CRIME AND THE MEDIA

The sensational case of the murder of Meredith Kercher. An overview.

presented by
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Over the last three decades the relationships between crime and the media and between criminal facts and the media representation of them have been comprehensively researched by a huge number of scholars and professionals. This dissertation aims to explore the relationships between the media and crime by providing a critical examination of one of the biggest crime stories that occurred in Italy, the case of the murder of British student, Meredith Kercher, in 2007.

Chapter one will illustrate the facts and give the reader an idea of the background issue and the research task. Chapter two and chapter three will focus on the questions of the media representations of crime and the public’s perception of it.
FOREWORD

- a holy day -

Candle flames glow beside a steamy little window. Jack O’Lantern stares at passers-by with his usual grin. Excited children, all dressed up, scream loud and laugh along the street, it is their first year to go trick-or-treating around the neighbourhood. Just as thrilled - if not more - as little kids seem grown-ups on Halloween. Everyone gets dressed up on that night. Everyone is eager to party and hang out with their friends. Tonight Meredith has chosen to be the darkest and most frightening vampire ever. She has put on a long black cloak and a choker high around her neck, tied her hair up at the back of her head and smeared red lipstick all around her mouth as fake blood. This is going to be one of the most exciting moments for her since she arrived in Italy three months ago. During the entire night she snaps photos of their friends, all wearing fancy and spooky costumes. She wants to keep a beautiful memory of this special Halloween night spent away from home. All those pictures will surely be posted on her Facebook page tomorrow, so as to share with her friends and her family the amazing time she is having abroad. Besides, very soon she will be looking at those same pictures and laughing along with her parents John and Arline, her sister Stephanie and brothers Lyle and John, as in two days it will be Arline’s birthday and Meredith has already bought a plane ticket to London. It will be a great surprise. She is flying back home with a bag full of boxes of chocolates, one of the specialities of the Italian hilltop town of Perugia, and her mother surely does not expect her to come home for her birthday.
After the long and amusing night out on Halloween, Meredith decides that she needs an early night the day after. She watches a DVD and has a pizza at some friends’ house, then she walks home, tired from the previous night, but happy. Nice people to hang out with, her favourite Italian food and one of those soppy and touching movies she has always enjoyed watching because they make her sob and smile. While thinking of all this and flicking once again through the funny pictures she took at the Halloween party the night before Meredith smiles and feels good on the day of November 01, 2007, a public holiday in Italy, the day of Ognissanti, All Saint’s Day.
Perugia, morta studentessa inglese uccisa in casa con un taglio alla gola*1
(La Repubblica, 02.11.2007).

Studentessa inglese sgozzata in casa²
(Corriere della Sera, 02.11.2007).

Mystery after British student is found with her throat cut
(Owen and Foster in The Times, 03.11.2007).

Police hunt killer after British student is found butchered and part-naked in Italy
(Pisa, Hale and Koster in Daily Mail, 03.11.2007).

*All the translations from Italian into English are by the author.
1 Perugia, British student found dead in her flat with her throat cut.
2 British student found with her throat slashed at home
Giallo nella cittadina umbra, investigatori al lavoro per far luce sulla vicenda
Il corpo della ragazza scoperto dalla polizia postale che indagava su un cellulare

Perugia, morta studentessa inglese uccisa in casa con un taglio alla gola

PERUGIA - E' avvolta nel mistero la morte di Meredith Kercher, una studentessa inglese di 22 anni, trovata morta in un'abitazione a poche centinaia di metri dal centro storico di Perugia con una profonda ferita alla gola. Gli investigatori non escludono alcuna ipotesi. La pista privilegiata è che la ragazza sia stata uccisa da qualcuno poi fuggito. E' stata trovata infatti nella sua camera con la porta chiusa a chiave. Era sul letto, coperta da un piumone. Con la maglietta alzata e il seno scoperto, gli altri indumenti indosso.

La studentessa era arrivata a Perugia nell'agosto scorso nell'ambito del programma Erasmus e frequentava l'Università italiana. Viveva in una palazzina con intorno una sorta di giardino che finisce in una scarpata, con una strada piuttosto trafficata sull'altro lato. Con la giovane abitavano altre due studentesse universitarie italiane e una statunitense. Dagli accertamenti della polizia è emerso che nessuna ha passato la scorsa notte in casa.

A trovare il corpo della straniera sono stati, intorno alle 13, gli agenti della polizia postale. Il telefonino della giovane era stato recuperato nel giardino di una casa poco distante ed è stato proprio il cellulare a portare gli investigatori nell'appartamento. In mattinata infatti, alla Questura di Perugia una persona, sembra un'anziana, aveva denunciato di aver ricevuto ieri sera una telefonata di minaccia. La stessa, poi, ha riferito di aver trovato nel giardino della sua abitazione il telefonino.

Nella palazzina la polizia postale ha trovato due coinquiline della straniera appena rientrate che sembra non si fossero accorte di niente. Gli agenti hanno notato alcune tracce di sangue in bagno e quindi individuato il corpo della giovane.

La squadra mobile di Perugia - diretta dal Marco Chiacchera - e la polizia scientifica della Questura hanno avviato le indagini. Sembra che tracce di sangue siano state trovate sulla finestra rotta e su un fazzoletto vicino a una ringhiera che delimita la strada sovrastante, oltre che nella camera della vittima. Nessun segno di effrazione evidente è stato invece individuato sulla porta d'ingresso. In serata è comunque giunta da Roma una squadra Ert, Esperti in rilevo tracce, della polizia per approfondire gli accertamenti ancora in corso.

Gli investigatori - coordinati dal sostituto procuratore Giuliano Mignini - stanno cercando di ricostruire le ultime ore della studentessa. Pare sia stata vista viva per l'ultima volta nel pomeriggio di giovedì. Non è chiaro come abbia trascorso le ore successive e se abbia incontrato qualcuno.
Police hunt killer after British student is found butchered and part-naked in Italy

By NICK PISA, BETH HALE and OLINKA KOSTER

Police in Italy were today picking up vital clues in their hunt for a killer who slashed the throat of a British student murdered on a study year abroad.

Former public school girl Meredith Kercher was discovered semi-naked in a pool of blood hours after she had left a party.

A mattress or duvet had been used to conceal the body of the 21-year-old postgraduate exchange student.

Detectives were looking for the murder weapon, possibly a knife or a screwdriver, Italian agency Ansa reported.

The brown-eyed brunette was found by police yesterday afternoon in the house she shared with three other female students close to the centre of the picturesque city of Perugia.

The door to her bedroom had been locked from the inside.

Miss Kercher, who may have been dating an Italian man, had been in the Umbrian city for only three months after completing her undergraduate degree course at Leeds University.

She had been to a party with friends on Thursday night at the University for Foreigners, which specialises in Italian language courses for overseas students.

A day earlier she had posted a string of photographs of herself in Halloween costume on the social networking website Facebook.

The photographs show the smiling student in high spirits posing with friends, including several young men.

Italian TV news said that the victim had recently been seeing an Italian man from the Puglia region.

Bloodstained pieces of paper were found near her body but her computer and other items were untouched.

Police have apparently ruled out theft as a motive. Meredith's father, John, said last night he was flying out “as soon as possible”.

Reports said he made desperate attempts to contact his daughter on her mobile after hearing a British student was dead in Italy.

He told the Daily Mirror: “I rang Meredith to make sure she was safe but her phone was turned off. I must have tried 15 to 20 times.”

“I was clinging to hope that it was another Meredith or even that they had got the name wrong. But I have been told she was identified by one of her flatmates.
"Now I will have to go out there and identify her as her father. I can't bear to think about it."

Miss Kercher's housemates - an American and two Italians - stayed out overnight after the party and it is understood the discovery was only made after police were alerted to the girl's mobile phone lying in the garden of an elderly woman nearby. A trace on the phone revealed the victim's name and address.

When police got no answer at the whitewashed house they broke down the door and a search led officers to the discovery in the bedroom. The photographs on the Facebook page are entitled "Halloween Perugia Stylieeeeee" and show Miss Kercher, from Coulsdon, Surrey, in costume with fake blood around the mouth. In one picture she is photographed with a black collar high around her neck, standing next to a man in a blood-covered Scream mask and another dressed as a policeman.

At the family's semi-detached home in Coulsdon, Miss Kercher's father John, a journalist, said: "I'm just stunned, I can't even cry I'm so in shock. "I am flying out there as soon as possible."

Known to her friends as Mez, Miss Kercher was due to return home on Friday to celebrate the birthday of her mother, Arline. She is understood to have a sister, Stephanie, 24, and two brothers, John, 30, and Lyle, 28.

In Italy, police had last night sealed off the area around the student house as forensic teams carried out a fingertip search of the building. A police source said Miss Kercher was found dead in her bedroom and officers were questioning her housemates as part of the investigation. Attention appeared to be focusing on a window of the bedroom because the door was locked from the inside. The source said: "We know that the victim and her housemates had been to a party the night before and that she was the only one to return to the house.

"Her housemates spent the night elsewhere. We were called after a mobile phone was found in a garden and checks revealed it belonged to the victim. "This was a particularly nasty murder and the victim was found with a deep cut to her throat."

Italian news reports said that the elderly woman who found the phone had also reported receiving a telephone threat from a mystery woman. Miss Kercher is believed to have attended the Old Palace School of John Whitgift, an independent day school for girls aged four to 18 in Croydon which boasts of offering a "first class education" and where fees are £9,570 per year. Friends in Perugia described the student as "tranquil and interested in only her studies".

In one of her last messages to friends on the Facebook site last month Miss Kercher
described how she had been eating too much at a famous chocolate festival that takes place in Perugia every October. She wrote: "I have been trying to go to uni am taking modern history, modern political theories and cinema history.

"It's all mostly about the French revolution which i know nothing about. would say it's going well!! Miss u, especially dancingxx."

The inquiry is being led by investigating magistrate Giuliano Mignini and a post mortem is due to be carried out by pathologist Luca Lalli - neither of who was available last night for comment.

She was receiving funding for her stay in Italy from Erasmus, the European student exchange programme. "We have funded her but she was not on one of our programmes," a spokesman said.

The University for Foreigners, which is separate from the much older University of Perugia, was founded in 1921.

Former Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith studied there in the 1970s.

Perugia is the capital city of the region of Umbria. A notable artistic centre, the painter Pietro Vannucci, who was nicknamed Perugino and taught the great Renaissance artist Raphael, was a native of Perugia, as well as the architect Galeazzo Alessi.
03.11.2007

Mystery after British student is found with her throat cut

Richard Owen in Rome and Patrick Foster

A British student has been found semi-naked with her throat cut in the historic Italian hill town of Perugia.

Meredith Kercher, 21, was studying at the town’s University for Foreigners, under the EU Erasmus programme. Reports said that she had returned alone to the house she shared with three other women students late on Thursday after a party. Her body is believed to have been found under a duvet or mattress in a state of undress. She was found by officers from the Postal and Communications Police Service who were checking the discovery of a mobile phone registered to her name in a nearby garden. Some reports said that an elderly woman had complained to the police of receiving “menacing phone calls” from the number. It is thought that the door to Ms Kercher’s room was locked, and her attacker appeared to have left through a window.

Viale Sant’ Antonio, the area where Ms Kercher lived, is within walking distance of the Università per Stranieri, in the centre of Perugia. Ms Kercher, who graduated from Leeds University this year, was one of six British students registered on an Erasmus course at the university. Known to her friends as Mez, she was due to return to her family home, in Coulsdon, Surrey, next Friday, for the birthday of her mother, Arline. The student wrote to a friend on the Facebook website: “I . . . am taking modern history, modern political theories and cinema history. It’s all mostly about the French revolution which i know nothing about. would say it’s going well!! Miss u, especially dancingxxx.

“I’m back for a bit in Nov for my mum’s bday, 9th til the 14th. Then back again for Xmas around the 15th. I am having a good time thanks, it’s starting to get really cold now tho but choc festival is on at the moment so just a good excuse to drink a lot of hot chocolate.”

Last night her father, John, a journalist, said: “I’m just stunned, I can’t even cry I’m so in shock. I am flying out there as soon as possible.” Ms Kercher had an older brother, Lyle, 28, and sister, Stephanie, 24. She was thought to be a former pupil of the Old Palace School of John Whitgift, a private girls’ school in Croydon. Last night the British consul in Florence was travelling to Perugia to assist local police. The British Embassy in Rome confirmed that Ms Kercher’s next of kin had been informed.

Surrounded by rolling hills, Perugia is one of the most picturesque towns in Umbria. It is noted for its art museum, its chocolates, and for its jazz festival in the summer. It was the home of one of Italy’s most celebrated Renaissance artists, Perugino, who was born Pietro Vannucci but took his artistic name from his home town. The Università per Stranieri was founded in 1921, and is popular with foreigners learning Italian language and literature, for which it issues widely respected degrees and diplomas. The Erasmus project, short for European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students, began in 1987 as a European Community student exchange scheme. A spokeswoman for Erasmus confirmed that the project had provided financial assistance to Ms Kercher for her studies, but gave no further details.
INTRODUCTION

Former public school girl Meredith Kercher was discovered semi-naked in a pool of blood hours after she had left a party. A mattress or duvet had been used to conceal the body of the 21-year-old postgraduate exchange student. The brown-eyed brunette was found by police yesterday afternoon in the house she shared with three other female students close to the centre of the picturesque city of Perugia (Pisa, Hale and Koster. in Daily Mail, 03.11.2007).

Meredith Kercher moved from Coulsdon, south London, to the medieval town of Perugia in August 2007. She was on an exchange programme from Leeds University to Università per Stranieri di Perugia and was in Perugia to study Italian with the prospect of maybe teaching or working in politics. After spending a night out on Halloween, wearing spooky outfits and having a great time with friends, Meredith decided to relax in her flat in Via della Pergola, 7 on the day after. The following morning she was found half naked on her bedroom floor with her throat slit.

One year on from that terrible November 2, 2007 the case of the 21-year-old British student Meredith Kercher was far from being solved. Several lines of inquiry kept alternating with different possible theories and assumptions. Mez, as her friends used to call her, may have drunk herself to death, prosecutors initially said. She may have been stabbed in an argument over stolen money with her 20-year-old American house mate Amanda Knox. She may have been a victim of a violent sexual assault, a sex-game gone wrong in which Foxy Knoxy, as Knox nicknamed herself, and Rudy

3 Perugia University for Foreigners.
Hermann Guede, a citizen of the Ivory Coast, took part along with the third suspect, 24-year-old Knox’s Italian ex-boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito (Rossitto in *Panorama*, 10.04.2008) (Pisa in *Daily Mail*, 19.04.2008). Italian police and private detectives investigated and interviewed sources and alleged witnesses in what at the time of writing this thesis, appeared to be a hazy and still unsolved case where no murder weapon and no motive had been identified, no convincing evidence had been found and no exact time when the victim died had been defined yet.

Nevertheless, on October 28, 2008 the first conviction was pronounced by Italian Judge Paolo Micheli: the 21-year-old Rudy Guede was found guilty of murder and sentenced to 30 years in prison. At the same time judge Micheli ruled that Amanda Knox and Raffaele Sollecito, who had been sitting in jail since November of the previous year, would soon stand trial on all charges filed by prosecutors. The two were accused of premeditated murder, sexual assault and covering up the killing to make it look like a robbery (*Corriere della Sera*, 28.10.2008).

