



The “Men Who Kill” Through the Lenses of the Media: Performing Images of Criminal Suspects¹

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ABSTRACT The media plays an important role in producing narratives and representations of transnational male criminals in crime news stories. The sample examined here includes historical analysis of news published in European newspapers in 2014–2016 related to the coverage of certain high-profile criminal cases. Relatively few studies have focused on media analysis of offenders in general, and even fewer have examined how the media portrays “men who kill” within a specific transnational context. I argue that different newspapers use convergent approaches based on a moral view of gender, guided by the ideology of criminal practices related to masculinities. I conclude that the press, through its style, treatment, and tenor, tends to (re)produce biased, sensationalised, and stereotypical portraits of the behaviour of male criminals, performing them as “monsters”, “insane”, and “ancestral”. This also often occurs by attributing different notions of “otherness” when focusing excessively on “migrant criminals” associated with particularly marginalised populations such as male sexual predators.

KEYWORDS crime, media, gender, otherness, suspects

Introduction

The media plays an important role in producing narratives related to crime news (Schildkraut and Donley 2012; Kitzinger 2004; Gruenewald et al. 2009; Paulsen 2003). Regardless of the country, day or time, “crime is a topic of important nature” (Chermak 1994: 95) and is a substantial topic in news coverage. Through the lenses of the media, men and women have been primarily portrayed through a series of advertising images that (re)construct cultural beliefs about how gender is symbolised and perceived as a social issue (Surette et al. 2011; O’Donnell 2016; Clifford and White 2017). As the current literature shows, media outlets, through their stories, tend to misleadingly present themselves as agents and operators of morality viewpoints. They establish a “hyper-reality” (Baudrillard 1981) according to standard portrayals of criminal behaviour. Among other things, media outlets are capable

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of constructing practices and discourses that shape, simplify, and translate a complex reality. If, on the one hand, media outlets may promote a specific idea and image of the social world, on the other hand, they can enforce and reinforce bias and stereotypes in the public space (Welch et al. 1997: 479; Maneri and Ter Wal 2005; Happer and Philo 2013) that creates an overstated criminal behaviour, underlined by distinguishing between law-abiding citizens and “bad” citizens (Gurevitch et al. 1982: 265).

Relatively few scholarly studies have focused on the media analysis of offenders in general (Greer 2003; Machado 2004; Surette et al. 2011; DiBennardo 2018), and even fewer have examined how the media portrays “men who kill” within a specific transnational context. Most crime news stories are dominated by sensationalised and stereotypical portraits of the behaviour of male criminals, depicting them as “monsters”, “insane”, and “ancestral” (Naylor 2001; Surette et al. 2011). Following this train of thought, these associations with the violent acts of men have often been disproportionately portrayed as particular forms of processes of masculine identity (see Connel 1998, 2005; Flowers 2003: 56; Marsh and Melville 2009). As Carrington and Scott (2008) and more recently Ellis et al. (2013), argue, notions of masculinity produce the idea that males are associated with serious crimes, such as homicide, domestic violence, child violence, the use of drugs, street crime, and terrorism, among others. This research also focuses on the construction of female as victims of criminality. This theory applies to the role of women associated with traditional roles that are supposedly closer to “natural feminine traits” (Easteal 2015: 22), where lethal violence is rare.

This construction exemplifies how certain cultural assumptions can become a democratic meaning configured to the function of gender roles.² In turn, media narratives show how men and women should “behave” in relation to each other and how both sexes should “behave” in society. It is, therefore, possible that the over-representation of men as “bad guys” in crime news stories demonstrates the role of the media in the embodiment of gender stereotypes of males as being violent and females as being docile (Jewkes 2004; Marsh and Melville 2009; Seal 2010; Simkin 2014). This also often occurs by attributing different notions of otherness when focusing excessively on the “criminal other” interconnected with particularly marginalised populations, such as male sexual predators (Ellis et al. 2013; DiBennardo 2018). Also, it is fundamental considering the prevalence and the complexity of the constructions of otherness with specific negative stereotypes enacted by framing “migrant men” (Tuija 2018: 159) as maintaining practices that reinforce the corporality of nationality to criminality.

