate focus on the dead female body, both as a reproductive entity, the forms of violence it was subjected to prior to her demise, and the nature and cause of injuries. These descriptions are described as more detailed and intimate than is called for, even in a medical context. Simultaneously, said medical context is used as an argument for the relevance and legitimacy.
of these intimate descriptions (Garpenhag 2008: 85f). He also describes how the textual elements that accompany the atlas' illustrations are used to construct the dead and violated bodies according to their social position when alive, which situates them in a social context (ibid. 91). Therefore, these descriptions can be read as social stories in which society is created - social construction of bodies as representatives beyond their person - and therefore related to morale and ideals (ibid. 95).

As mentioned above, excessive violence is one of the factors that affect the newsworthiness of a murder victim and its potential to become a high profile murder case. Intimate descriptions of violence and the dead female body could then provide the audience with feelings of proximity to the victim, as well as "a sense of power at being privileged to see that which was meant to remain unseen" (Dovey 1996: 127 in Jewkes 2004:190). Therefore, Garpenhag's study remains relevant, based on the assumption that this focus on the relationship between the physical body and the violence it has been subjected to will remain a prominent theme within contemporary crime journalism.
3. Methodology

In this chapter, I will discuss the suitability and the potential for combining three methods: Thematic Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis and Multimodal Visual Analysis, in order to fulfil the purpose and aims of the present study. This will include a description of the methods, a critical discussion of their suitability, and an outline of the analytical framework. Finally, the validity and reliability of the study will be discussed.

3.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis is used to identify and analyze meaningful, recurring, and absent patterns within data. It may also be used to identify similarities and differences of how a topic is discussed within a chosen material. The method enables a rich description and understanding of the entire data set, as well as the possibility to structure the material for further analysis, thus making a more extensive data set manageable. Consequently, the researcher identifies specific parts of the material that can be of interest for the study's aim and research question/s. Since the method is easy to adapt to different types of material, such as interview transcripts, field notes from ethnographic studies or texts, it offers a great deal of flexibility, while emphasizing a structured way of working with the material (Braun & Clarke 2006; Bryman 2016: 584ff; Flick 2014: 421).

These characteristics make it a suitable method for the present study since a large material need to be structured and a smaller sample derived for the Critical Discourse Analysis. Even though the construction of themes remain a subjective course of action, the possibility to identify recurring patterns within the material still thwarts the risk of cherry-picking parts of the material that fits the researcher's bias and expectations of what to find within the studied texts, while other interesting aspects could be overlooked. Here it is vital that the researcher pursue transparent descriptions of what constitutes a theme and how they were identified, as well as justify why and how the chosen themes are important and significant. This can be achieved by describing how themes relate to each other, the research question/s and the theoretical framework, and what the implications of these associations are.

Both Braun & Clarke and Flick argue that Thematic Analysis can be applied either deductively, where themes are decided a priori and derived from the study's theoretical framework, or inductively, where themes are identified through several close readings of the material. However, there are studies where both perspectives have been combined and take its
point of departure in a theoretical framework, but allow the researcher to add new themes discovered within the data set (e.g. Fereday et al. 2006). In the pilot study conducted prior to this thesis, a deductive approach was used. However, during the analysis, it became clear that new non-anticipated themes and sub-themes composed a significant part of the material, while other themes created from theory were insufficient and needed to be thoroughly revised, such as explicit descriptions of the material body. Therefore, the theoretical framework was adapted prior to the present study, and a combination of both deductive and inductive elements will be used, similar to the study conducted by Fereday et al. (2006).

Braun and Clark (2006) outline a rather straightforward six-step-model for Thematic Analysis. First, the researcher should familiarize herself with the material. Similar to discourse analysis, this step includes several thorough readings and re-readings. Braun and Clark argue that the whole data set should be read in total at least once before the coding starts, in order to get a sense of its content with an open mind. Secondly, initial codes are generated. Codes are potential themes and subthemes that will, in step 4, be revised into the final themes. Thirdly, the researcher search for themes, or rather, code the material. In this phase, new codes and connections will occur. Fourthly, the codes are reviewed and refined. In this step, codes are organized into themes, sub-themes or removed altogether. Fifthly, the themes are defined and labelled. This will include descriptions of what "makes a theme" as well as include examples from the material. It is also preferable to construct thematic maps as a visualization of themes and sub-themes and how they connect. When themes are finalized, they should be labelled, so that their names reflect what the theme represents. Finally, the results are reported. This is where the method can, and in this thesis will be, combined with other methods of analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006; Flick 2014: 421f)

For the present study, news articles related to the portrayal of murdered women and their bodies will be the data set, while the data units will be excerpts and images from the articles. Themes 1-4 were all based on the theoretical framework for this study and functioned as the deductive point of departure for the method. However, due to the inductive approach used during coding, it became evident that some sub-themes should be altered and that new sub-themes needed to be added. It was concluded that the initial theme violence was not a theme in its own right, but a sub-theme to the Victim as Object. Descriptions of violence were written in a way that de-individualized the body and enabled a voyeuristic gaze even when the body was explicitly absent, as will be analyzed thoroughly in the Results section. Another original theme was Lawsuit due to the study's focus on crime journalism. However, the legal
process is very complex, and different aspects of the legal investigation aligned with different aspects of the body as subject, object or abject. Due to the aim and research questions, excerpts that focused on the lawsuit as a social process and societal institution were included in the *Victim as Abject*. Forensic investigations and other medical investigations were deemed part of the *Victim as Object*, and testimonies and interrogations that focused on the victim and her actions were instead included in the *Victim as Social Subject*. Because of this, there was no longer a need for a separate theme labelled lawsuit. It also became evident that the topic of public grief, although small, was important, since it addressed what Kristeva describes as the abject and how death as a societal crisis is handled. Due to this, the theoretical framework was altered, and the theory of grief journalism added, while public grief was included in theme 4. Therefore, the following recurring themes were identified:

1. **The Victim as Social Subject.** Includes descriptions of the victim's personality and traits, interests, life goals and life before the murder. Furthermore, it includes the voice and agency of different agents, when describing the victim or victim's actions, or conducting actions that affected the victim in some way.

2. **The perpetrator.** Includes descriptions of the perpetrator personal traits, habits, life and dreams for the future as well as how he acts during the trials.

3. **The Victim as Object.** Includes descriptions of physical traits as well as sexual objectification of the material body. It also includes how the material body is constructed through intimate descriptions of violence and as forensic evidence.

4. **The Victim as Abject.** Includes expressions of fear for own or public safety, as well as expressions of public grief. It also considers the legal process as a way to restore social order. It also includes the representation of societal institutions, such as the police, the church and the court, and their agents.

5. **miscellaneous.** Parts of the data set that does not fit into the other categories.
The chosen themes will be used to further delimit the material, in order to generate a suitable sample, both in relevance and scope, for the Critical Discourse Analysis. It is not necessarily the most frequent or extensive themes that are chosen for further analysis. Smaller or seldom occurring themes may be interesting as part of a larger discussion, as well as in relation to the aim and research questions. Themes 2 and 5 were not included in the critical discourse analysis since they lacked relevance for the aim and research questions.

3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and Multimodal Visual Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) focuses on language as non-neutral ways to express opinions and ideological functions within a social context. One of the basic ideas is that texts and images communicate both explicit and implicit meanings and that those meanings affect the reader on both conscious and subconscious levels. The choices made in the production of texts affect how readers understand both the text and the world. Because of this, texts are understood as both a product and a process, where authors and readers interact to construct meaning (Fairclough 2010: 360). Texts that discuss different angles of the same topics in a specific social context are defined as discourses, ideologically influenced interpretations of reality, that shape how language and knowledge are constructed. Thus, language and society are both constituted and constituent in a constant dialectical relationship, without any possibility to finalize meaning (Fairclough 1995:54ff, 2003:6; Roosvall 2005:33). Texts and images comprise the material of this study, and the aim and research questions are based on the epistemological assumption that language affects how producers and consumers of text perceive the world. This makes CDA a suitable method to gain a deeper understanding of how the dead body of female murder victims is constructed and charged with meaning in the public discussion of news journalism. In this study, CDA is used to identify the common discourse used by journalists to portray said victims and their bodies, as well as the relationship the particular portrayals have with the audience.