The Meredith Kercher murder case in Perugia was undoubtedly a big crime story with huge domestic and international prominence. It gripped both the public and the media imagination for more than a year, ever since the body of the British student was found in the house she shared with Knox and two other Italian students and the investigation began. There was intense speculation as how and why she died and the speculation was especially heavy in the first two months following Kercher’s murder. What clearly emerged was also the inefficiency and incompetence of the whole procedure of investigation led by Italian detectives and police, who, after
putting in jail three suspects within days of the killing, claimed it was an open-and-shut case, case closed, caso chiuso.

As part of a Masters Degree in International Journalism, this academic study will explore the relationships between crime news and real crime. It will take the Perugia murder as a case study and analyse the coverage in the media in Italy, Britain and the US during the first year following the slaying. The thesis aims to discover and examine to what extent the truth might be distorted by the media representation, to what degree reporting was actually opinion posing as factual reporting. The dissertation will also investigate the degree of sensationalism employed in order to appeal to a public prurience rather than serve a public interest.

As Professors Philip Schlesinger and Howard Tumber outline in their book *Reporting Crime* (1994), the media are not a dangerous enemy to be avoided or feared, but a crucial part of the policing apparatus of society. British, American and Italian media organs have been covering the Kercher case in different, sometimes radically diverse ways, also due to substantial distinctions between the legal systems in force in each country. Within different legal environments, for example, the procedures around the inquiry and the protocols of what can be reported and of what cannot, in terms of working with the police and following the entire process of investigation, vary significantly. Unlike Britain, in Italy there is no law of contempt that makes it a criminal offence to release potentially prejudicial information ahead of a trial, a full trial that for the Perugia murder case was expected to start off in January 2009. Consequently, it might happen that during the investigation detailed
information becomes available to the public through the media, which is very welcome to journalists. As *Daily Mail* correspondent Nick Pisa said:

> That’s what made it such a great story for us as well in England, because in England … once someone is arrested, stop, you cannot write anything else about them, because they say otherwise, contempt of court, prejudice to a trial … you can’t write anything once someone is arrested in charge, so formally accused. … In England you wouldn’t hold someone in jail without charge for nearly a year (interview with the author, 11.09.2008).

The leakage of statements and details regarding the investigation was exceptionally strong in the Kercher case. What this may cause, and may have caused in the course of the case hereby analysed as it will be widely discussed in chapter II of this research paper, is a dangerous distortion of the supposed truth, with the resulting overrepresentation and sensationalisation of everything related to the crime. News becomes entertainment and enters a dimension in which the amount of crime depicted has sometimes little relationship to the amount of crime occurring.

According to London Guildhall University Lecturer in Mass Media and Philosophy Richard Osborne, television, press and other media organs in this post-modern era never tire of crime reporting and reconstruction (Osborne, 1995). Crime has become extraordinarily popular, threatening and entertaining all at once thanks to the huge spreading of crime-related television shows, such as *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* or *Law & Order*. As Eastern Michigan University criminology professor and trial judge Donald E. Shelton and New York University professor Tom R. Tyler outline,
these programmes have the power to lead both to wrongfully acquit guilty defendants when no scientific evidences are presented supporting the case and to increase the tendency to convict when science is viewed as the only and infallible means to be trusted (Shelton, 2008) (Tyler, 2006a). “CSI effect” is the term that legal authorities and mass media have coined to describe this phenomenon, which is believed to strongly influence jurors as well as the public opinion. Chapter III of this dissertation aims to investigate in depth the CSI effect, its direct influence onto the Perugia case, and more generally the way in which crime news such as the Meredith Kercher murder case are manipulated and, as University of Sheffield Lecturer in Criminology Sheila Brown says, mediatised (Brown, 2003). Furthermore, as University of Toronto Professors Richard V. Ericson, Patricia M. Baranek and Janet B.L. Chan indicate, the process of influencing the representation of subjects such as crime and justice, is the means whereby news turns into an ‘agency of social control’ (Ericsson, Baranek, Chan, 1991: 4) and produces what former London Guildhall University Head of the Department of Sociology and Applied Social Studies and Criminology Professor David Kidd Hewitt calls ‘mass-media generated fear’ (Kidd-Hewitt, 1995: 2).
METHODOLOGY and STRUCTURE

According to University of Warwick Lecturers in Continuing Education Loraine Blaxter and Christina Hughes and Professor Malcolm Tight, ‘there are many ways of thinking about, and categorizing, the wide variety of methods available for designing, carrying out and analysing the results of research’ (Blaxter, Hughes, Tight, 2001: 59). Having extensively researched the main topic of this study through a collection of data on the field and literature searches, it was decided to focus first of all on the case (Chapter I), illustrating facts and giving the reader a better understanding of the background topic and the research task.

Once a good familiarity with the subject matter and the area of study is achieved, the dissertation examines from a closer point of view the inextricable relationship between reality and representation and between crime, media and the public (Chapter II and Chapter III).

It has to be borne in mind that at the time this work was conceived in late 2008, the murder case of Meredith Kercher was still ongoing and the final sentence had not been pronounced. Nevertheless all the material needed to exhaustively discuss the case and achieve the aims of this research was already available at the time of writing. The study period for this research was defined a November 1, 2007 – November 1, 2008. The subsequent facts and publications could not and did not add any further relevant information to this work whatsoever.
This dissertation is based on an analysis of media documents, namely newspaper articles and video footage from Italian, British and American media. The literature which has been examined is composed of academic studies in books, journals and essays and provide context. Interviews have also been conducted with professionals and journalists who reported the Meredith Kercher murder case. These included *Daily Mail* foreign correspondent Nick Pisa, *Il Messaggero* journalist Cristiana Mangani and Italian criminal lawyer Maria Valeria Feraco.
chapter I

CASE NOT CLOSED
Assassinio di Meredith, tre arresti confessa la coinquilina americana\(^4\) (Vinci in *La Repubblica*, 07.11.2007).

Omicidio Perugia, 3 fermi: caso chiuso\(^5\) (*Il Sole 24Ore*, 06.11.2007).

Murdered student died during sexual attack, say Italian police (Attewill in *The Guardian*, 06.11.2007).

Meredith Kercher ‘killed after refusing orgy’ (Owen, Foster and Rajeev in *The Times*, 07.11.2007).

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\(^4\) Meredith’s murder, three arrests, her American flatmate confesses.

\(^5\) Perugia murder case, 3 people arrested: case closed.
Perugia, la verità di Amanda: lei era con Patrick e gridava

«Ero spaventata e mi sono tappata le orecchie»

PERUGIA — «Patrick e Meredith si sono appartati nella stanza di Meredith, mentre io mi pare che sono rimasta in cucina. Non riesco a ricordare quanto tempo siano rimasti insieme nella camera ma posso solo dire che a un certo punto ho sentito delle grida di Meredith e io spaventata mi sono tappata le orecchie. Poi non ricordo più nulla, ho una grande confusione in testa. Non ricordo se Meredith gridava e se sentivo anche dei tonfi perché ero sconvolta, ma immaginavo cosa potesse essere successo».

È l'alba di ieri. Amanda Knox, l'amica americana di Meredith che con lei condivideva l'appartamento, racconta di aver assistito all'omicidio. Cede di fronte alle contestazioni dei poliziotti che l'accusano di aver mentito quando ha raccontato di essere uscita di casa alle 17 del primo novembre e di essere tornata soltanto la mattina dopo, quando è stato trovato il corpo straziato di Meredith. Il suo fidanzato Raffaele Sollecito è stato sentito qualche ora prima e ha già ammesso che quell'alibi è falso, pur negando di aver partecipato al delitto. Amanda capisce di non avere via d'uscita, però si ritaglia un ruolo marginale. Accusa Patrick Lumumba Diya di essere l'assassino. Il suo racconto è confuso, si capisce che la ragazza non dice tutta la verità. Ma il pm ritiene che le sue dichiarazioni siano comunque sufficienti per firmare il provvedimento di ferma anche nei confronti dei due uomini.

I «non ricordo» di Amanda

Il racconto della giovane statunitense comincia alle 5,45 di ieri mattina. «Voglio riferire spontaneamente quello che è successo perché questa vicenda mi ha turbata profondamente e ho molta paura di Patrick, il ragazzo africano proprietario del pub Le Chic dove lavoro saltuariamente. L'ho incontrato la sera del primo novembre dopo avergli mandato un messaggio di risposta al suo, con le parole “ci vediamo”. Ci siamo incontrati intorno alle 21 al campetto di basket di piazza Grimana e siamo andati a casa mia. Non ricordo se la mia amica Meredith fosse già a casa o se è giunta dopo. Quello che posso dire è che si sono appartati». Entra nei dettagli, descrive il momento della violenza. Poi aggiunge: «Ho incontrato Patrick questa mattina (il 5 novembre ndr) davanti all'università per Stranieri e mi ha fatto alcune domande. Voleva sapere che domande mi erano state fatte dalla polizia. Penso che mi abbia anche chiesto se volevo incontrare i giornalisti, forse al fine di capire se sapevo qualcosa della morte di Meredith». Poi parla del fidanzato: «Non sono sicura se fosse presente anche Raffaele quella sera, ma ricordo bene di essermi svegliata a casa del mio ragazzo, nel suo letto, e che sono tornata al mattino nella mia abitazione dove ho trovato la porta aperta». I poliziotti della squadra mobile e dello Sco, il servizio centrale operativo, danno atto al termine del verbale che «la Knox si porta ripetutamente le mani alla testa e la scuote». Scrive il pm nel provvedimento di ferma: «Il rapporto sessuale tra Meredith e Patrick deve ritenersi di natura violenta, considerato il contesto particolarmente intimidatorio nel quale si è svolto e nel quale la Knox deve ritenersi abbia dato comunque un contributo al Diya».
Le bugie del fidanzato

I tabulati telefonici esaminati dalla polizia postale si sono rivelati fondamentali per ricostruire gli spostamenti dei ragazzi. E per smontare quanto avevano sino ad allora affermato. Il primo ad ammettere di aver «raccontato un sacco di cazzate» è Sollecito. Il giovane viene convocato in questura alle 22.40 del 5 novembre, due sere fa. Dopo la scoperta del cadavere di Meredith era già stato interrogato, ma aveva detto di non sapere che cosa fosse accaduto: «Ero fuori con Amanda», si era giustificato. Ora capisce che la situazione è cambiata. E così decide di modificare anche la propria versione. Il verbale di Raffaele Sollecito comincia alle 22.40 di martedì. «Conosco Amanda da due settimane. Dalla sera in cui l’ho conosciuta lei ha cominciato a dormire a casa mia. Il primo novembre mi sono svegliato verso le 11, ho fatto colazione con Amanda, poi lei è uscita e io sono tornato a letto. L’ho raggiunta a casa sua verso le 13-14. C’era anche Meredith che è uscita frettolosamente verso le 16 senza dire dove andasse. Io e Amanda siamo andati in centro verso le 18 ma non ricordo che cosa abbiamo fatto. Siamo rimasti in centro fino alle 20.30 o 21. Io alle 21 sono andato da solo a casa mia, mentre Amanda ha detto che sarebbe andata al pub Le Chic perché voleva incontrare dei suoi amici. A questo punto ci siamo salutati. Sono andato a casa, mi sono fatto una canna, ho cenato, ma non ricordo che cosa ho mangiato. Verso le 23 mi ha chiamato sull’utenza fissa di casa mio padre. Ricordo che Amanda non era ancora tornata. Ho navigato al computer per altre due ore dopo la telefonata di mio padre e ho smesso solo quando Amanda è rientrata, presumibilmente verso l’1. Non ricordo bene come fosse vestita e se era vestita allo stesso modo di quando ci siamo salutati prima di cena. Non ricordo se quella sera abbiamo consumato un rapporto sessuale. La mattina successiva ci siamo svegliati verso le 10 e lei mi ha detto che voleva andare a casa a farsi una doccia e cambiarosi gli abiti. Infatti è uscita verso le 10.30 e io mi sono rimesso a dormire. Quando è uscita Amanda ha preso anche una busta vuota, dicendomi che le sarebbe servita per metterci i panni sporchi. La mattina successiva ci siamo svegliati verso le 10 e lei mi ha detto che voleva andare a casa a farsi una doccia e cambiarsi gli abiti. Infatti è uscita verso le 10.30 e io mi sono rimesso a dormire. Quando è uscita Amanda ha preso anche una busta vuota, dicendomi che le sarebbe servita per metterci i panni sporchi. La mattina successiva ci siamo svegliati verso le 10 e lei mi ha detto che voleva andare a casa a farsi una doccia e cambiarsi gli abiti. Infatti è uscita verso le 10.30 e io mi sono rimesso a dormire. Quando è uscita Amanda ha preso anche una busta vuota, dicendomi che le sarebbe servita per metterci i panni sporchi. 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Il ritorno a casa

I due vanno insieme nell’appartamento. E così Sollecito ricostruisce quei momenti: «Lei ha aperto la porta con le chiavi e sono entrato. Ho notato che la porta di Filomena era spalancata con dei vetri per terra e la camera tutta in disordine. La porta di Amanda era aperta e invece era tutto in ordine. Poi sono andato verso la porta di Meredith e ho visto che era chiusa a chiave. Prima ho guardato se fosse vero quello che mi aveva detto Amanda sul sangue nel bagno e ho notato gocce di sangue sul lavandino, mentre sul tappetino c’era qualcosa di strano, una sorta di mista acqua e sangue, mentre il resto del bagno era pulito… Il resto era in ordine. In quel mentre Amanda entrava nel bagno grande e usciva spaventata e mi abbracciava forte dicendomi che prima, quando aveva fatto la doccia, aveva visto delle feci nel water che invece adesso era pulito. Mi sono chiesto che cosa stesse succedendo e sono uscito per vedere se riuscivo ad arrampicarmi sulla finestra di Meredith… Ho cercato di sfondare la porta ma non ci sono riuscito e a quel punto ho deciso di chiamare mia sorella e mi sono consigliato con lei perché è un tenente dei carabinieri. Mi ha detto di chiamare il 112, ma nel frattempo è arrivata la polizia postale. Nel precedente verbale vi ho riferito un sacco di cazzate perché lei mi aveva convinto della sua versione dei fatti e non ho pensato alle incongruenze».

Fiorenza Sarzanini
Meredith Kercher ‘killed after refusing orgy’

Richard Owen in Perugia, Patrick Foster and Rajeev Syal

The flatmate of Meredith Kercher, the British student who was murdered in the Italian town of Perugia, broke down and confessed to being involved with two men in her death, it emerged yesterday.

Detectives said that Amanda Knox, 20, an American student who had the bedroom next to Miss Kercher, confessed to a criminal act. Ms Knox’s boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito, 23, from Bari, southern Italy, and Patrick Diya Lumumba, 37, of Perugia, are also being held.

Detectives said that they believed that Ms Kercher may have been killed after refusing to take part in a violent orgy. Police have said that they now consider the case to be cut and dried.