My analysis shows how different newspapers use convergent approaches of a moral line towards gender, guided by the ideology of criminal practices related to masculinities. As a consequence of these approaches, gender has been ascribed “its performative

² This paper follows the argument defended by the Portuguese sociologist Ana Brandão (2008) when she explains that gender identity is designated by the “subjective sense of an individual’s self as being male or female”. She adds that related to gender roles are “all norms of behaviour and stereotypically linked to each gender, including both characteristics adopted by one person and gender-based characteristics attributed to them by others” (p. 3).

fluidity” (Butler 1988: 528). Nevertheless, motivated by this context, I offer an answer to the assumption concerning how distinctive media discourses tend to present “transnational suspects”, defined as individuals who cross borders to commit crimes, in the context of a relational approach that circulates (see M’charek 2008, 2016). The study was inspired by the unique opportunity to provide relevant criminal cases that operate at the transnational level. This high level of concern with the transnationalisation of crime impels symbolic meanings that emphasise differences and make them visible. In the media building process, ascriptions of the concept of “transnational suspects” relies, in discursive and operational terms, on complex configurations of the cultural, social, and political spheres.

This article builds on insights from two main groups of literature. The first is by scholars in the fields of gender and critical media studies who have made a considerable contribution to analytical thinking about cultural and social views linked to gender inequality and gender role stereotypes (Wood 1994; Machado 2004; O’Donnell 2016; Kapoor and Narkowicz 2019). Also, critically thinking about the media tensions related to mapping a mental picture of certain types of offenders linked to agenda-setting (McCombs 2004; Jewkes 2004; DiBennardo 2018). The second insight concerns contributions to the notion of performativity, which has been widely debated in feminist theory as “always a doing” process (Butler 1988: 33). This notion enables us to understand how the idea of “transnational suspects” articulates various concepts associated with a conceptual package that (re) constructs categories of suspicion. As Karen Barad (2003: 802) explains, “performativity, properly construed, is not an invitation to turn everything (including material bodies) into words; on the contrary, performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real”. In this specific context of media narratives, the definition of performativity allows us to understand how individuals and social groups that are considered to be “risky” and/or “suspect” lie between a set of practices through which transnational/national boundaries shape different forms of identity, with a process that is imagined and legitimised by the media. This phenomenon, on a European scale, is connected to the meanings related to the “movements” of suspicious populations across borders and not only materialises a way of identifying the (in)visible “enemy” but also a governmental practice that seeks to instigate fear and discomfort about the “Other(s)” (Bigo 2005; Lalonde 2017; Machado et al. 2019).

Research Methods

In order to analyse how “men who kill” are represented in crime news stories within the transnational context, I have chosen as an empirical example two high-profile criminal cases that are part of a more extensive study whose main objective is to understand media narratives about the application of DNA technologies in transnational criminal cases.³ In this particular case, to focus on the intensity of the analysis, the number

³ This study benefited from support from the EXCHANGE project [grant agreement n. °648608 to H.M.] that explores the societal, cultural, ethical, regulatory and political impacts of the use of forensic DNA technologies in the European Union, led by Helena Machado and hosted at

of cases was not predicted a priori. These two cases were selected because they offer a unique position to think about media analysis of offenders in general, since few studies have examined how the media portrays “men who kill” within a specific transnational context.

I use my data to conduct a historical analysis (2014–2016). I used the Lexis Nexis database,^{4,5} which enables full-text searches of articles in newspapers worldwide using specific keyword(s), namely, the name of the suspect and the victim. The search was limited only to news articles. Nevertheless, other news supplements (images and advertisements) occur with less prominent expression. I do not include merely descriptive news and opinion articles. The results were directed to newspapers in the countries where each case occurred. My sample includes 17 articles published in the newspapers of three European countries: the United Kingdom (UK), Spain, and Sweden. In this context, news related to Spain and Sweden has been translated into English (while respecting the original content expressed within the news articles). In this paper, both tabloid and broadsheet newspapers are analysed while admitting a differentiation between the two. On the one hand, I focus on the tabloid newspapers *20 minutos*, *La Vanguardia*, *La Voz de Galicia*, *Expressen*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* and *Daily Record*. On the other hand, I analyse the broadsheet newspapers, *The Independent*, *El País* and *El Mundo*. The latter three newspapers are not those with the largest circulation but have been selected because they offer a representative portrayal of the two high-profile crimes. I can summarise this situation by stating that the tabloid press presents itself as a vehicle for news related to emotion and personal entertainment, with less emphasis placed on politics, the economy, and society at large, whereas the broadsheets predominantly focus on political, social, economic, and cultural themes with greater emphasis on reflection and argumentation (Skovsgaard 2014). At the European level and, according to Mihelj et al. (2008: 282–283), these two broad groups of newspapers have general similarities and are comparable across countries.