Norman Fairclough has developed a model for the application of CDA on mediated texts, in order to study its form and meaning. He argues that a discursive event, such as a written text or a public speech, affect a reader on three different levels: the written or spoken text, the discursive practice and the social practice (Fairclough: 2010: 94). The different levels are all interdependent and "questions of power and ideology ... may arise at each of the three levels" (Fairclough 2010: 95). The steps will be described separately below, but implemented together in the analysis, as Fairclough himself advocate (2003: 16). However, in this thesis,
images are defined as part of the concept 'language' that, in combination with written text, produce meaningful messages for interpretation. Images will be considered as a part of the material that complement, or challenge, written representations within the chosen texts, both in the individual articles and the material as a whole. One might say that text and image exists in a dialogical relationship that, when read together, may alter or enhance certain aspects or readings of each other. Images then become part of ideological argumentations for a certain cause or interpretation within discourses (Becker 2000: 133; Björkvall 2017: 177ff).

The textual analysis is based on critical linguistics. Due to the scope of this study, I have chosen to focus on the linguistic concepts of presuppositions, transitivity and modality, since they capture implicit meanings in the text, their connections to other texts, and allow for a thick description of the material. Furthermore, these concepts focus on actors, agency and (inter)actions. These concepts connect to what Anders Björkvall call "representations of on-goings in the world", that also focuses on how actors and processes affect the reading of an image (2017:187, also 2019: 60-82). He argues that critical readings of images share many characteristics with critical linguistics, such as the ones mentioned above. My intention is not to focus on different photographic techniques or camera angles but whom or what the image portrays and how this affects the reading of both text and image. Therefore, a critical reading of written and visual language will be used to fulfil the aim of this study and explore the media representation of murdered women and their bodies.

3.2.1 Transitivity and modality in written and visual texts

Transitivity is a linguistical concept from syntax analysis that concerns how actors and actions are constructed within clauses. It is divided into three categories: processes, participants, and circumstances. Processes are further divided into deliberate, controlled actions and unintended, uncontrolled events. Both of them can be material, verbal, or mental (Björkvall 2017: 189; Boréus & Bergström 2017:156ff). Material actions intentionally affect other agents physically and in a controlled manner, such as he abused her', while material occurrences affect other agents unintentionally, such as 'approximately one week before she died'. Within images, the direction of both types of actions is indicated by a vector, an imagined line that moves from the active actor towards a goal. If the vector cannot be established or is directed equally between two actors, they are referred to as interactors, e.g. two policemen jointly investigating a piece of evidence (Björkvall 2017: 188f). Verbal
processes are expressed through spoken or written speech acts. Verbal actions occur when agents' claim', 'deny' or 'write', while a verbal occurrence might be 'they argued a lot'. Mental processes are thoughts or motifs; a mental action could be "I hate Billy" while mental occurrences can be dreams or ideas (Boréus & Bergström 2017: 157).

Participants are further divided into agents (human) whom Björkvall refers to as actors, who possess agency, and passive goals, which can be both human and non-human. This can be relevant in order to identify if certain groups of people, such as men, are portrayed as active, while other groups, such as women, are instead passivated. Circumstances refer to the time and location where something occurs (Björkvall 2017: 187; Boréus & Bergström 2017: 157).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processes</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Circumstances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Agents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Does not involve other participants</td>
<td>Human Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Does not involve other participants</td>
<td>Non-Human Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental</td>
<td>Involve other participants</td>
<td>Target of processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model 1. Transitivity. Based on Boréus & Bergström 2017: 158

Modality concerns speaker and writer authority. It includes the analysis of which actors that are allowed to voice opinions, how these opinions are presented, and how these voices increase or decrease the credibility of the text. An elite source, such as the prosecutor in a murder case, will increase the credibility of a text more than a less significant actor, such as a character witness at a trial, when the topic discussed is whether or not the suspect is guilty as charged (Fairclough 1995: 162; 2003: 165f; 2015:142f). Therefore, speech acts and the level of commitment and/or certainty an actor express towards an utterance is analyzed. To state that
'there is sufficient evidence to get the suspect convicted' indicates a higher degree of modality than the remark that 'hopefully there is enough evidence to get the suspect convicted' (Fairclough 2010:272; Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 155ff). Kress & van Leeuwen argue that modality is a way to produce "shared truths aligning readers or listeners with some statements and distancing them from others. It serves to create an imaginary 'we'. It says, as it were, these are the things 'we' consider true, and these are the things 'we' distance ourselves from" (2006: 155).

Additionally, when editors decide whose voices that will be represented and what sources that are to be used in a news item, elite sources with an already established high level of credibility will be given primacy. In a crime news perspective, this often means that prosecutors, police officers and forensic experts will receive greater media attention and therefore the possibility to shape the public opinion. Due to their privileged access to information that is not yet public, their interpretations will more seldom be critically challenged. Consequently, these actors will make themselves more readily available to journalists in a mutually beneficial relationship, where journalists have easy, and fast, access to credible information, while said elite sources can mediate their perspectives through an extensive platform (Gill 2007: 113; Jewkes 2004: 38; Monckton-Smith 2012: 64).

### 3.2.2 Intertextuality, interdiscursivity and social practice

The discursive practice involves the production and interpretation of texts and functions as a bridge between the text and the social practice. Fairclough (2010: 94) write that "on the one hand, processes of text production and interpretation are shaped by (and help shape) the nature of the social practice, and on the other hand the production process shapes (and leaves' traces' in) the text, and the interpretative process operates upon 'cues' in the text". This is often referred to as intertextuality and concerns the re-articulation of older texts within new texts or images (Fairclough 1992: 84; 2003: 39). Presuppositions are a type of intertextuality, that refers to how certain ideas and ideological assumptions constitute the taken for granted point of departure of a text or an image. It is a way for an author or agent to establish a shared level of 'common sense' with her/his audience, in order to propose a specific reading of the text and its content, or how to look at and interpret an image. When these constitutive assumptions are not explicitly stated, they become harder for the reader to question (Fairclough 1992: 85; 120f; 1995: 106f).
Interdiscursivity resembles intertextuality but concerns the recontextualization of other discourses and discursive practices within a new discourse (2010:). This includes the study of vocabulary and from which discursive 'catalogue' different expressions, forms and focuses the present text is influenced by (Fairclough 1992:85; 2010: 95, 107, 249, 422).

The social practice may refer to different levels of social organization, but in this thesis, it is understood as the wider societal context, or 'context of culture' "(Fairclough 2010: 95). Our social context will, due to ideology and power, affect how we interpret or even perceive it possible to interpret, specific texts, images or occurrences. Fairclough argues that even though any kind of interpretation is theoretically possible, there are always, in reality, a limited number of interpretations that appear probable. The social practice is then defined as "relevant interpretative principles, necessary to generate coherent readings" (1992:84) and is closely connected to Gramsci’s ideas of hegemony. Hegemony is here understood as the struggle of particular social groups "to win the consent of other groups and achieve a kind of ascendancy in both thought and practice over them" and to be elevated to a state of 'common sense', naturalized, and therefore more difficult to identify and question (Hall 2013a: 33). All ideologies aim to construct social subjects and identities for those subjects to occupy, but, just like language, ideological identities and ideas remain flexible and submitted to challenge and change (Gill 2007: 13, 55f; Hall 2013a: 35). Hegemonic ideological assumptions also form social knowledge, e.g. about crime, which have practical implications for people in the 'real' world, such as punishment and imprisonment. Discourse is then not only linguistic but a form of action. Power and knowledge production is, therefore, inseparable from each other, in a dialectical relationship where we all occupy multiple social positions of dominance and oppression, such as gender, ethnicity and social class. This construction of meaning affects our world view by positioning the spectator, actively (re)produce social categories, and connects to imaginaries of identity, subjectivity and desire. Consequently, we are all oppressors and, simultaneously, we are all oppressed, even though the degree of privilege differs immensely between different individuals and social situations (Gill 2007: 12, 55f; Hall 2013a: 34).

3.3 Critical discussion

The mixed-method design used in this study profits from the advantages of the separate methods and enables to balance out each method's weak spots. Within all methods, applied
epistemological compatibility was ensured, taking a point of departure in social constructionism.

