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Who’s friends with the victim? A corpus-based
stylistic approach to the analysis of the TV series
The Killing¹

1. Introduction

Although television crime fiction is one of the most proliferating genres nowadays, many of its features are still understudied. Most research on fictional drama has focused on the offender, the detec-tive, or the plot, thus relegating the victim of murder to second place in the literature. This research proves that the functional role of the victim in the development of the narrative plot is worth being further investigated.

The fictionalisation of crime has been a popular genre since the Middle Ages. In China, crime fiction started already during the Song Dynasty (960– 1279). In the western world, the father of crime fiction is thought to be Edgar Allan Poe with *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, a short story published in 1841, while on television *Telecrime* (BBC, 1938–1939) is acknowledged as the first televised crime mystery series. Cawelti (2004: 364) categorises the detective story as one of the most important popular myths of modernity, one that causes endless fasci-nation to contemporary audiences. Nowadays, one of the most popular genres on network TV is crime-related programming (cf. Moody 2003).

Crime fiction (cf. Rezpka and Horsley 2010; Akrivos and Antoniou 2019) has often
been perceived as the result of applying established

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formulae. Nevertheless, Allan et al. (2020) argue that in the past twenty years structuralist semiotics and narratology have exonerated detective fiction's moral dubiousness by paying attention to its form rather than its content. These theories underline that the textuality, plotting and epistemological enquiry of detective fiction provides a model for narrative itself. Their proposal advocates for authors to steer away from conventional accounts of crime fiction and enhance the non-conforming and innovative features that are 'more than just a reworking of pre-existing formulae' (Allan et al. 2020: 3). In that spirit, their introduction to the volume encourages theoretical and methodological innovation in future reflections on the current state of crime fiction criticism.

Along those lines, this chapter ventures into one of the least travelled routes in academic accounts of crime fiction: a linguistic analysis of the function and presence of victim-naming in the dialogues of televised Murder Mystery Series (MMS), in which the victim is a woman, taking as a case in point the cult TV series *The Killing* (AMC 2011–2014). MMS is here understood in the terms specified by Gregori-Signes as 'an umbrella term for drama and comedy crime, detective and procedural genres whose plot revolves around solving the mystery of a murder rather than other types of crime (e.g., mugging, blackmail, rape, etc.) (2020: 34).' Victim-naming is one of the stylistic devices used to construct the victim of murder, and one that still remains unexplored in televised crime-fiction. As is the case with vocatives in natural conversation, my contention is that variations in naming serve to establish characters' identities (cf. Formentelli 2019: 27) and status within the fictional world (Chierichetti 2021) of television series, while also reinforcing the central plot of solving the murder case.

There is a relatively vast amount of research on written crime fiction (Reilly 1980; Priestman 1990; Gregoriou 2007; Dutta-Flanders 2017; Akrikos and Antoniou 2019; Allan et al. 2020a, 2020b; Perce 2021) but not so much on televised crime fiction. In fact, in their introduction to the *Routledge Companion to Crime Fiction*, Allan et al. state that crime TV series deserve to be treated comprehensively, since they 'have arguably become the most significant manifestation of crime fiction' (2020a, 2020b: 5). Within the categories of characters (cf. Bednarek 2011; Gregoriou 2011) in crime fiction (Todorov 1966), the (discursive) role of the victim of murder is one of the least examined. Most of the

literature on fictional crime drama has been devoted to the study of offenders or detectives rather than victims of crime (Gregoriou 2007; Gregoriou 2011; Binder 2021). The victim of murder has often been deemed the least important role (Wright 1946: 40) or even been dismissed as negligible in some studies (Gregory-Klein 1995; Malmgren 2010), become almost invisible (Binder 2021) and said to disappear during the course of the investigation, as the detective gains ascendancy over the criminal or offender (Gregory Klein 1995; Binder 2021). In her essay, Bolin (2018: 21) contends that while many murder stories have women as victims, it is not the victim herself but rather her memory that takes the role of a distinct character. Mills (2020), following Pyrhönen (1999), concludes that the victim is one piece of a puzzle, and a necessary point of contact between detective and crime (Pyrhönen 1999: 132). Knight (2004: 87–8) also argues that ‘in the context of post-war fiction, the victim has some wealth and authority’. Other studies on fictional victims have paid attention to features such as gender, race (cf. Bednarek 2011) and other behavioural characteristics (cf. Rader et al. 2015). Rader, Rhineberger-Dunn and Vasquez (2015) used a statistical approach to study how demographic factors (e.g., gender, race, age),

incident-related factors (location, crime type, relationship with offender), and behavioural factors (drug use, alcohol use, sexual promiscuity etc.) predict victim blaming, in 124 episodes of 7 different crime TV dramas. Pedro-Mustieles (2020) victim-blaming in the series *YOU* and claims that the series perpetuates a gendered ideology that assigns responsibility for the violence perpetrated against them upon women on the grounds of their sexuality. Menti (2019) applied corpus methodologies to study crime and criminals and the gender of the victims in the BBC’s *Sherlock* and American CBS’s *Elementary*. Palomino-Manjon (2022) described how victims of gender violence are appraised in the TV series *Westworld*, while Rosca (2021) compared the most frequent phrasal verbs used in police investigative work in two television crime series.