Furthermore, drawing from a grounded theory approach, this paper defends a “continuous interplay between analysis and data collection” (Strauss and Corbin 1994: 273). The unit of analysis chosen for coding was the paragraph, coded on the themes addressed following the principles of content analysis in qualitative research. In using this approach, my code combines manifest and latent analysis contexts. For this article, the analysis is directed to take a careful and critical look at the social and symbolic representations that the press uses in relation to procedures used in the coverage of high-profile criminal cases, in which men constitute one of the epicentres of the crime narrative. The analysis follows an overview of the two high-profile criminal cases that have been selected for this paper.

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⁴ See <https://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/>

⁵ See research by Lisette Jung and Amade M’charek (2017) on a high-profile criminal case in Germany.

The Criminal Cases

This section provides a brief description of the two high-profile criminal cases selected for analysis. These two criminal cases have been portrayed in the press as the “Euro-Ripper” case and the “Exoneration of Van Der Dussen” case.

The “Euro-Ripper” Case

On 21 May 2015, an elderly couple, 75 and 74-years old, were raped, tortured, and murdered. Close relatives found them on the kitchen floor where they lived in Vienna, Austria. The newspapers described the violent manner in which the case occurred and revealed the atrocity of the crime by describing how the bodies had been mutilated. According to the news, the perpetrator tortured the victims and “painted” the following enigmatic expressions in brown paint – “Tantum Ergo”. Through transnational exchange of DNA data within the European Union, a 29-year-old Polish suspect named Dariusz Pawel Kotwica was identified. In addition to confessing to the crime, Dariusz Pawel Kotwica also mentioned that in 2012, he robbed several stores and perpetrated another murder in Salzburg, Austria. Austrian police also discovered that Dariusz Pawel Kotwica had lived in the United Kingdom for several years, and therefore suspicions were raised about the possibility that he may have committed further crimes in that country. On 8 June 2015, the suspect was arrested in Düsseldorf railway station in Germany and was immediately extradited to Austria, where he was put on trial.

The “Exoneration of Van Der Dussen” Case

On 10 August 2003, on the streets near Fuengirola in the province of Málaga in Spain, three women suffered violent sexual assault and one attempted rape. After recognition by two of the victims and an eyewitness, a 30-year-old Dutch citizen, Romano Van Der Dussen, was accused of perpetrating the crimes. In the same year, he was given a 12-year sentence. In 2007, four years after the verdict, and following international cooperation, it was revealed that the DNA sample found on one of the victims matched that of UK citizen Mark Dixie, the perpetrator of similar crimes in the United Kingdom and Australia. It was also found that Mark Dixie lived in Spain, precisely in the city of Málaga, during the period of the sexual assaults. Nine years later, in 2015, the Spanish Supreme Court considered the new report from the scientific police that indicated the reliable connection between one of the crimes and the UK citizen, Mark Dixie. Van Der Dussen’s appeal against one of the three rape charges was reviewed, and the case has been reopened. The court continues to investigate the case. Romano Van Der Dussen’s defence states that because of the *modus operandi*⁶ of the three crimes, it is possible to conclude that Mark Dixie committed all three crimes.

⁶ The definition of *modus operandi* is understood as follows: “a criminal’s *modus operandi* is made up of choices and behaviours that are intended to assist the criminal in the completion of the crime. An offender’s *modus operandi* shows how the offender commits the crime. It is separate from the offender’s motives or signature aspects; the latter has to do with why an offender commits the crime” (Turvey and Freeman 2008: 334).