The focus of this study lies on how representation is communicated through written and visual texts and how those texts produce and reproduce meaning. Therefore, it is necessary to apply methods that allow for a thorough and interpretative reading of the material. Critical Discourse Analysis enables close analysis of texts' form and meaning, and results in a 'thick description' of their content. The same argument can be brought forth when discussing multimodal analysis that extends the concept of 'texts' to images. This is beneficial because images constitute an essential part of news articles' communication to the audience in all news journalism. Multimodal Visual Analysis shares many of its elements with CDA. Both methods are extensive and time-consuming to apply, due to the attention to details. Therefore, I decided to restrict the analytical tools used in this study, to only the ones essential for the presented research questions.

As a consequence, insights that might have been gained from different elements of the methods were lost. However, this is not considered problematic as the analytical tools were carefully chosen in light of the needs of the research aim and questions, namely the role of agents, agency and actions. It enables the analysis of both explicit and implicit meanings, as well as of the relationships with other written and visual representations. However, other elements could, of course, have generated unanticipated results, with interesting implications for the results and further studies could thus be beneficial.

However, both methods are better suited for smaller samples. It is also sensitive to the author's subjective interpretation and perception of dominating themes that confirms the author's hypothesizes or bias ('cherry picking'). By combining CDA and MVA with Thematic Analysis, some of these disadvantages can be thwarted. I was able to handle an initially larger sample and derive both present and absent themes relevant to the present study. Unexpected themes and sub-themes can be identified, as exemplified by the identification of the sub-theme 'public grief'. Another benefit of the method is that it is straightforward but still flexible. It is easy to adapt to the aim and research questions but remains structured and cohesive.

Admittedly, a similar result might have been achieved through a qualitative or quantitative content analysis, but the research focus is not that of frequencies, and neither method would allow for the coding of data excerpts into multiple themes. Since both explicit and implicit themes are taken into account, the frequency and scope of a theme would be
difficult to measure and code. Besides this, the use of an a priori design would have risked missing important aspects of the material, since both themes and sub-themes were altered, added or removed during the coding. However, after thorough qualitative analysis, the research could benefit from a content analysis by gaining insights into the distribution of themes in the text and give evidence of which themes are dominant in frequency and which are less often used.

3.4 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are terms that originate in a positivistic research tradition and acts as a measurement for the quality of a study. However, these measurements can be difficult to apply in a qualitative study. Instead, I have focused on what Cresswell calls qualitative validity and qualitative reliability, which focuses on accuracy and consistency during the research process (2014: 201). Validity is one of the biggest strengths of qualitative research and relates to the precision of the measurements and how well they capture the studied phenomenon as well as the operationalization of the aim and research questions. This includes authenticity, trustworthiness and credibility. Cresswell argues that the implementation of various strategies can achieve good validity. I have generated a detailed and 'thick' description of the material, in order for the reader to assess the arguments and conclusions made. Furthermore, I have strived for transparency, both regarding how the methods were applied and any contradictions within the material. The usage of citations and multiple references back to the material enables the reader to easily return to the material and control for both the accuracy and credibility of the analysis (cf. Cresswell 2014: 202).

The scope of this thesis does not allow for any generalizations to be made about how murdered women and their bodies are portrayed in crime journalism. It may, however, discuss the prominent place the dead female body is given in this genre, and how this representation can be understood. Cresswell advocates that careful and thorough consideration must be paid to the consistency of the research process. The study has been theoretically based on solid academic research, both concerning the analytical framework and the methodological tools. Also, rather than be generalizable, the results of this study will offer a foundation for other studies, both quantitative and qualitative, that can further test its accuracy and suitability. As Cresswell argues, "particularity rather than generalizability is the hallmark of good qualitative research" (2014: 204).
4. Material and sampling

Since this study is limited to the representation of murdered women and their bodies in crime journalism, both male and transgender bodies were excluded. This decision was made in order to conduct a focused and cohesive study, but also to maintain a focus of comparison between living and dead women. The idea is that female bodies do not always have to be studied in comparison to male bodies in order to say something meaningful. However, further research on these topics are strongly encouraged and important, both as a topic in itself but also to enable comparative studies within the research field.

I decided to select material published in tabloid newspapers, since they assign a lot of space and resources to high profile murder cases, as the sampling section will show. Articles from daily newspapers were reviewed but excluded due to their significantly smaller coverage of high profile murder cases. The pilot study conducted in December 2018 also indicated that the articles published in daily newspapers were fewer, shorter, and contained fewer images. Consequently, articles published in tabloid newspapers constitute a more substantial part of the discursive arena considering murdered women and their bodies. Additionally, tabloid newspapers have a larger audience, both online and offline, and their online content is also more frequently free of charge (TU 2018). With all these factors taken into consideration, articles from tabloid newspapers provide suitable material for answering the aim and research questions of the present study.

4.1 Sampling

Approximately 27 women are murdered each year in Sweden (Brå 2018), but as mentioned above, not all murder cases receive the same amount of attention, where only a few become high profile cases. High profile cases are here defined as cases that were performed in Sweden, covered in all national newspapers during at least one week after the body was found, the victim was named, the articles contained pictures of her, and all the trials were covered by news media. This could be compared to what Dowler, Fleming & Muzzatti write about 'mega cases,' that is, "cases that enjoy relative longevity in the media because they elicit a very strong response in the potential audience the reporter is writing to" (2006: 839). In addition to this, only murders performed in Sweden was taken into account due to this study's focus on a Swedish social context.

High profile murder cases offer rich material, both in matters of material and reach. Due to the scope of this thesis, the material was limited to two cases. The sampling frame was
narrowed down to the previous five year period, 2014-2018, in order to select relevant cases that occurred in a similar social context as the present. 2018 was excluded when discovered that it takes approximately one year until the final sentence is declared in murder trials. A purposeful sampling was then conducted where cases that fitted the sampling frame was compared to the available material in the online archive Retriever. The cases that generated the most articles were chosen: the murders of Lisa Holm (2015) and Tova Moberg (2017). These cases have been chosen both for their individual traits but first and foremost because of their position as part of a larger media phenomenon. Since both Tova Moberg and Lisa Holm went missing before they were found murdered, a lot of media attention was dedicated to their disappearances. Consequently, their names and pictures were released to the press at an early stage, which established a media presence. Both cases have remained within the media spotlights, e.g. on lists of famous murders, in documentaries and podcasts (e.g. Kernen & Lundqvist 2018; Rättegångspodden 2017, 2018; TV3 Dokumentär 2018, 2019; Wadebäck & Fernandez 2018).

All of the material was retrieved through the online archive Retriever, where the search phrases "Lisa Holm" and "Tova Moberg" were used. The search period was limited to the date the victim was found murdered, and the date the Supreme Court declined the attorney's appeal to try the case. The sample was retrieved from Sweden's two largest tabloid newspapers, *Aftonbladet*, and *Expressen*, and consisted of all online and printed articles that they had published during the period.

In Lisa Holm's case, the search period was limited to 2015-06-13 and 2016-05-02, which resulted in 592 hits. Front pages, news flashes, duplicates, and 'most read the past week'-lists were excluded. The final sample consisted of 322 articles: 195 from *Aftonbladet* and 127 from *Expressen*. All the articles contained at least one image. In Tova Moberg's case, the search period was limited to 2017-05-17 and 2018-06-21, which resulted in 212 hits. Front pages, news flashes, duplicates and 'most read the past week'-lists were excluded. The final sample consisted of 114 articles: 54 from *Aftonbladet* and 60 from *Expressen*. All the articles contained at least one image.

### 4.2 Material

The material consisted of 436 articles. Those were all coded using Thematic Analysis, as described in the methodology chapter. Due to the focus of this study, their prominence in the material and their interconnectedness, excerpts of the themes *the Victim as Social Subject,*
Victim as Object, and the Victim as Abject were chosen for a more thorough linguistic and visual analysis. These themes, their sub-themes and their interconnectedness are presented in model 2. It is difficult to provide an exact number for how large the sample analysed through CDA is, since multiple themes are present within close to every article in the material and different excerpts can be coded to multiple themes simultaneously. This has not been considered a problem since the focus of the thesis is not frequencies or absolute numbers, but to understand the different ways of representation.

Articles and images that are quoted or referred to in the analysis are listed under 7.3 Empirical materials. The complete material is available on demand.

Model 2. Selected themes and their sub-themes.

