

Investigating Nordic Noir

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Abstract

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Scandinavian crime films and television series have become popular in recent years. This thesis explores some of the key texts in ‘Nordic noir’ through a discussion of detectives, the environment, and visual style. The emphasis in the project is on textual analysis. The first chapter examines the figures of Wallander and Lund in *Wallander* and *Forbrydelsen* respectively. I argue that the conflicts Nordic detectives often have between work and the domestic sphere are an indication of how gender stereotypes are challenged in the Scandinavian crime genre. The second chapter considers the role of the natural and built environments in Nordic noir. Features such as forests and water play a crucial role in *Forbrydelsen* because of the ways in which they create uncertainty, anticipation, and suspense. The urban spaces of *Bron/Broen* develop a sense of anonymity that recalls the function of the city in classic film noir. Rather than developing links between Sweden and Denmark, the series suggests that the Øresund bridge that spans the two countries is ultimately a disconnecting, centrifugal force that functions as what Marc Augé would call a ‘non-place’. The final chapter considers the role of colour and light in the films *Insomnia* and *Jar City*. My analysis demonstrates that Nordic noir encompasses more than naturalism and realism. Like classic and neo-noir, it includes a range of expressive aesthetic strategies that serve both narrative and thematic functions.

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Notes on the Text

Because “noir” has become Anglicised, this thesis does not italicise this French term, unless quoted from another author. When referring to noir, this thesis uses the letter case “n”, including for the alliteration “Nordic noir”.

All case studies are referred to in their original language. For example, *Forbrydelsen* refers to the Danish original television show whereas *The Killing* refers to the American re-make. For any other European films and television series, the original titles will be followed by a translation. For example: *Mördare utan Ansikte* (Berglund 1995) [*Faceless Killers*].

The referencing style of this thesis generally follows MLA style. However, in order to differentiate between different texts by the same author, and due to the length of some of the titles, a number of books and articles have been abbreviated. The list below clarifies which titles the abbreviations refer to. Full reference details are available in the list of works cited.

Abbreviations of References

Books and Book section

- (SF) Andrew K. Nestingen and Paula Arvas. *Scandinavian Crime Fiction*
- (CF) Andrew K. Nestingen. *Crime and Fantasy in Scandinavia: Fiction, Film, and Social Change*
- (FS) Daniel Brodén. *Folkhemhets Skuggbilder*
- (WP) Eva Novrup Redvall. *Writing and Producing Television Drama in Denmark: From The Kingdom to The Killing*
- (SK) Michael Tapper. *Snuten i Skymningslandet: Svenska Polisberättelser i Roman och Film*
- (SC) Michael Tapper. *Swedish Cops: From Sjöwall and Wahlöö to Stieg Larsson*
- (CN) Norðfjörð, Björn Ægir. "Crime up North: The Case of Norway, Finland and Iceland." From the book: *Nordic Genre Film*
- (DG) Philippa Gates. *Detecting Women: Gender and the Hollywood Detective Film*
- (FT) Steven Peacock. *Swedish Crime Fiction: Novel, Film, Television*

Journals

- ("Dark") Daniel Brodén. "The dark ambivalences of the welfare state: Investigating the transformations of the Swedish crime film"
- ("Dogmas") Eva Novrup Redvall. "'Dogmas' for television drama: The ideas of 'one vision', 'double storytelling', 'crossover' and 'producer's choice' in drama series from the Danish public service broadcaster DR"
- ("Identity") Gunhild Agger. "Nordic Noir – Location, Identity and Emotion"
- ("Approaches") Gunhild Agger. "Approaches to Scandinavian Crime Fiction"
- ("Thriller") Gunhild Agger. "Thrillers Kunst: *Forbrydelsen* I-III"