On 12 February 2016, in light of the doubts associated with the case, Romano Van Der Dussen was released. Both cases remain without conviction.

To give an overview of the following pages of this article, my analysis indicates that the newspapers were able to underline the “men who kill” with such significance across three interrelated categories, inspired by Goulandris and McLaughlin’s (2016) study,⁷ which can be typified as follows: (1) “The sexual killer type”, which made it possible to infer gender blame reworked as a social model of the “monsters”, thereby subverting the entire idea of moral order (Naylor 2001; Surette et al. 2011); (2) “The killer head”, which evokes and represents dangerous men within the constructed iconic status of a master criminal based on cultural frameworks of a sexually motivated murder (Flowers 2003; Carrington and Scott 2008; Ellis et al. 2013); and, finally, (3) “The killer Others”, which enables newspapers to develop a social process of forging an otherness that is aligned with what are considered to be the real enemies, the “migrant men” associated with the collective memory of a European borderland (Kuus 2004; Said 2004; Tuija 2018).

“The Sexual Killer Type”

Media narratives are subject to intense public consumption. Indeed, journalistic articles tend to draw upon a “sensationalist justice” (McCombs 2004) dedicated to “details and characteristics of the individuals involved, rather than addressing the substantive issues” (Machado and Santos 2008: 4). As a result, a large proportion of the newspaper universe focuses on the portrayal of perpetrators in the media. Scholars have generally found that media outlets tend to give increased attention to a “strange” predator. Generally, the discussions focus on men that are described as the perpetrators of bizarre and extremely violent crimes (Collins 2016; DiBennardo 2018: 3).

In the specific case of the “Euro-Ripper”, this kind of crime coverage is clearly evident. The newspapers reveal the role of the “the sexual killer type”, which makes it possible to apply an element of gender blame on men as “animalistic killing machines more akin to gothic monsters than human offenders” (Surette et al. 2011: 54). In the UK’s tabloid newspaper, the *Daily Mail* with its sensationalist tone, the perpetrator was represented as the predatory Evil, ready to kill. Media outlets described the crime scene from the viewpoint of the watchful eye of a violent criminal, who was capable of writing on the old victim’s naked body. According to the *Daily Mail*, the expression “Tantum Ergo” refers to Greek mythology – when Tantum invited all the Gods of Olympus to eat and then served them the flesh of his own son, as illustrated in the following quote:

The bodies of Gerhard Hintermeier, 75, and his wife Erna, 74, were discovered at their home by relatives. They had been bludgeoned and stabbed several times while written in brown paint on the woman’s naked body was either the Latin phrase “Tantum Ergo” meaning “only then” (“Euro-Ripper”, *Daily Mail*, 28 November 2015).

⁷ Goulandris and McLaughlin (2016) focused on an analytical framework of the media construction of Amanda Knox.

The same form of portrayal applies to Van Der Dussen's case. This type of crime scenario falls under an archetypal and detailed journalistic approach underpinned by gender-role expectations. It is another dimension that can be added to the sense of drama and panic intended to incite readers' emotions. The broadsheet *El País* builds a dark and grey scenario of how the three victims, Laura, Maria, and Carolina (fictitious names), were attacked under threat and subjected to extreme brutality. The sexual offences were depicted through detailed and allusive descriptions that highlight and cultivate emotions embedded in the underlying fear of crime. There is an intentional implication that ordinary people, especially female citizens, can be the target of a crime of this severity even when simply walking down the street, as follows:

Between 4:30 and 5, a man attacked Laura in the Miguel Bueno street in Málaga [Spain]. He hit her violently, throwing her to the ground, ripping her pants and "trying to insert his penis or other object into her vagina", according to the established facts. Briefly afterwards, at 5.30, the same person approached Maria, punched her in the face and pinned her down in order to rape her. (...). Thirty minutes later, around 6, he attacked Carolina, his third victim. After punching her all over her body, he tried to spread her legs ("Exoneration of Van Der Dussen", *El País*, 14 September 2014).