Central to the present research were Gregori-Signes’ (2020) and Tabbert’s work (2013, 2015, 2016). Tabbert (2016) analysed victim-naming strategies in German and English newspapers (cf. also Malmgren 2010; Gregoriou 2011; Gregoriou 2021; Binder 2021).

audiences view victims (Tabbert 2016: 80). Gregori-Signes (2020) analysed victim-naming choices for Laura Palmer, the 17-year-old girl murdered in the series *Twin Peaks*. Her investigation traced the distribution (cf. Biber 1989) of the presence of the victim in the whole series both in quantitative and qualitative terms. These two studies coincide in pointing out the adequacy of applying corpus linguistic techniques (Fischer-Starcke 2010) in their analyses, since these techniques may help find non-obvious patterns that derive from the use of victim-naming forms (Kenney 2002) that otherwise would be difficult to discern.

The methodology followed to analyse the function of the victim in the dialogues of the first two seasons (cf. Table 1) of the TV series *The Killing* combined the methods exposed in Tabbert (2016) and Gregori-Signes (2020). The first two seasons may be considered a corpus since they feature a closed narrative within the overall series. At the end of the second season, the murder of Rosie Larsen is solved, while the series progresses to explore new murder cases involving different victims. Although some corpus linguists may contend that a corpus of this size may be insufficient to make generalisable claims, McIntyre and Walker (2019: 112) argue that corpus-based stylistics ‘necessitates a less prototypical definition of a corpus’ since the objective may not be to make generalisable claims but to gain insights into text style. Consequently, one single text, or even a poem can be (O’Halloran 2007). McIntyre/Walker allege that ‘by exploring the possibilities of subjecting the target text itself to corpus analysis’ (2019: 111), we can better understand the stylistic choices made in the text. The authors label the practice of ‘treating the target text as a corpus in its own right’ (2019: 111) as *corpus-based stylistics*. Applying a corpus-based methodology, this analysis examined the frequency and distribution of victim-naming terms throughout the text and among various different characters in the first two seasons of the cult TV series *The Killing*.

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Results proved that victim-naming choices function as a plot propeller which lends coherence and continuity to the primary plotline, while also emphasising for the audience the relevance of the characters in the fictional world. In this sense, the results obtained suggest the convenience of relying on corpus-based techniques for the analysis of individual television series or a selection of seasons within the series (cf. Gregori-Signes et al. 2021), as is the case here. Using corpus-based

techniques helped provide textual justification of the function of victim-naming as a propeller of the plot and an indicator of the status of the different characters within the internal fictional world of the series (e.g., Sara Linden, the main protagonist, has the highest number and range of victim referring terms).

The main hypothesis underlying the study was that the victim should prove pivotal to the narrative plot, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. One potential method of verifying this hypothesis could be to examine the varied victim-naming forms employed by the characters in the dialogues (Kozloff 2000). I further hypothesised that the closer the relationship with the victim, the higher the quantitative number of victim-related terms the character would use. Likewise, the stronger the relationship with the victim, the higher the internal status of the character in the fictional world.

The present paper is structured as follows. Section 2 includes a brief introduction to the TV series *The Killing*. Section 3 reviews some relevant contributions on naming and forms of address. Section 4 exposes the methodology by describing the target corpus, the methodological framework and the procedure applied in the analysis. Sections 5 and 6 comprise the analysis and results obtained. Finally, Section 7 is dedicated to the conclusions and suggestions for further research.

As known, the analysis of TV series can be approached, mainly, from 3 broad perspectives: production, reception and product (Bednarek 2018). However, and due mainly to space restrictions, the present study focuses exclusively on the dialogues, that is, the verbal component, as opposed to other multimodal elements such as sound, music and image (cf. Bednarek 2018).

2. The TV series <<The Killing>>

There are not many examples of television series that have become cult phenomena, marking the canon by which the rest of the series of that subgenre will be judged, as has been the case of *Forbrydelsen* (DR 2007–2012), the series that marked the path of rebirth of Nordic noir

and the rise of Scandinavian series. *The Killing*, its American adaptation, is the object of analysis of the present paper.

As argued by Bolin (2018) and LeBor (2020), many examples of crime fiction rely on murdered women and girls as a story engine, partly because dead women seem to have been an easy plot device in the history of MMS. *Twin Peaks* is often cited as the series that started it all, and it is no secret to anyone who followed the critics, that *The Killing* has been classified in the press as the heir of *Twin Peaks*. Both storylines revolve around two seventeen-year-old girls found dead in the water, Laura Palmer (*Twin Peaks*) wrapped in plastic and Rosie Larsen (*The Killing*) in the boot of a sunken car. Both were at the same time liked and envied in their school, worked in a casino, got involved in a prostitution network and left behind video tapes and voice messages.

The main characters in *The Killing* can be classified as belonging to three sets of categories: investigators, family and friends; and the community (cf. Gregori-Signes 2020). Sarah Linden and Stephen Holder are the two main detectives in charge of solving the murder of the teenager Rosie Larsen. Her family is formed by Stan, the father; Mitch, the mother; Aunt Terry and her two younger brothers, Tommy and Denny. The third group, the community, would include as its main protagonists councilman Darren Richmond, who is running for mayor and his two main campaign advisors, Jamie Wright, and Gwen Eaton. Rosie Larsen's body was found in the trunk of a car registered under Richmond's campaign.

