

Familiar felons: Gendered characterisations and narrative tropes in media representations of offending women 1905–2015

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Abstract

This article contends that contemporary writings on the representation of offending women provide a simplified outline of ‘available’ representations. To nuance and further complicate our understanding, this study lays bare the most salient media characterisations of women perpetrators in Swedish press. In contrast to much previous research, it covers various offence types and an extensive period of time (1905–2015) and moves away from the focus on mega-cases and cases of extreme deviance. First, the study illustrates that characterisations are contingent and that there is a greater variety in ‘available’ representations than previous research suggests. The characterisations rather tend to move between and beyond the categories of *bad*, *mad* and *sad*. Second, the study makes visible the narrative continuities (across cases and over time) and analyses the social and cultural work of gendered characterisations. While steering attention to sense-making and the construction of familiarity, the article complicates the assumption that women’s deviance primarily or necessarily is represented as otherness.

Keywords

Crime and media, gender, historical criminology, Sweden, women and crime

Introduction

Statistically, ‘the female offender’ is a relatively uncommon figure. Compared to men, women far less often engage in criminal activities or violent offences (e.g. Estrada et al., 2016). Public crimes or violent offences are simply considered a male affair and a masculine sphere (Brennan and Vandenberg, 2009; Chancer, 2014). Since lawbreaking women are fairly rare and signify something unexpected, cases involving women perpetrators are often deemed newsworthy and are

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highly visible in the media; thus, as a character, 'the female offender' usually appears sensational and fascinating (Barnett, 2006; Collins, 2016; Davies, 2011; Eastal et al., 2015; Jewkes, 2011; Skilbrei, 2012). As a form of crisis, 'the female offender' generally disrupts the notion of femininity and the general perception of what it means to be a woman, or for that matter a mother or a wife. And as all things deemed unexpected and ungraspable, she needs to be made intelligible. As Estrada et al. (2019: 17) have demonstrated: it is more common that press reports on cases involving a woman perpetrator include explanations for the offending.

Media portrayals of women suspected or convicted of crime reflect prevailing attitudes and norms about gender (Eastal et al., 2015: 32; Naylor, 2001a: 181). They are also productive in the sense that they could influence verdicts and/or public opinion and policy (e.g. Collins, 2016; DeKeseredy, 2011: 53; Eastal et al., 2015) and, in a more general sense, (re)produce norms of appropriate femininity and female behaviour (Barnett, 2006; Seal, 2010). As Barak (2012: 379) puts it: media contributes to 'the maintenance of social conformity, order and control'. As depictions of crime and offenders delineate the boundaries between the normal and deviant, between the civilised and barbaric, between the appropriate and inappropriate, news coverage disciplines and it serves to normalise. As, for instance, Seal (2010: 7) notes, the discourses of womanhood that gender constructions of violent women reproduce 'play a role in the wider social regulation of femininity'. Or as Skilbrei (2012: 140) puts it: 'Accounts of homicide in news media do more than establish that homicide is wrong. They also play a part in setting the boundary between what is considered normal and what is not in a wider sense'.

How criminals have been perceived and dealt with have naturally varied throughout history; our notions of deviance and illegitimate behaviour, of evil and danger, of femininity, change with shifting norms generally and shifting societal structures. Likewise, how offending women are made intelligible and what offending women come to represent reasonably change with time and vary across different contexts. However, as of yet, existing research on how offending women are portrayed in the media generally lacks empirical explorations that shed light on the complex and contingent nature of the discursive representation of women suspected or convicted of crime.

The objective of the present paper is to render visible the various ways in which the female offender is made 'known' and to further elaborate on the role of the media in the social regulation of femininity (on a more general and 'everyday' basis). The paper contributes to current debates by scrutinising how the female offender is constructed in the media across various offence types and throughout an extended period of time (1905–2015). By making use of the concept of tropes, it offers a novel reading of how gendered media representations and characterisations of offending women may be understood. The article will be structured as follows. First, it briefly outlines the literature on the representation of offending women that the study wishes to speak to. Second, it introduces the concept of narrative tropes and elaborates on the construction of familiarity and otherness. Third, it offers a few remarks on the empirical material and the methodological approach. Thereafter, the article is dedicated to the analysis of an extensive empirical material consisting of 145 press reports; it lays bare and analyses the nine most salient characterisations of offending women in Swedish press between 1905 and 2015. Where relevant, the discussions also compare the results to those in previous research. The article ends by discussing the contingent nature of media representations as well as the narrative continuities, and finally by summing up the overall argument.

The bad, mad and sad

Previous research on the representation of offending women in the media often points out that media tends to, or even incessantly, constructs 'the female offender' as either bad, mad or sad (e.g. Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002; Brennan and Vandenberg, 2009; Eastal et al., 2015; Wilczynski, 1991). Often, previous accounts seem to put an emphasis on 'either/or'; the categories of bad and mad/sad are frequently portrayed as distinct and separate categories. Generally, it is argued that women perpetrators are depicted either as overall bad women acting intentionally or as victims of circumstance and medically and/or mentally unfit – either they are demonised and masculinised as unwomanly and caricaturesque monsters, portrayed as *femme fatales* who lure their victims using their sexuality, or as non-agents, as obedient and passive women (see Brennan and Vandenberg, 2009: 145; Collins, 2016; Eastal et al., 2015: 32; Jewkes, 2011; Naylor, 2001b). The use of such 'standard narratives' (Jewkes, 2011), 'stock characters' (Chancer, 2014), or 'gender representations' (Seal, 2010) suggests that 'certain key stereotypical constructions of violent women's femininity have delimited the range of available representations to those which are disparaging and/or disempowering' (Seal, 2010: 6). Although modified and reconstructed depending on the context and time period, there is – as suggested – continuity in the representation of offending women.

Yet, previous research on the representation of 'the female offender' often focuses on individual cases and particular perpetrators (e.g. Barnett, 2006; Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002; Eastal et al., 2015; Morrissey, 2003; Naylor, 2001b; Seal, 2010). Typically, these are exceptional or so-called mega cases (e.g. Comack, 2006: 46; Greer and Jewkes, 2005: 21; Skilbrei, 2012: 140), which come to serve as illustrations of how women convicted of crime are generally represented. Previous research also tends to focus on a particular crime category – that is, murder; the analysis of the representation of offending women is thus often delimited to women serial killers or mass murderers (e.g. Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002; Jewkes, 2011; Morrissey, 2003; Skilbrei, 2012). Furthermore, or consequently, previous research commonly emphasises the articulation of deviance and construction of otherness, and the role of media in processes of stereotyping (e.g. Chesney-Lind and Eliason, 2006; Collins, 2016; Comack, 2006; Greer and Jewkes, 2005; Jewkes, 2011; Morrissey, 2003: 9; Naylor, 2001b). Based on the well-known suggestion that women lawbreakers tend to be outlined as 'doubly deviant', and thus doubly damned, as they are considered to transgress both criminal law and the boundaries of femininity (Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002: 50; Jewkes, 2011: 125), previous accounts often point to how 'the female offender' is depicted as an Other.