4.3 Background
Tova Moberg, 19, was beaten and strangled to death by her ex-boyfriend, who had a history of verbal and physical abuse towards her, on the night between the 13th and 14th of May 2017. He then sank her body in a lake next to his remotely located farm outside of Hudiksvall. She was found two days later after her family had reported her missing. During the court hearings, it was revealed that she had kept a secret diary and a USB flash drive where she documented the abuse she had been subjected to during the relationship. Billy Fagerström
Lisa Holm, 17, was reported missing by her parents on June 7th 2015 when she never came home from her summer job at a café in Blomberg. Her body was found five days later, pressed into a locker room cabinet in a building barracks. The autopsy showed that she had died through strangulation by hanging, and the prosecution argued that the crime was sexually motivated. Nerijus Bilevicius pleaded not guilty but was convicted for the murder and sentenced to life in prison and expulsion. He was later transferred to Lithuania to serve the rest of his sentence. His appeal to the Supreme Court was rejected on May 2d 2016 (SVT Väst 2015).
5. Analysis and results

The analysis will be structured according to the selected themes that were presented in the material section above. In themes *Victim as Object* (5.1) and *Victim as Social Subject* (5.2), each case will be presented separately due to their differences. The third theme, *Victim as Abject* (5.3), will be presented jointly, because of the similarities between the cases. Results from the visual analysis will be presented jointly with the corresponding written theme, in order to show how images and texts functions to emphasize or contradict certain aspects or meanings presented in the articles. Images are often given a prominent position, especially in the longer articles, where they cover approximately half the page. However, every news item in the material is accompanied by at least one image, which shows the importance of images in our contemporary hyper-visual culture. This is interesting since none of the images can portray the central elements of the crime: the murder itself, the dead body or the actual crime scene. Instead, the image and text functions in a dialogical relationship. The textual level will be discussed parallel to the discursive and social practices, as advocated by Fairclough, because of their interdependent qualities and the difficulties to completely separate them. All citations used were translated from Swedish by the author.

5.1 Violence and de-individualization

When reading through the material, the journalist's aversion towards writing about or describing the dead body as a *physical* body became apparent. The absence of the physical body, both in imagery and in the written texts, is surprising, as an individual becomes the material body more than ever after death – it is all that is left of the formerly living person.

Instead, there is an extensive focus on where and under what circumstances the body was found, and what types and amounts of violence the victim was subjected to. In Tova's case, both prior to and during the murder. However, apart from being the receiving object of violence, there are no descriptions of how the body looked post mortem. Therefore, the first big theme in this thesis is the implicit construction of the physical body as an object through detailed, intimate and repetitive descriptions of violence.
5.1.1 Tova Moberg

The most significant difference between the two cases is the nature of the relationship between victim and perpetrator. Tova Moberg was in a relationship with her murderer, Billy Fagerström, for many years prior to her murder. It was an abusive relationship, which ended when Tova's parents reported Billy to the police in March 2017, two months before her death. Because of this and due to the content of the prosecution, the articles include detailed descriptions of violence that occurred both during and before the murder. Even if the body is a material object, I will argue that Tova is objectified through these descriptions. It is unremarkable that crime journalism contains descriptions of violence, but in this case, it is done on an exceptional level.

When the prosecutor presented his case in Tingsrätten, the police investigation became public. This initiated a multitude of articles that meticulously describe how Tova had been beaten over 20 times with a blunt object, that the hard blows had been directed towards both head and body, that she must have experienced intense anguish and that she had been strangled. Sometimes on multiple occasions within the same article, such as the headline, the preamble, caption, and/or the text (Malmgren 2017a, 2017c; Rapp 2018c; Rapp & Tagesson 2017). But they also lingered on details about the materials used to tie Tova's body to a wheelbarrow, in order to sink it in the lake next to the perpetrator's farm. A journalist at Expressen wrote: "Two days later Tova Moberg is found brutally murdered. The body had been sunk into the lake, tied to a wheelbarrow with duct tape and wire, laden with weights"¹ (Malmgren 2017b). This can be understood in relation to what Young calls crime as phantasm or the pleasure of crime. These descriptions allow the audience to position itself as an outside spectator, which can observe and envision both violence and body as an exhilarating experience. Since this gaze can never be reciprocated, it is an objectifying gaze, a way for the spectator to appropriate the murdered female body for her/his pleasure and motives.

There are also descriptions of abusive incidents during their relationship, as told by Tova in her secret diary. The violence described is both physical and psychological, in terms of degrading comments, threats of physical violence, prohibited to attend swimming practice when bruised and such. She is also forbidden to meet her friends. She writes in her diary how "[Billy] said that I had to dump them or die. He threatened me, hit me, and throttled me. It

¹ “Två dagar senare hittas Tova Moberg brutalt mördad. Kroppen ligger i sjön, fastsurrad i en skottkärra med silvertape och metalltråd och nedsänkt med vikter”
went on all night and then I had to write to [my friends] and 'break up' with them² (Rapp 2017a). He had also threatened to drown her on at least one occasion (ibid.). The use of citations and information from the trial, the verdict and excerpts from Tova's diary are used to legitimize the journalistic choice to print those details since journalists simply repeat available facts. Even though these documents are not agents in themselves, they are treated as important elite sources and the modality or authority of this information is never called into question. This is particularly prominent when connections are made between 'old' and 'new' violence in order to establish guilt. The murder, and how it was carried out, is a continuation of the previous violence and death threats Tova experienced. Journalists ask no critical questions because it is presupposed that Billy is guilty. Instead, the prosecution is given extensive media coverage for their opinion that the perpetrator's altered and/or embellished explanations of the course of events is unreliable and, most likely, made up (Rapp 2017b, 2017d, 2018a; Rapp & Tagesson 2017).

The diary enables Tova to construct her own voice within the crime narrative, and thus produces her own testimony, but she also constructs her own body as evidence of the violence experienced by photos of previous injuries. Written descriptions of violence are accompanied by photo documentation as a way to visually present and support her claims. This is one of the reasons why the diary and photographs are so important – they emphasize how physical scientific evidence is the central way to prove that a crime has been committed, and by whom. It follows the premise of seeing is believing. This connects the body to the scientific and criminological discourse described by Garpenhag and establishes the presence of a scientific gaze. Furthermore, by locating the body within a forensic context, the use of intimate descriptions of violence are legitimized through the perceived objectivity of the natural sciences, as well as their forensic necessity. The body transforms from being someone into an object of mystery to be solved.

The relationship between violence and materiality poses another problem for journalists. It would be unethical to show images of the dead body, and the police would never allow for these types of photographs to be taken by anyone else than a forensic expert, especially not for publication. By obscuring the material body from voyeuristic gazes, the body must be made 'visible' in a different way. Even though Tova's body is not explicitly shown, it is implicitly constructed, through those descriptions of violence, both before and

² "'(22-dringen) sa att jag var tvungen att skita i dom eller dö. Han hotade mig, slag mig, ströp mig. Han höll på så hela natten och sen var jag tvungen att skriva till dom och "göra slut" med dom."
after her murder, as discussed above. This implicit construction depends on the presupposed visual register of dead female bodies among the audience. Since only a few people experience a violent death first hand, this reference is instead related to familiarity with hyper-visual representations in popular culture. Our media consumption, whether it consists of paintings, theatre, TV-series and/or films, provides us with a multitude of images of murdered women and their bodies. When journalists write that "The young woman had received more than 20 hard blows against her head and body. Furthermore, the ex-boyfriend had used duct tape to tape the body to a wheelbarrow, which he wheeled into the lake"³, or write that Billy once pounded Tova's head against a wall, it is not to provide the audience with simple facts, it is to enable a visualisation based on presupposed experience (Tagesson 2017; Rapp 2018a; TT 2018). When we consume popular culture representations of crime, we know roughly what a body subjected to brutal violence looks like. It will probably also provide us with references to how a body looks like after two days at the bottom of a lake. While the circumstantial descriptions from the real murder are repeated in close detail in most articles for the audience's imagination, it is also combined with the picture of the living Tova. This is a way to establish a connection between the female body in general and Tova's body specifically, as subjected to this violence. We know how it might look, and we know that there are pictures of this body, even though they are unavailable to us, because it is part of our visual repertory.

This reduces Tova's body to an object that serves to provide the audiences with the imagery of the perpetrator's bestiality, at the same time as we are fascinated by this abnormal scenario. These descriptions of violence both reify her and make her invisible. She and her body become a mirror for the most extreme consequences of patriarchal structures, but in this process, she loses her identity. She appears as passive and without agency. On the few occasions that she exerts her agency, e.g. by the continuous meetings with a violent man, her actions contribute to her demise. Consequently, she reproduces the patriarchal image of women as weak and unfit to make important decisions, while men actively are the masters of their destinies.