Remarkably, the media focuses public attention on the offender's guilt, in particular through sexual assaults and rapes by the "unknown" perpetrator. Much has been written about the focus on the victimisation of these three women (Furedi 2006; O'Donnell 2016; Clifford and White 2017; Waters et al. 2017). Also, these representations emphasise traditional gender beliefs and trivialise, without content and context, the violence to which women are regularly exposed through male violence (Wood 1994; Pollak and Kubrin 2007). Through this scenario, women typically appear in the news in everyday and vulnerable situations, especially emphasising the possibility that this horrifying perpetrator could suddenly appear and commit countless crimes, as is clear in the following quote:

Mark Philip Dixie (...) first attacked a woman along the road, although she managed to escape. Later that night (...) he followed her, gagged her, sexually assaulted her and murdered her. It happened at night, on September 2005. (...). But this wasn't his only crime ("Exoneration of Van Der Dussen", *El País*, 14 September 2014).

The structured image of the "The sexual killer type" is understood in terms of the ways that gender is portrayed through specific media assumptions and a set of ideologies that are continually embodied for them. The general public's censure and blame of the criminals establish a common adversary through which citizens can consolidate their sense of social solidarity. The "faces" of the criminals matched that of the violent man, normally perceived as "rebellious", "violent" and "monstrous" offenders and, therefore, strongly associated with sexual crimes (see Naylor 2001; Greer 2003: 128; Carrington and Scott 2008; Jewkes 2011; Ellis et al. 2013; Guiliani 2016). Through the conception of gender roles, the media is capable of identifying the male offenders and female victims through "stylization (...) of the gendered self" (Butler 1988: 519). With those conceptions in mind, the data demonstrates that the media narratives construct the concept that specific forms of masculinity are closely

linked to male criminality. However, the link between masculinity, crime, and violence may not have taken place naturally. It may also be approached from the perspective that crime-related actions and reactions may be mapped without abandoning gender roles, but with careful, rather than merely descriptive analysis that also makes it possible to correlate cultural, social and political issues (Flowers 2003: 32–35).

“The Killer Head”

Media narratives highlight the vilification of the offender from an individual perspective. The most popular and highest media representations show that violent crimes are described as a consequence of psychological deviations (Wood 1994; Quintero Johnson and Miller 2016; Clifford and White 2017; Powell et al. 2018). The “Van Der Dussen” case very tangibly combines this type of news reporting. As seen in the following headline related to the case of the “Euro-Ripper”: “The English psychopath” (“Exoneration of Van Der Dussen”, *El País*, 6 March 2016). Usually, “the killer head” is embedded within the paroxysms of the wild psychopath and nurtures a strong sense of indignation and provocative moral emotion conveyed by the demonic personification surrounding the perpetrators of the crimes (Greer 2003: 138–139; Surette et al. 2011: 54).

These terminologies, therefore, reinforce the social distance that arises between “Us” and the “Mentally ill”, and the newspapers substantiate that some men conceal and then manifest certain violent, destructive, and subhuman pathologies (Greer 2003; Machado 2004; Surette et al. 2011; DiBennardo 2018). The “Euro-Ripper” is described as someone who was driven by a “voice that commanded him”. Because of that voice, in that precise moment, the elderly couple had to die. So, the action tends to be supportable in the journalistic articles in response to an individual issue that is related to a severe mental disorder, as noted in the Swedish tabloid newspaper *Expressen*: “The murderer has said that he heard a voice in his head that said ‘Tantal’ and ordered him to kill his victims” says Ewald Schneider, chief inspector of the Vienna police force (“Euro-Ripper”, *Expressen*, 10 January 2016).

Journalists explore a clear media representation of a sick, unbalanced, and hallucinating man who, as a result of this context, commits immoral crimes. Also, the same tabloid newspaper, *Expressen*, states that the suspect showed that he could not logically and articulately answer the police questions while the criminal investigation was underway, as seen in the following quote: “It’s been hard to get a clear answer about why he wrote [on the victim’s body], we only get an illogical answer”, says prosecutor Lotta Nielsen (“Euro-Ripper”, *Expressen*, 10 January 2016).