It might be true, as Morrissey (2003: 2) suggests, that legal and media reactions to women who kill 'demonstrate the desperate measures of discourses in crisis', and that the analytical focus on murderesses thus makes visible the exclusionary operation of discursive identity formation. Yet, as Chancer (2014: 599) notes, 'shifting the focus of analysis from media coverage of high profile cases to coverage of more ordinary or routine crimes by women / . . . / is likely to provide examples of more multifaceted characterisations'. As argued here: studies on mega cases and/or female murderesses merely capture how individual cases and cases of extreme deviance are represented, when media sensationalism, crude stereotypes and misogyny are most likely and most expected. Hence, if mega cases continue to be the focal point, there is a risk that the literature on the representation of offending women in itself becomes too categorical and serves to reproduce

simplifications and generalisations. Though 'current representations of crime in the media bear traces of earlier codes and practices', as Carrabine (2018) stresses, the representation of offending women is not static, but contingent and irregular. Therefore, this study generally moves away from the focus on individual high-profile cases and exceptionally violent offences, and – as it covers a long period of time and includes various offence types – offers a research design that sheds light on the (more) contingent nature of how this particular category of offenders is represented in the media *but also* makes visible the narrative continuities in stories of female deviance. As such, the article focuses on the historical overview, thus leaving aside discussions on modern media culture and shifting media logic.

Gendered characterisation and narrative tropes

As the present study generally moves away from mega-cases (set in a specific time and context), it has proved necessary to also look beyond the process of stereotyping. Rather than thinking of the representation of offending women as necessarily stereotypical – which according to Hall's (2013: 248) conceptualisation would suggest a demarcation of inside and outside, between the imagined community and the Other, and loaded with negative feelings – the media narratives on women perpetrators have been read first and foremost as expressions of sense-making. For that reason, the present study makes use of the concepts of narrative characters and tropes; these concepts steer attention *back* to the construction of familiarity, to how the seemingly ungraspable is turned into immediately recognisable characterisations. As Zarzycka (2017: xiii) puts it: tropes are '[e]asily accessible, undemanding in their familiarity'; 'tropes replace the un-picturable with the recognizable, and convey the unimaginable to the outside world in a knowable form'. Tropes allude to broader discourses, norms and narratives – they 'hint at familiar stories' – and could thus reveal taken-for-granted values, assumptions and perceptions of a given society (Sandberg, 2016: 164). Tropes do not necessarily carry negative feelings or delineate otherness; in other words, tropes are not necessarily *stereotypes*. However, as will be demonstrated, also the projection of otherness can serve to make 'the female offender' appear familiar. Thus, the suggestion here is that the characterisations of women perpetrators *not only* or *necessarily* serve to construct 'a despised Other' but above all serve to construct familiarity; they *not only* or *necessarily* create sensationalism, but recognisability.

This does not mean that characters and tropes are not gendered; characterisations of women perpetrators are loaded with narratives about appropriate femininity and make visible that which fits with our conception of female deviance and reasonably obscure that which does not. These characterisations not only reproduce certain normative notions of femininity, but the repetitive circulation of stories, characters and narrative tropes ultimately serve to structure our imagination of what 'female crime' is and what and who 'female offenders' are. Media narratives on crime generally form what societies come to know about crime and gender, and how societies come to view crime and gender (Naylor, 2001a: 181). The crime stories told in the news reporting media, and the representation of the offenders in such stories, are not mere descriptions of events and the perpetrators; these stories produce realities and provide us with particular understandings of how, why and who. Ultimately, through reiteration, certain stock stories, myths or characters reproduced in the media get ingrained into our shared memory and imagination. Just as Morrissey

(2003: 9) argues: stock stories, which usually are familiar to us, are vital to our understanding as 'they provide easily identifiable and acceptable evaluations of both character and behaviour'. In her discussion on the tropes of war images, Zarzycka (2017: xviii) further notes that the *familiarity* of tropes 'has an emotional force that keeps pulling us in'. In this study, the different characterisations of women perpetrators, which are repetitively circulated in Swedish press, are thought to represent different narrative tropes. Over time and through structural repetition, in the press and elsewhere, these characterisations *become* familiar to us; yet, through their intertextuality and allusions to deep-seated notions of femininity, they may also already be familiar. The principal argument here is that the various characterisations of women perpetrators *serve* as tropes, as they turn 'the female offender' into a narrative female character we already 'know', yet not *necessarily* despise.

Material and methodological considerations

The analysis of how 'the female offender' is represented in Swedish press between 1905 and 2015 is based on a sample of, in total, 145 press reports. The material has been collected from two major Swedish newspapers – *Aftonbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter* – which both have been published throughout the period between 1905 and 2015. The first represents a tabloid newspaper, whereas the other a broadsheet newspaper; they also have different political affiliations (independent social democrat and non-aligned liberal, respectively). However, the empirical analysis is not a comparative media analysis, but focuses on the overall representation of offending women over a 110-year period. The collection of reports is restricted to January, April, July and October every 10th year, and has been collected by means of a manual search.¹ The selection criteria have been that the reports offer some sort of explanation for the criminal offence, and that they are relatively extensive; very brief news items have thus been discarded.²

The press reports cover cases where women are suspects, recently convicted or seeking appeal. The sample includes women of all ages; however, age is not necessarily reported or made relevant in the reports. All possible offences – from shoplifting to murder – have been included; of the 145 press reports in the sample, 53 concern murder (23 of those, child murder), seven concern attempted murder (four of those, attempted child murder), 10 concern assault, nine concern arson, 37 concern larceny (incl. fraud and embezzlement), while 12 concern mugging or robbery. 17 press reports in the sample concern other crimes (undefined or crime in general: eight, espionage: two, escape attempt: two, animal cruelty: one, perjury: one, abduction: one, terrorism: one, rioting: one). 120 of the press reports deal with Swedish cases, whereas 25 are reports on foreign cases.³

The different press reports have been considered to represent mini-narratives; they all constitute shorter or longer news stories, which describe and seek to make sense of the sequence of events, the characters involved and the motives behind the criminal offence. Thus, besides the concrete judgements that the reports (may) express or reflect, the analysis has been attentive to allusions or indicative words which ascribe meaning to the events that have taken place or which make sense of the given offender. Thus, in line with Sandberg's (2016: 164) definition of narrative tropes, which is more concrete in its application than as discussed above, the analysis has been attentive to 'single words or short phrases that / . . . / hint at familiar stories'.



'A despairing mother' *Dagens Nyheter* 28/1 1925 (left). '20-year-old maid stole 8.000 from family. Merely to satisfy luxury needs' *Aftonbladet* 5/7 1945 (right).

Single words or short phrases could indeed carry specific meaning when standing alone; yet, in the case of press reports, it is in the context of the overall story that these words or allusions become meaningful. Thus, there is a difference between, on the one hand, coding and counting the various references and individual facts mentioned, or, on the other, considering the story as a whole and the general sentiment that governs the story. As an example: a given offender is not necessarily represented as 'mad' simply because the report mentions that the woman in question will be mentally examined. Hence, the analysis has considered the individual stories as a whole; it has primarily concentrated on the *general* representation of the offender and the crime. Various aspects have proved relevant: descriptions of the offender and the victim(s), headings and captions, the tone of the report, the details with which the crime is described, the specific circumstances mentioned, etc. Just as single words or short phrases, or indeed images, can refer to bigger stories and dominant discourses, so can news stories as a whole or the more general depictions of women perpetrators. Thus, the *tropes* of 'the female offender' which are elaborated in the empirical analysis to various degree all allude to familiar stories of female deviance and/or stories of the special nature of women.

Naturally, the news reports are selective, and sometimes very scarce in information; most often, social class, ethnicity and other identity markers are not revealed.⁴ However, when brought forward and adding meaning to the narrative, it has been noted in the empirical analysis. Furthermore, most press reports do not include images; pictures are rare especially during the first half of the 20th century. Still, the sample of press reports include all kinds of formats: from brief news items to front-page and full-page articles, with multiple and/or big letter headings as well as pictures. When pictures are present, they have been considered an integrated part of the report's narrative. Commonly, these pictures have been considered neutral in the sense that they do not reflect a particular sentiment or add further meaning to the narrative and/or general representation of the women and/or the crime. In two instances, pictures have been considered particularly relevant; those pictures are thus described in the analysis.