5.1.2 Lisa Holm

Lisa Holm did not know her murderer even though he lived and worked close to the café, where Lisa had a summer job. She was abducted on an ordinary summer's eve, just after

³ "Den unga kvinnan hade fått över 20 hårdare slag mot huvud och kropp. Dessutom hade ex-pojkvännen med hjälp av silvertejp tejpat fast kroppen vid en skottkärra som han körde ut i vattnet."
closing time, when she was supposed to drive her moped home alone for the first time. Her body was found five days later, stuffed away in a locker room cabinet.

There are significantly more articles written about the Lisa Holm case, and one could assume that this would result in many different descriptions of her body. This is not necessarily the case. Similar to Tova, Lisa's body is rarely referred to explicitly, except the occasional 'the body was found'. Instead, the body is constructed from descriptions of the violent, but also sexualized, circumstances of her death.

It is difficult to define exact boundaries for when 'reasonable' accounts of what happened turn into excessive descriptions of violence. Therefore, some examples from the texts are called for. The murder of Lisa Holm is described as "brutal", "an execution", "grotesque" or simply that it "defies all description" (e.g. Hjertén 2016; Svensson 2015b; Tagesson 2015c). It is pointed out in hundreds of articles that she was found strangled and hanged, with duct tape wound around her head to cover her mouth and nose. It is emphasized that the prosecution and the defence disagree whether she was first strangled and then hanged, or the other way around.

I will use two examples to illustrate what details have been considered in the public interest to publish. The first example focuses on the cord that was used to strangle and then hang Lisa. It is frequently mentioned that the type of cord used is "snöre", to which the most common translation might be twine. It calls to mind a rather flimsy thing, not as robust as a rope. Therefore, it is pointed out that this is not just any type of twine. This specific type is unusually sturdy because it is commonly used to tie bays of hay together. It is emphasized that the blue twine has been wound tightly around her neck, and then used to suspend her from a pipe in the wall (e.g. Abrahamsson 2015; Hellberg 2015; Hellberg & Lundberg Andersson 2015; Ronge & Hellberg 2015; Stenquist & Granlund 2015). A few articles even mention that this room is called 'the slaughter room', because of a local hunting association that used it to butcher their catch (Abrahamsson 2015; Cantwell 2015; Tagesson 2015a, 2015b).

The second example is the locker room cabinet where the body was found (shown below). It is described as impossibly narrow and that the body must have been squashed into it using vast amounts of force. This is also an example of when images are used to support the written text. Even though many articles mention the exact width of the cabinet, it is most often described as "narrow", "extremely narrow" or "minimal" (e.g. Danielsson 2016; Hellberg & Lundberg 2015; Ronge 2016). However, many articles are illustrated with an image of the cabinet, retrieved from the police investigation. The image has been completed with graphic
Even though the descriptions of physical violence and the location where the body was found remain detailed and repetitive, the sexual aspect of the murder remains the dominating focus. Lisa was not raped, but the prosecutor argues that the crime still is 'sexually motivated'. The prosecutor summons an expert witness, a professor that specializes in sex crimes. Even though the professor explains these kinds of sexual desires and fantasies in general terms, they are instantly picked up by journalists that repeat the information as a fact. The murder is now referred to as sadistic, a desire for control and dominance, and realized fantasies in order to experience sexual satisfaction (Abrahamsson 2015; Lennander & Olsson 2015, Svensson 2015a; TT 2015b). It is emphasized that the perpetrator has masturbated multiple times in connection to the crime scene and in 'odd' places, one of them being close to a window that overlooks the café where Lisa worked. Connections are also made to Nerijus Bilevicius.
possession of large amounts of pornography, and it is implied that the images portray tied up and suspended women, thus bearing a considerable resemblance to how Lisa's body was found (e.g. Cantwell 2015; Granlund 2015; Olsson et al. 2015). Even the forensic aspect of the body is profoundly connected to violence and sexualization.; it is stressed explicitly that DNA traces are placed on the inside of her clothes and that her pants and underwear were pulled down (e.g. Abrahamsson 2015; Cantwell 2015; Olsson 2015; Tagesson 2015a, 2015b; Tronarp 2015). This is repeated over and over again as if it is so important that she has been sexually violated despite not being raped. I would argue that this representation, similar to that of violence in general, can be connected to presuppositions within the imagination of the audience, both from popular culture and pornography.

Consequently, the media reports on the murder of Lisa Holm can be understood as somewhat contradictory. Detailed descriptions of how she was murdered and the alleged sexual motivation for this are mixed up with the condemnation of the deviant and sadistic motif. However, when these intimate descriptions of sexual violence directed at her body are reproduced over and over again, they contribute to and reproduce this sexualisation. Even if the motivations for this crime are denounced, it enables the projection of sexual fantasies with Lisa's body and contributes to this objectification process where the female body exists for the gaze and pleasure of the spectator. This connects to Bronfen's ideas that how a woman's death and dying is portrayed is a form of rhetorical violence against women, where the dead body substitute the woman herself and become her only form of representation. When we look upon a dead female body, our gaze will always move beyond the individual and instead view the gratifications a female body can provide us with, such as the erotic desire in voyeurism. This gaze renders the observer the potential to possess the observed, which grants voyeuristic pleasure, a kind of appropriation of the dead female body for the fantasies of the viewer.

5.2 Personal traits, agency and normative objectification

The second theme, the Victim as Subject, was characterized by the two sub-themes personal traits and agency. This is strongly connected to transitivity, especially regarding agents, their voices and their actions. The general idea of the theme is to capture portrayals and/or attempts to represent the victim as the social subject she was before her murder. Both girls are described in very similar ways, with only slight differences. However, the descriptions of their agency and potential for agency are very different. As the analysis will show, one
consequence of the representation of Tova and Lisa is how their personalities are used to establish a normative objectification of how women ought and ought not to behave.

5.2.1 Tova Moberg

The description of Tova's traits and agency is a contradictory story, and Tova is portrayed as a complex person throughout the material. This partially depends on the fact that she knew her perpetrator and had had a long-standing romantic relationship with him. The transitivity analysis shows that the articles, in general, put much emphasis on material and verbal actions taken by different agents, while very few articles focus solely on Tova's traits and interests (Lundberg Andersson 2017; Somnell 2018; Westin & Nilsson 2017a, 2017b). However, multiple articles refer to her actions, or lack thereof, and the consequences that followed. Additionally, she kept a diary to document the abuse she suffered during this relationship. By doing so, she obtained the rare possibility to have her voice heard throughout the police investigation and the trials since she produced her own testimony and became her own star witness. Consequently, she possesses a certain degree of agency to describe different incidents, to articulate her own emotions and to describe her own and others actions. In short, it is an active participation in the construction of the narrative that ends with her murder.

In their verdict, Tingsrätten writes that "the diary entries made by Tova are very straightforward and detailed. She has been able to describe different incidents, as well as her own feelings, in a very expressive way, which enables an external reader to imagine the predicament of her current situation" (Rapp 2018a). When this quotation is reproduced in news reports, it establishes an intertextual link between this very influential source of information and Tova's diary. Due to the high legitimacy and modality of the court as state representatives, the journalists elevate the diary into an elite source of its own. One remarkable effect is that none of the excerpts is ever called into question, but is accepted as an accurate description of the events. This applies even in articles that do not refer directly to any of the verdicts. Tova's words are presupposed to be true, which is an interesting contrast to other trials of domestic and/or sexual abuse where it is 'her word against his'.

However, the content of the diary, in combination with testimonies from the trials, can also be seen as a problematic example of how women use their agency. Tova writes that Billy,
on multiple occasions beats her, tries to strangle her and that he threatened to drown her (Malmgren 2017b). She takes photos of her injuries just to hide them carefully under her bed, in order to validate the entries in the diary. Despite having this type of evidence, she does not take any legal action, and she does not ask anyone for help. When she makes these decisions, she is not only passive herself, but she acts in a normatively undesirable way. She also prevents other people, as well as society (the police), to use their agency to help her. By her undesirable choices, she disables others from acting normatively desirable.