Mostly, in these specific criminal cases, with great notoriety and detail, the media reports conduct of pure violence, which is primarily the result of mental illness and perversion. According to the UK broadsheet newspaper *The Independent* and the Spanish broadsheet newspaper *El País*, the offender was happy to torture the victims and celebrated the crimes. The following quotes denote illustrative expressions that are linked to how this act of sexual torture was practiced with “pleasure”:

(...) Police have said he takes "joy" in torturing victims, and he wrote bizarre phrases on the Austrian woman's naked body after raping her ("Euro-Ripper", *The Independent*, 29 November 2015).

Mark Philip Dixie celebrated his 35th birthday by raping and murdering the young model Sally Anne Bowman in London. That night, after having a few drinks at the pub with his friends, he planned a macabre end to his celebration ("Exonerated of Van Der Dussen", *El País*, 14 September 2014).

These kinds of fundamental theories that claim criminals are controlled by demonic possession are usually visualised as such in the media. The expression "it was the fault of the devil" is recycled frequently in tabloid newspapers as an acceptable explanation for criminal practices (Surette et al. 2011: 65; Quintero Johnson and Miller 2016: 214). According to the study by O'Donnell (2016: 7), the most prominent topic in the newspapers is the depiction of the "psycho killer" or "cruel killer". Such studies have tended to conclude, therefore, that this misleading depiction motivates the notion that these mental disorders do not arise from personal, social, and environmental factors, but as a consequence of a violent and punishable act. The applied approach can be confined in two ways, namely through creation of "mental illness", as well as by "dehumanisation" of the individual. Moreover, in these criminal cases, the roles are instrumentalised according to the ultimate goal, in particular, the practice of crimes (Haggerty 2009; Powell et al. 2018).

"The Killer Others"

The media determines that the characteristics of "men who kill" interact with other many factors to determine their news value, which means that certain types of individuals are more likely to be covered in the press. The "killer Others" are linked through a simplistic and sensationalist approach that draws on stereotyped connotations and highlight "migrant masculinity as a threat to European women" (Tuija 2018: 159). These discourses primarily derive from narratives linked to the "Euro-Ripper" case. This can also explain why it was the only case that was not covered by broadsheet newspapers. The broadsheet newspaper articles that were analysed do not seem to draw as much attention on that issue.

The most prominent categories that arise from the creation of the "performativity of suspicion" focus on Eastern migrants, i.e. the mass transiting populations. They are represented in the press as a danger to Western societies because of their past, as pointed out by Didier Bigo (2002: 4), "which frames a tendency to break the law and to be criminal". The media, mostly invisible to the general public, ends up by legitimising a long past and present historical memory that is linked to an idea of Europe⁸ that in their imagination began from the idea of an "Other". These assumptions are corroborated by the UK tabloid

⁸ In this paper, I do not intend to exhaustively draw a historical map of Europe, but the reader must pay attention to the work of George Steiner (2005: 27) who describes the "Idea of Europe", referring to the idea that Europe "was and is travelled on foot", and recovers the concept of a Europe that is covered and fuelled by stories and memories that cannot have been forgotten.

newspaper *Daily Mail* when they point out that the perpetrator's nationalities are mainly linked to Eastern European countries. Considering this overall prevalence, there is a clear and manifest association with suspects' nationalities in the articles, as illustrated by the following extract: "Polish national being thought of as first serial killer to strike across Europe" ("Euro-Ripper", *Daily Mail*, 28 November 2015).

The gradual representation of the "Other" highlights "old" forms of discrimination and intensifies stereotypes and associations associated to nationality-based stigma. The progressive securitisation of exclusion (see Huysmans 2000) has legitimised a complex process of practices in which various forms of security convey an underlying organising principle. It is precisely in this context that I focus this empirical analysis on answering how the so-called "transnational suspects" have performed. This relational approach makes it possible to understand how the meanings attributed to individuals and, in turn, to social groups considered to be "risky" and/or "suspicious" circulate in a transnational territory and how, by means of this circulation, power games and competing policies of identity and citizenship are (re)constructed. The "performativity of suspicion" is based on media narratives that establish an inevitable reality, linked to symbolic, social, and cultural imaginaries that together determine the "movements" of transnational suspects. This "enemy" has been identified as someone who "moves around" (Scott 1998), as part of a neoliberal geopolitical imagination.