'A tragic end to the love story' *Aftonbladet* 26/7 1915 (left). 'She couldn't resist his charm' *Aftonbladet* 28/7 1965 (right).

The making sense of offending women in Swedish press 1905–2015

This section will summarise the most salient female criminal characters that emerge in Swedish press over time or over periods of time between 1905 and 2015. The analysis will illustrate how these characters are made intelligible and constructed as familiar, and how stories on women perpetrators function 'in disciplining and normalising ways' (Skilbrei, 2012: 140), also when the construction of radical Otherness is less striking. The nine characterisations elaborated below often move between and beyond the categories of bad, mad and sad. Some characterisations are noticeable throughout the whole century, whereas others appear more contemporary. The characterisations are therefore presented in a loose chronological order to illustrate both the narrative continuities and the variety of media representations throughout the 110-year period.

The poor woman

An event commonly reported is mothers who have killed their children. Infanticide has been considered a typically 'female crime', as it takes place in the private sphere, 'in the dark', and is essentially linked to the female body (Bergénlöv, 2002: 281; Svensson, 2004: 150–151). Compared to previous research, it is interesting to note how infanticide and filicide are contextualised during the early 20th century; essentially, the act of killing one's own children is linked to an unfortunate and precarious situation rather than, for instance, 'maternal defects' (Barnett, 2013: 513) or 'biological malady or a medical condition' (Eastal et al., 2015: 32, 40). Thus, these crimes are not necessarily depicted as 'the tragic actions of a mad woman' (Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002:

50), but as the tragic actions of a despairing mother. Infanticide and filicide are made intelligible by phrases such as ‘an unhappy woman’ (16/4 1905), ‘the sad doing’ (11/4 1915), ‘a despairing mother’ (28/1 1925), or ‘the desperate decision’ (29/7 1925). Even as the reports describe in graphic terms how the killings have been carried out – for example, that the child has been beaten to death (21/1 1915), how the baby’s throat has been cut (28/1 1925), or how carbonised body parts have been found in the kitchen hearth (29/7 1925) – the reports nevertheless convey a sense of sadness and sympathy.⁵ For instance, one report emphasises that a 17-year-old girl – who has choked her new-born to death – was giving birth in complete solitude (11/4 1915). In another report – about a housemaid who has killed her new-born – it is explained that the murder was provoked by the enormous pain of giving birth, the thought of being a burden to her ‘master’ and the ‘shame’, which had made her miserable and desperate (29/7 1925).

Through these depictions of poverty, solitude and despair, the actions of female child-killers are not framed as individual and isolated acts of insanity or cruelty, but as a consequence of societal structures and wider social problems. The perpetrator’s economic situation is often explicitly mentioned as part of the motive or contextual circumstances (e.g. 12/4 1915; 18/4 1925; 24/4 1925b). As in a report about a mother who has been detained on suspicion of attempted murder of her 5-year-old son, which begins by asserting that there are a lot of extenuating circumstances; prior to the incident, the mother had just one Swedish krona to live on, and she had not eaten for several days (24/4 1925b). Similarly, another report describes how women are pushed into abortions (which at the time was heavily restricted) due to economic and social difficulties (28/10 1945). And when the ‘unnatural behaviour’ of parents who physically abuse their children is brought up and discussed as a social problem, it is primarily the role and responsibility of the state authorities that are foregrounded rather than the individual parents themselves (22/1 1925).

This representation of these women perpetrators – as desperate and despairing – could be thought to divest them of responsibility; as it appears, economic and social structures have essentially forced these women into criminality. Thus, the women are not represented as ‘doubly deviant’, as transgressing the boundaries of femininity, but they rather appear as helpless and vulnerable victims themselves. Rather than serving as an Other, the poor woman simply appears as *one of many*, even excusable. However, with reference to previous accounts on the representation of female child killers, one should, of course, note that stories of mental instability and potential insanity also are noticeable throughout the 20th century (e.g. 4/1 1935; 17/1 1935; 18/1 1935; 12/10 1985; 26/4 1985; 24/7 1995; 21/10 2005; 1/4 2015).

The light-fingered woman

Another offence type that has been considered typically female is shoplifting (Lacey et al., 2003: 324). In 1905, kleptomania is discussed almost as an epidemic – a pathological phenomenon – and as a female ‘speciality’; as it is explained, the big ‘shopping palaces’ – with beautiful luxury items – have incited a certain type of larceny, and made thieves out of women who normally do not steal. The phenomenon is depicted as fascinating, as a psychological enigma (5/1 1905a). In the empirical material from the 20th century, stories of kleptomania turn up sporadically. Common for these stories is the focus on temptation, weakness and/or victimisation; as it seems, certain women have such a weak character, that the temptations simply are impossible to resist. As the young woman who has stolen money from lettercards at a postal office; she is referred to as the

'misfortunate young woman', and at the time of her arrest, she was bedridden and crying (13/4 1905). Another woman is labelled the 'light-fingered housemaid' and a 'victim of kleptomania'. As it is described, she has not been able to resist the temptation of stealing precious items when confronted with the opportunity (30/10 1915). And there is the housewife who is sentenced to 2 months' imprisonment for shoplifting; the temptations in a supermarket are simply 'too strong for people with weak character', her attorney is reported to have claimed (6/10 1955).

In these stories, the light-fingered women are linked to weakness, lack of self-control, desire and vanity. As, for instance, the female gang of shoplifters that is reported to have been cracked by the police in 1955; as the report explains, the young women had been 'driven by a desire to show off in elegant clothes' (28/4 1955). In another report on a different female gang of shoplifters, the lawyer suggests that their crimes may be explained by 'woman's weakness for beautiful clothes' (29/1 1955). The light-fingered woman is generally made known through these typically feminine and thus familiar traits. The women do not appear to steal out of hardship – which means, they did not *need* to steal; hence, their actions are depicted as silly yet intriguing (see e.g. 27/7 1985). They also appear as victims of a society that is permeated by consumption, rather than wilful and strategic actors *operating* in a consumer society. As illustrated in a 1985 report on a kleptomaniac – a teacher – who now has been forced to pay taxes for the stolen goods; she is clearly depicted as a mentally unstable person, who previously has been sentenced to psychiatric confinement. She 'fell ill and transformed into a kleptomaniac', the report explains; she 'felt the compulsion'. As the idea that she had been running a commercial business and therefore is obliged to pay taxes is portrayed as absurd, she herself appears as a victim (1/10 1985).

The mystery woman

In the mid-20th century especially, a few stories of deceptive women pop up; women who are represented as *femme fatale* types, who in various ways 'use' their femininity to achieve their aims and dominate men and/or the courtroom. Above all, these stories convey a sense of mystery and fascination; and fascination is a doubled relation, Young (2010: 83) notes, 'oscillating between censure and desire'. As a true enigma, the mystery woman is to be figured out, she is an object 'to be decoded'; she comes to represent the *unknown* woman, who possesses an inherent threat (see Young, 1996: 27/31). Hence, these stories foreground the woman's character and past/present behaviour. The fascination seems to lie in the fact that these women appear to embody a 'mix' of respectable and threatening feminine traits; they are good looking and charming, yet cunning and capable of deceiving men (see Svensson, 2004: 150). This is reflected, for instance, in the story of a young woman who is accused of continuously stealing from her various employers (12/7 1935; 16/7 1935). As claimed, 'her con-artistry can hardly be described' and she has an 'astonishing ability to lead people astray'; she bursts into tears and repeatedly expresses remorse, and has 'an aura of innocence and naivety'.