During the court hearings, her family explains that they persuaded Tova to break up with Billy Fagerström, and reported him to the police when they found out that he abused her (e.g. Rapp 2018c; Wikström 2017b; Johansson 2017). Despite these attempts by her parents to act correctly, Tova refused to cooperate in the police investigation of the reported abuse, not wanting to make "life a living hell" for her ex-boyfriend (Karlsson 2017). This is problematic since she not only refuse to act in her own best interest but also prevent the police from keeping their part of the social contract: to uphold the law and keep the citizens safe.

Additionally, Tova continued to meet Billy in secret and lied to her parents about this on multiple occasions (Johansson 2017; Westin et al. 2017; Westin & Nilsson 2017a, 2017b), even on the night of her murder (Wallin 2017). This misuse of agency is exemplified in an article published in Expressen, where friends of the family said that "Tova recently ended the longstanding relationship, which was described as destructive. On the Saturday [of her murder] 

she still chose to go visit her ex-boyfriend"5 (italics added, Enn Henricsson & Wikström 2017).

Furthermore, her mother insists that the rest of the family had no idea of the severity of the abuse that Tova was subjected to (Rapp 2017d). Had Tova been honest with them, the family would have helped her. Even Billy Fagerström's mother claims that if she had known that the relationship was abusive, she would have helped Tova, even though this meant going against her son (Mattson 2018; Wikström 2017b). Here it is also presupposed that the parents could have made a crucial difference, indicating that if Tova had not acted the way she did, she might still be alive. This elucidates normative ideals for how women ought and ought not to behave, as well as which men to choose and not. The flaws implied only enhance what is to be considered a preferable normative behaviour. This is an interesting contrast compared to what Anette Forsberg describes as the narrative of public grief, where all kind of flaws of the victim is deemphasized, in order to construct the victim as a wonderful person, that enable

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5 "Familjeveränner har berättat för Expressen att Tova nyligen hade avslutat det mångåriga förhållandet, som de beskriver som destruktivt. På lördagen valde hon ändå att åka och besöka expojetväninen" (italics added)
collective identification. However, Forsberg discusses the victims of crime only as a possibility for positive identification. In Tova's case, this is the explicit message when she is portrayed as a social subject. Simultaneously, by discussing her misuse of agency and her less desirable traits, she is also a negative example of how to not behave.

Tova is portrayed as a close to perfect person as far as explicit descriptions are considered. She is described as "such a lovely person" that is "very well liked" (Westin et al. 2017; Westin & Nilsson 2017a; Asplid 2017a). Not only does she enjoy hanging out with her family, but she is also an accomplished swimmer that volunteers as a coach for the younger children in the swimming team. She also has a part-time job as a caretaker of the elderly and dreams of starting to work immediately after finishing high school. This indicates that she has the potential to become a valuable citizen that would contribute to society, just like she already strengthens her local community. It is also emphasized that she is happy, kind and reliable, which might be seen as slightly contradictory in comparison to her actions related to agency and her former relationship.

All of this considered, it paints a complex picture where a girl is explicitly framed as a close to perfect person, while it is described how she has deceived those closest to her and made it impossible for them to help her. However, these negative personality traits are only implied and mentioned in passing. Tova is active when she decides to produce documentation and evidence of her situation, but the material that is presented in court describes her as passive and without agency, e.g. "He says that if I break up with him, he will kill me, I do not dare to risk it. Truth is told I feel sick and tired, but I cannot think about that now. I just try to make the best out of the situation" (Rapp 2017a). Tova is a victim of her circumstances, with no way out, and the agency shifts to the perpetrator.

Lastly, representations of individual agency can be compared to the lack of structural analysis within the material. To lie, excuse, rationalize and trivialize the behaviour of a boyfriend or husband is not uncommon behaviour in abusive relationships, but when these actions are not contextualized to structural analysis, they instead function as a normative benchmark of desirable behaviour. Where structural analysis could have added depth and complexity in comparison to the individual, it is replaced by a normative evaluation regarding individual choices and use of agency. Since murdered women involuntarily become public persons, they should have the right to be represented as a person, not (only) as an object that

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6 "Han säger att om jag gör slut så dödar han mig, jag vågar inte chansa. Mår egentligen så sjukt dåligt men orkar inte tänka på det. Men jag försöker göra det bästa av situationen"
enables projections of societal preferences. In Tova Moberg's case, it is affecting all abused women when implied that she could, and should, and had the opportunity to make other choices, which would have led to a different outcome. Focus is instead shifted to the individual, rather than the collective, as is often the case in a neo-liberal discourse. We are responsible for the choices we make and their consequences and how our choices affect other people's chances to make decisions.

5.2.2 Lisa Holm

It is challenging to explore the voice and agency of Lisa Holm, simply because she does not have one in the same way as Tova Moberg. Considering the circumstances of her murder, this is unsurprising and probably more common among murder victims. Her personality and interests are instead the main focus of how she is represented, as voiced through interviews and court hearings with her family and colleagues.

One of the key features of the case is that Lisa is not assigned any agency at all since she is abducted and then hastily murdered. She is supposed to drive home alone after work for the very first time, an initiative initiated by her father to encourage his daughter's independence and transition into adulthood. After she has locked up the café where she works during the summer, she mysteriously disappears. Her family argue that something serious must have happened since Lisa is "timid" and "would never approach or talk to a stranger" (Hellberg & Lundberg Andersson 2015; Tronarp 2015; Tronarp et al. 2015). Later on, it is described that she is overpowered and has no chance at all to escape. Throughout all the media coverage, both explicitly and implicitly, she is represented as entirely passive. From a transitivity point of view, the perpetrator, Nerijus Bilevicius, is the agent that execute material actions towards Lisa, and therefore she is reduced to a goal for his actions. This emphasizes the contrast to the perpetrators unnatural and deviant actions. Even though this passivity is not necessarily desirable, it is to be considered reasonable under the circumstance. We do not assume that 17-year-old girls can fight off men twice their age and size. As opposed to Tova Moberg, Lisa Holm does not use her agency in an undesirable way. Rather, she is doing everything right, since she attempts to take responsibility and mature from childhood into adulthood. This is also, I would argue, the reason why her case is so newsworthy. She is described as happy, kind, empathetic and reliable. She is a "delightful girl" (Lennander 2015b), and it is pointed out on multiple occasions that there is not a bad thing to be said.
against her (Hellberg & Lundberg Andersson 2015; Stenquist 2015). She is everything you would want yourself, your daughter, friend or girlfriend to be. The manner of her abduction enhances this. She is snatched by a stranger, abused, and murdered under humiliating circumstances. Similar to what Stillman and Dowler et al. describes, she is represented as the ultimate ideal victim. When describing a person in such generic terms, it becomes challenging to picture her as a complex person. 'Beauty' can then be considered to possess both a physical and a normative dimension through its construction and affirmation of desirability. Forsberg argues that this portrayal of victims are widespread and serves the purpose to elevate the person into a symbol for 'our' community, rather than commemorate her as a person. Therefore, this could be seen as a way to de-individualize and objectify her, rather than represent her individuality. Furthermore, this kind of representation verifies the case's newsworthiness and assures the audience that the media made the right choice; the victim does not only 'potentially' deserve but definitely worthy of the audience's attention and concern.

This can also be seen in the visual representation of the victims, which applies to both Tova and Lisa. Both are visually represented by their school photographies that are reprinted in most articles. The images were released while the girls were missing, and therefore established a visual presence early on. These types of images are very familiar in a Swedish context since children have their picture taken every year in schools and kindergartens. Therefore they also symbol that the victims were young, since they apparently still attend school, or have attended school recently. The focus is on their faces, and the upper body can be hinted. These types of pictures are surrounded by both social conventions and actual regulations, such as the prohibition of some political symbols or gestures. The visual space is restricted, so the possibility to express individual differences is minimal. This could be seen as a way to present the victims as subjects, and in one way they do. It is indisputable that these images portray Tova and Lisa, even though the only way for the general population to know that is by reading the captions. Otherwise, they could be any blond, pretty, smiling girls. Through these generic and universal portrayals, they almost become de-individualized. Ester Pollock argues something similar that the images of the girls are turned into symbols when she is quoted in Aftonbladet (2016). Here it is important to remember that in the present context, these images are familiar to the public, but when they were published and imbued with specific meanings, they could still be anyone.
5.3 Public grief, the origin of fear and the restoration of social order

As mentioned above, the explicit representations of Lisa, Tova and their bodies express a normative embodiment of young, kind and innocent women. However, the murdered woman and her body is also the embodiment of abjection. By her death, and the brutality of her murder, her body evokes fear within society. Law and order are disrupted, and the social contract where citizens can expect the state to protect them is broken. Therefore, apart from being a body of pleasure and fantasy, the murdered female body is also the origin of fear. This fear needs to be dealt with in order to keep the community together. Public grief for the victim then acts as a way to inspire hope and enable ideas of shared identities. Simultaneously, the body functions as an arena for the restoration of social order through the legal process of the police investigation, forensic inquiries and court trials.