The body of Ms Kercher, 21, from Coulsdon, South London, was discovered last Friday under a duvet in her bedroom at the house she shared with Ms Knox. She was partially clothed and her throat had been cut, it is believed, with a penknife.

Police said that the breakthrough came when Ms Knox, from Seattle, “crumbled” under questioning and confessed to what had happened late on Thursday and early on Friday. Pathologists have put the time of death as between midnight and 2am.

All three suspects were taken to Perugia police headquarters early yesterday, and last night were in custody on suspicion of involvement in murder and sexual violence.

There were reports last night that Mr Lumumba, whose wife is Polish, had claimed to be the grandson of Patrice Lumumba, the revolutionary who became the first prime minister of the Republic of Congo in 1960. He was assassinated in 1961.

Arturo De Felice, the chief of police in Perugia, said that charges could follow, adding that the inquiry into Ms Kercher’s murder was “concluded”. It had become clear that the murder of Ms Kercher, a student at Leeds University who was studying Italian at the University for Foreigners, in Perugia, was sexually motivated.

“All three [suspects] took part in the act,” he said. Ms Kercher had been “morally upright”, Mr De Felice added, and no traces of drugs or alcohol had been found in her blood. “She was a victim, nothing more,” he said. A post-mortem examination found evidence of sexual activity before Ms Kercher’s death. Medical examiners refused to confirm reports that she had been raped.

Ms Knox, an exchange student, studies German and Italian at the University of Washington. Last month she wrote on a social networking website: “I’ve been working every night (except for Monday night) from 10pm to 2.30am at a bar called Le Chic. It’s a really small place owned by this man from the Congo. His name is Patrick.”
In July Ms Knox, who was educated at a $12,000-a-year (£5,750) Jesuit college, was fined $269 over a “residential disturbance”. She wrote on Facebook: “I don’t get embarrassed and therefore have very few social inhibitions.”

Mr Sollecito, a computer-science student, had told a British Sunday newspaper last weekend that he and Ms Knox had been horrified to see Ms Kercher’s body after police broke down her door. He said that he and Ms Knox had reported an apparent burglary and had been concerned to find Ms Kercher’s door locked from the inside. “It was hard to tell it was Meredith at first but Amanda started crying and screaming. I dragged her away because I didn’t want her to see it, it was so horrible,” he said.

Last night Mr Sollecito’s father said that he could not believe that his son was involved in any way.

Mr Lumumba moved to Italy in 1988, police said. He works at a bar in the town and holds an official resident’s permit. His friends expressed incredulity at his alleged involvement. One, a bar owner, said that he was “a cultivated man, a great guy, a reggae musician and the father of a little boy”. He was seen on Monday at the torchlit vigil held in Ms Kercher’s memory.

Giuliano Amato, the Italian Interior Minister, described the murder as “a terrible business in which people that were in this young woman’s home tried to have relations with her she didn’t want to have, and she was killed”.

Last night Ms Kercher’s sister, Stephanie, said that Meredith had intended to come home this weekend “with a suitcase laden with chocolates” for her mother’s birthday.

She added: “Meredith touched the lives of everyone she met with her infectious, upbeat personality, smile and sense of humour.”

Amanda Knox described on MySpace how she found the house in which Meredith Kercher was murdered:

“We run into a very skinny girl who looks a little older than me putting up a page with her number on the outer wall of the university. I chat it up with her, she speaks English really well, and we go immediately to her place, literally two minutes from my university. It’s a cute house that is right in the middle of this random garden in the middle of Perugia. Around us are apartment buildings, but we enter through a gate and there it is. I’m in love. I meet her roommate Molly. The house has a kitchen, two bathrooms, and four bedrooms. Not to mention a washing machine, and internet access. Not to mention, she owns two guitars and wants to play with me. Not to mention the view is amazing. Not to mention I have a terrace that looks over the city/countryside. I put down a down payment. I’m feeling sky high. These girls are awesome. Really sweet, really down to earth, funny as hell. Neither are students . . . they are desperate for roommates because the two they wanted disappear[ed] all of a sudden”
Murdered student died during sexual attack, say Italian police

The murdered British student Meredith Kercher died fighting off a sexual attack, police said today after three people were arrested in connection with her death.

The body of 21-year-old Ms Kercher was found in her bedroom in Perugia, where she was studying on an exchange programme, last Friday. Her throat had been cut.

Arturo de Felice, the Perugia police chief, told a press conference officers had arrested the victim’s 20-year-old American flatmate, Amanda Marie Knox, the American’s 24-year-old boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito, and a Congolese barman, 38, identified as Lumumba “Patrick” Diya.

Mr De Felice added that Ms Kercher was a "victim and nothing more". A postmortem revealed there was evidence of sexual activity before her death, but did not confirm she had been raped.

The Italian news agency Ansa reported that detectives had swooped today after Ms Knox, also a student, apparently broke down during police questioning and confessed.

In a press conference later, detectives confirmed that Ms Kercher appeared to have been killed because she refused to take part in violent sex. Ansa reported that the officers said the arrests meant they had closed the case.

The investigating magistrate, Nicola Miriano, yesterday suggested Ms Kercher could have been attacked by more than one assailant. In a statement, he said her death was caused "by a violent action by an unidentified person or persons".

The student had been to a Halloween party before making the short walk home alone at around 9pm last Thursday evening. It is believed she died in the early hours of Friday morning.

Her partially clothed body was discovered under a duvet in a house near the city centre. Journalist Nick Pisa told Sky News detectives had found a wealth of clues in her rented student accommodation, including two mobile phones covered with fingerprint evidence.

Blood was also detected on a broken window through which her attacker is believed to have escaped.

Her father, John Kercher, told the Daily Telegraph he found it “very difficult” to believe postmortem examination reports that she had sex with her killer before being murdered.

Italian press reports claimed a cook working in a local bar was a suspect. Newspapers also said police were studying her diary and laptop computer for evidence, and looking through photographs she placed on the Facebook website in which she posed with friends in Perugia.

Ms Kercher's return journey from the party took her through Piazza Grimana, where a basketball court is used as a meeting point for drug addicts at night. “There are CCTV cameras in Perugia, but not in the square, so the addicts come here,” Francesco Barraco, who knew Ms Kercher and lives on the square, said.

Two other residents who knew Ms Kercher, Gennaro Crucigiano and Pasquale Alessi, were planning a candlelit vigil last night outside Perugia's cathedral, with a banner hoisted at the town hall bearing her name.

Flyers announcing the event handed out in the city during the day read: "With greatest love from all your friends in Perugia, addio Meredith."
The flatmate of Meredith Kercher, the British student who was murdered in the Italian town of Perugia, broke down and confessed to being involved with two men in her death, it emerged yesterday. Detectives said that Amanda Knox, 20, an American student who had the bedroom next to Miss Kercher, confessed to a criminal act. Ms Knox’s boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito, 23, from Bari, southern Italy, and Patrick Diya Lumumba, 37, of Perugia, are also being held. Detectives said that they believed that Ms Kercher may have been killed after refusing to take part in a violent orgy. Police have said that they now consider the case to be cut and dried (Owen, Foster and Rajeev in The Times, 07.11.2007).

One of the few certainties about the British student Meredith Kercher murder case was that the case was still wide open. Nevertheless, Perugia Police Chief Arturo De Felice announced, during the press conference held a few days after Carabinieri had found her dead, that it was ‘Caso chiuso’, or case closed. After four days and four nights of non-stop interrogations and intense group work led by the Perugia police department along with a team of forensic experts and the Postal Police, the branch of the police dealing with communication crimes, Captain De Felice declared the inquiry into the murder shut and added: ‘We felt obliged towards our citizens who wanted a prompt and definite answer to this case’ (ILSole24Ore 07.11.2007). The Italian police were triumphant. Three suspects had been arrested in less than one week: the victim’s 20-year-old American flatmate, Amanda Marie Knox, Knox’s 23-year-old Italian boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito, and the 37-year-old Knox’s employer,
Congolese barman Diya ‘Patrick’ Lumumba. The prosecution firmly claimed they had forced Meredith to take part in a violent drug-fuelled orgy and then killed her. All suspects would deny any wrongdoing.

It really seemed that the case of the murder of British student Meredith Kercher had been cracked in only five days. The truth appeared to have come out. Yet soon afterwards that same truth started to crumble, the clear picture police and prosecutors had been drawing up to then began to blur and what had appeared to be an absolute success for detectives and prosecutors quickly turned into an intricate and deadly story of sex, knives and lies.

Under interrogation Amanda Knox first denied that she was at home, but then confessed to being present when her flatmate was being killed. Knox also accused her boss Lumumba of carrying out the knifing while she helplessly listened to her flatmate's dying cries. ‘I can’t remember’, Knox stated, ‘how long they were together in the bedroom but the only thing I can say is that at a certain point I remember hearing Meredith’s screams and I covered my ears’ (Hale and Pisa in Daily Mail, 08.11.2007).

According to the investigating magistrate Claudia Matteini, Lumumba was infatuated with the British student and on the night of November 1, 2007 sneaked into her apartment in Via della Pergola, 7 with Knox’s and her boyfriend’s help. After Meredith refused him, he stabbed her to death during what most of the press called a violent sex-game (Ponte in La Repubblica, 28.05.2008).
In any mysterious story, when conclusions are drawn and a solution to the mystery seems to jump out, which in the Perugia murder case was to say that the culprit or culprits behind the murder were being uncovered, it often occurs that a number of contradictions and doubts unexpectedly arise. What was initially considered a certain truth starts to break down and changes into a way more complicated and confused issue. The case of the murder of the British student Meredith Kercher was opening up again.
The American student accused of killing Meredith Kercher has dramatically changed her account of the murder - claiming she was never at the scene. Amanda Knox - who has already been branded a compulsive liar by police - has reverted to her original claims that she was with her Italian boyfriend on the night of the tragedy. It is the second change in the party-loving languages student's account. (Hale and Pisa in Daily Mail, 11.11.2007)

Less than two weeks had passed since that night of November 1, 2007 and the more that was learned the less that was clear and “closed”. The questions to be answered kept piling up around the Perugia murder case for weeks. Where were Knox and Sollecito when Meredith Kercher died? If they were not in the house, as Knox said in a new statement, who helped Lumumba in? Moreover, at what time did the victim exactly die and where is the murder weapon? And above all, who killed Meredith Kercher?

She was stabbed and left to choke to death on her own blood after fighting off a sexual attack, forensics and prosecutors claimed after the post-mortem examination of Kercher’s body. Police also took away an eight inch knife from the kitchen of Sollecito’s home, saying it was compatible with the wound on Kercher's throat. Once tested for blood and fingerprints, forensics asserted that DNA from the victim was found on the tip of the blade of the kitchen knife, now described as being the possible murder weapon, as DNA from Knox was found on the handle (Pisa in Daily Mail, 03.10.2008).
New key elements such as bloody shoeprints, allegedly said to be matching with a pair of Sollecito’s runners, and strands of hair showed up at the crime scene, while a bottle of bleach was found at Sollecito’s flat. Questioned by the police the Italian 23-year-old suspect first said he went out with Knox on the night of the murder. But his story, as well as the American’s, suddenly changed. He flipped and admitted what he originally told the police was 'a load of bullshit'. Because of the dope they had been smoking he could not remember whether his girlfriend was at his house or not that night, he could not recall how she was dressed, whether she changed her clothes or whether they had sex or not that evening (Sarzanini in *Corriere della Sera*, 07.11.2007).

Confessions and retractions from the suspects came one after another. A fantastic, dark and intricate jigsaw puzzle was taking form hour after hour, day after day. The amount of information freely accessible through leaked reports and through the Internet became huge.

As Queen’s University Sociology Professor Vincent F. Sacco says, the individuals’ private problems are strongly linked to the social issue of crime. Two dimensions, private and individual the first, public and social the second, interplay through the media and become available for public consumption (Sacco, 1995: 142). The transition from private troubles to public matters might be extremely fast and frenzied nowadays thanks to new technologies, as Nick Pisa points out while describing the first steps he made on Perugia murder case:
Going to the Internet I put University for Foreigners Meredith, and bang, I got immediately a class list of all the foreign students at the University of Perugia and there was a Meredith there from England. … As soon as we got the name, straight onto Facebook and MySpace\(^6\) and so much information was available. There were pictures of her, pictures of all her friends, names of all her friends, everything. … Then we got the names of the others, Sollecito and Knox, I mean, Sollecito was priceless. We put his name and we found all those pictures of him with knives and how he liked these crazy, blood-thirsty comics (interview with the author, 11.09.2008).

Journalists like Pisa were enthusiastic, they could build up their own suppositions about the intriguing and obscure Perugia murder case. They started to shape their own inquiries and their own sensational opinions. Some of the headlines on British and Italian newspapers read:

**Suspect ‘bought bleach to clean murder weapon after Meredith Kercher’s death’**

(Owen in *The Times*, 19.11.2007).

**Quel coltello lo usava Amanda solo in cucina\(^7\)** (Meletti in *La Repubblica*, 17.11.2007).

**Inside the twisted world of Foxy Knoxy**

(Fernandez and Hale in *Daily Mail*, 07.11.2007).

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\(^6\) Facebook and MySpace are two major social networking websites.  
\(^7\) Amanda used that knife in the kitchen only.
According to David Kidd-Hewitt (1995), the way of representing crime by the media is part of an innate process, an “irresponsible nature”, which leads to a disproportionate emphasis on the spectacular and the violent aimed to pursue sensationalism. The following chapter will focus on this phenomenon, examining from a closer standpoint the reasons and the direct consequences of this sensationalisation of news.

In Perugia, the police were now making a crucial breakthrough. It was time for the first big revelation coming from the first eye-witness. A university professor from Zurich confessed that he spent at least two hours, from 8 to 10pm – the alleged time the British student was killed – on the night of the murder in Lumumba’s company at his bar “Le Chic”. A string of other witnesses claimed that Lumumba was working in that same bar after 10pm (Sarzanini and Capponi in Corriere della Sera, 12.11.2007).

The bar owner who was imprisoned for two weeks on suspicion of murdering Meredith Kercher had a strong alibi and was released. Lumumba was arrested following a confession by Amanda Knox made during her first interrogation. Why had she tried to frame the Congolese bar owner, who since the very beginning had always claimed his innocence? In an exclusive interview with the Daily Mail Lumumba revealed his feelings towards the American girl and her jealousy and anger towards both himself and Kercher.

She was angry I was firing her and wanted revenge. By the end, she hated me. … She's empty; dead inside. She's the ultimate actress, able to switch her emotions on and off in
an instant. I don't believe a word she says. Everything that comes out of her mouth is a lie. But those lies have stained me for ever. ... She tried to play the race card. She thought that by pointing the finger at a black person she'd distract attention from herself. She used me as a scapegoat. ... Meredith was a natural charmer, a beautiful girl who made friends easily, and effortlessly received attention wherever she went. Amanda tried much harder, but was less popular. I didn't realise it at the time, but now I see that she was jealous. She wanted to be the queen bee, and as the weeks passed, it became clear that she wasn't. She hated anyone stealing her limelight and that included Meredith (Hoyle in *Daily Mail*, 25.11.2007).
A major role in the Perugia murder case was played by forensic science. The media gave detailed information about DNA, fingerprints or blood trace elements showing up on the crime scene or in someone else’s house. An analysis of how science influenced the entire procedure of investigation will be developed further on in the thesis. For the moment science will be taken into account only due to a startling turn the investigation took less than three weeks after the night of the murder.