Ultimately, though these women are represented as wicked, they are not necessarily stigmatised in the ways that previous research generally suggests (e.g. Jewkes, 2011: 142; Seal, 2010: 38). They are not necessarily depicted as an Other; they rather serve as illustrations of when the deceptive nature of woman comes to show. At times, they are depicted as almost impressive. As, for instance, in the 1955 case of a 40 years old immigrant woman suspected of having involved her Swedish husband in a spy affair. Her appearance in court is labelled a 'solo performance' and

she is compared with distinguished Swedish actresses. Labelled 'The Beautiful Editha', she is described as deeply fascinating – she appears theatrical, entertaining, charming, exotic, loud, a force of nature (29/4 1955). In a different example, one finds a convicted murderess on retrial in Germany; she is alternately called 'dangerous', 'all too beautiful' and 'the beautiful sinner' (28/10 1965). The report describes the jolly parties that she has hosted, how she cares for her looks, how she served the police brandy and made them believe in her innocence. The women in the audience, who are there to shame her, are described as 'fat ladies' in unfashionable and unflattering felt hats; these so-called 'hyenas' come to serve as a contrast to the fashionable, charming and elegant murderess.

Essentially, these are sexualised stories, which 'attract attention to the sexual dimensions of women and/or their violence, and away from other elements' (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2008: 8). This is, for instance,⁶ illustrated in the report of a waitress charged for perjury after she – allegedly as an act of revenge – has accused a general manager for carrying out an induced abortion (29/10 1965). Once he was convicted, she surprisingly retracted her allegations and she is branded 'a notorious liar'. The manager, she explains, had provided her with money, food and alcohol, but she denies that the two have had a sexual relationship; occasionally though, he 'spanked' her.

The passionate woman

Another recurring story when crimes of women are brought to attention is the story of obsessive passion, lack of self-control and/or lust for revenge. The passionate women, particularly salient during the first half of the 20th century, is depicted as having too strong of emotions and as unable to control them. These offenders are not necessarily portrayed as evil or cunning, neither are they ridiculed or depicted as absurd; rather, the lack of obvious condemnation make these women appear tragic more than anything else. As, for instance,⁷ in the story of a housekeeper who has poured a bottle of nitric acid onto the face of her master and then hit him with a hammer hatchet before eventually killing herself in her prison cell (26/7 1915). The report bears the headline 'A tragic end to the love story'; she had been driven by despair over the fact that the man had refused to marry her. Or as in the case of a young woman in England who is explained to have stabbed her married lover to death with a butcher's knife (6/4 1925). She had fetched the knife 'out of desperation' when told that the two could not marry, and eventually she was 'frantic with despair' once he laid dead on the ground.

Ultimately, these are stories of desire and female sexuality, which – when unleashed – seem to constitute a threat for the men being close, but also for the women themselves (as they harm also themselves). Though these women indeed appear dangerously violent and deviant, they seem familiar; essentially, these stories reiterate the idea of women as overly sensitive and highly emotional, over-reactive and irrational. The passionate woman appears hysterical. As the arsonist, who – as an act of revenge – burnt down a shed with her ex-fiancé's stored furniture, and who reportedly attempted to commit suicide twice before the police found her (28/1 1935; 29/1 1935). And 'the jealous wife', who attempted to kill her husband with a razorblade and then taking her own life. Out of desperation, it seems, as the husband wanted to get a divorce. 'I rather see you dead than you walking out on me!' she is reported to have said during a quarrel (6/10 1945).

The uncontrolled woman

Similar to the passionate woman outlined above, who is depicted as obsessive and lacking self-control, another characterisation – the wild, fierce, frenzied woman – is noticeable primarily during the second half of the 20th century. These are stories of the irrational behaviour of an impulsive and aggressive woman, of rage and uncontrolled violence, of how women lash out in unexpected ways. Compared to the depiction of the passionate woman, the sentiment dominating these reports appear less forgiving and more condemnatory. The stories clearly stigmatise the women's irrational and bizarre behaviour; they convey a sense of shock and horror. As, for instance,⁸ a 1955 report with the headline 'five witnesses: SHE HIT THE BOY WITH AN AXE!', which reveals how a 36-year-old 'wife' has been apprehended after beating a 14-year-old, leaving him unconscious (20/4 1955b). She had thrown an axe at the boy, then run out, picked it up again and hit him with it three times. The woman is labelled 'the fierce woman', and as the article explains: she is known for her violent temper and she has caused numerous disputes in the past. Or as a story in 2005 of a 'raging woman', allegedly with a history of unprovoked rage and violence, who has been apprehended on suspicion of killing a shop assistant with a pair of scissors (she later proved to be innocent) (26/10 2005). The story is structured around headlines such as 'knocked down [bus] driver', 'screamed and fought' and 'stabbing with scissors'.

The uncontrolled woman is unruly, scary and thus bad, but also, as it appears, potentially mad. Through the more or less detailed descriptions of the courses of events and/or the assumed reasons for their violent actions, the uncontrolled woman is generally depicted as a threatening Other. Typically, these stories primarily focus on describing the crime as such rather than the context or the perpetrator's personal features or traits; the stories point to the irrational and seemingly *un*-understandable. Paradoxically, the lack of context serves to make sense of these women, as they fall into the easily recognisable category of complete absurdity and madness. As the stories are presented, these women have turned furious for seemingly trivial reasons and completely lack self-control. As the childminder who is reported to have 'lost her temper' and brutally attacked a 3-year-old, after the 3-year-old peed on a new rug (13/4 1965), or the three 'furious' and 'raging' escapees who knocked down, kicked, clawed and scratched a police officer (1/7 1955). And there is the ex-fiancée, labelled 'the fierce women', who is reported to have attacked a farmer and his new girlfriend in an act of rage (22/1 1985). As explained, she could never accept that her engagement with the farmer was called off. The report gives a vivid description of how the ex-fiancée storms the house as the two watch television. She grabs an opened wine bottle and hits him in the head. The wine splashing over the room. As the farmer tries to escape, she throws ornaments and china vases after him, chasing him upstairs, forcing him to throw himself out from the balcony into a snowdrift. And the story continues; she has followed him around on dance parties, calling out for him in the loudspeaker, and spied on him on vacations.

The greedy woman

Throughout the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, stories of thieving and fraudulent women emerge recurrently. These are stories of women acting out of greed, of women who are sneaky and selfish – far from the ideal of the caring and self-sacrificing altruist. Often, they are depicted as utterly and ridiculously shameless. As, for instance,⁹ the well-insured arsonist in 1905,

who is described to have seemed 'very content' when the firemen showed up and then asked whether she would receive full insurance compensation (12/4 1905), the thief who tries to fool the police by sending a fake letter signed with the name of a deceased sailor (10/1 1945), or the daughter who calculatedly has murdered her millionaire father and who is claimed to have written a note to her boyfriend and partner in crime (who eventually reported her) stating 'Disinherited, thanks' (23/1 2015). Primarily during the 20th century, the stories of greedy women could include allusions to the perpetrators' unfeminine behaviour or unattractive appearance. As when, once again, the arsonist is said to have the appearance of a plain woman, 'slightly disabled' (5/4 1905), seemingly slow and feeble-minded (27/4 1905). Or as when a 'divorced woman' is alleged to have gambled away 'every penny' of her dirty money on horse racing (21/1 1965), or when it is said that the two mothers and housewives – who have 'taken time off house-work' and hitch-hiked around Sweden to go on grand theft tours (the police is literary 'paddling around in stolen goods') – most likely have spent most of the money on having a merry time in various pubs (21/10 1965). Similar insinuations largely disappear over time.