Fear is constructed in very different ways in the two cases. In Tova's case, fear is mostly an individual experience. The citations of her diary are a constant reminder of how afraid and weary she felt, but this fear is limited to her. Even though a member of the public comment that the situation is "very, very unpleasant" and resembles "something that you read about or see in a movie" they are not afraid on a personal or communal level (Karlsson

7 "Väldigt, väldigt obehagligt och det känns ju som att det är någonting man läser om och ser på film"
Although her death is tragic and shocking, it is not necessarily unexpected, and due to the ambiguous representation of her character and actions, it is not as desirable for 'us' to identify with Tova. 'We' do not see ourselves at risk of ending up in the same situation that she did. But this is also a way to handle potential fear. If we recognized ourselves in Tova, we would be admitting that multiple women, constantly, are in danger, despite living in one of the most equal countries in the world, and that the police are unable to protect us from this threat. Therefore, we want to believe that this man, as an individual, is an isolated threat to society and that this threat has been eliminated when brought to justice. Lisa is the ideal victim, and therefore, it is safer to mourn her, especially since her perpetrator came from outside 'us'. This is also one of the reasons that Tova's diary is assigned such a high level of modality and credibility because it allows us to dislocate her perpetrator on the outside of the community. Furthermore, a murdered woman cannot make demands or articulate how she wants the content of the diary to be interpreted, or possibly connected to structures of men's violence against women. In this sense, her voice is simultaneously heard and silenced.

In Lisa's case, explicit collective fear is a significant element. Lisa's body is also the outmost abject body since she was abducted by a stranger, in a setting that was supposed to be safe for her, and then subjected to sadistic sexual violence. She is also described as a victim of circumstances since the perpetrator had approached other women earlier, who had become suspicious of his behaviour. Those cases are very rare and therefore unexpected, and because of this, the fear extends to a national level, since it evokes the feeling that 'none of us can feel safe' and that anyone, anywhere, can be next (e.g. Lennander & Olsson 2015; Roos 2015). At the café where Lisa worked, new routines have been implemented, because none of the girls working there wants to open up or close for the day on their own (Lennander 2015a; Nilsson 2015). Thus, the fate of a murdered woman affect the habits and working conditions of living women, even when the 'realised' threat is removed and brought to justice. Bronfen argues that mediated representation of a woman's death and dying is both a form of rhetorical violence and a form of objectification, where the woman is reduced to her dying and death, instead of being represented as a person. It is then somewhat contradictory that the death of Lisa Holm generates more fear, thus indicating that women at large are in danger from male strangers, while the death of Tova Moberg does not, despite her death being a fate that is significantly more common in the female population and therefore should be considered more threatening to women in general. Therefore, the legal trial is an essential process in eliminating threats against society (e.g. Britts & Stenquist 2015).
Public grief is portrayed both visually and in written text in both cases. The bodies' position as abject is highlighted by the fact that they are elevated to a matter of public concern. Journalist's write that the murder of Tova Moberg has upset all of Sweden and that her death is cause for national grief. Members of the community initiate a vigil to commemorate her, even though the organizers did not know her personally. Images from this vigil are then reprinted frequently in the news coverage, especially in the online content. One universal symbol in these pictures is candles, in order to keep the darkness at bay.

The same structure can be seen in the articles about Lisa Holm. If there is a difference compared to Tova, it is the magnitude of public grief. Various commemorative places are set up and visited by hundreds of members of the public and local politicians (Aftonbladet 2015a). Journalist's write that this grief, shock and anger involves 'everyone' and that everyone can identify with how horrible things must be for the family, but also all of 'us' (e.g. Aftonbladet 2016). It is frequently described that her death is something that has 'moved the whole nation' and that this will change our society forever. One journalist writes that "something broke inside our nation when we found out that the unbelievably beautiful and
happy Lisa Holm from Skaraborg had been found dead” (Boisen 2015). This is legitimized by Lisa's family who gives a statement that says that this is a grief that includes "all friends, everyone in the local community, everyone in Skövde, everyone in Sweden" (Aftonbladet 2015b) and by the fact that Lisa's funeral is broadcasted live by multiple different news outlets. This could be related to what Forsberg calls the media's role as a mediator of 'correct' ways to express grief and that people, by arranging and attending these vigils, show that they understand how 'we' mourn 'our' dead. It is also an invitation to the audience to participate in this grief and to reaffirm one's status as part of the community and a shared identity.

However, grief alone cannot set society straight again. If the order is to be restored, the guilty ones must be punished. In both cases, the trials in Tingsrätten and Hovrätten are the most important possibilities to restore social order and feelings of safety within the public. This can also be seen in the visual representation when the perpetrators are taken into or out of court. They are chained up and held between two sturdy police officers, thus indicating that the state is once in charge and have the abject perpetrator under control.

The arrest of Nerijus Bilevicius.  
Photo: Ljungdahl (2016)  
Billy Fagerström leaving Tingsrätten.  
Photo: Lorentz-Allard (2018)

The courts and the police equal the voice and actions of the government, and because of this, their assigned modality and credibility are tremendous. Furthermore, the prosecution and the prosecutor's speeches are the primary sources of information for the press that then mediates it to the audience. This information is always communicated with a high degree of modality and stated as unquestionable facts (cf. Fairclough 1995). This can be compared to how the defence

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8 "När nationen nåddes av beskedet vi inte ville ha, att den sagolikt vackra, glada, Skaraborgsflickan Lisa Holm hittats död, gick något sönder i vårt land."

9 "Sorg för alla vänner, alla i samhället, alla i Skövde, i Sverige"
is portrayed throughout the material. In Billy Fagerström's case, the defence is mostly rendered invisible. Instead, the focus is concentrated on his explanations of what happened at the night of Tova's murder. These portrayals are frequently assigned low modality, and it is, as mentioned above, implied that the explanations are so ridiculous they cannot possibly be true. A similar pattern can be seen when Nerijus Bilevicius is brought to trial. The defence argues that Bilevicius is the target of a conspiracy, from close to everybody, and the victim of racist assumptions within the police force. This has apparent dramaturgical similarities with true crime documentaries, such as Making of a Murderer and The Staircase. The defence could be argued to presuppose that the audience is familiar with these types of semi-popular culture representations and that this would make the argument more plausible. However, the prosecution is often allowed to portray this opinion as farfetched and untrue, thus reducing the modality of this line of argument.

The trial is also described as a part of closure. In 'ordinary' deaths, the funeral can be considered the end, but in the crime narrative, the final conviction is the 'true' ending. Aftonbladet writes that when the final sentence for Nerijus Bilevicius is published, people cry out of both relief and grief. Justice has been dealt, and order is once again achieved.
6. Conclusions

This study aimed to explore the discursive construction of murdered women and their bodies. This resulted in an overarching theoretical question of how this representation could be connected to societal norms and ideals regarding desirable and undesirable femininity in the Swedish social context. The question was operationalized into two research questions, and the conclusions from the analysis will be discussed below. The ambition was also to contribute theoretically to a field that has been understudied and provide a foundation for a professional as well as academic discussion about the current situation.

As indicated by the theoretical framework, the dead female body has been, and continue to be, an important symbol for society. Throughout both journalism and popular culture, the death and dying of women is a recurrent theme, and these media representations evoke feelings of both pleasure, desire, fear and disgust. Despite rigorous research on the representation of (living) women and their bodies, within a multitude of research fields, the murdered female body remain predominantly absent. Therefore, this thesis aimed to address these shortcomings and provide new insights. The results of this study show that murdered women and their bodies are represented as both subjects, objects and abject.