È un uomo, probabilmente uno straniero. Non è uno studente però, forse vende droga per vivere. Non appartiene al mondo di Meredith ma la sera del primo novembre era nella sua camera da letto. C'è l'impronta del suo pollice insanguinato sulla federa del cuscino trovato sotto il cadavere della studentessa londinese⁸ (Ponte in La Repubblica, 17.11.2007).

The fingerprint found on the blood-soaked pillow in Kercher’s bedroom did not match the three people in custody. A new piece of evidence was changing everything. The whole investigative approach initially put forward by the magistrate made no sense from then on. The supposed truth everyone had been figuring was going to pieces once again. It was all put into doubt by the arrival on the scene of a new person. Investigators started to seek the fourth suspect and found him in Germany. He fled the country immediately after the murder. His name is Rudy Hermann Guede, a citizen of Ivory Coast who grew up in Perugia. His DNA samples

⁸ It’s a man, possibly a foreigner. He’s not a student though and maybe he sells drugs for a living. He doesn’t belong to Meredith’s world, but on the night of November 01 he was in her bedroom. His bloody thumbprint was found on a pillow underneath the London student’s dead body.
were also found inside Kercher's body as well as on toilet paper in her bathroom. Guede has always claimed to be in that house on the night Kercher died, but insisted he did not kill her. According to a letter he wrote in Germany and the first confession he made in front of the Italian judge, he said he was invited by the girl to her house on the night of November 1. They had a chat and kissed each other. Not feeling too well he then went to the bathroom, from which he heard the doorbell ring and shortly afterwards Kercher’s scream from her room. After emerging from the bathroom he confronted a man whom he could describe only as a ‘brown-haired Italian who was wearing a Napapijiri black jacket’. They scuffled. Guede was harmed by the attacker who fled after shouting out: ‘black man found, black man guilty’. Guede then headed back to Kercher’s room and found her in a pool of blood. He tried in vain to stop the blood that was spilling out from her neck by pressing a towel on it, but the wound was deadly and too deep. In that moment Guede lost his mind and ran away, leaving the poor British girl slowly dying on her room-floor (Castellini et al., 2008: 95-104).

As Giuseppe Castellini, editor-in-chief of the Perugia local newspaper Giornale dell’Umbria notices detectives and prosecutors immediately noted that Guede’s statement was not very credible and questions once again began to arise. (Castellini et al., 2008: 104) He said he had a fight with the attacker as soon as he walked out of the bathroom. The attacker was also carrying a knife and hurt him. However, no cuts or scars were visible on Guede’s body. He said that Meredith invited him over the night of November 1 and that they met for the first time at the Halloween party in a club in Perugia. Kercher’s friends all claimed the two never met on that night. Plus, the manager of the club where Meredith Kercher was on Halloween claimed that Rudy Guede had been banned from there because of his inappropriate behaviour
towards girls and other customers. Nevertheless, the main question everyone keeps asking themselves is: why Rudy Guede fled instead of calling an ambulance? ‘I was scared to death’, he stated. ‘Since I was a child I’ve always dreamt of saving the world and now, I didn’t even manage to call the 118 [ambulance toll-free number] … I’m ashamed of myself’ (Castellini et al., 2008: 101).
- conclusions -

After the first three weeks of investigations, forensic examinations and interrogations, it appeared clear was that the Meredith Kercher murder case was anything but solved. As Giuseppe Castellini outlined in a conference held in Perugia in April 2008, Italian police had to be blamed for their excessive confidence and hastiness in claiming the inquiry closed when it was absolutely obvious that five days after the murder the case was more chaotic and confused than solved.

According to media reports, what also appeared clear at that stage was that all the suspects had been lying to the police all along, making up bizarre stories and changing their statements numerous times. In so doing, other than leading prosecutors and detectives down the wrong path, the imagination of the media and of their consumers were being fuelled to a level beyond which it became extremely hard to disentangle facts from representations, truths from lies, reality from fiction, as *La Repubblica* crime correspondent Meo Ponte highlighted in a documentary shown in April 2008 on *Channel 4*:

Il gip Matteini immagina una scena in cui Meredith sta al centro di tre persone con Patrick che sta cercando di avere un rapporto probabilmente contro natura con lei, con due persone che la minacciano e che poi culmina nell’omicidio, però fatto da Patrick. Questo è un romanzo. Non è la realtà
(Sex, Lies and the Murder of Meredith Kercher, Channel 4 - 17.04.2008).  

The investigating magistrate, Matteini, imagines a scenario with Meredith at the centre of three people and Patrick trying to have intercourse, probably an unnatural act with the other two threatening her, which ends in her murder, but that murder is committed by Patrick. This is fiction. It’s not reality.
chapter II

A SENSATIONAL STORY

Amanda in aula sbuffa e canta: “Non mangio gli uomini”\textsuperscript{11} (Capponi in Corriere della Sera, 17.09.2008).

L’imputata si preoccupa del look: “Sono nervosa e adesso ho i brufoli”\textsuperscript{12} (Laurenzi in La Repubblica, 17.09.2008).

GENERAZIONE Amanda\textsuperscript{13} (Yehya in MAX, January 2008).

\textsuperscript{10} Same daring and challenging eyes on her angel face: Foxy Knoxy one year later.
\textsuperscript{11} Amanda sighs and sings while in court: ‘I’m not a man-eater’.
\textsuperscript{12} Defendant worried about her look: ‘I’m nervous and I’ve got pimples now’.
\textsuperscript{13} Generation Amanda.
18.10.2008

Mignini: «Dal giudice di Seattle attacco mediatico»

«Mez accoltellata da Amanda, con l'aiuto degli altri durante gioco erotico violento»

Requisitoria dei pm davanti al gup per l'omicidio della Kercher. Chiesto ergastolo per Guede con rito abbreviato

PERUGIA - Meredith Kercher è stata accoltellata alla gola da Amanda Knox, mentre Rudy Guede e Raffaele Sollecito la tenevano. Guede, oltre a trattenere la vittima, esercitava su di lei violenza sessuale. Il delitto, secondo i pm, è maturato nel corso di un gioco erotico violento: i tre imputati arrivarono insieme nella casa e tutti parteciparono all'uccisione della giovane inglese.

LA RICOSTRUZIONE - È la ricostruzione dell'omicidio della studentessa inglese fatta dai pm Giuliano Mignini e Manuela Commodi nella requisitoria davanti al gup di Perugia. Per Rudy Guede i due pm hanno chiesto la condanna all'ergastolo. L'ivoriano aveva chiesto il rito abbreviato, mentre gli altri due imputati, Sollecito e Knox, hanno scelto il rito ordinario. Per loro i pm hanno formulato la richiesta di rinvio a giudizio. Guede, Knox e Sollecito, che si sono sempre proclamati estranei al delitto, hanno assistito alle richieste dei pm apparentemente impassibili e i loro difensori si sono detti sicuri di poter confutare le accuse. L'udienza è stata rinviata a lunedì per l'intervento delle parti civili e quindi sarà la volta delle difese. La studentessa inglese è stata uccisa nella sua casa di Perugia il 1° novembre 2007.

DICHIARAZIONE DELLA KNOX - In mattinata l'udienza preliminare era cominciata con una dichiarazione spontanea di Amanda Knox davanti al gup Paolo Micheli. L'americana, parlando per una decina di minuti con l'assistenza di un interprete, ha ribadito di essere estranea al delitto. «Meredith era mia amica e non avevo alcun motivo per ucciderla» ha detto Amanda tra commozione e lacrime. La Knox ha detto di avere ricevuto pressioni dalla polizia la notte in cui venne fermata e che le sarebbe stato detto che, nel caso non avesse confessato, avrebbe preso trent'anni di carcere. Infine si è scusata per avere generato confusione con le sue dichiarazioni precedenti, in cui accusava del delitto Patrick Lumumba poi scagionato. Dopo di lei ha preso la parola Raffaele Sollecito, che si è limitato a dire di avere conosciuto Amanda il 25 ottobre a un concerto di musica classica per fugare i dubbi generati dalla testimonianza dell'albanese Kokomoni che aveva affermato di aver incontrato i due giovani insieme nel luglio 2007. Tra i due, fidanzati fino al momento dell'arresto, ci sono stati diversi sguardi ma nessuna parola.

Ha quindi parlato delle «pressioni e interferenze» che hanno caratterizzato gli accertamenti e ha affrontato la posizione di Guede sostenendo che Rudy non ha conosciuto Metz a casa di amici il 31 ottobre e che non aveva alcun appuntamento con lei la sera del delitto. Il processo si tiene nell'ex Officina Elettrica di via XIV Settembre, ora sede della sezione penale del Tribunale di Perugia. Presente, oltre ai tre imputati, anche Partick Lumumba, che si è costituito parte civile nei confronti della Knox accusata di calunnia nei suoi confronti.


LA DIFESA - «Rudy non ha ucciso Meredith. Siamo convinti della sua estraneità al delitto e dimosterremo che lui non c'entra niente»: così i difensori di Guede, gli avvocati Valter Biscotti e Nicodemo Gentile, al termine dell'udienza. Secondo i legali il quadro indiziario delineato dalla requisitoria dei pm «non è cambiato» rispetto a quanto già ipotizzato dall'accusa. «La richiesta di condanna dei pubblici ministeri (all'ergastolo - ndr) - ha detto l'avvocato Biscotti - è coerente rispetto agli addebiti formulati. È quello che ci aspettavamo e Rudy era preparato anche se ovviamente si aspetta una conclusione diversa del giudizio nei suoi confronti.» L'avvocato Giulia Bongiorno, uno dei difensori di Raffaele Sollecito, ha attaccato la ricostruzione dei pubblici ministeri dove «manca totalmente» la prova della conoscenza tra i tre imputati. «Ci aspettavamo elementi specifici - ha detto ancora l'avvocato Bongiorno - in particolare sulla conoscenza tra loro dei tre imputati. E invece il dato emerso è che l'accusa non ha fiducia nel test Kokomani (l'albanese che ha riferito di avere visto insieme i tre davanti alla casa del delitto - ndr).» Secondo l'avvocato Luca Maori, un altro dei difensori di Sollecito, «Raffaele ha seguito con molta attenzione le parole del pm». «È molto provato - ha aggiunto - dalla lunga detenzione», «Non ci sono riscontri oggettivi - ha sostenuto l'avvocato Marco Brusco, un altro dei difensori del giovane - e quella dei pm è una ricostruzione che non condividiamo. Dimostreremo l'innocenza di Raffaele.»
Raffaele e Amanda, gli ex amanti
Il loro segreto dietro un sorriso

Lei ha un pullower azzurro, lui i capelli lunghi. In un solo sguardo forse si nasconde la verità sul destino di Meredith...
Amanda canta in aula, Per Rudy processo con lo scontro
Prima udienza per i tre presunti assassini di Mez: l’americana intona i Beatles. Raffaele assesta

IL GIALLO DI PERUGIA

La polizia scientifica: la ragazza si trascinò per mezzo metro dopo essere stata colpita alla gola.

GUIDE IN MANETTE IN AULA

LE PROFESSIONI

La testimonianza di un amico
«Rudy era affascinato ed appagato da un’aggressione.

IL PERSONAGGIO

I personaggi

Amanda è una cantante di successo, nota per la sua voce potente e lo stile sincero. Rudy è un musicista dilettante e amico di Amanda, noto per la sua carisma e le sue composizioni. Ma quando Rudy viene accusato di mandare una minaccia alla polizia, Amanda si trova nel mezzo di un dilemma. Dobbiamo decidere se credere a Rudy o a Amanda.

Gli stessi sguardi di sfida sul viso d’angelo:
Foxy Knoxy un anno dopo

JOGGING IN PRIGIONE E TANTI SPARIRANZI

Amanda corre nell’aria fredda e tiepide

La polizia accerta che il delitto è stato commesso durante un furto, e che la vittima è stata uccisa per evitare di denunciare l’assalto. Amanda, sfiorata dalle grami d’angoscia, non riesce a sopportare il pensiero che il suo caro amico sia il killer del giorno. Il caso diventa un mistero, e la polizia non sembra avvicinarsi alla verità. Ma Amanda non si arrende, e continua a cercare la verità con tenacia e determinazione.

E poi la polizia trova una soluzione: Rudy è stato arrestato per il furto, e Amanda ha deciso di rimanere al suo fianco, per sempre. Il caso è risolto, e Amanda e Rudy possono finalmente riprendere la loro vita normale. Ma la verità è sempre più lontana, e nessuno sa quando tenterà di riportarvi alla luce.
Foxy Knoxy: I was bullied because everyone thought I was a lesbian

By Nick Pisa

The American woman suspected of sexually assaulting and murdering British student Meredith Kercher claims she was bullied at school because everyone thought she was a lesbian. Court documents reveal how Amanda Knox, 21, plans to dismantle the case against her. Knox - nicknamed Foxy Knoxy - will insist she was not at the house where Meredith, 21, was found last November but talking to her boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito elsewhere about the taunts. At a hearing in Perugia, northern Italy, to decide if she should be formally charged and face trial, she will highlight a phone call made by fellow suspect Rudy Guede that was tapped by police. In the call to a friend - made while Guede, 21, was on the run - he says: 'I was in the bathroom when it happened. One thing is certain, Amanda wasn't there.' 'I fought with a man when I came out. She was not there.'

The man referred to by Guede is understood to be Knox’s boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito, who is also facing trial. American student Knox, who was Meredith’s flatmate, will highlight Guede’s remarks through her lawyer when her pre-trial review resumes. Knox, 21, Sollecito, 24, and Guede all deny murdering Meredith, from Coulsdon, Surrey. Knox’s lawyers will also argue that any DNA evidence from the scene is merely natural contamination because she lived at the property where the killing took place.

They will also claim she was ‘beaten and abused’ by police after her arrest. They will say that despite the fact that police insist the murder was sexually motivated, there is not enough evidence from the post-mortem to prove this. Bank statements will also be produced to show that at the time of the murder last November, Knox had $4,465 (£2,400) in her bank, making it unlikely that robbery was a motive for the killing.

After her arrest, Knox said she was not at home but with Sollecito on the night Meredith, 21, died. Then she changed her story and said she was there and blamed bar owner Patrick Lumumba for the killing. Lumumba was arrested but later freed after witnesses said he was at his bar on the night of the killing.

In court documents seen by The Mail on Sunday, Knox writes: ‘I’m sorry for not setting the record straight from the beginning and I’m sorry for saying at first that I was there. I said these things because I was scared and confused.’ Last week Knox appeared in court demurely dressed in a white blouse with her hair tied back. But Francesco Maresca, the Kercher family lawyer, said she was deliberately trying ‘to make herself look sweet and innocent, like an angel’.

He said: ‘She wanted the judge and everyone else including Meredith’s poor parents to think how on earth can such a sweet-looking girl have murdered her flatmate and friend but it didn’t work. ‘As far as they are concerned, all three of them took part in the murder at various stages and, as far as we are concerned, the motive was sexual.’
We live in a world where the highest function of the sign is to make reality disappear (Baudrillard, 1996: 5).