Compared to the light-fingered woman, the greedy woman is hardly depicted as a victim; generally, these characters are portrayed as organised, enterprising, calculating, deceitful, at times utterly ruthless and cruel (e.g. 26/7 1905; 29/7 1945; 9/10 2015), at times astonishingly successful in their crimes (e.g. 1/10 1975; 13/10 2005). Typically, the greedy woman has put a lot of people at risk, or has hurt people that are utterly innocent and vulnerable; as the arsonists who have jeopardised the lives of other tenants or hotel guests (27/4 1905; 22/4 1925; 11/1 1975), the baby farmer who has neglected other women's children (26/7 1905), or the woman who stole from a dying woman in a poorhouse (27/4 1945a). Or, as in 2015, the mother who scammed hundreds of people online (25/4 2015), and the 'false nurses' who tricked '93-year-olds' into believing that they needed to be vaccinated against a 'refugee virus', just to get into their apartments (9/10 2015). Although not necessarily depicted as an absolute Other, the greedy woman is commonly described with a tone of contempt.

The vile woman

Throughout the 20th century, stories of the 'super bad' female offender occasionally emerge. These are stories of brutality and indifference, of monstrous crimes, structured around headlines such as 'the gruesome murder' and 'two women's terrible crime' (10/1 1905), 'she came to the relatives with fruit drink, cookies and rat poison' (6/7 1965), or 'the murder weapon broke' and 'licked up the blood' (21/4 2005). The murders or attempted murders could be described as a result of the woman's 'sick imagination' (24/4 1925a), or as being 'executed in a cold-blooded and ruthless manner' (8/4 1995). Although these cases are often less sensational than the cases frequently discussed in previous research, these stories regularly – to various degree – serve to demonise and/or masculinise the perpetrators (see Brennan and Vandenberg, 2009: 145; Eastal et al., 2015: 36); seemingly unfeminine or dangerous feminine traits are repeatedly foregrounded to 'explain' the crimes and/or reinforce the impression of horror and abnormality. She could be sexual and deceitful, projecting a decent and attractive image while inherently hateful, merciless and cruel. As, for instance, in the case of a mother and a daughter who have killed their employer, a crofter, and are said to have had a good reputation in the area. The mother kept the house neat and tidy, and the daughter was proper and attractive. However, as the reports suggest, they had

both been 'hard' on the crofter (21/1 1905a; 21/1 1905b) and the daughter was tough-minded and aloof (10/1 1905). Or, as in the case of a housemaid suspected of having killed a number of children that she's been guarding (29/4 1925; see also 24/4 1925a). Numerous witnesses describe her character and her 'peculiar traits'. Her former master has said that she was unreliable and dishonest, and she had made his son so terrified that the boy started to stammer. Another boy had been locked up in the kitchen, and ultimately became malnourished due to the lack of food, whilst the housemaid brought male acquaintances home.

The vile woman could also be depicted as a plain beast, stripped of all femininity and/or sexuality. As, for instance, in the well-reported Danish case of an adoptive mother accused of having beaten three of her nine adopted children to death. The reports suggest that she has completely dominated her family and husband (e.g. 31/7 1975); while she is described to be 'a large, heavy woman, almost fat' (19/1 1975), or 'big and strong' (14/1 1975), the husband is described as terrified (e.g. 14/1 1975) and 'small, slender, feeble and withdrawn' (19/1 1975). Or as in the case of a woman charged with stabbing a fellow woman to death (21/4 2005). A large picture displays her in full figure; she is shown to have uncombed hair, being slightly overweight, wearing a loose fit tracksuit and bath slippers seemingly too big. The caption says 'TOTALLY INDIFFERENT'; when police arrived at the scene, the murderess was standing on the balcony, smoking a cigarette, voicing concern for her two *dogs*. This was her major concern, a police officer explains.

In these stories, the vile woman is linked to a lack of empathy rather than a lack of self-control (cf. the uncontrolled woman); the women are projected as ruthless, merciless, calculating, systematically cruel, cold-hearted, dominant and calm. For instance,¹⁰ an accused murderess in a German case – 'a shy housewife' – is said to be 'loathing the whole world' (6/7 1965). In another Swedish case, a woman of Polish heritage, who has pleaded guilty of murdering a fellow woman, is described as 'scarily unconcerned' (27/1 1955a) while unrestrainedly enjoying the attention she gets in court (28/1 1955b). These vile women are portrayed as (unwomanly) uncaring to those they are supposed to care for: to their master, relatives, husband – to fellow women, children in their care or even to the humankind in general (as opposed to dogs). As an absolute Other (Greer and Jewkes, 2005), the vile woman appears strange yet as a familiar character; she has overstepped every boundary of decency and femininity. This becomes particularly clear in the case of a woman accused of murder of her husband, son and mother (5/7 1925; 15/7 1925). The reports note that she repeatedly interrupted the witnesses, that she has (pretended to have) forgotten the birth dates of her children, that the husband was submissive and repressed, that she has been seemingly unaffected by the death of her husband and that she appears remarkably calm – too calm. She has made attempts to cry, without success; instead, she almost burst into laughter.

The foolish woman

From the 1950s onwards, a different character becomes noticeable. Stories of devoted and seemingly foolish women now reoccur, with headlines such as 'driven by love for the dynamiter' (20/4 1955a), 'she couldn't resist his charm' (28/7 1965), 'she robbed for love (26/10 1995), or 'the sportswoman was in love – therefore she helped the sexual murderer escape' (8/4 2005). These are stories about women who have entered the male and masculine arena of 'public' crimes, and therefore have disrupted the gendered notion of female crime; women are simply not expected to rob banks, engage in armed robbery or help sex murderers escape from prison. Hence, as it

seems, the criminal offences need to be explained by the 'typically' female and by familiar representations of women, mothers and girlfriends; essentially, the crimes of the foolish woman are made intelligible through allusions to romantic desire, naivety, silliness and submissiveness. Her crimes are moreover depicted as utterly absurd, or as a mystery – as character and behaviour do not appear to add up. As for instance in the 1955 report of a young woman, allegedly 'double-natured'; although she is religious, gifted and pretty, even a well-read poetry-lover (and thus appears 'pure' and womanlike), she has taken part in a heist (21/4 1955a; 21/4 1955b). By no means a gangster type, the report declares; she is small and slender, educated and it is in her nature to help those in need. She is enthusiastic about car engines, and she has been in love before; this time she fell for a 'dynamiter' and dreamt of a happy life together with him.

As these women's actions so clearly deviate from the idea of female helplessness and peacefulness (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2008: 7), they ironically – it seems – have to be reconstructed as helpless and (essentially) peaceful. Importantly, the foolish woman does not appear as a 'real' criminal and her crimes are thus often portrayed as amateurish, humorous and excusable (see Berrington and Honkatukia, 2002: 55; Seal, 2010: 5; Svensson 2004: 158). The news reports reflect pity – but also mockery. This becomes particularly striking in a 1985 story of how a wife and mother of three – an artist and aid worker – has carried out a series of armed robberies (25/1 1985). She is presented as a loving mother; for instance, a large image shows the bank-robbing woman from behind, looking out a prison window while holding a toddler in her arms. After a failed attempt to relocate with her family to South America, she had to travel back to Sweden on her own to raise money for plane tickets for her family. Driven by a desperate wish to reunite with her family, she disguised herself with a wig, trench coat and glasses and bought herself a toy gun. As the heading goes: 'My only chance was to become a bank robber'. As a true amateur, she (tragicomically) takes off her glasses after the fourth and last robbery, and as the snow falls she can barely see and finds herself rambling around the neighbourhood before eventually getting arrested. The mockery tone is also striking in a 1995 story of another bank-robbing mother of three (4/10 1995). The report suggests that many thought the woman turned criminal out of desperation, as she was debt-ridden and unemployed, yet as it turned out: she was in love. 'Love is blind', as the chief prosecutor is quoted saying. Her boyfriend wanted a car, and as she did not have the money, he suggested she rob a bank. And so she did. At her first attempt she wears a 'ladies sock' over her head and the bank refuses to let her in. The second time, she shows up with an accomplice, unmasked and 'waves' with an air gun, whilst being recorded on CCTV. A subsequent report describes her as 'still enamoured, possibly in love', while it is reported that the boyfriend has uttered in court that he never loved her (26/10 1995). As the report clarifies, her life is now shattered to pieces.¹¹