- (“Emotion”) Gunhild Agger. “Emotion, gender and genre: Investigating *The Killing*”
- (“Kropp”) Michael Tapper. “Hans Kropp - samhället självt. Manliga svenska mordspanare på ålderns höst Kommissarie Jensen, Martin Beck, Kurt Wallander och Van Veeteren”
- (“Dystopia”) Michael Tapper. “More than ABBA and skinny-dipping in mountain lakes’: Swedish dystopia, Henning Mankell and the British *Wallander* series”
- (“Icelandic”) Norðfjörð, Björn Ægir. “‘A typical Icelandic murder?’ The ‘criminal’ adaptation of *Jar City*”
- (“Serial”) Philippa Gates. “Manhunting: The Female Detective in the serial killer film”
- (“Melodrama”) Philippa Gates. “The Maritorious Melodrama. Film Noir with a Female Detective”
- (“Challenging”) Pia MajBritt Jensen and Anne Marit Waade. “Nordic Noir challenging ‘the language of advantage’: Setting, light and language as production values in Danish television series”
- (“Nordic Noir”) Anne Marit Waade and Pia MajBritt Jensen. “Nordic Noir Production values – *The Killing* and *The Bridge*”
- (“Isolation”) Steven Peacock. “The Impossibility of Isolation in *Wallander*”

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Introduction

This thesis aims to observe and analyse some of the major trends in Nordic noir. It uses a textual analysis approach of selected works because of the constitutively “aural and visual rhetoric” of noir cycles (Neale 157). The project focuses on three core components of Nordic noir: the Nordic detective in relation to gender, the representation of location specific environments, and the visual style of Nordic noir. These elements are found in most, if not all, Nordic noir films and television series. Each case study is designed to examine and illustrate the Scandinavian characteristics or reinterpretations of noir.

Unlike other genres, film noir did not emerge from industry conditions and practices. Rather, the discourse of film noir developed through film criticism beginning in France after World War II. Steve Neale explains that the term “film noir” did not emerge through any systematic empirical analysis. Instead, it was applied retroactively in 1946 by French film critic Nino Frank and referred to a body of American films released after 1941 whose “unity and coherence are presumed in the single term [noir]” (Neale 144, 145). The term both obscured and illuminated the nature and extent of the phenomena it alone is said to embody (Neale 143). Paul Schrader contends that “*Film noir* is not a genre [...] It is not defined, as are the western and gangster genres, by conventions of setting and conflict, but rather by the more subtle qualities of tone and mood” (Silver and Ursini 53).

As a revisionist form of noir, Nordic noir belongs to the current international and transnational genre of neo-noir (Kuhn and Westwell np). Conard explains that neo-noir is any film that came after the “classic era” that contained any noir themes and sensibilities (2). In the new noir era, these sensibilities often concern the effects of modernisation on the human subject, focusing on the protagonists’ sense of defamiliarization and meaninglessness. The primary issues at stake are identity, memory, and the perception of time as non-linear (Conard 2).

Pia Majbritt Jensen and Anne Marit Waade have identified that Nordic noir follows the thematic parameters of the 1940s and 1950s American crime film and psychological thriller. They point out that:

[Nordic noirs] also have tragic plots, melancholic and desperate anti-heroes as well as unusual camera placement, heavily subdued lighting and a pronounced use of shadows [the difference is that] Nordic noir uses recognizably *Nordic* phenomena, settings, light, climate and seasonal conditions as well as language(s), characters and themes such as gender equality, provincial culture and the social democratic welfare state (“Nordic Noir” 191).

Their analysis acknowledges those thematic and sociocultural fundamentals of Nordic noir, accounted for by several scholars.¹ More importantly, it also highlights the genre’s atmospheric qualities, which is crucial to its *sui generis*. As with noir and neo-noir, examining the relationship between these factors is important to achieve a deeper understanding of Nordic noir. As such, there is an opportunity within Film studies to expand on Waade and Jensen’s research.