In his book *The Perfect Crime* (1996) French philosopher and theorist of post-modernity Jean Baudrillard argues how reality has been murdered by the new technological environment. Baudrillard's thinking centres on the two main concepts of hyper-reality and simulation. Both terms refer to the virtual nature of contemporary culture in the age of mass communication and mass consumption. Baudrillard believes that we live in a world dominated by simulated experience and feelings and this made us lose the capacity to understand reality as it really exists. The reality has been driven out of reality and the world itself has left space to a simulation. ‘The proliferation of screens and images’ (Baudrillard, 1996: 4) has created the radical illusion through which our world still can exist and due to which the reality disappears. Hence people, facts, even wars seem not to exist or take place, although we watch them on TV. Drawing on his concepts of simulation and hyper-reality, in another book called *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1995) Baudrillard argues that an entire war like the first Gulf War in 1991 did not take place, but was a carefully scripted media event.

We will never know what [the war] would have been like had it existed. We will never know what an Iraqi taking part with a chance of fighting would have been like. We will never know what an American taking part with a chance of being beaten would have been like. We have seen what an ultra-modern process of electrocution is like, a process of paralysis or lobotomy of an experimental
enemy away from the field of battle with no possibility of reaction. But this is not a war, any more than 10,000 tonnes of bombs per day is sufficient to make it a war. Any more than the direct transmission by CNN of real time information is sufficient to authenticate a war. (Baudrillard, 1995: 61)

Composed of three essays and published in the Parisian newspaper, *Libération*, between January and March 1991, the book intended not, as some critics pointed out, to appear in total contradiction with the facts – just for the sake of it - and insensitive to the bloodshed that was actually taking place in Iraq at that time. This book aimed to draw attention to the fact that the Gulf War, the whole Operation Desert Storm, was so heavily edited and manipulated when shown on television, that what Americans and people from all over the world saw was not even close to the real war. A media show rather than a genuine war, pure hyper-reality, ‘a masquerade of information: branded faces delivered over to the prostitution of the image, the image of an unintelligible distress.’ (Baudrillard, 1995: 40). As *The Guardian* reporter Steven Poole wrote the day after Baudrillard’s death, ‘the war was conducted as a media spectacle. Rehearsed as a wargame or simulation, it was then enacted for the viewing public as a simulation: as a news event, with its paraphernalia of embedded journalists and missile's-eye-view video cameras, it was a videogame’ (Poole in *The Guardian*, 07 March 2007).

As Baudrillard points out the hyper-real becomes more real than reality itself. Inside this magnificent model of virtuality it seems impossible to disentangle the real from the representation, the true from the untrue. During an interview in 1984 the French thinker also outlined that in the postmodern universe we happen to live in,
entertainment, information and technologies provide experiences much more intense and fascinating than the banal everyday life (Baudrillard, 1984). A drug-fuelled group sex game gone wrong and ended in a bloody murder on a Halloween night sounds way more entertaining, glamorous and intense than a banal assassination in a cottage on an ordinary autumn evening. Not to mention the incredible pastiche of unusual scenarios which showed up in the Perugia case since Kercher’s death: the bizarre suspects’ behaviour who changed their confessions various times, the series of leaks to the press of succulent statements and evidence, gothic video footages and even jail diaries by suspects seen during the investigation and the investigation itself that from the very beginning appeared to be sloppy and slow, a festival of suppositions, theories and assumptions. A fantastic manufactured ad-hoc hyper-reality that could not but contribute to throwing an enthralling yet totally unprecedented foggy aura of mystery and ambiguity not only onto the crime case, but also onto everything closely related to it. No wonder the case of Meredith Kercher attracted media attention for more than a year. However, ever since the first contradictions began to arise, the public started to suspect and asked themselves whether the stories about the Perugia case which were being published and broadcasted might be viewed as reality: a good and impartial version of the truth or else as a distorted and false depiction of a supposed truth?

What we do as reporters is a concept that can best be defined as the best obtainable version of the truth. It’s our responsibility to get day after day the best obtainable version of the truth, which is a very simple thing to say and a very difficult thing to achieve (Carl Bernstein at the International Journalism Festival - Perugia 2008).
In a conference held in Italy in spring 2008, the American journalist Carl Bernstein spoke about the relationships between media and power and threw some light on the methods whereby journalists, press and the other media organs should deal with facts and people, in order to always deliver good pieces of information. Objectivity as both the ideal path to be followed and an extremely challenging issue was the bottom-line of Bernstein’s entire speech. Journalism Professors Jerry Lanson and Barbara Croll Fought (1999) highlight how crime reporters everyday face this same big challenging question, that is to inform the audiences of actual crime facts without sensationalising them in a way that the public’s perceptions of reality is distorted.

What truly happens often times yet, as Sheila Brown (2003) observes, is an overrepresentation of crime news and, as seen throughout the coverage of the Meredith Kercher murder case, of those individuals who happen to be involved. They are depicted in a disproportionately negative way using shocking and deplorable language and labelling, other than at times unneeded upsetting images, as those of the victim’s corpse broadcasted by an Italian local TV station, Telenorba 7, in one of the many episodes witnessed in the Perugia murder case of information, namely a crime scene forensic video, leaking to the press (Ponte in La Repubblica, 02.04.2008).

According to University of Hull Senior Lecturer in Criminology Yvonne Jewkes (2004) press, radio and television are not windows on the world, but a prism subtly distorting our picture of reality, of what we have always called the truth. After trampling on and killing the real, the hyper-reality produces a postmodern culture centred on immediate consumption and sensationalised impact where the distinction
between information and entertainment is abandoned and facts and fiction become hybridised. This aspect will be discussed further on in this thesis.
- angel face or diabolic siren -

È difficile immaginarla come una fredda assassina quando varca la soglia del Tribunale accompagnata da due guardie penitenziarie. Difficile credere che abbia ucciso per pochi soldi, e chissà quali contrasti. Eppure la procura dice che è lei, Amanda Knox, quella che ha organizzato tutto. Ha i polsi liberi dalle manette, una camicia bianca leggera, i jeans e un viso che se Hitchcock l’avesse conosciuta ne avrebbe fatto la protagonista di un suo giallo (Mangani in Il Messaggero, 16.09.2008b).

As earlier debated in chapter one, one of the peculiarity of the Perugia murder case was the wild and perhaps extreme media coverage of the story. Thanks to the massive amount of material made available in various formats and from different sources, correspondents deployed to report from the hilltop Italian town easily managed for more than a year to shape their fascinating and exclusive scoops.

As Research Director for the US National Council on Crime and Delinquency James Garofalo observes in his essay Crime and the Mass Media (1981: 334), rather few people have wide-ranging direct experience with crime. Therefore it appears reasonable that the public’s mental images of crime, as well of criminals and criminal justice, are to a great extent shaped by the mass media: fantastic and riveting stories according to someone, nonsense and speculations according to others.

14 Watching her on the way into the courtroom escorted by two penitentiary police officers, it’s hard to imagine her as a cold-blooded murderer. It’s hard to believe that she killed someone over money or over God-knows-what sort of arguments. However prosecutors claim that Amanda Knox set up the whole thing. She’s now uncuffed and dressed in a white lace-edged blouse and blue jeans. If Hitchcock had ever met her, he would have given her a main role in one of his thriller movies.
American student Amanda Marie Knox arrived in Italy from Seattle at the end of the summer 2007 to study Italian on a three months exchange programme at Università per Stranieri di Perugia. Before classes started she found a place to live, a small cottage she shared with British student Meredith Kercher and two Italian girls. A post on her MySpace page read: 'It's a cute house that is right in the middle of this random garden in the middle of Perugia. … I’m in love’ (Owen, Foster and Rajeev in The Times, 07.11.2007).

To many of her friends and teachers in her home town, Amanda Knox was by all accounts a brilliant student, a talented sportswoman and the morally-upright product of her austere education at a $12,000-a-year Jesuit college. Two years at the prestigious University of Washington followed and then her admission to the Perugia foreign language programme. As Daily Mail journalist Sharon Churcher (11.11.2007) wrote, this was a dream that had come true for the American woman. A dream that soon turned in her worst nightmare ever. Overnight, in every sense of the word, Amanda Knox became the leading character, the protagonist of one of the most gruesome and intricate murder cases in the last few years.

During the first hearing held in October 2008 Perugia prosecutors Giuliano Mignini and Manuela Comodi claimed that on the night of November 01, 2007 Knox stabbed her British flatmate Meredith Kercher as the other two suspects, Rudy Guede from Ivory Coast and Knox’s Italian ex boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito, held her down and strangled her during a sexual assault in which Kercher eventually died an agonisingly slow death (Corriere della Sera, 18.10.2008) (Pisa in Daily Mail, 20.10.2008).
After the first Knox’s appearance in court in September 2008, when she was dressed in a white blouse and blue jeans, with her hair tied back and just a hint of make-up on her face, Francesco Maresca, the Kercher family’s legal representative, firmly claimed:

She wanted the judge and everyone else including Meredith’s poor parents to think how on earth can such a sweet-looking girl have murdered her flatmate and friend. She was deliberately trying to make herself look sweet and innocent, like an angel’ (Pisa in Daily Mail, 22.09.2008).

On the following month of October, before the pre-trial hearing had even begun, Knox burst into sobs and tears claiming her innocence. ‘I am innocent. I didn’t murder my friend Meredith’, she said and added that in the first interrogations she said what she said because of the pressure she was put under by Italian police who hit her around the head and told her that she would go to prison for 30 years (Corriere della Sera, 18.10.2008) (Pisa in Daily Mail, 20.10.2008).

Over the whole year following the brutal slaying of Meredith Kercher, the blonde American woman next door Amanda Knox and the mediated “angel-face-men-eater-hash-smoking-party-girl-obscure-dark-lady-from-Seattle” character Foxy Knoxy (CBS, 09.11.2007) (Churcher in Daily Mail, 11.11.2007) (Mangani in Il Messaggero, 16.09.2008a) (Capponi in Corriere della Sera, 17.09.2008) let world public’s imagination run wild. Particularly young people remained hypnotised and obsessed to such a fascinating story and most of all to such an intriguing hero, as journalist
Enrico Arosio wrote in a piece significantly titled “Ossessione Amanda”\textsuperscript{15} (Arosio in \textit{L’Espresso}, 27.11.2007).

According to feminist scholars and psychologists, the obsession towards this female supposedly evil figure might be explained with the novelty and high newsworthiness to media organs of a young beautiful woman unexpectedly implicated in an awfully serious crime. Women rarely stalk, kill strangers or commit serial murder. Yet when this happens, even if only allegedly, media are provided with a sensational and powerful image of the unusual female criminal that fails to comply with some conventional feminine stereotypes such as innocence, passivity, monogamy and motherhood. Sexuality, physical attractiveness and sexual deviance play an undeniably central role in this complex process of fascination of the uncommon. If a woman can be demonstrated, or even just hinted, to be morally vacuous, lesbian or promiscuous, the portrayal of her as manipulative and evil enough to commit a crime such a murder is way more straightforward. She then becomes the evil manipulator, deviant temptress and murderous witch clearly deriving from pagan mythology, Judaeo-Christian theology and classical art and literature (Jewkes, 2004) (Wykes, 2001).

The picture Knox herself exposed on the Internet and the representation given by the media was exactly that of a diabolical, false and monstrous woman, that of a potential killer. The photos posted online of Knox screaming behind a machinegun or posing outside a cannabis shop, together with a YouTube\textsuperscript{16} video showing her drunk with friends while at university provided an image of the American student far

\textsuperscript{15} Obsession Amanda. \\
\textsuperscript{16} A major Internet video-sharing website.
removed from the studious, hard-working and most of all innocent girl depicted by her family and friends at home.

[This] is the other, secret side of this most enigmatic of accused murderers; the Amanda Knox who, ever since she was an impressionable teenager, has felt driven to aggressively compete with other women, most notably her own mother, for the attention of men. (Churcher in Daily Mail, 11.11.2007)

Only ten days had passed from the murder of Meredith Kercher and stories of the type seen here above were invading the Web, appearing especially in British and Italian newspapers and magazines. From a certain point of view this type of approach might be seen as a little pushed over the limit. American public opinion spoke of speculations and outrageous fantasies put together by British and Italian tabloids, which in reality was fabricated nonsense. Interviewed by local Seattle TV channel KIRO 7, CBS correspondent Peter Van Sant firmly claimed how Amanda Knox was getting savaged in the British and Italian press and being portrayed as some sort of promiscuous slutty girl due to that nickname, Foxy Knoxy, she had on her MySpace account and which was simply her nickname from when she was young, when she was a soccer player and her team mates said that on the pitch she moved around like a fox (EXTENDED INTERVIEW: 48 Hours Investigates Amanda Knox Case, 11.04.2008).

To the American eyes the Perugia case seemed puzzling ever since the three suspects were put into custody by Italian police in November 2007. Some American lawyers, hired by American TV channels to examine the case, have been fiercely supporting
Knox and accused the investigation led by Italian police of incompetence and carelessness with violations of the crime scene and contamination of crucial evidence. They also suggested, along with a Seattle Judge and the “Friends of Amanda” (a supporting group that at around the end of September 2008 started selling “Free Amanda” T-shirts, baseball caps and mugs in an attempt to raise further publicity), that the proceedings against the young American student should be moved to the United States. Reactions from Italian police and prosecutors were immediate and vehement, accusing the Americans of being pretentious and superficial with comments from over 9,000 kilometres away on a case they had no knowledge of, and offensive claims without knowing the complexities of Italian judicial terminology (Donadio in *The New York Times*, 30.09.2008) (Ponte in *La Repubblica*, 21.10.2008). Further features regarding the supposed unskilled investigation led by Italian police and the role played by science in the case will be analysed in chapter three of this thesis.
Murder preoccupies the media. It is the single most newsworthy kind of crime, simple to understand, endlessly different in its permutations and often ordinary in its gruesomeness (Osborne, 1995: 39).

The prosecution in the Perugia case said that the British student Meredith Kercher was sexually assaulted and then stabbed in the throat by her 21-year-old American flatmate Amanda Knox. It was also alleged that Rudy Guede from Ivory Coast and Knox’s ex-boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito held Kercher down during the attack (Sarzanini in Corriere della Sera, 19.10.2008). Since the night of the murder on November 01, 2007 the three suspects were held in custody and meanwhile targeted by the media. However the two male characters sort of remained in the shadow of the protagonist Foxy Knox. They both received the same treatment from the press as Knox, but, due to fewer ambiguities concerning their confessions and possibly much clearer evidence about them collected on the crime scene, the computer-science student Raffaele Sollecito and the Ivory Coast citizen Rudy Hermann Guede did not generate any kind of obsession into the public or the media environment.