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3. Naming choices for the victim of murder

Terms of address, or vocatives, have been the object of study in sociolinguistics (Ervin-Tripp 1969; Trudgill 1983; Braun 1988) and anthropology, as well as in linguistics since the 1950s (Bratt Paulston 2008; Chaika 1982; Keshavarz 2001), their interest evolving mainly from the fact that they reflect not only grammatical differences, but also nearness or remoteness in social relations (Brown and Gilman 1968: 253–60). Rodríguez-Martín points out, when analysing the TV series *Breaking Bad* (AMC 2008–2013), that ‘terms of address are the linguistic

manifestation of a number of social factors that shape the linguistic behaviour of interlocutors and their relationship' (2021: 55). Terms of address also vary according to the interlocutor and therefore may provide information about 'who the speaker believes he is, who he believes the addressee is, what he thinks their relationship is, and what he thinks he is doing by saying what he is saying' (Parkinson 1985: 1). Thus, the linguistic forms that speakers use to name others can mirror the complex social relations of individuals in a speech community, and, by extension, the relationship between the characters of a television series.

Van Leeuwen (2008: 42) distinguishes between *functionalisation* and *identification*. Functionalisation occurs when social actors are referred to in terms of an activity or in terms of something they do, for instance, an occupation or role (e.g., a journalist); or by a noun which denotes a place or tool closely associated with an activity (e.g., pianist or chairperson). Identification occurs, according to van Leeuwen (2008), when social actors are defined, not in terms of what they do, but in terms of what they, permanently or unavoidably, are (e.g., a woman). Van Leeuwen (2008: 42) describes three types of identification. The first, *relational* identification, is realized by a closed set and would represent individuals in terms of their personal relationship or work relations. The second, *classification*, is done in terms of social major categories such as age, class, gender. The third one, *physical* identification, focuses on the character's physical characteristics.

Forms of address can take many forms (Biber et al. 1999; Leech 1999; Culpeper 2001; McCarthy and O'Keeffe 2003; Formentelli 2019) such as endearments (*dear*), family terms (*Daddy*), familiarisers (*dude*), familiarised first names (*Katie*), full first names (*Dianne*), title and surname (*Miss Lorte*), honorifics (*Ma'am*), nicknames (*you reds*), and even elaborated nominal structures such as *those of you who want to bring your pets along*. Following Jeffries (2010) and Tabbert (2013) I use the term *naming* as a broader category which includes those forms that are used to refer to, describe, name or label someone. Jeffries (2010) contends that naming includes several linguistic practices such as (1) choosing a noun over another to indicate a referent, (2) constructing pre-/postmodified noun phrases which further describe the referent and (3) using nominalisation. In particular, the present analysis focuses on the variations in *victim-naming* (cf. Tabbert 2016) choices or forms

used by the characters (Gregori-Signes 2020; Chierichetti 2021), to refer to the victim of murder, *Rosie Larsen*, in the dialogues of the TV series *The Killing*.

Particularly relevant for this research is Tabbert's (2013, 2015, 2016) analysis on how victims, murders, offenders and crimes are constructed in the British and German Press. For Tabbert, naming choices are 'part of a mosaic where different linguistic elements combine to construct offenders and victims based on ideological views of them' (2016: 43). Tabbert's (2016) analysis resorts to labelling theory and to criminological and sociological theories. Her research interest lies in how society creates deviance by 'making rules, applying them to particular people and labelling them as outsiders' (Becker 1966: 9, cited in Tabbert 2016: 44). As for the victims, Tabbert indicates that they are constructed linguistically 'partly by how they are named and described in noun phrases' (2016: 45). Tabbert (2016: 75) groups victim-naming into 5 different categories: social system (family, mother), gender (woman, man), victimhood status or role in investigation (victims, body), age (children, pupil), profession (investors) and other (people). The objective of the present study differs from Tabbert's (2016), first, because the data is televised fiction in the form of dialogue, which is substantially different from news reports. Secondly, because although I also analysed noun phrases (e.g., *my daughter*), my main focus was on the victim's first name and surname, which Tabbert excludes from her study precisely because she is not interested in such forms of address (2016: 77–78). In the present work, this decision is quantitatively justified, since the combinations FN (first name) and FN+S (first name + surname) are the most frequent victim-naming forms in the data. In this respect, van Leeuwen (2008: 41) claims that *nomination* is typically realised by proper nouns, which can be *formal* (surname only, with or without honorifics), *semiformal* (given name and surname), or *informal* (given name only). Additionally, van Leeuwen (2008: 46–47) states that while proper names, possessive pronouns and nouns personalise social actors, abstract nouns can sometimes yield to *abstraction* (poor, black, unskilled, Muslim) or *objectivation*. The latter can be expressed by a metonymical reference in the form of *spatialisation* (e.g., substituting 'Australians' by 'Australia' in *Australia was bringing in about 70.000 migrants a year*); *utterance autonomisation* (e.g., *This concern, the report noted, was reflected in surveys*) which lends a kind

of impersonal authority to the utterances; and *instrumentalisation*, by which social actors are represented by reference to the instrument with which they carry out the action, as in *A 120mm mortar shell slammed into Sarajevo's marketplace*. Finally, *somatisation* represents social actors by means of reference to a part of their body.