Increasingly, regimes of mobility have become invisible for some, while becoming extremely hard and visible for others, even if the latter find strategies to transgress them. The celebration of free movement of people, at the heart of the European Union (EU), is complemented by increasing attempts to restrict and monitor the mobility into, and within, the EU of people who are deemed to be problematic in one way or the other. The Euro-Ripper case has also generated tremendous media notoriety and focused attention on the political, social, and cultural effects of "opening borders" (see Martins et al. 2016). The sociologist Bauman (2005: 8) associates this paradigm with a "liquid society" and, therefore, the creation of liquid boundaries that are articulated with the fluidity, flexibility, and mobility of citizens. In this process, the main objective is to monitor people who are considered to be "risky". As stated in the UK broadsheet newspaper *The Independent*, Dariusz Pawel Kotwica was the first criminal to have benefited from the mobility and "opening" of Europe's borders to commit crimes in Britain and throughout the European Union, as mentioned in the following headline: "Dariusz Pawel Kotwica: 'Europe's first serial Killer' could have committed 'serious crimes' in Britain" ("Euro-Ripper", *The Independent*, 29 November 2015).

This crime spree has raised several critical voices related to the celebration of a European society that facilitates the freedom of movement and the flow of people. There is high visibility of EU immigration (see Aas 2007; Cere et al. 2014; Weber and Bowling 2008). As the UK tabloid newspaper, the *Daily Express* points out, the opening of borders has created a security deficit that results in reproduction of an understanding of the migrant male as the foreigner. From country to country, Dariusz Pawel Kotwica "took advantage of the EU's open borders". The articles also point out that allowing this mobility permits these criminals to find new victims: "Dariusz Pawel Kotwica, 29, took advantage of the EU's open borders to evade police and find new victims in six countries over several years" ("Euro-Ripper", *Daily Express*, 30 November 2015).

The Swedish newspaper *Expressen* reinforces the narratives of the UK press by stating how the Euro-Ripper could have committed various crimes across Europe. This discourse implicitly reinforces the context that paved the way to Brexit (see El-Enany 2018) whose repercussions are still being felt in the United Kingdom today, anchored in issues of fear and terror in the context of the emergence of terrorism and illegal immigration,⁹ as is apparent in the following extract:

Several British newspapers have also recently published data from an internal police report in which British police state that the man (...) had lived in the country for extended periods and, may have therefore been involved in a number of crimes. It is suspected that Kotwica may be the first European serial killer to have moved from country to country, committing murders along the way (“Euro-Ripper”, *Expressen*, 10 January 2016)

Furthermore, in the context of the current European border management regime, the notion of “killer Others” is constituted in conjunction with concerns about (in)security and crime. So, this appearance of “transnational suspects” is simultaneously portrayed as “the face of the immigrant” (Guild 2003: 336) such that criminal narratives appeal to social control and risk management (Garland 2001; Bigo 2014). Indeed, there is a long history and memory linked to stereotypes and myths associated to migrants. As argued by Judith Butler (1988: 521), “the body is understood to be an active process of embodying certain cultural and historical possibilities, a complicated process of appropriation”. It is a meaningful and familiar context through the media that legitimises a more vigilant social and political urgency and a European management policy. Additionally, media images of crime today also support toxic discourses about “migrant criminals”. Since 2001, such media stories have intensified, due to the noticeable arrival of terrorism in the public sphere and as part of the “war against terrorism” exacerbated by political bodies (Farris and Mohamed 2018).

This involves a complex but persistent confluence of two processes: (1) the creation of geographical differences between “Us” and “Them” and (2) a practical focus on “socially visible” minorities. This dual process produces the “The killer Others”, clustered together on the basis of a criminalisation effect: immigrants as a group that are portrayed as potential criminals. This dual course makes versions of a reality contaminated with an imaginary that construct categories of suspicion of the “criminal Other” who moves across specific territorial spaces.