Both Sollecito and Guede always denied any involvement in the murder and kept protesting their innocence ever since they were imprisoned in September 2007. In some letters from the cell, not surprisingly leaked to an Italian monthly magazine, Sollecito also wrote that he and the murdered Kercher were in reality both victims of terrible and extraordinary circumstances and their lives had both been destroyed on that appalling November morning when the lifeless body of the British student was
found on her room floor covered by a duvet (Pisa in Daily Mail, 23.10.2008). Yet Sollecito’s existence did not seem that ruined less than two days after the murder when some Perugia clothing shop’s CCTV cameras caught him and his likewise devastated American girlfriend kissing and embracing each other while purchasing sexy underwear and promising each other a night of wild sex (Ponte in La Repubblica, 23.11.2007). This once again leaked video footage, the photos posted on Sollecito’s Facebook page picturing him wrapped up in toilet paper and holding a butcher’s cleaver and some further succulent information on his knives and bloody Japanese manga comics collections, helped to portray to the public a new odd and unusual character with at-times-crazy personality who alongside Foxy Knox resulted perfectly fitting into the thrilling Perugia murder case (Pisa in Daily Mail, 20.10.2008).

The picture was almost complete. The appearance on public’s screens of the third main character, the black drifter and small-time drugs dealer, would add the last touches. Again, posted on YouTube, a video clip of the Ivorian Rudy Hermann Guede weirdly acting and repetitively claiming to be an alien, a vampire and Count Dracula, outlined his personality and most of all showed to the world the character Guede, the mad man whose DNA was all over the place in Kercher’s bedroom (Rossitto in Panorama, 03.04.2008). Allegations about him being a drug dealer and a petty thief made his position extremely clear and the public easily reached a verdict: guilty (Owen in The Times, 28.10.2008). During the months of September and October 2008 Guede was also shown walking in the courtroom with, unlike the other two suspects, his hands handcuffed behind his back. He was guilty without any
evidence proving that he was the one who carried out the knifing and without any verdict pronounced yet.

At the end of October 2008 Guede was sentenced by Judge Paolo Micheli to 30 years in jail, a reduction granted by the abbreviated procedure – he had requested a fast-track trial - after prosecutors had asked for the maximum life sentence. The brave defense led by his lawyers, who claimed Guede’s innocence as he had never changed his story while the other two defendants had, turned out to be useless. They also said his client was being accused of murder only because he was the easiest target and such a verdict was totally predictable (Corriere della Sera, 25.10.2008). People eventually had what they wanted. Justice was done. The wicked man, which in the Perugia murder case happened to be black too, had been caught and put behind bars.
Perugia, strongly fortified by art and nature, on a lofty eminence, rising abruptly from the plain where purple mountains mingle with the distant sky, is glowing, on its marketday, with radiant colours (Dickens, 1846: 179).

One year since the death of Meredith Kercher, the still sealed off cottage in Via della Pergola, 7 had turned into one of the city’s main places of interest. The ‘house of horrors’ would be soon put in a guidebook, said author Zachary Novak while interviewed by Italian reporter Cristiana Mangani (Mangani in Il Messaggero, 27.10.2008).

Perugia is renowned around the world for its art museum, its chocolates, and for the famous summer Umbria Jazz Festival. The Università per Stranieri di Perugia is another pride and joy for the city. Very popular among foreign students learning Italian, it is certainly one of the main reasons why Perugia is considered a fantastic place to be a student. International students also rule the city economy, as many Italian families have left the town centre and rent their apartments to those attending university. Furthermore, the lively clubs, the cosmopolitan population and the dynamic student life have turned the city founded by Etruscans in a longed-for ‘Mecca’ for any young people coming from the five continents. Nevertheless after the Kercher’s murder, the public’s perception of Perugia underwent a big change and the city suddenly turned into a Dantesque circle, the modern Sodom, the Ibiza of foreign students where transgression, vodka and hashish were the sine qua non, the students’ first necessity, as journalist Fabrizio Roncone wrote a few days within the
Kercher murder (Roncone in *Corriere della Sera*, 08.11.2007) (Popham in *The Independent*, 11.11.2007).

As seen in the previous paragraphs, what happened in the “house of horrors” on the night of November 01, 2007 provoked an unprecedented deployment of media to report about the murder and the moral decline of the new Sin City. Especially during the first two months after the police burst into the cottage in Via della Pergola, 7 Perugia was invaded by journalists from all over the world, who, as Rome-based criminal lawyer Maria Valeria Feraco said, started in a certain way to ‘play all at being detectives and judges themselves’ (interview with the author, 03.09.2008). This behaviour, also due to basic market rules which will be analysed in the next paragraph, led to every sort of assumptions, allegations and fantasies regarding the suspects, the victim and the case on the whole. Among them, the “satanic-ritual theory” supported by a book released in January 2008 – only three months after of the murder - by Italian journalist Giancarlo Padula. According to Padula (2008: 19-35) behind the drug-fuelled group sex game tragically ended in the Kercher’s killing would clearly stand the demons of death, lust and filth, alongside Satan himself, that after being evoked on the deadliest night of the year, the Halloween night, took possession of those who brought them in and of the victim’s soul.

As Perugia local newspaper *Il Messaggero Umbro* editor-in-chief Sandro Petrollini outlined during a conference in April 2008, the image of the city provided by national and international media after the dreadful killing of the British girl was devastating with an astonishing and exclusive focus on the alleged obscure and dark side of the city, made of drugs, alcohol and perversions of any kind. A dark side that
is present in any other Italian or international city, Petrollini said. The attitude he also suggested it should be taken more often by any media outlet would be the propensity not only to show the misery and the gloom, but also to inquire the causes behind them, behind the so-called ‘Perugia phenomenon’, in order to maybe give back to the city some of the splendour people as Charles Dickens and Meredith Kercher were stunned by.
When the first pictures of her foot emerged, we said: “That is terrible pictures” and the desk in London said: “That’s disgusting, get them we want them as well” (interview with Nick Pisa, 11.09.2008).

As debated earlier in this chapter, an excessive emphasis on the spectacular and the violent might appear in the media, with the resulting sensationalisation and overrepresentation of the actual crime news. As University of Sheffield Professor of Media Communication Bob Franklin (1997) and Sheila Brown (2003) argue this is a trend which could be generated in accordance with values of newsworthiness, but to a bigger extent with rules of marketing. From the market’s point of view the public appeal of a story is absolutely fundamental. A lack of it would be reflected in poor sales figures. That is why public appeal is frequently used to justify what could seem dramatic or too sensationalist, as Italian journalist Cristiana Mangani outlines:

Naturally we are subject to the demands of the market. If you reader or you citizen ask me something because you want to read it, of course I will give you that something, I will provide you any subject you want. Maybe my approach will be exaggerated, or even wrong, but this is what you’re asking me. Unfortunately, this may also lead to the regrettable example of Telenorba.
According to Franklin, news media have become part of the entertainment industry and news is conceived as a product designed for a specific market. ‘Journalists are more concerned to report stories which interest the public than stories which are in the public interest’ (Franklin, 1997: 4). The term Franklin uses to describe the new media creature is the British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge’s neologism ‘newszak’, a combination of the words “news” and “muzak”, the bland music piped in to stores and other public spaces (Franklin, 1997: 4, 9). The New York Times journalist Sally Bedell also chose the same term to describe Entertainment tonight, the flashy and gossipy TV programme that became extraordinarily popular in the Eighties using a news format for an essentially entertainment programme (Bedell in The New York Times, 18.01.1983). News is converted into entertainment. As a result, journalism becomes engaging rather than informing. Franklin also employs the “newszak” concept and the term “infotainment” - which will be taken into further analysis in chapter three of this dissertation - to draw the attention on the shift of broadsheet newspapers, commonly perceived as more intellectual, towards a more tabloidy aspect in format and above all in contents. High priorities are now being allocated to stories which once would have been disdained as light and colourful tabloid stories (Franklin, 1997).


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18 Nobody noticed the smile that imperceptibly appeared on an ordinary Perugia day, in an ordinary courtroom. The only witnesses were the lawyers. They said it was there, no doubt, ‘a warm and sweet smile of 20-year-old people who are still very much in love’. 
Along with Corriere della Sera, La Repubblica and La Stampa, Il Giornale newspaper can be considered as one of the main Italian national newspapers. By the end of September 2008 the three defendants in the Meredith Kercher murder case, Kercher’s American flatmate Amanda Knox, her ex boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito and Ivorian Rudy Guede had been in custody for almost eleven months, since the British student was found half naked with her throat cut in her bedroom in Perugia. The fragment cited above has been taken from the day after the court hearing where for the first time after their arrest, Amanda Knox and her Italian ex-boyfriend Sollecito walked into the same room and exchanged a few glances. The one page long Macioce’s article appears entertaining and enjoyable, with detailed descriptions of the defendants’ outfits, their feelings while stepping into the trial room, their facial expressions and two huge close-ups of them staring at each other with the caption reading: ‘Divisi a processo: Raffaele e Amanda a giudizio per la morte di Meredith Kercher: in aula solo uno sguardo freddo. I due ormai sono “ex”’.19 On the right hand side of the page an eye-catching photo sequence stands out bearing the headline: ‘Il giallo di Perugia e le immagini della love story’.20 This is a clear example of one of the many Home News, “Cronaca Nera” (literally “Black chronicle”), pieces printed in what could be seen as a hybrid broadsheet format newspaper containing tabloid entertaining stories.

Unlike Britain and Anglo-Saxon journalism generally, Italy does not have either a tabloid tradition or a proper tabloid newspaper. Despite the fact that an authoritative national newspaper such as La Repubblica adopted the tabloid format years ago, this compact size did not mean a move towards sensationalism, celebrities and gossip. In

19 Divided in court: Only cold glances between Raffaele and Amanda, the two ex-lovers trialled for Meredith Kercher’s death.
20 The Perugia mystery and the pictures of the love story.
Italy there is simply no distinction, technically and content wise, between broadsheet newspapers and tabloids. It is not important whether the physical broadsheet format or the smaller tabloid size is being used, every Italian daily newspaper can be viewed as what Bob Franklin (1997: 7) calls a ‘broadloid’, in which the contents of the tabloid genre are allowed to fill broadsheet pages and vice versa with almost no restrictions whatsoever.
- conclusions -

As media scholars and criminologists outline, among them University of the West Indies, Trinidad, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Behavioural Sciences Derek Chadee and University of Sheffield Professor of Criminology Jason Ditton, newspaper crime news concentrates heavily on those crimes considered as infrequent and involving sex or violence, better yet both. Especially in the tabloid press, but to an important degree in the broadsheets as well, sex is viewed as one of the most salient news values and sexually motivated murders always receive substantial and overemphasised attention (Chadee and Ditton, 2005) (Jewkes, 2004). In addition, as debated throughout the second chapter, sex and violence are not the only aspects to be taken into consideration in the Perugia murder case. Some other characters have played an important role in this case, as journalist Cristiana Mangani pointed out:

In un fatto come quello di Meredith c’erano tutte le componenti perché il fatto diventasse interessante per lo spettatore. C’erano i giovani, gli studenti, internazionale e un omicidio senza una logica\(^2\) (interview with the author, 05.08.2008).

In the Meredith Kercher case all these elements appeared to be well visible since the very first week of investigation, together with the revelations published by most of the press and mentioned in the previous paragraphs about dope addictions and extreme drinking habits in dusk-to-dawn parties. As journalist Giamila Yehya outlined on the Italian monthly magazine MAX these aspects relates not only to the

\(^2\) In a case like the Meredith one there were all the elements needed to make it an interesting story for the readers. There were young people involved, students, an international prominence and a murder mystery without any motivation.
three suspects, but to an entire young, lonely and bored generation who aimlessly
roamed around a city that to the eyes of the entire world had become the tenth circle
of Dante’s inferno.

La Generazione-Amanda è una generazione digitale che
comunica via sms, scrive email chilometriche, passa intere
nottate su MSN, aggiorna quotidianamente i blog, ma è
incapace di parlare. … Questi figli dell’assenza e del
virtuale non sanno più chi sono; sanno soltanto cosa
posseggono. Nei loro blog la prima parola chiave è
“confusione”, la seconda è “solitudine” (Yehya in MAX, January 2008).

Journalists and psychologists observed that this is the degeneration of a generation,
the so-called “Facebook Generation” (Popham in The Independent, 11.11.2007) or
“Web 2.0 Generation” (Yehya in MAX, January 2008), who longs for intense
experiences and strong emotions, who aims to be unmonitored and totally free and
who is obsessed with an insatiable need to share their feeling with the rest of the
world and tell that same world about every single aspect of their lives (Piperno in
Panorama, 22.11.2007) (Arosio in L’Espresso, 27.11.2007). The Internet is their
world, the world of virtuality in which everything appears to be possible and more
real than this world.

The only truth you know is what you get over this tube.

Right now, there is a whole and entire generation that never

22 MSN Messenger (in the latter version the name has changed in Windows Live Messenger) is an
instant messaging programme that lets you send instant messages to your contacts (friends).
23 Generation Amanda is a digital generation of young people that communicate via text messages,
write never-ending emails, spend entire nights chatting on MSN, update daily their blog pages, but
aren’t able to speak. … These sons of the absence and the virtual no longer know who they are; they
only understand what they have. In their blogs the first key word is “confusion”; the second
“loneliness”.

knew anything that didn't come out of this tube. This tube is the gospel, the ultimate revelation. This tube can make or break presidents, popes, prime ministers. This tube is the most awesome goddamn force in the whole godless world (Network, 1976).
chapter III

CRIME SCENE

DO NOT CROSS
“Hanno inquinato la scena del crimine”\textsuperscript{24} (Stancanelli in Panorama, 13.03.2008).

Omicidio Mez, la difesa attacca sul Dna. La tecno-poliziotta: Nessuna contaminazione\textsuperscript{25} (Ponti in La Repubblica, 05.10.2008).

“Amanda e Raffaele erano lì. Tre prove li incastrano”\textsuperscript{26} (Sarzanini in Corriere della Sera, 05.10.2008).

CSI technique leads Italian police to bloody footprint in Foxy Knoxy’s bedroom (Pisa in Daily Mail, 11.01.2008).

\textsuperscript{24} “The crime scene was contaminated”.
\textsuperscript{25} Mez’s murder, the defense accuses of DNA mishandling. The super tech-cop says: No contamination at all.
\textsuperscript{26} “Amanda and Raffaele were there: three evidences frame them up”.
Il processo di Perugia. Scontro sulle tracce di sangue e di DNA

«Amanda e Raffaele erano lì. Tre prove li incastrano»

Le accuse della Scientifica. La difesa: impianto sgretolato

PERUGIA — Tre indizi per formare la prova e sostenere che i tre imputati erano nella stanza del delitto. Tracce di sangue e Dna per affermare che uccisero Meredith Kercher e poi cercarono di alterare la scena del crimine. I test effettuati dalla polizia Scientifica superano l’esame dell’udienza preliminare e aprono la strada al rinvio a giudizio di Amanda Knox e Raffaele Sollecito. Perché è proprio del ragazzo barese il codice genetico trovato sul reggiseno della vittima. Dunque, sostiene l’accusa, «lui era lì insieme agli altri, partecipò all’omicidio». Poi, nel tentativo di avvalorare questa tesi, il pubblico ministero deposita una nuova relazione per smentire la versione fornita da Rudy Hermann Guede, l’unico ad aver chiesto di essere giudicato con il rito abbreviato.