As depicted in these stories, female sexuality is not only a potential threat to men, but to women themselves. Though the foolish woman is not projected as an Other – as, essentially, these women could be *any* woman – their behaviour is clearly ridiculed and shamed. Essentially, the foolish woman is depicted as a victim of her own feelings and (silly) desires, and these stories thus point to the irrational yet seemingly understandable. As a 1965 story could illustrate: a 'young well-behaved' girl has helped a man she barely knows steal a large amount of money from the bank where she works (28/7 1965). As the interviewed police inspector makes out: love has completely distorted her head. The report elaborately describes the rumours of this immensely charming 'stranger'; his looks and appearance, his 'interesting accent', his 'cupid's bow lips', and his

twisted moustache. Her crime, the report declares, was her great love for this man and the 'stupidity' that came with it.

The victim woman

Lastly, a few words on the indeed very familiar story of women perpetrators who have experienced abuse and/or mental pressure and stress. The victim woman is widely discussed in previous research (e.g. Easta et al., 2015: 33; Morrissey, 2003: 25; Naylor, 2001a: 188), usually in relation to spousal murder and battered woman. The victim woman emerges in Swedish press primarily during the second half of the 20th century; she emerges in stories that concern various offence types – from parricide, filicide and child abuse to fraud or theft. Although the general tone could be condemnatory and the crimes could be depicted as deplorable and shocking, it is – as in the case of the poor woman – the contextual circumstances that dominate these stories, and the women themselves do not appear as strategic actors and thus despicable, but as women (or girls) trapped in an overwhelming situation or caught up in an asymmetric relationship. These stories foreground (feminine) helplessness, vulnerability or weakness, desperation and despair, and the representations move primarily between 'mad' and 'sad'. The offences are given meaning through phrases such as 'broken-down' (27/4 1945b; 31/1 1985a), 'deepest despair' (31/1 1985b), 'a poor home' (21/7 1955) and 'troubled childhood' (17/1 1995a; 10/7 1995) or 'moronic and infantile mind' (21/10 1955), 'spur of the moment' (31/1 1985a) and 'blackout' (17/1 1995a). Essentially, the victim woman has found herself in a distressed situation; either she is under the influence of her son (3/7 1955; 21/7 1955; 21/10 1955), she is haunted by an abusive husband (27/4 1945b), she has been sexually assaulted by her father (31/1 1985a; 31/1 1985b), or she just cannot cope with the societal expectations of being an achieving woman, mother and wife (17/1 1995a).¹²

Contingency and continuity

As the empirical study has sought to illustrate, there is generally a great variation in how lawbreaking women are depicted in Swedish press between 1905 and 2015. The narrative of 'the female offender' is far from consistent; the representation of women's involvement in crime varies across time, across different offence types and across different circumstances. The depictions are not uniform but complex; the bad, mad, sad dimensions are noticeable in the characterisations outlined above, yet the analysis complicates the idea of distinct and separate representations. Whereas the poor and the victim woman clearly are made intelligible by foregrounding the sad and mitigating circumstances, and the vile woman is depicted as unquestionably bad, most other characterisations move *between* or *beyond* the categories of bad, mad and sad. Individual news reports could, of course, also move between different familiar characterisations, as – for instance – the 'con woman' in 1945 who initially is depicted as greedy and (sexually) shameless but ultimately portrayed as a likely victim herself (30/4 1945). As the empirical study has demonstrated, certain female characterisations are salient in certain periods and appear more contemporary, while others are noticeable throughout the whole period of 110 years (see Figure 1).

Essentially, the analysis has illustrated that there is a greater variety in 'available' representations of offending women than previous research generally has indicated, which suggests that the representation of 'the female offender' is always contingent, rather than universal and fixed. At

	1905	1915	1925	1935	1945	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995	2005	2015
The poor	—	—	—		—							
The light-fingered	—	—				—			—			
The mystery				—		—	—					
The passionate		—	—	—	—	—	—					
The uncontrolled					—	—	—		—	—	—	
The greedy	—		—		—		—	—			—	—
The vile	—		—			—	—	—		—	—	
The foolish						—	—		—	—	—	
The victim					—	—		—	—	—		

Figure 1. Tropes and year in which they appear in the press material.

the same time, the study has uncovered how characterisations continuously allude to familiar representations of femininity or female deviance. Hence, though one can note a variety of representations, there are still certain narrative themes that are foregrounded to put the behaviour of deviant women into context. For instance, the themes of sexuality, love, bodily appearance and traditional family roles (as in mother, wife, girlfriend) often return and give meaning to the characters. Certain ‘female’ qualities also become highly visible and render the female offender ‘familiar’; often the tropes hint at familiar stories of the dark side of woman – and highlight cunningness, (dangerous and sexual) desire, vanity, irrationality, loss of self-control – or they lean towards the notion of non-agency, feminine weakness, helplessness and silliness.

Conclusion

When moving away from mega-cases and cases of extreme deviance, it becomes rather clear that lawbreaking women are not necessarily constructed as social enemy figures, which serve to mark the boundaries of a (feminine) community’s selfhood. For sure – as an abstract – ‘the criminal’ is always already an Other (Young, 1996); and ‘the female offender’ challenges our shared expectations of female behaviour. Yet, as the empirical study has demonstrated, it is not that the female offender by default becomes a signifier of all that is wicked, socially unacceptable and/or unfeminine (cf. Chancer, 2014: 599; Tsoukala, 2009: 34). Rather, when bringing attention to more conventional and everyday cases, what comes to light is the aspect of sense-making. The narrative continuities which make sense of the characters outlined above – for instance, the themes of sexuality, love, appearance or family roles – not necessarily serve to renounce the women behind the crimes; for instance, markers such as ‘mother’ and ‘wife’ do not always signal ‘bad mother’ or ‘bad wife’, but also serve to provide a context which makes female crime intelligible. Hence, the paper has not only shed light on narrative continuities and the contingent

nature of the representation of offending women (across time and offence types), but also opened up for a different reading of the social and cultural meaning of gendered representations. Essentially, the characterisations of women perpetrators in Swedish press make the incomprehensible comprehensible, they make the unknown known and they make the unexpected seem expected. In other words, the narrative tropes make sense of that which is already (considered) sensational; they make the women who transgress the law appear familiar, and thus more intelligible (see also Barnett, 2006: 414). By making visible that which fits with our conception of female deviance and through allusions to deep-seated notions of femininity, the characterisations outlined above – the different shades of bad, mad, sad and beyond – in various ways make female violence and crime appear less of a disruption. Of course, the female offender is not uncommonly depicted as sexually threatening or a despised Other; yet, in those instances, the female offender becomes a *familiar* Other. In the main, this is what the paper wishes to bring forward: that – through allusions to traditional representations of female deviance and/or the ‘typically’ female – the characterisations in Swedish press primarily serve to make the women and their crimes appear familiar; thus, the sense-making and meaning-making in the press arguably function in disciplining and normalising ways, irrespective of whether projections of otherness are present or not.