The study's second research question addressed how the victims' bodies and personalities were portrayed through written and visual language. The results show that the material body as an object was explicitly absent from the material, both visually and textually and thus obscured from the audience gazes. However, it was made implicitly visible through detailed and repetitive descriptions of violence and interdiscursive connections to popular culture. Few physical attributes were mentioned, and the only visual representation consisted of the school photographies provided to the press when the girls went missing. Even though the body is explicitly invisible, it is still sexualized and desirable, due to its normative framing of feminine perfection. In connection to descriptions of violence, this offers the audience an opportunity for voyeuristic pleasure and reduces the victim to an object that mainly exists for others. This contributes to a media representation that objectifies women and the female body, as discussed by, e.g. Fredrickson & Roberts.

Furthermore, when the victims were represented as social subjects, personal traits and agency were given primacy. Tova Moberg was portrayed as a complex person throughout the material, depending on the diary she kept during her relationship with her murderer. This gave her a somewhat unique possibility to create her own testimony and articulate her experiences
and feelings. Her voice was assigned a high level of modality throughout the legal process. However, the excerpts from the diary also established a contradictory image of Tova's agency and personal traits. It is described that she, on multiple occasions, could act in her own best interests, but refrained from doing so. She also refrained from submitting the written and visual evidence of abuse, that she had been collecting for some time, to the police. Consequently, she prevented the police from upholding their obligation to keep the public safe and maintain social order. Because of this, Tova is partially established as a kind of negative role model, or warning example, of undesirable choices. This representation functions quite contrary to what Anette Forsberg describes as the role of victims of serious crimes. She argues that any less desirable trait or action will be de-emphasized so that the public will feel a desire to identify with the victim. Simultaneously, explicit accounts of Tova's personality framed her as a lovely person and a valuable part of her community. Consequently, the results of this study add to Forsberg's and offer a more sophisticated understanding of the role of grief journalism.

Lisa Holm, on the other hand, was constructed as a perfect person, that was a victim of unlikely and misfortunate circumstances. She is described as a completely passive and beautiful girl that is snatched from life by a brutal monster. The visual representation shows both girls as young, blond, and beautiful. The choice of photographies enhances the perfection of their traits and interests, but not of any agency. Therefore, the visual representation both support, enhance and, in Tova's case, contradict, the written message. Unsurprisingly, this verifies the theories of the newsworthy victim, and that the (pretty) missing white girl syndrome is especially prominent in order to explain both the more extensive media coverage that Lisa Holm received and the involvement from the audience. Even though this thesis was not focused on studying newsworthiness per se, the analysis might have contributed other results, and therefore, an even more sophisticated understanding had other cases, or more cases, been chosen. Further research will be necessary to explore this theoretical perspective.

The third research question concerned how murdered women and their bodies could function as an abject signifier for society. The results of the Critical Discourse Analysis imply that the body as abject, what Kristeva defines as positioned between the roles of social subject and material object, primarily serves as a potential arena for the restoration of social order. This is done through both written and visual representations, such as the perpetrators being arrested or escorted from court surrounded by police officers. It is also noticeable in the
pervasive focus on the prosecutor's narrative of events and the media coverage assigned to the legal process.

Another factor is how the female body is used as a symbol for the nation. In this case, femininity is not inferior to masculinity. Through the abject actions of the male perpetrator, a need to distance him from 'us', and more than anything 'masculinity', arise. In order to do so, deviant traits of the perpetrator's are emphasized. In Billy Fagerström's case, it is his abusiveness and his substance abuse, for Nerijus Bilevicius, it is his nationality, his sexual preferences and, in both cases, their working-class status. Instead of being categorized as Men, their individuality is stressed. Their actions are the deeds of one sick individual and hold no resemblance to anything that 'real men' would do.

Consequently, the female victim is the only one left to identify with, and therefore, she is de-individualized and elevated to a close to saintly position. She and her death become a reflective surface of what keeps 'us' together and therefore operates as a signifier for collective identity and the nation. This resembles and verifies the similar positions argued within the theoretical framework, mainly by Bronfen and Young, but adds the dimension of the undesirable masculinity to the equation.

Furthermore, the victims' bodies are presented as a universal body, that everyone in 'our' society can identify with. Similar to Dyer, I argue that this is due to the invisibility of certain privileged positions, that in this context trumps her position as Woman. In the present case, this applies to the victims' whiteness and social class. An interesting contrast is the emphasis on the rural environment, which is seldom given primacy as desirable and important in a Swedish media context. One explanation for this could be that a rural environment mirrors the normative innocence of the murdered woman and her body. Even though van Zoonen and de Lauretis both argue that we need an intersectional analysis to highlight the complexities of different social identities, the material often reflects stereotypical representations of femininity and gender. However, the benefit of the intersectional perspective is how it enhances the possibilities, provided through CDA, to investigate implicit meanings within texts. Therefore, the intersectional approach has proven valuable, even though more studies that concern a variety of cases are sorely needed.

The death of a young, innocent and beautiful girl is the outmost abject body. Although the body of Lisa Holm also evoked feelings of societal fear, the dominating aspect was how the community and nation, despite fear, came together in expressions of public grief and feelings of shared identity. Interestingly, Tova Moberg's body did not evoke the same
levels of explicit fear and grief as Lisa's. One of the reasons for this was argued to be the ambiguity of her personality, as presented above. However, this representation could also be understood as a way to ignore potential feelings of fear. Since the threat of partner violence is much more common and challenging to address, the victim of such a crime is less desirable to identify with, since this would indicate that the state cannot keep us safe and that the threat originates from inside 'us' as a community.

6.1 Critical discussion and further research

When limited research has been done on a topic, it becomes necessary to construct an interdisciplinary theoretical framework in order to interpret the material and support the analysis. Which previous epistemological perspective and empirical studies one chooses, therefore, become very important. However, a lot of previous research and angles will be left out, due to both time constraints, scope, previous knowledge and/or the researcher's bias. I am aware of the fact that a different theoretical framework might have resulted in different conclusions and contributed other types of knowledge than the present study. A lot of time and research on different research areas and topics were conducted in order to get the best and most complete overview possible. Since the present study concerns the written and visual representation of murdered women and their bodies and not the audience's attitude or perception of this body, studies on representation and gender were considered more relevant concerning the aim and research questions, as well as the material as such.

Furthermore, the choice of material only takes a specific part of the discourse into account: the tabloid press. Although this is a broad genre that reaches millions of people each day in Sweden alone, it would be relevant to consider a multitude of different materials, including true crime documentaries, crime journalism in television and radio news, but also user-generated content, such as podcasts, for future studies. This would also enable for audience studies, in order to explore how these representations influence attitudes towards animate and inanimate women, as well as the gratifications, these representations offer the audience. As of today, a multitude of online forums include groups dedicated to crime, e.g. Flashback and Facebook.

The combination of three different methods proposed challenges. The material, although delimited, was extensive, and even though it was more structured thanks to the Thematic Analysis, it remained challenging to gain a good overview of the material.
However, had the Thematic Analysis not been included, it would have been impossible to use such extensive material. This would have meant choosing a much smaller initial sample, which would have the consequences that some patterns and valuable insights could have been lost, such as the contradictory nature between Tova’s actions and her assigned personality. Since the articles where her personality was discussed were so few, this comparison might have been lost. Due to limitations in scope, the Multimodal Visual Analysis had some shortcomings, since very limited aspects of the images could be analyzed. For future studies, this is a research area that can be improved.

There is always a potential risk that the researcher reproduces the objectification of the dead female body when conducting qualitative research on gender and femininity. Furthermore, when discussing norms and ideals connected to the female body, alive or dead, there is always the risk that the researcher indicates that there is an ‘accurate’ or ‘true’ way to represent the female body, femininity and agency. This would also emphasize the need for a more extensive intersectional analysis that includes more cases. Murdered women and their bodies are not all the same, and they are not subjected to the same kind of societal ideals. This begins in the assigned newsworthiness of a case, in journalistic representation, but also in academic interest. Therefore, it would be valuable with studies that consider a multitude of social dimensions in order to portray the complexity of female identities.

In this thesis, I have highlighted the present representation of murdered women and their bodies within the tabloid press in Sweden. I hope that this, besides providing valuable scholarly insights on an understudied topic, will provide the possibility for critical reflection within the journalistic field and initiate a conversation on ethical considerations and newsworthy choices. One way would be to promote the connection between individual cases of abuse and a more extensive structural analysis of partnership violence.
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7.5 Images