In real life, the rules for uses of first names and surnames as well as titles are regulated by social convention and are considered common ground (Ridley 2016). Using appropriate forms of address during interactions requires considering both the status of the participants and the context of the situation. Other factors such as discursive dominance and power or audience orientation can also influence the selection of a particular form of address (cf. Labov 2001; Garofalo 2016; Sharma 2018). However, the focus in this research is not on how social status and power may affect the discursive dominance of one or another character (cf. del Saz-Rubio and Gregori-Signes 2013), but on how through naming choices the characters express their relation to the victim. It is precisely this aspect, the use of referring terms to name a character who is not alive, and consequently cannot take an active part in the interaction, that is still understudied in the field of telecinematic discourse. The naming system offers a powerful tool for constructing dialogue and can be exploited to emphasise specific aspects of a victim's personality (Clark 1992; Jeffries 2010). This can be particularly relevant in murder narratives, where the use of specific names and labels can play an important role in shaping the story and highlighting themes. The lexical choice of a naming term over another creates a 'map' (Fowler 1991: 82) which attributes values, while reflecting and influencing relations (Carter and Simpson 1989) within and outside the fictional world.

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4. Methodology

4.1. Research objectives

Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques, the analysis of the first two seasons of *The Killing* focused on the discursive role of victim-naming. The hypotheses were 1) that the number of

references to the victim should be sufficient to presuppose its centripetal role in the development of the narrative plot of the series; 2) that variations in victim-naming choices in the form of first name and surname, and other noun phrases (e.g., *the little girl*) may vary not only according to the setting, intimacy and social distance but also according to the activity type (e.g., interrogating possible suspects) and status of the speakers involved in it.

4.2. Corpus

The corpus for this study comprises the first two seasons of *The Killing* (cf. Table 1) at the end of which the murder of *Rosie Larsen* is solved. The character names and allocation of turns were identified by watching the videos for each episode. Individual corpora for each relevant character were created for comparison purposes, as illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 1: The Killing dates of release (Wikipedia).

	Originally released			
Season	Episodes	First released	Last released	Network
1	13	April 3, 2011	June 19, 2011	AMC
2	13	April 1, 2012	June 17, 2012	

Table 2: Subcorpora of the most relevant characters.

	CHARACTER	TYPES	TOKENS
POLICE	Sarah Linden	2084	19709
	Stephen Holder	2094	15201
FAMILY	Stanley Larsen	862	5585
	Mitch Larsen	609	3307
	Terry	668	3273
	Jasper (ex-boyfriend)	214	525
	Sterling (best friend)	223	660
	Belko (close family friend)	354	1375
	Tommy (brother)	228	667
	Denny (brother)	251	682

Table 2: Continued

COMMUNITY	Darrell Richmond	1377	7261
	Jamie	1185	5279
	Gwen Eaton	1016	5729

4.3. Corpus-based stylistics

McIntyre and Walker (2019: 314) claim that corpus linguistics analytical techniques are particularly valuable in corpus-based stylistics to identify patterns in texts and validate or invalidate intuitions about individual texts (cf. Stubbs 2005; O’Halloran 2007). Corpus linguistics adopts an empirical approach to the analysis of linguistic data that makes use of computer technologies to analyse computerised collections of text (corpora). The investigation usually focuses on language use and typicality (repeated patterns) and may combine quantitative with qualitative analysis. Quantitative information includes the analysis of frequent words or combinations of words, while qualitative analysis usually proceeds via concordancing. However, the application of corpus linguistic techniques to the analysis of TV series (Bednarek 2018; Chierichetti 2021) still remains an area of limited research..

The linguistic analysis of victim-naming in *The Killing* used the tools *Word lists*, *Concordances*, *File view* and *Plot* as provided by the freely available online concordancer Antconc (version 4.0.1) created by Laurence Anthony. The creation of the subcorpora for each character was assisted by Piao’s Multilingual Concordancer (2012), which facilitated the extraction of xml annotated subcorpora. *Word/frequency* lists include all the words in the corpus ordered by frequency. Words are counted in terms of types and tokens. Token refers to the total number of words in the corpus and type to the number of different words. Grammatical words (e.g., articles, prepositions) usually obtain the highest frequency since they occur more repeatedly than content words (Baker 2006: 53). The *concordance* tool gives every contextual occurrence of the search pattern, which can be explored using the *File view* tool. The *File* tool shows the text of individual files and, therefore, allows you to investigate in more detail the results generated in other tools of AntConc (Anthony 2022). The *Plot* tool shows concordance search results plotted

in a ‘barcode’ format (see Image 1 below). This allows you to see the position where search results appear in the target texts.