Moving forward, to explore the issue of contingency and continuity further, and to avoid the reproduction of simplifications, future research would be well served by critically examining a wide spectrum of crime types and by steering attention away from the most spectacular or notorious cases. As this study has shown, an analysis that covers a long period of time and takes various offence types into account opens up for a (more) nuanced understanding of how offending women are represented, beyond the seemingly ‘fixed’ so-called standard narratives or stereotypes.

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Notes

1. The study presented in this article represents a qualitative analysis of a smaller sample of press reports (1905–2015) drawn from a larger data collection, which Estrada et al. (2019) have examined quantitatively in a comparative study on press reports on offending women and men respectively. The present study is part of a larger project on the female offender as a social problem in a Swedish historical context, a project that for example includes previous publications on crime statistics and the declining gender gap (Estrada et al., 2016).
2. In case of multiple press reports on the same case, those press reports most explicitly describing the offender and her motives have been included.
3. News reports on foreign cases: France (5/1 1905b; 5/1 1925; 11/1 2015), Switzerland (20/7 1925; 29/7 1945) England (6/4 1925; 13/7 1955; 27/4 1975), Germany (6/7 1965; 28/10 1965), Austria (14/1 1965); Portugal (2/7 1965); Denmark (14/1 1975; 19/1 1975; 20/1 1975; 31/7 1975), Finland (12/10 1985; 21/10 1985), USA (13/7 1975; 15/7 1975; 30/7 1975; 5/1 1995c; 10/7 1995; 24/7 1995; 21/10 2005).
4. For instance, the sample includes only six news reports in total (which covers three separate Swedish cases) that mentions that the offender is of foreign heritage or an immigrant (27/1 1955a; 27/1 1955b; 28/1 1955a; 28/1 1955b; 29/4 1955; 29/1 1975). In an absolute majority of the cases, the news reports do not explicitly mention the ethnicity, nationality or religious beliefs of the women.
5. See for example, Kaspersson (2003) on how Swedish courts in the first half of the 20th century, in contrast to earlier, specifically asked for the motive behind the woman's actions, and that scarcity, shame and psychological explanations often were seen as mitigating circumstances. See also Carrabine (2018: 18) on the turn to 'New Journalism' in the latter half of the 19th century and the introduction of 'human interest' stories to – for instance – incite sympathy for the poor. Cf. also Cavaglion (2008: 275) on stories of socioeconomic distress in contemporary Israeli cases.
6. See also 14/1 1965.
7. See also 13/7 1955; 2/7 1965.
8. See also 11/7 1945; 20/7 1945; 12/7 1965; 17/1 1995c.
9. See also 23/1 1945; 5/7 1945; 7/1 1965; 27/1 1965b.
10. See also 20/7 1925; 9/1 2005; 5/1 2005.
11. See also 16/1 1965; 27/1 1965a.
12. See also 29/1 1975; 13/7 1975; 5/1 1995b; 17/1 1995b.

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Appendix

Full list of collected press reports and selected references

(DN) *Dagens nyheter* (AB) *Aftonbladet* Selected reference (in running text or endnotes)*

5/1 1905a. DN, *En frestelsens organisation**

5/1 1905b. DN, *Affären Syveton*

10/1 1905. DN, *Det ruskiga mordet i Bjuråker. Två kvinnors hemska brott**

21/1 1905a. AB, *Bjuråkersmordet**

21/1 1905b. DN, *Bjuråkersmordet. De skyldiga inför rätta**

5/4 1905. DN, *Mordbrandsanstifterskan å Östermalm**

12/4 1905. DN, *Mordbranden vid Grefturegatan. Polisens utredning**

13/4 1905. DN, *Tjänsteflicka som stjal från posten**

16/4 1905. DN, *En olycklig kvinna. Angaf sig själf för barnamord**

22/4 1905. DN, *Barnamord*

23/4 1905. AB, *Djurplågeriet å Glimmingehus*

27/4 1905. AB, *Eldsvådan på Östermalm**

26/7 1905. AB, *Änglamakeriet i skärgården. Fru Norbergs föregående verksamhet**

14/10 1905. DN, *Feminism bland stråtröfvare*

24/10 1905. DN, *Spångadramats hjältinnor / Nytt uppslag i Spångadramat?*

21/1 1915. DN, *Barnamord i ett anfall av vansinne**

12/4 1915. AB, *Upprörande mord- och självmordsdrama. Arbetarehustru tar sitt liv och ett 3-årigt barns liv**

11/4 1915. DN, *För barnamord. . . **

26/7 1915. AB, *Ett tragiskt slut på kärlekshistorien**

9/10 1915. AB, *Den för stöld häktade danskan ej fullt tillräknelig?*

10/10 1915. DN, *Den nyligen i Kristiania för dråp dömd. . .*

30/10 1915. DN, *24-årig tjänsteflicka offer för kleptomani**

5/1 1925. AB, *Medium häktat för stöld*

22/1 1925. AB, *När föräldrar misshandla sina barn**

28/1 1925. DN, *En förtvivlad mor**

6/4 1925. DN, *21-årig kvinna dömd till döden för mord**

18/4 1925. DN, *Kvinna häktad för mordförsök mot sitt barn**

22/4 1925. DN, *Städerska häktad för mordbrand i Umeåhotell**

- 24/4 1925a. DN, *Lexbymörderskan rannsakas i dag**
 24/4 1925b. DN, *Den häktade hustrun har mycket till sitt försvar**
 29/4 1925. AB, *Barnamörderskan minnes intet**
 5/7 1925. AB, *Mordaffären i Skåne**
 15/7 1925. DN, *Fru Lundh nekar trots graverande vittnesuppgifter**
 20/7 1925. AB, *En onaturlig moder**
 29/7 1925. AB, *Dödad barnet i hastigt mod*
 4/1 1935. DN, *Dödade sin dotter i sinnesförvirring**
 17/1 1935. AB, *Barnamörderskans sinnessillstånd undersökes**
 18/1 1935. DN, *Barnamörderskan sinnesundersökes**
 28/1 1935. AB, *Kvinnlig kand. häktad för mordbrand**
 29/1 1935. DN, *Kvinnlig kandidat sökte ej släcka**
 2/4 1935. AB, *740.000 kr. borta. Polisen utreder*
 12/7 1935. AB, *Ung flicka med otrolig duperingsförmåga**
 16/7 1935. AB, *Flickan grät inför domstol**
 18/7 1935. DN, *16-årig mordbrännerska ej tillräknelig*
 30/10 1935. AB, *18-åringen hämnades med mordbrand*
 10/1 1945. AB, *Skrev brev för att vilseleda polisen**
 12/1 1945. AB, *Kvinnan i spionaffären sålde kriskort till Lönnegren*
 23/1 1945. AB, *Flickor plockade män på mycket pengar**
 6/4 1945. AB, *Söders värsta postbov 18-årig flicka*
 27/4 1945a. AB, *Bestal döende kvinna på hennes besparingar**
 27/4 1945b. AB, *Norska blev tjuv efter misslyckat äktenskap**
 30/4 1945. AB, *'Fröken Karlsson' svek bergsprängares lyckodrom**
 5/7 1945. AB, *20-årigt hembiträde stal 8.000 av familjen. Blott för att tillfredsställa lyxbehov**
 11/7 1945. DN, *60-åring rånad av hushållerska**
 20/7 1945. DN, *Kvinna förövade Torsåkersrånet**
 29/7 1945. AB, *Ung fru mördade svärföräldrar och jungfru?**
 6/10 1945. DN, *Svartsjuk fru gav maken gift, sökte döda honom med rakblad**
 28/10 1945. AB, *Staten och abortfrågan**
 27/1 1955a. DN, *Mörderskan helt oberörd inför rätta**
 27/1 1955b. AB, *Mörderskan kom i knallblått siden och clips*
 28/1 1955a. DN, *Filmen visade att polskan ensam kan ha utfört mordet*
 28/1 1955b. AB, *Är detta verkligen nödvändigt? Mord-rättegången allt mera makaber**
 29/1 1955. DN, *Mildare straff för tjuvjuntan**
 5/4 1955. AB, *Brobydom: Tjänstefel. Åtalet för dråp ogillades*
 6/4 1955. DN, *Brobykvinnan friad från dråp, får 18 månader för tjänstefel*
 20/4 1955a. AB, *Flicka planlade 60.000-kronorskupp. Drevs av kärlek till dynamitard**
 20/4 1955b. AB, *5 vittnen: Hon slog pojken med yxa!**
 21/4 1955a. AB, *SF-flicka drömde om lycka med dynamitarden**
 21/4 1955b. DN, *Kupp flickan - dubbelnatur - Ferlinexpert**
 28/4 1955. DN, *20-åringar var butiksråttor. Raider i hela Mellan-Sverige**
 29/4 1955. AB, *Edithas utbrott stor enmansteater**
 1/7 1955. AB, *3 unga rymmerskor överföll Skåne-polis**