Sono in aula i presunti assassini, sempre vicino ai propri avvocati. Vietato parlarsi e allora seguono attenti la discussione tra i periti, il contraddittorio che può segnare il loro destino. Si parla di macchie ematiche, di alleli, di compatibilità. Dettagli tecnici, nulla a che vedere con le testimonianze e gli alibi relativi a quella sera del primo novembre quando la ventunenne inglese — a Perugia da due mesi con il progetto Erasmus — fu uccisa a coltellate. Ma si capisce che l’accusa segna un punto decisivo a proprio favore anche se poi, alla fine dell’udienza, i legali di Sollecito sosterranno che «è andata bene, l’impianto si è sgretolato».

Dura nove ore l’interrogatorio di Patrizia Stefanoni, la biologa della Scientifica che coordina l’Ert, gli esperti nella ricerca delle tracce. I consulenti della difesa la incalzano, ribadiscono che le prove sono state contraffatte. Sostengono che il Dna sul gancetto del reggiseno è frutto di contaminazione, dichiarano che anche la traccia mista di Amanda e Meredith rilevata sul coltello di Raffaele non prova che è l’arma del delitto. Sono i due indizi principali e le loro argomentazioni vengono smontate. «Perché — spiega Stefanoni — per ogni reperto abbiamo usato un paio di guanti diversi, come possono testimoniare i periti scelti della difesa. E siccome il Dna non vola, è impossibile che i reperti siano stati alterati».

Quando si parla di Rudy, il pubblico ministero Giuliano Mignini deposita una nuova relazione sul cuscino trovato sotto il corpo di Meredith, per sostenere che l’ivoriano non fece alcun tentativo di soccorrerla ma anzi partecipò all’omicidio. «Fatti vecchi», liquidano i difensori Walter Biscotti e Nicodemo Gentile. Ma è il terzo indizio che l’accusa userà. L’ulteriore tassello che giocherà alla prossima udienza, il 18 ottobre, quando chiederà alla sua condanna e il processo per Amanda e Raffaele. I legali del barese — Giulia Bongiorno, Luca Maori e Marco Brusco — ostentano sicurezza quando si tratta di fare previsioni sull’esito finale. Ma appare difficile che riescano ad evitare il dibattimento davanti alla Corte d’assise.

Fiorenza Sarzanini
CSI technique leads Italian police to bloody footprint in Foxy Knoxy's bedroom

By NICK PISA

A bloody bare footprint has been discovered by forensic teams investigating the murder of British student Meredith Kercher, Italian police have revealed.

The imprint was discovered by police scientists using Luminol - a substance that turns blue in the presence of blood and made famous by hit series CSI Miami.

The news came just hours after police revealed that they had discovered traces of DNA from suspect Raffaele Sollecito on Meredith's bra.

Computer studies student Sollecito, 24, the boyfriend of fellow suspect Amanda Knox, 20, who was Meredith's flatmate, had always denied being at the crime scene.

Edgardo Giobbi, chief of the Rome based scientific police, said: "This is a crucial discovery and very important. "It was discovered during the examination of the apartment and was in Amanda's bedroom. At this stage we do not know if it was made by a man or a women.

"It will be compared to the three suspects and there were also traces of blood found between the room and other parts of the apartment.

"Luminol also showed up traces of blood in Meredith's bedroom and these are also being investigated."

Luminol is used by crime scene investigators to locate traces of blood, even if it has been cleaned or removed.

It is sprayed over the crime scene and the iron present in any blood in the area sparks a chemical reaction which causes the Luminol to "glow" blue.

The glow lasts for about 30 seconds and examinations are usually carried out at night as it needs to be dark.

Meredith, 20, was found semi-naked and with her throat cut in the bedroom of her student digs in Perugia on November 2.

Four days later American Knox, 20, Sollecito and local bar owner Patrick Diya Lumumba, 38, were held on suspicion of her murder.

Lumumba was later released but a fourth suspect Rudy Herman Guede, 20, was arrested in Germany after fleeing the country and extradited back to Italy.

His DNA has also been found on Meredith's bra as well as a bloody fingerprint of his on a pillow at the murder scene.

Knox, 20, shared a house in Perugia with Meredith and two other girls. Police expect that she and the other two suspects will face trial at the end of the year.
Detectives have also revealed that they were trying to track down two of Meredith's credit cards that have disappeared.

Police are working on the theory that Meredith was murdered after stumbling across Guede and Knox as they stole money she kept in her underwear drawer. Meanwhile, the Perugia chief prosecutor Giuliano Mignini said he expected the investigations to be completed by the summer and the three suspects to face trial at the end of the year.

Sollecito's lawyer Marco Brusco said that his client had expressed "surprise" that his DNA had been found on Meredith's bra. Mr Brusco added: "As I have already said, we shall await the full report before saying anything but my client is surprised to hear his DNA has been found."

Sollecito has always insisted that he was at home working on his computer at the time of the murder but police say the discovery puts him at the scene. Knox also denies being involved in the murder.

Knox and Sollecito share a kiss in the days after Meredith was killed, and before they were arrested and accused of killing her in a violent sex game that went wrong.
Details Only Add to Puzzle in Umbrian Murder Case

A Seattle college student, Amanda Knox, escorted to a pretrial hearing on Saturday, is suspected of killing her British housemate in Perugia last year. (photo: Daniele La Monaca/Reuters)

By RACHEL DONADIO

PERUGIA, Italy — From the rear windows of the medieval courthouse here you can see clear across the Umbrian countryside to Assisi. But inside, a true-crime drama is playing out whose brutality seems at odds with the postcard-perfect surroundings.

In the coming weeks, a judge will decide whether to indict Amanda Knox, of Seattle, and her onetime Italian boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito, in the killing of Ms. Knox’s 21-year-old housemate, Meredith Kercher, last November. A third suspect, Rudy Hermann Guede, who was born in Ivory Coast and grew up in Italy, is undergoing a separate fast-track, closed-door trial for murder and sexual assault; a verdict in his case is expected by the end of October.

With its good-looking young suspects, tales of junior-year-abroad debauchery and hints of racial tensions in a sleepy college town, the case has drawn relentless news media attention, particularly in Italian and British tabloids. Whenever the suspects arrive in court, they face a veritable Fleet Street gauntlet. There are blogs and books about the case. But much of the coverage is speculative because nearly a year has gone by without any decisive developments.

There is still no clear motive, no precise time of death and no definitive murder weapon. Because the case has not yet moved to open court, details have emerged in a wild series of leaks, contradictions and reversals. All three suspects say they are innocent. And the more information that materializes, the hazier the story becomes.

But this much seems clear: last Nov. 2, Ms. Kercher, an exchange student from Surrey, England, was found strangled and with her throat cut, wrapped in a duvet in the hillside house she shared with Ms. Knox and two other women. Mr. Guede has admitted he was in the house the night she was killed and traces of his DNA and a bloody fingerprint were found there, the police have said.
An eight-inch kitchen knife was found at Mr. Sollecito’s house with traces of Ms. Kercher’s DNA near the tip and Ms. Knox’s near the handle, prosecutors say. Prosecutors say the killing was part of a drug-fueled group sexual assault and have charged the three suspects with “voluntary murder with the aggravating circumstance of cruelty,” which carries a life sentence. They have also charged Ms. Knox, a student at the University of Washington, and Mr. Sollecito, a computer science student, with covering up the murder to make it look like a robbery. Over time, Ms. Knox, 21, has changed her statements. At first she said she was at Mr. Sollecito’s house the night of the killing. Then she said she was at her house during the killing, and accused another man of the crime. He is no longer a suspect and is suing her for defamation. Italy’s highest court later deemed that statement inadmissible after it emerged that Ms. Knox had been questioned without a lawyer or an interpreter, although the same ruling upheld her detention. Ms. Knox now says she returned home to find Ms. Kercher’s body after spending the night at Mr. Sollecito’s house, where the two smoked marijuana. Prosecutors maintain that Ms. Knox said multiple times that she was at the house during the murder.

Over time, Ms. Knox, 21, has changed her statements. At first she said she was at Mr. Sollecito’s house the night of the killing. Then she said she was at her house during the killing, and accused another man of the crime. He is no longer a suspect and is suing her for defamation. Italy’s highest court later deemed that statement inadmissible after it emerged that Ms. Knox had been questioned without a lawyer or an interpreter, although the same ruling upheld her detention. Ms. Knox now says she returned home to find Ms. Kercher’s body after spending the night at Mr. Sollecito’s house, where the two smoked marijuana. Prosecutors maintain that Ms. Knox said multiple times that she was at the house during the murder. To American eyes, the case can seem baffling, with prosecutors, law enforcement and lawyers regularly leaking confidential material. And under Italy’s preventive detention laws, the suspects have been in jail since last November, although Ms. Knox and Mr. Sollecito have not yet been formally indicted. The judge must either indict them before the end of October or renew the detention order. The process can also seem slow. But “for Italy, the timing is extremely quick,” said Francesco Maresca, a lawyer for the Kercher family. He predicted the case would go to trial early next year, with a verdict next summer. “The important thing is they were all there,” he said. “All three are responsible.”

As in the unresolved case of Madeleine McCann, the 3-year-old British girl who disappeared in Portugal during a family vacation last year, the investigation has drawn accusations of incompetence. “I’m not impressed,” said Joseph Tacopina, an American lawyer who was paid by ABC News to examine the case. He said Italian authorities had violated the crime scene. “They trampled all over that place,” he said. “That makes forensic evidence unreliable.”

In the courthouse last week, reporters and paparazzi clustered five-deep behind a barricade to catch a glimpse of the suspects as they were escorted into court. “Are you innocent, Amanda?” one reporter shouted before a hearing. “Foxy-Knox Comes Face to Face with Look-Alike Ex-Boyfriend,” ran a headline in Britain’s Daily Mail newspaper after Ms. Knox and Mr. Sollecito both wore white and blue to court. “They’re brutalizing her in the press,” Curt Knox, Amanda’s father, said in an emotional interview here last week. He said his daughter had cooperated with the police and never expected to be implicated. “She is 100 percent innocent,” he said. Mr. Knox, an executive at Macy’s, and Amanda’s mother, Edda Mellas, a Seattle schoolteacher, have taken turns living in Italy to visit their daughter in prison.

The case is being watched closely. “Obviously, we’re following the case, as we do with all American citizens arrested,” said Philip Egger, the consul general at the United States Embassy in Rome. Through a spokeswoman, Senator Maria Cantwell, Democrat of Washington, said she was “concerned that all citizens who visit Italy, or Europe, receive fair treatment and adequate due process if they are suspected of or prosecuted for criminal offences.”

Mr. Sollecito’s family has hired one of Italy’s top lawyers, Giulia Bongiorno, a member of Parliament who has successfully defended the seven-time prime minister Giulio Andreotti in Mafia trials. After the hearings last Friday, defense lawyers held impromptu news conferences, poking holes in the story of the only witness who claims to have seen the three suspects together the night of the crime. “It was a festival of ‘I don’t know,’ ‘I don’t remember,’ ” said one of Mr. Guede’s lawyers, Nicodemo Gentile. There is no public record from the closed proceedings.

Prosecutors have also implicated Ms. Knox’s former boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito. (photo: Tiziana Fabi/AFP — Getty Images)

Rudy Hermann Guede is being tried separately for murder and sexual assault. (photo: Pier Paolo Cito/Associated Press)
As outlined earlier on the first theory produced by the prosecution in the Meredith Kercher murder case a few weeks after the British girl’s body was found in Via della Pergola, 7 was that Knox and Sollecito staged the crime and Lumumba physically committed it, more than likely with some assistance from the other two. According to Chicago private detective Paul Ciolino, who was brought to Italy by American TV channel CBS to look into the case, that would be a ‘great theory, until the science comes rolling in, until the fingerprints show up’ (A Long Way From Home, CBS - 13.04.2008). When this happened, the story was radically reversed.

A murder such as the one in Perugia in 2007 was practically unheard in local history. Italian investigators spared no expense bringing the country’s best forensic teams to Perugia. During the course of the investigation police said they recovered hard evidence linking American student Amanda Knox to the murder. Traces of her blood mixed with the victim’s blood were detected in their house, mainly in the bathroom. Police also had Rudy Guede’s fingerprint and shoeprint in Kercher’s bedroom both in her blood. Extensive testing on a knife taken from Raffele Sollecito’s kitchen drawer showed Knox’s DNA on the handle as well as Kercher’s on the blade. The compatible murder weapon had been found, police claimed. Moreover the DNA belonging both to Guede and Sollecito found on the clasp of the victim’s torn bra in her room proved that the Ivorian did not act alone. And if Sollecito was involved so was Knox, simply because they both stated they were together that night. Caso Chiuso then: during a drug-fuelled sex frenzy 21-year-old Meredith Kercher was killed by the group of three (Bonini in La Repubblica, 21.11.2007) (Owen in The
Thanks to forensics the truth had finally come up. Science had provided the ultimate answer. Perhaps, as criminal lawyer Maria Valeria Feraco illustrates:

I metodi scientifici sono sicuramente utili. Sono però anche un’arma a doppio taglio poiché portano molti investigatori ad adagiarsi su quelle che sono le risultanze di esami del Dna o di altre impronte, andando a scapito della logica e di quegli elementi che una volta erano i primi che si andavano a verificare. ... Non si può affidare sempre e solo tutto all’esame del Dna, della macchiolina di sangue o della traccia di saliva. ... Sono questi strumenti indubbiamente utili, ma come strumenti coadiuvanti. Non possono diventare il perno su cui si regge tutto27 (interview with the author, 03.09.2008).

Feraco’s words seemed to be incredibly fitting to the Perugia case where all the theories and hypothesis shaped by prosecutors were almost exclusively based onto scientific evidence. However these findings appeared to be far less relevant than if some other valid elements had showed up, such as a real and not just a compatible murder weapon had been found, or the exact and not just an approximate time the victim died had been established or a concrete proof that the three suspects knew each other before the night of the murder had been discovered. In addition to this, the autopsy conducted on the victim’s body long after the murder, the wreckage of the crime scene with improper measurements and relocations of crucial pieces of

27 Scientific methods are surely helpful. However they are a double-edged weapon as they might make investigators take it too easy and rely only on DNA results or fingerprints findings, not taking into consideration simply the logic and those methods once viewed as the first and foremost ones. ... You can’t always and exclusively rely on DNA, blood stains or saliva traces examinations. ... These tools are undoubtedly helpful, but they should be taken as a support to the investigation, not as the carrying pillars.
evidence all around Kercher’s bedroom, and the constant leak of non-official statements and supposedly top-secret information witnessed during the investigation, inevitably led media and public opinion to raise serious questions about whether the whole procedure of investigation was botched and the evidence contaminated. (Ponte in La Repubblica, 02.04.2008) (Nadeau in Newsweek, 21.04.2008) (Donadio in The New York Times, 30.09.2008).

Forensic science seemed then not to be providing enough certainties this time. It seemed that science had failed and the case was anything but solved. But science never fails on TV.
GRISSOM sits on a stool in the garage. He's holding an open file folder. SARA swabs the passenger seat and checks for blood.

SARA
Affirmative for blood -- passenger side

GRISSOM
Well, that's just a trace amount.
Where's the rest of it?