4.4. Procedure

The procedure involved first an exploration of the whole corpus to obtain the number of types and tokens using Antconc 4.0.1. The verbal corpus of the first two seasons of *The Killing* contains 5834 types and 97520 tokens. It comprises the dialogues as uttered by the characters, without annotations or tags. In order to check if the victim was recurringly named in the dialogues, a manual exploration of the wordlist ensued. After grammatical words (*the, in* etc.), the victim’s first name *Rosie* was the most frequent word (see Table 3 below), proving therefore the high presence of the victim’s name in the dialogues in quantitative terms. I then proceeded to explore the concordances for First name (FN) and First name and Surname (FN+ S). The File tool allowed me to examine the co-text, i.e., the words surrounding the search term, around the concordances **obtained for Rosie/ Rosie Larsen**. This exploration resulted in the identification of various referring terms such as ‘my baby’ and the deictic pronoun ‘she’ (e.g., Rosie was different. She was curious). However, the primary focus remained on FN, FN+ S and other Noun Phrases. The use of the deictic pronoun was not further examined since it is mainly used to avoid repetition.

The use of the Plot tool played a crucial role in demonstrating the centrality of the victim to the narrative development. This tool facilitated the quantitative analysis of occurrences of FN/FN+S across the entire corpus, as well as for each individual character (see Table 4 below). Consequently, naming choices were classified into 3 different subtypes:

- (a) Combinations of FN and/ or FN+ S. These appear in subject, object or complement position (e.g., as subject in *Rosie prom*

ised to bring us biking at the docks or as object in *You think I killed Rosie?*).

- (b) Genitive constructions with the FN/ FN+S (*Rosie’s body*); *Rosie’s teacher*; *Rosie Larsen’s death*.
 (c) Other Noun phrases (henceforth NPs) which were used to refer to the victim (e.g., *my daughter, the dead girl*).

Each concordance was manually scrutinised and classified accordingly. Finally, the subcorpus of the character Sarah Linden, the main detective in charge of the case, was explored in detail, since quantitatively she mentions the victim more often than any other character. Each example drawn from Linden's lines was classified according to one of the five categories (cf. Tabbert 2016; Gregori-Signes 2020) listed below:

1. Utterances referring to the story of the crime or the victim herself, in order to reconstruct the crime, e.g., [...] *if you saw this girl, Rosie Larsen, in the basement Friday night.*
2. Utterances which mention Rosie as a murder case or investigation, e.g., [...] *to prove she was involved in Rosie Larsen's murder.*
3. Utterances which mention Rosie as a body, e.g., *Rosie's body was found.*
4. Utterances which describe the victim's personal profile, e.g., *Rosie was sneaking out during school.*
5. Utterances which mention the victim's personal possessions (*What about Rosie's burner-phone records?*) or relationships (*Rosie's teacher*).

Further patterns in the use of the victim's FN and FN+S by Linden were explored taking into account the concept of *style-shifting*, which Labov (2001: 87) defined as 'both adaptation to different audiences and different degrees of audio-monitoring.' Firstly, I proceeded to quantify the interactions of Linden with other characters searching the data with regular expressions, then classified style variation according to activity type and audience-orientation (cf. Sharma 2018).

5. The centrality of victim-naming in the narrative plot

The starting point to identify different names for the victim was to obtain and examine the wordlist. After the category of grammatical words, the first most frequent word was *Rosie*. The search for *Rosie/Rosie Larsen* gave a total of 401 hits distributed in four different forms, as illustrated

in Table 3 below. As mentioned above, this outcome was the first signal of the centrality of the victim as a potential conversational topic. A further manual scrutiny revealed that were two possible combinations to introduce the victim as the topic: a) FN or FN+S in subject, object or complement position (*Rosie/ Rosie Larsen*); b) FN and S in objective or subjective genitive constructions (*Rosie’s backpack, Rosie Larsen’s murder*).

Table 3: Total number of hits for Rosie/ Rosie Larsen.

Rosie	260
Rosie Larsen	36
Rosie’s	74
Rosie Larsen’s	31
TOTAL	401

As exposed in Table 3 above, the most frequent victim-naming term was the victim’s FN, *Rosie*, as object, subject or complement or as part of a genitive construction (*Rosie’s*). Genitive constructions amounted to a total of 105 cases. In this category, I also included those examples in which Rosie Larsen functioned as premodifier of a noun [*det. Article+ Rosie Larsen + noun*], e.g., *the Rosie Larsen files*. The latter were found to belong to the lexico-semantic field of CRIME: *case* (5 hits), *murder* (6 hits), *murder case* (2), *files, film* (1 hit each).

The distribution of the four patterns (cf. Table 3 above) that contain the victim’s FN and FN+S, as shown in Image 1 below, indicates that the victim is evenly dispersed throughout the corpus, and therefore recurrently present in the dialogues.

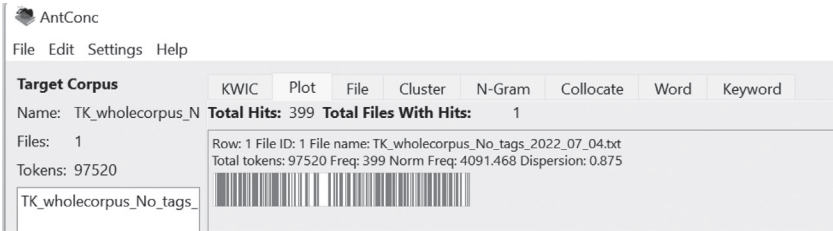


Image 1. Dispersion plot for the presence of the victim in the dialogues

The subsequent step examined the number of mentions by the key characters involved in the murder case. Table 4 below illustrates the results obtained for each character. These were classified as belonging to one of the following three categories (cf. Gregori-Signes 2020): Rosie's family and (close) friends, the police and the community (represented by the politician Richmond and his co-workers).