Conclusion

In conclusion, and to underline my argument concerning the “men who kill” in crime news, I would like to consider once again my example that gender must be defined as a fluid substance and must be understood as a “constructed identity” (Butler 1988: 520). I argue that different newspapers provide convergent approaches towards a moral gender-based viewpoint

⁹ This paper draws attention to the term “illegal” being considered in this investigation carried out by the media. A term whose connotation, as Brouwer et al. (2017: 103) notes, “stresses criminality and defines immigrants as criminals”.

guided by the ideology of criminal practices related to masculinities. As I mentioned, the results of a process of masculinity are perceived and mirrored in a mediated framework where behavioural violence operates (Flowers 2003: 56). This research demonstrates that gender stereotypes are reconstructed into a “corporeal style (...) which is both intentional and performative” (Butler 1988: 522). Pictures of male criminals focus on notions of what it means to be masculine or to be a “good” or “bad” citizen (Gurevitch et al. 1982: 265).

From this perspective, the “men who kill” has become a construction of the press and can take various shapes. The media’s lenses, in terms of their style, treatment, and tenor, tend to (re)produce biased, sensationalised, and stereotyped portraits of male criminal behaviour into three main groups. The first is “the sexual killer type”, developed within the complex mosaic that underpins gender blame. This type of narrative reinforces and configures a shared experience, rooted in a “public opinion court” (Greer and McLaughlin 2011: 138) where *agenda-setting* stands out, and violence and sex, articulated in a specific media “campaign”, display different degrees of permeability to gender positions. This context includes behaviours and expectations that shape gender labelling as particular forms of globalised masculinities (Naylor 2001; Flowers 2003: 32–35; Marsh and Melville 2009) that generally confirms the existence of an “ancestral” man (rebellious and grotesque). The well-thought-out image of the “criminal man” is framed through the repetition of violent and sexual crimes.

The second type is symbolised by “the killer head”, depicted in numerous media illustrations, namely men with a severe clinical pathology, the Evil man, the insane. Nevertheless, I believe that particular criminal stories take on a negative tone, focusing on individual motives, rather than embracing broader social issues. This empirical analysis falls within the framework of other studies (Naylor 2001; Flowers 2003; Machado 2004; Marsh and Melville 2009; Powell et al. 2018) that configure male behaviour as a form of demonic possession. The message that is conveyed by the media promotes a picture of sexual assaults from strangers, the “unknown”. This is often a strategy used as a way to establish public alarm and public anxieties (Surette et al. 2011).

Usually, this observation makes visible the third type: “the killer Others” that confirm the existence of the connections between the flexibility and fluidity of “people on the move” and the construction of suspicion. Questions of belonging and identity are not only raised and answered in political meetings but are also covered in detail on the pages of journalistic newspapers. These discourses contribute to the production of specific social categories, which can be called “performative of suspicion”. That assembly underlines forms of criminalisation based on specific territories. I suggest that the “transnational suspects” have been enacted as forms of suspicion that in this case construct different notions of otherness, which are considered herein beyond the normative order of citizenship. In a network of practices, these suspects are portrayed as being distinct when focusing excessively on the face of the “migrant criminal” associated with specific marginalised populations such as the male sexual predator. The multiple relations in this transnational context recreate the criminal other. These types of assumptions are related to issues of identity and belonging, viewed under an embedded image of stereotypes.

I believe that the media can act as an agent that has the power to frame social problems that need to be addressed. By contrast, through the narratives of its agenda,

the media has legitimised the gender-based portrayal of the male criminal, circumscribed by different surveillance purposes (Machado 2004; Pollak and Kubrin 2007; Machado and Granja 2019). The delicate concern about the "transnationalization of crime" (Machado and Santos 2008: 139) provides a kind of management of suspect populations. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the threat facing the criminal justice system is linked to debates concerning control and vigilance that pursue a democratic form of "being seen". This form of visibility contains associations connected to dominant individuals and national and transnational security issues. This (re)creation of the "monster" establishes a geopolitical position that challenges not only gender roles but also cultural and social lines that highlight and materialise the "men who kill" as a global phenomenon of "criminal migrants". This "Other" goes beyond the physical body to include the classification of certain groups and individuals to whom the status of deviant has more easily been conceived as those responsible for cross-border crime.

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