SARA
Want to pass me the luminol?

GRISSOM hands SARA the spray bottle and turns off the light. SARA sprays the front passenger seat area. The seat glows.


Besides the originality and intelligence of creators and scriptwriters, there are different reasons behind the incredible popularity of the TV series CSI: Crime Scene Investigation, first aired in 2000, and of the two possibly even more successful spin-offs: CSI: Miami and CSI: New York. As Arizona State University Professor Gray Cavender and University of Wisconsin Law School Graduate Sarah K. Deutsch suggest, each episode is a combination of ‘an interesting flavour of crime, melodrama and the seeming authenticity of science’ (Cavender and Deutsch, 2007: 70). Throughout the programme several cases are solved after interviewing witnesses and suspects, examining crime scenes and collecting precious evidence which afterwards are analysed in lab experiments, where the science bursts in decisively and, almost by itself, cracks the murder case in an amazingly brief period of time.
Thanks to scientific methodologies police scientists in Perugia similarly discovered crucial elements on the crime scene, such as DNA, sperm and blood traces, which, according to them, were sufficient to take into custody the three main suspects. Luminol, a chemical substance made famous by the hit TV series and used by crime scene investigators to locate traces of blood, even if it has been cleaned or removed, was sprayed all over the victim’s apartment. In so doing key evidence such as a bloody footprint, ascribed to Rudy Guede, was detected and police trumpeted the finding as another great success (Bonini in *La Repubblica*, 21.11.2007) (Pisa in *Daily Mail*, 11.01.2008).

According to Sheila Brown (2003: 40) forensic scientists, crime profilers and criminologists have become extremely fashionable and trendy. Forensic science has never been as sexy as today. TV programmes such as *CSI, Law & Order* and *Bones* among many others, with their extraordinary focus on the use of science in solving crimes, have increased the public’s interest and fascination with crime. Investigation techniques and hi-tech instrumentation used by forensics on crime scenes and most of all in laboratories are the stars of these shows. As *TIME* journalist Jeffrey Kluger argues, scanning electron microscopes, gas chromatographers and mass spectrometry machines, that allow detectives to peer with unquestionable precision into the tiniest piece of evidence, are undeniably the most gripping and charming aspects of any episode of these TV dramas (Kluger in *TIME*, 21.10.2002). *CSI* manages to bring science to the masses, turning it into a glittering and entertaining toy, explains *CSI* writer Richard Catalani, adding that these shows do educate audiences in forensics as well (Catalani, 2006). People are so riveted by the idea that science can solve crimes
and enchanted by their new heroes, that they would do anything to become one of them.

They’re waiting for their interviews, and they look like they’re auditioning for a hip profession. It’s not the nerdy-looking people anymore. They don’t realize that there is nothing cool or funky about this job. (Toobin in *The New Yorker*, 07.05.2007)

Interviewed by *The New Yorker* reporter Jeffrey Toobin Lisa Faber, the supervisor of the New York Police Department crime lab’s hair-and-fibre unit, sounded rather flattered by the attention *CSI* and its descendants brought to her profession, with a dramatic increase of job applications and forensic education programmes offered at schools and universities around the United States, that drew more and more students into forensic studies. However, Faber seemed wary of the cinematic license the show’s creators took since the first episodes, generating unrealistic expectations that real scientists are able to solve every crime the way Grissom and his squad do around the city of blinding lights, Las Vegas. *CSI* producers acknowledged that some liberties with facts and graphics had been taken in order to entertain and keep the story lines moving. Notwithstanding this, scientific principles behind the images were absolutely real (Willing in *USA Today*, 05.08.2004).
[Hyper-reality] is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real, that is to say of an operation of deterring every real process via its operational double (Baudrillard, 1994: 2).

As mentioned earlier on in this chapter, inside the TV forensic-based show CSI science appears to be the biggest, brightest and above all irreproachable star. Slam-dunk evidence together with a successful lab work and revealing test results always lead to quick convictions. Yet this is exactly CSI’s main fault, according to real scientists who claim that in the real world every crime is way more complex than those shown on television. As Italian author and philosopher Umberto Eco (1985) outlines in one of his brilliant essays, realistic products - the TV series CSI in this specific case - are created in an effort to come up with something that is better than real, which gives spectators things that are more exciting, more beautiful, more terrifying, and generally more interesting than what is encountered in everyday life. CSI can be viewed as a double of the real forensic world which attempts to substitute it with a much more glamorous and entertaining model. Through its media representations real crime becomes hyper-real crime. According to Richard Osborne (1995) and Sheila Brown (2003) the hyper-real effect might be identified not only in fiction products but in television and press news as well. The latter one increasingly moved from being informative towards being mainly entertaining and turned into “infotainment”. This is a process of hybridisation of genres and formats whereby the gap between facts and fiction, between information and entertainment has been
rapidly reduced. One of the main reasons for this gap-shrinking phenomenon is to be found in a higher level of enjoyment shown by the audience when dealing with juicy crime stories based onto real facts: the perfect environment for fascinating and intriguing characters that inhabit fantastic and at times scary scenarios. When these stories also last longer than an open-and-shut case and consequently turn into a sort of real-crime-soap-opera-like programme, the public’s level of satisfaction reaches its highest peak. And this is what exactly occurred on the Meredith Kercher murder case, as comprehensively debated in the previous two chapters. But the murder of the British student in Italy appeared fascinating due to another aspect that made it even more captivating and in a way intriguing.

In 2003, when the TV series *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* really started to become popular in the United States and in the rest of the world, the “CSI effect” made its first appearance. It was a new term coined by legal authorities and the mass media to highlight the fact that the fictional show had accidentally put great pressure on real-life proceedings (Shelton, 2008: 1-2). ‘The CSI effect represents the impossibly high expectations jurors may have for physical evidence’, claimed in a concerned manner trace evidence analyst Max Houck, director of West Virginia’s Forensic Science Initiative (Mirsky in *Scientific American*, 25.04.2005). The prosecution worried that gullible juries, fooled by real-crime television shows, were inclined to wrongfully acquit guilty defendants unless prosecutors come up with fancy forensic evidence. The defense, on the other hand, was concerned that jurors would wrongfully convict their clients when they unrealistically believe in the infallibility of forensic science (Cole and Dioso-Villa, 2006). As scholars, judges and sociologists suggest, there seems to be very little evidence, *CSI*-esquely speaking, that a “CSI effect” truly
exists. It might be nothing more than a media phenomenon. Rather than any direct “CSI effect” influencing juries, it should be more appropriate to speak of what Eastern Michigan University criminology professors Donald E. Shelton, Young S. Kim and Gregg Barak call a “tech effect”: due to the advancements in both technology and information distribution, jurors are inevitably led to expect that prosecutors present in court the scientific evidence that technology, rather than CSI, has made available to obtain (Shelton, Kim and Barak, 2006: 332-333, 367-368). Nevertheless, as outlined above, CSI-type shows have increased people’s interest in forensic science and the effect produced among the general public, whatever it might be called, is undeniably real.

According to media reports, the millions of people who watch the CSIs all of a sudden become real-life science sleuths, private detectives and trial judges. They develop unrealistic expectations about the sort of evidence typically available during real trials and these expectations, in turn, increase the likelihood that they will have a reasonable doubt about a defendant’s guilt or some sort of blind acceptance of any scientific evidence brought in court against the defendants (Lovgren in National Geographic News, 23.09.2004) (Rincon in BBC News, 21.02.2005). According to New York University Professor Tom R. Tyler the incredible degree of certainty and decisiveness given by CSI and its offspring to scientific evidence facilitates, in an unconscious manner perhaps, a public’s over-belief in the probative value of such evidence, which would lead to guilty verdicts even before any sentence has been pronounced or a trial has begun. Pre-trial publicity would change verdicts and the media exposure would shape the threshold of the reasonable doubt (Tyler 2006b: 1056-1063). Just a few examples:
• Amanda Knox’s DNA traces detected on her boyfriend’s kitchen knife and the micro blood-stains found in the bathroom in Meredith Kercher’s house represented damning evidence that the so called dark angel from Seattle was guilty.

• Raffaele Sollecito’s DNA traces detected on the clasp of Meredith Kercher’s torn bra, perhaps contaminated according to his defense attorneys was the clear proof that the Italian suspect was guilty.

• Rudy Guede’s fingerprint in victim’s blood made him nothing but guilty.

Professor Tyler also argues that there is no concrete proof that the over-estimate of the probative value of scientific evidence is done on purpose in a conscious mental process of convicting. The phenomenon, however, appears consistent with the psychological argument that people’s reaction to harm and the need to resolve harm are motivated by their desire to see justice done, as Perugia Police Chief Arturo De Felice correctly noted when he declared the Kercher murder case closed (Tyler, 2006b: 1064-1071) (IlSole24Ore 07.11.2007). A wish to convict that is legitimated by science, the one the public watches acting on TV. Science causes people to see within scientific evidence the degree of certainty that makes them comfortable with a guilty verdict (Tyler, 2006b: 1084). Crime becomes a sort of fascinating topic to be read and heard about, an engaging game to be played and enjoyed, although at times it could scare to death.
We are all of course, breathless for gossip and, in the case of murder, we are insatiable (Linklater in *The Times*, 14.11.2007).

As debated in the previous chapters, a story of violence, sex and mystery, such as the Perugia murder case, naturally attracts and preoccupies the media. Media organs employ their best reporters and professionals with the aim of achieving the highest number of readers and viewers. Sensationalism becomes the most powerful weapon and nothing manages to escape it: suspects, victims, places, the investigation and every other aspect related to the crime get drawn into the media storm. As professor Kidd-Hewitt and other scholars outline, media coverage of crime certainly plays a significant role also in engendering panics and causing people to be fearful. By over-reporting newsworthy violent events and searching mainly for sensation and emotions above accuracy, mass media not only produce fascination and obsession towards crime and its protagonists, they also generate fear, anxiety and moral panics (Kidd-Hewitt, 1995) (Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994). So do *CSI* and its spin-offs. They reinforce the public’s fears by depicting the world as a mean and scary place in which heroic characters fight every day against crime (Cavender and Deutsch, 2007).

According to University of Canterbury, New Zealand, Lecturer in Mass Communication Sue Tait (2006) forensic-based television series are television shows and spectacularly resolving crimes is the business of the show. ‘Crime has been exploited as commercial entertainment since the earliest day of cinema and remains the most salient theme in television dramas and “reality” shows, which
enthusiastically mix fact, fiction and titillation’, argues Yvonne Jewkes (2004: 143). Nevertheless there seems to be much more than a commitment to entertain and educate the public behind what she refers to as the fictionalisation of science. Forensic science offers demonstrations of the benefits it is able to provide to ensure public security. In so doing, it emanates a dense aura of authority and infallibility. After all, the physical evidence and the laboratory never lie: ‘there is no better judge than science’ (Cavender and Deutsch, 2007: 78).

Media portrayals of forensic teams and of the police more generally, produce a sense of public legitimacy for the institution of policing. The mass media are not an enemy to be held at bay, but a fundamental part of the policing apparatus of society, which cannot but facilitate the ‘expansion of popular culture into the hallowed discourses of science, law and medicine’ (Brown, 2003: 39). The media collect, sort and contextualise crime reports. Despite the fact that the real facts appear to be inevitably distorted and exaggerated, their entertaining mediatisation helps to shape public consciousness concerning which conditions need to be seen as urgent problems, what kinds of problems they represent and how they should be resolved (Jewkes, 2004) (Sacco, 1995).

As University of South Alabama Professor Ellen Burton Arrington (2007: 366-368) suggests, through an idealisation of scientific evidence, CSIs foster the fantasy that science and technology can provide society with stability of individual and national identity and security among threats of violence and terrorism in the contemporary world situation. The resulting world in which the public enjoy immersing themselves is a fantastic place where ambiguous or disruptive identities can be fixed by a
spectrometrical measurement of DNA or by some magic Luminol smartly sprayed on an unsuspected tile on the floor. It is a world where crime can be defeated, the truth discovered with certainty and the order restored. Caso Chiuso.
CONCLUSIONS

At the time this research paper was being written the trial against the two suspects for the murder of the British student Meredith Kercher, 21-year-old Amanda Knox and 24-year-old Raffaele Sollecito, was about to start in Perugia and was going to last one year at least. The purpose of this dissertation has not been to suggest a verdict and establish guilt or innocence. Throughout this study it has been attempted to illustrate the intricate and complex relationships between crimes such as the Perugia murder and the media representations of them. In order to do so a good amount of journalistic data regarding the case and academic studies on themes such as crime, law and media culture were previously collected and analysed.

Sensationalisation and misrepresentation of reality through media portrayals of it have been central themes in this thesis. As widely debated throughout the three chapters this dissertation is composed of, the public’s perception of crime appears to be distorted by an extremely smart mediatic manipulation of the occurring facts. The mass media carry out a sharp and composite procedure that fuels people’s imagination to an extraordinarily high level. Furthermore, the media necessity of turning the simple and allegedly uninteresting truth into an entertaining and glossy item to sell to the highest number of customers cannot but magnify this distortion. The Meredith Kercher murder case in 2007 owned all the main features thanks to which media outlets could easily transform that case into a fascinating and enthralling courtroom soap-opera-like programme in which, as outlined above, the public’s excitement started long before the protagonists had entered the courtroom.
All the media organs that covered the Perugia murder case were perfectly aware of the fact that rather than in the factual reporting, the public was way more interested in the psychology and behaviour of the characters involved into the crime, in the theories and suppositions formulated by the police and in the scientific procedures led by forensics. Once scientific evidence and forensic teams came into play supported by the most advanced technologies, facts and reality became victims of the so-called “CSI effect” and seemed to be irreparably lost.

A final observation on the Meredith Kercher murder case must be made in regard of the extent to which the coverage of this story resulted over-emphasised and opinionated. Being sensational, entertaining and noisy are intrinsic characteristics of any story represented through the media, it is something that is in the media’s nature. However, sometimes the boundary gets pushed too far and, as Italian journalist and author Marco Travaglio argues, facts become unnecessary and no longer needed since they ‘disturb the circulation of opinions’ (Travaglio, 2006: 129). In the Perugia case the Italian media, as well as the British and the American, took the factual story and attempted in a rather desperate manner to constantly get a big scoop, making the public believe that there was always an awful lot to see when in truth, most of the times, there was almost nothing at all to see.

During the process of this dissertation a series of questions were raised and answered only in a marginal manner, due to time and space constraints. Areas of further research suggested by this study could be:

- different judicial systems in different countries: legal aspects and procedures around a crime investigation that have to be followed by media organs in
terms of working with the police, following the investigative process and reporting facts;

- crime reporting in an international context: from a professional and ethical point of view what kind of protocols journalists go through and what sort of restrictions and freedoms they have in terms of accessing local and official sources, collecting data and eventually putting their stories together;

- the panics-and-fear-generating role of the mass media: according to sociologists and media professionals, it could be also viewed as ‘a narcotic weapon to dumb down “the masses” into a stupefied acceptance of consumerism’ (Brown, 2003: 3), ‘a form of political control and marketing technique for neo-conservative politics’ (Osborne, 1995: 38) or simply as a ‘weapon of mass deception’ (Travaglio, 2006:115).
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