Table 4: Types and Tokens, and victim-naming terms for the main characters.

		Rosie	RLarsen	Rosie's	RLarsen's
POLICE	Sarah Linden	79	18	25	6
	Stephen Holder	32	4	13	4
	Lieutenant Oakes	2	0	3	0
FAMILY & FRIENDS	Stanley Larsen (father)	59	0	0	0
	Mitch Larsen (mother)	13	0	0	0
	Terry (aunt)	12	0	0	0
	Jasper (boyfriend)	6	0	0	0
	Sterling (best friend)	10	0	0	0
	Belko (close family friend)	10	0	0	0
	Tommy (bro)	5	0	0	0
	Denny (bro)	7	0	0	0
COMMUNITY	Darrell Richmond (politician)	0	1	0	4
	Jamie Wright (team member)	0	3	0	0
	Gwen Eaton (team member)	0	2	0	0

Table 4 above illustrates that Rosie's family and friends, who were close to her, never used her full name. Rosie was their daughter, sister, niece and girlfriend. On the contrary, the politician and his team refrained from using the victim's FN only, and opted for the semiformal *Rosie Larsen*. This choice suggests a certain level of detachment from the murder case and from the victim herself, since if evidence

were to emerge suggesting that they had a relationship with the victim it could potentially have devastating consequences for their political careers. Genitive constructions *Rosie's* and *Rosie Larsen's* were used to talk about her relationship with other characters (*Rosie's teacher*), her possessions (*Rosie's backpack*) and to express other types of relations, such as to mention parts of her dead body (*Rosie's detox*), some aspect of her life (*Rosie's voicemail*), and even to refer to her murderer (*Rosie's killer*). The outcomes coincide partly with Tabbert's (2016) naming strategies for victims and with Gregori-Signes' (2020) reported use of FN and FN+S in *Twin Peaks*, although, in general, victim-naming patterns in the form of NPs are more varied in *The Killing* than in *Twin Peaks* (cf. Gregori-Signes 2020).

A manual exploration of the concordances and co-text around *Rosie/ Rosie Larsen* revealed the presence of other NPs that referred to the victim. Following Tabbert's (2016: 75) core dimensions along which victims can be constructed, victim-naming forms were listed and classified in 4 different categories, as illustrated in Table 5 below. In the examples, the numbers in parentheses (e.g., (20) for *your daughter*) indicate the frequency of co-occurrences for each of the collocations that appeared more than once.

Table 5: Core categories of victim-naming terms (adapted from Tabbert 2016: 76).

Category	Victim-naming NPs
(1) <i>Social system</i>	that Larsen girl (1) The/ Larsen girl (22), my daughter (20), my baby girl (2), my little girl, our girl, your niece, your girlfriend, their daughter, his daughter, your daughter (20), a great kid
(2) <i>Gender + age</i>	a little girl, that sweet little girl, that pretty little girl, your 17-year-old niece, that dead 17 year old girl, a 17 year old senior.
(3) <i>Victimhood status or role in the investigation</i>	the murder of Seattle teen Rosie Larsen, the murder of local high school teen Rosie Larsen, the murder victim, the dead girl (2) the Larsen case (3), the Rosie Larsen case, Rosie Larsen's body, good little dead girl, was a bad little live girl
(4) <i>Profession</i>	A student of your husband's, a 17-year-old senior, a maid

As can be inferred from Table 5, there is some overlap between categories. Therefore, some cases could be classified as belonging to more than one category. For example, *that dead 17-year-old girl* could be said to identify the victim both in terms of gender and age, and as a victim of murder. For practical purposes, nevertheless, each example has been assigned to only one dimension. The most abundant NPs that describe the victim are those classified under the category (1) *social system*. Within those, the most numerous labels are relational identifications (van Leeuwen 2008) of the victim in terms of her personal kinship (*my daughter*) and terms of endearment (*my baby girl*) which describe a sense of relationality, of belonging to the same family and therefore 'anchor the victim in a family system' (Tabbert 2016: 54), e.g., *The Larsen girl*. These instances are almost always, using van Leeuwen's terminology, (2008) *possessivated*, as in e.g., *their daughter* and confirm that Rosie Larsen is part of a circle of people who are affected by her death (Shapland and Hall 2007: 179).

In category (2), gender + age, the examples with the word *girl* are the most numerous. When accompanied by determiners such as 'a' and 'that', these NPs can create a certain distance as in *a girl*, or *that* in *that pretty little girl*. *Little*, *sweet* and *pretty* are examples of appraisal (van Leeuwen 2008: 45). They indicate sensitivity towards the victim who is often subjectively identified as a child (*my baby girl*), vulnerable, and naïve. Other labels such as *Seattle teen Rosie Larsen*, which appear on the TV news, serve the purpose of *spatialising* (van Leeuwen 2008) the victim. In this case, the murdered girl and her family lived in Seattle.