- 3/7 1955. DN, *Fantasifigur skojarhjälp. Mor 'lånade upp' 35.000 åt sonen**
- 6/7 1955. AB, *Bruten förlovning blev strafflindring*
- 13/7 1955. AB, *Nerverna svek till slut dödsdömda Ruth Ellis / Ruth Ellis röjde vapenmannen**
- 21/7 1955. DN, *Tragisk moderskärlek ledde till bedrägeri**
- 6/10 1955. AB, *Fru snattade i snabbköp – 2 mån**
- 21/10 1955. DN, *Ovillkorligt straff yrkas mot 70-åring i skojar mål**
- 7/1 1965. DN, *Unga svenskor fast - Bestal dansk sjöman**
- 14/1 1965. AB, *Skön östspion jagas. Var det på Sverige eller Schweiz hon spionerade?**
- 16/1 1965. DN, *Flicka lockbete vid rån - Man muddrades på 400**
- 21/1 1965. AB, *Kvinna förfalskade Bankböcker för 52 000**
- 27/1 1965a. AB, *Älskarinnan fick betala Cadillac och tre flygplan**
- 27/1 1965b. AB, *Hon lät postgirot betala hennes löpande utgifter**
- 1/4 1965. DN, *Häktade kvinnan slapp intagning på arbetsanstalt*
- 11/4 1965. AB, *Anklagas för snatteri. När köptes handskarna?*
- 13/4 1965. AB, *3-åring brutalt misshandlad av dagmamman**
- 30/4 1965. AB, *Emancipationen får skulden för ökad kvinnobrottslighet*
- 2/7 1965. AB, *Hon stal ett barn för att få tillbaka sin fästman**
- 6/7 1965. AB, *Hon kom till släkten med saft, kakor och - råttgift**
- 12/7 1965. DN, *Rånarflicka slog ner 60-åring med gatsten**
- 24/7 1965. AB, *Ung präst mördad av medelålders kvinna*
- 28/7 1965. AB, *Hon kunde inte motstå hans charm**
- 21/10 1965. AB, *Mammor liftade till storkupper**
- 28/10 1965. AB, *Minns ni Wera Brühne. Ska hon få upprättelse?**
- 29/10 1965. AB, *Kvinna ljög om illegal abort - hotas av åtta års fängelse**
- 11/1 1975. DN, *Fängelsestraff för mordbrand**
- 14/1 1975. AB, *Vad hände bakom de höga murarna?**
- 19/1 1975. DN, *Danske överläkarens status skyddade mot alla misstankar / Barnmisshandlaren själv ett offer**
- 20/1 1975. DN, *17-åringen vittnar: 'Det var frun som slog oss'*
- 29/1 1975. AB, *Åttabarnsmamman får inte arbeta – därför tvingas hon snatta. Nu döms Maria, 41 till fängelse**
- 11/4 1975. AB, *Tji kärlek – hon stal hans byxor*
- 27/4 1975. AB, *700 engelska barn dödas varje år av sina föräldrar*
- 13/7 1975. AB, *Ska hon behöva dö – för att hon inte ville bli våldtagen?**
- 15/7 1975. DN, *Rättegången handlar inte bara om mordet*
- 30/7 1975. DN, *'Jag dödade en vit man i självförsvar'*
- 31/7 1975. AB, *'Jag kunde inte hindra min fru från att slå barnen'**
- 1/10 1975. AB, *Försvunna flickan gjorde jättekupp**
- 22/1 1985. AB, *Ex-fästmän kom instormande och drämde till med en vinflaska**
- 25/1 1985. AB, *'Min enda chans var att bli bankrånare'**
- 31/1 1985a. AB, *Hur kunde det hända? 14-åringen sköt sina föräldrar i förtvivlan**
- 31/1 1985b. DN, *Dottern dödade föräldrarna. Incest orsak till dådet**
- 26/4 1985. AB, *Försökte mamman dränka sin son?**
- 27/7 1985. AB, *Snattade kläder för 7000 kronor**

- 1/10 1985. AB, *Kleptomän tvingas skatta för stöldgodset**
12/10 1985. DN, *Moder dränkte sina barn**
21/10 1985. DN, *Dömd till livstid utan bevis*
5/1 1995a. AB, *'Våldtagna pojkar måste söka hjälp'*
5/1 1995b. AB, *Psykiater: Kvinnors övergrepp är värre än mäns**
5/1 1995c. AB, *Miss dömd för mordmiss*
17/1 1995a. AB, *Mamman körde sin 2-åring i torktummlaren**
17/1 1995b. AB, *Mammavåldet ökar**
17/1 1995c. AB, *Mamma dödade pappa inför sonens ögon**
8/4 1995. AB, *Sköterskan fick livstid**
10/7 1995. AB, *Han vill få exfrun dömd till döden**
24/7 1995. AB, *Dödstraff eller livstid – idag får hon svaret**
4/10 1995. AB, *Hon blev rånare – för kärleks skull**
25/10 1995. DN, *De glömda brottsoffren*
26/10 1995. AB, *Hon rånade för kärleken**
5/1 2005. AB, *32-åring gripen för babymord**
9/1 2005. DN, *Fördomsfulla femininister ser våld som något manligt**
27/1 2005. DN, *'Kvinnor lika våldsbenägna som män i parförhållanden'*
8/4 2005. AB, *Idrottskvinnan var kär – därför hjälpte hon sexmördaren att fly**
21/4 2005. AB, *Kolla nu när din kompis dör**
13/10 2005. AB, *Spelade psyksjuk - lurade till sig 1,2 milj**
21/10 2005. AB, *Mördade sina tre små barn**
26/10 2005. AB, *En kvinna gripen för tygmordet**
11/1 2015. AB, *Kan ha flytt till Syrien*
23/1 2015. AB, *Hon blir utan arv**
1/4 2015. AB, *Försökte döda sitt eget barn**
25/4 2015. AB, *Blåste massor på säljsajterna**
4/7 2015. AB, *Högg exsambon – döms till fängelse*
15/7 2015. DN, *'Sluta låtsas att mödrars övergrepp inte finns'*
9/10 2015. AB, *Falska sköterskor lurade 93-åringar**
14/10 2015. DN, *Vänsterextremister nekar till upploppet*