The category victimhood (3) includes examples that itemise the victim as a murder case (*the Rosie Larsen case*). A great deal of those refer to the description of the victim's body (*Larsen's tissue*). Others use a possessive NP structure [Rosie Larsen's +X], to talk about how the parts of her body were affected by the criminal act (e.g., *fingerprints*, *hands*, *nails*) or how the act of murder was carried out.

Finally, even though it is a singular occurrence, it is worthwhile to take note of the irony present in Detective Holder's comment: *So, good little dead girl was a bad little live girl*. This utterance introduces the idea that the victim may have had an inappropriate behaviour. This is labelled by Cameron and Frazer (2000: 29) as the 'whore' category, which is a plot thread implicitly sustained during the whole two

seasons (e.g., *I'm not sure what Rosie Larsen would be doing in a place like this*). The ambiguity surrounding the character of the victim and whether she is a 'good' or a 'bad' girl is a common theme in many crime shows that feature young women as victims (e.g., *Twin Peaks*, *Mare of Easttown*, *Top of the Lake*, *True Detective*). This uncertainty is typically left unsolved until the end of the series. In some cases, this category is related to the victim's profession (4) or occupation. As for *Rosie*, close to the end of the investigation, the plot reveals that she was working in the casino as a maid, not as a prostitute.

In general terms, the function of FN and S is to act as a topic marker or initiator of information about both the victim and the crime act. After identifying the victim through FN, FN+S or a NP, subsequent information is largely introduced using the deictic pronoun *she* in order to avoid repetition. There were 405 examples of *she* in utterances which were either about the victim's private life, or about the reconstruction of the crime or a mixture of the two. For example, Linden says: *A girl with dreams. Her teacher said she wanted to see the world. Wanted something more than what she had. So, why was she hanging out in a dusty construction site in some crap casino in the middle of the night?* In the first part of her turn, Linden would be talking about the victim's personal traits, while in the second part (from *So* onwards) *she* is used to refer to the day in which the crime was committed.

Furthermore, the examination of the patterns that emerged from the victim-naming choices signal a reciprocal relationship between the status of the characters as primary or secondary, and the quantity and variety of victim-naming labels they used. The highest number and variety of referring terms (45 %) is by members of the police, specially by Linden and her partner Holder, the detectives in charge of the investigation. Linden mentions of the victim amount to 32 % of total number of victim's mentions in the dialogues, followed by Holder's, with 13,2 % of the total number. This indicates their involvement with the case of murder and with making justice for the victim. As such, the main detective Linden suspended her wedding, sacrificed her relationship with her boyfriend and lost her son temporarily to her father, all for the sake of solving the crime. In the next section, I analyse victim-naming choices by Sarah Linden, the detective, in order to test the emerging patterns that would indicate how victim-naming helped

establish the relationship between Linden (the character that mentions the victim more frequently) and the victim both for the characters and the audience.

6. Detective Sarah **Linden's** victim-naming strategies

Sarah Linden is a homicide detective with Seattle Police Department, a single Mum and a loner. At the beginning of the series, she wants to start living a normal life separated from the distressing events of her job, leave Seattle, move to Sonoma, California, and get married. But when Rosie Larsen is killed, she gets too involved in the murder and decides to stay until it is solved. As illustrated in Table 6 below, Linden's preference to refer to the victim is her FN, *Rosie*, which amounts to 33 % of the total number of times for *Rosie* and 34 % of the cases of *Rosie's* in the whole corpus. The prevalence for the use of her first name, informal (van Leeuwen 2008), coincides with the preference of the victim's family (cf. Table 4 above). This denotes her involvement with the case and her concern about the victim.

Table 6: Use of victim's first name by Linden.

Rosie	79/260
Rosie Larsen	18/36
Rosie's	25/74
Rosie Larsen's	6/31

Depending on the context and activity type Linden is involved in (e.g, interrogating possible suspects, finding information about the victim), her uses of FN/FN+S vary. As can be observed in Table 7 below, the analysis of the data prompted me to classify examples into five different activity types and patterns in Linden's victim-naming choices.

Table 7: Context sensitive use of victim-naming.

<i>Activity type</i>	<i>example</i>
(1) <i>Reconstructing the crime</i>	.. the key to Ahmed's apartment. He probably let Rosie into the apartment that night. Rosie Larsen was inside the Wapi Eagle casino the night. . .
(2) <i>Victim as a murder case/ investigation</i>	You have to drop charges and reopen the Rosie Larsen case. The killer's still out there.
(3) <i>Victim as a body</i>	Blood's a match to Rosie's type.
(4) <i>Victim's personal profile</i>	Rosie had everything. She had a family who loved her [...]
(5) <i>Victim's personal possessions or relationships</i>	Would you mind if I look through Rosie's room, Mr. Larsen?

As demonstrated in Table 4 above, Linden surpasses the other characters in both the number of NPs and combinations of FN+ S used to refer to the victim. When taking into account activity type and audience-orientation, distinct patterns emerged.

The exchanges between the victim's parents and Linden are brief conversations primarily focused on Linden's enquiries about their daughter's habits and routine. In these situations, Linden refers to the victim predominantly with the personal pronoun *she* followed by *your daughter*. A qualitative analysis of all their conversations reveals that Linden uses *Rosie* in relation to four activities: when enquiring about possible relationships with men, about her use of drugs, when asking about the victim's real father (*Even if Rosie wasn't your child? Who was Rosie's father?*) and to ask about a possession (*Did Rosie have a lockbox at home?*). These are aspects of the victim's private life that some may perceive as reflecting an inadequate behaviour on her part. Linden uses the NP "your daughter" predominantly, accounting for 9 out of 20 instances (45%) in which it is used in the narrative. Similarly, the victim's father utilizes 'my daughter' in 16 out of 20 of the total cases in which "my daughter" appears. The resting 4 are used by her mother. By consistently referring to Rosie as someone's

loving daughter the detective demonstrates both a sensibility towards the family and a recognition that Rosie is more than just a regular police case.

In her interactions with Holder, she employs the highest number of FN references: a total of 36 (out of 79), that is 45 %. During the activity *reconstructing the day of the crime*, Linden uses informal *Rosie*. Two distinct types of utterances arise in this case: (a) those whose content reconstructs the day of the murder (*Bennet could've never let Rosie in. He's on tape at the dance at 11:20. And that storeowner saw Rosie at the apartment at 10:00*) and (b) those that give personal information about the victim's life, habits, or personality traits. However, the latter are somewhat associated with her murder. For example, the utterance *Rosie had secrets. She went all over the city with that camera*, talks about a habit that she had but also suggests a possible connection with her murder. Likewise, when talking about the victim's personal possessions, personal relations or profile (*Rosie was scared and alone*), Linden's preference is *Rosie/Rosie's*, thus denoting interest towards things that mattered to the victim (*Rosie's backpack*) in her everyday life but may also provide information on her whereabouts or her murder. All in all, it seems that Linden's use of her first name is mostly connected with her function as the main detective: i.e. reconstruct and solve the murder case.

Linden's use of semiformal *Rosie Larsen* is again connected to the reconstruction of the crime. She chooses to do so primarily when she talks to characters who are less familiar with the victim or are enquired because they may have knowledge involving the crime, e.g., the school janitor (*...to know is if you saw this girl, Rosie Larsen, in the basement Friday night*), one of the suspect's wife (*Rosie Larsen was a student of your husband's?*), the principal of the school (*What was the extent of Mr. Ahmed's relationship with Rosie Larsen*). Linden also uses FN+S when talking to a possible suspect, for example the politician Richmond. The use of her full name, *Rosie Larsen*, would reflect her role as a detective, identifying the victim as a unique citizen with a name and a surname. That is, it is not a *Rosie* or a *Ms. Larsen*, it is *Rosie Larsen*. FN+S also prevails when she talks about the murder case as such (*...Carlson's off our backs until we solve Rosie Larsen's murder*).

7. Conclusions

The present study aimed to achieve two primary objectives. First, it sought to establish the quantitative centrality of the victim in the narrative plot of the TV series *The Killing* by analysing the frequency and distribution of victim-naming terms within the two first season of the series. Secondly, once the centrality of the victim was confirmed, the analysis delved into how the characters employed different victim-naming labels. The results confirmed that the use of victim-naming served as a device to give coherence and continuity to the main narrative, to help the audience distinguish between primary and secondary characters and to introduce information related to the victim and to the *modus operandi* of the murderer and the crime itself.

The analysis applied corpus-based stylistic techniques and used the concordancer Antconc to facilitate both quantitative and qualitative exploration. The results indicated the recurrent presence of the victim in the dialogues first because, after grammatical words the most frequent word was *Rosie* the first name of the victim. The exploration of the co-text surrounding FN and FN+S lead to the discovery of other NPs (*my daughter*, *my baby*) and examples in which the victim was referred to through the deictic pronoun *she*. The total number of combinations of FN + S, other NPs and the instances of the pronoun *she*, confirmed that references to the victim were statistically significant. Additionally, using the Plot tool to explore the dialogues revealed that the victim's name was consistently dispersed across the whole corpus. This has the effect of continuously reminding the audience of the victim's significance in the plot. The results coincide with previous studies indicating that the main narrative thread of the TV series focuses on revealing to the audience both, how the victim was murdered and the motives behind the murder. However, until the murder is solved, the information on the murder is usually intertwined with the characterisation of the victim as an individual, including details about her personality, her relationship with her family and friends, and her aspirations.

Underlying the whole analysis was the intention to prove the adequacy of a corpus-based stylistics (McIntyre and Walker 2019) methodology for the analysis of the presence of the victim in the narrative plot

of MMS. This approach to text analysis argues that the application of corpus methods can give valuable information about the text that would be difficult to obtain through other means. In fact, using corpus tools to explore the first two seasons of *The Killing* confirmed such claims by providing textual objective justification of the centrality of the victim in the dialogues, as demonstrated by a variety of context sensitive victim-naming choices. A possible continuation of this project would be to investigate whether this pattern, which coincides with Gregori-Signes's (2020) findings on *Twin Peaks*, is common to other TV series and to other types of crimes. It would also be interesting to contrast verbal indications for the victim with other multimodal aspects that may accompany them.

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