Nordic noir can also be linked to specific traditions within Scandinavian literature, film and television. Olof Hedlin summarises Scandinavian crime fiction, in its film and televisual incarnations as “a transnationally successful, but regionally based, European popular cultural expression” (2). The term crime fiction, or *kriminalfiktio*n, suggests a discussion on historical and cultural trends whereas Nordic noir implies a focus on both location as well as stylistic components of Scandinavian crime fiction. While Scandinavian crime fiction has become a familiar brand in North America and Europe since the 1990s (SF 1), the term Nordic noir was probably coined in March 2010 by the Nordic noir blog and book club at the Scandinavian Department at the University College of London (“Identity” 138). Gunhild Agger explains that the alliteration exemplifies a phenomenon which unites an international perspective with a recognisable Nordic context (“Identity” 138). The label “Nordic noir” has been described by Glen Creeber as “a broad umbrella term that describes a particular type of Scandinavian crime fiction, [characterised] by its heady mixture of bleak naturalism, disconsolate location and morose detectives” (21). Björn Norðfjörð refers to the same phenomenon as “a constellation of texts stemming from novels, television and cinema tied together in often various and blurred ways” (CN 62).

¹ For analysis of sociocultural aspects of Scandinavian Crime Fiction, see Kerstin Bergman, Barry Forshaw, Andrew Nestingen, Paula Arvas, Michael Tapper and Daniel Brodén. For analysis on audiovisual aspects, see Glen Creeber, Gunhild Agger, Pia Majbritt Jensen, Anne-Marit Waade, Lea Gamula and Lothar Mikos.

Like noir, Nordic noir films have their roots in crime literature. “Norwegian noir” arguably began with Mauritz Christopher Hansen’s books, such as *Den Gae Christian* [*The Mad Christian*] published in 1821 and *Mordet på Maskinbygger Roolfsen* [*The Murder of Engineer Roolfsen*] in 1840 (SF 3; Vestrheim 13). Barry Forshaw refers to a number of prominent authors of Scandinavian crime fiction, published between the years 1991 and 2015. Amongst these are Henning Mankell’s *Wallander* series, Liza Marklund’s *Sprängaren* [*The Bomber*] and Camilla Läckberg’s *Fjällbacka* series, Jens Lapidus’ *Stockholm Noir* trilogy, and Åke Edwardson’s *Inspector Winter* series, all from Sweden. Other prominent names on the market are Icelandic Arnaldur Indriðason’s *Mýrin* [*Tainted Blood*], Norwegian Karin Fossum’s *Don’t Look Back*, (6), and Jo Nesbø’s *Harry Hole* series and *Hodejegerne* [*The Headhunters*], all of which have been made into either films or television series (6, 105).

Kerstin Bergman lists five reasons for Scandinavian crime fiction’s international appeal: The Stieg Larsson effect, criticism of the welfare state, (relative) gender equality and strong female characters, exotic landscapes and settings, and a strong link to the Anglo-American crime fiction tradition (“Chill” 80). These components represent a Nordic identity for international readers (“Chill” 80). Forshaw also points out that Sweden is often considered a sort of “catch-all generic term” for all of Scandinavia (4). However, in 1992 the geographical relocation of the crime genre northwards was initiated by Danish author Peter Høeg’s book *Frøken Smillas Fornemmelse for Sne* [*Smilla’s Sense of Snow*]. Forshaw describes the book as “intelligent, exquisitely honed crime fiction infused with all the textual complexity of more overtly literary fare, spreading before us an intriguing new topography for the crime fiction genre” (5).

As for the film and televisual dimensions of Nordic noir, *Doktor Glas* (Carlsten 1942) based on Hjalmar Söderberg’s novel can in hindsight be considered one of the first Nordic noir films. Per Wahlöö and Maj Sjöwall’s *Beck* series (Arrow Films 1997- 2016), which was inspired by authors such as Stieg Trenter and Maria Lange (Dagmar Lange), ignited the film trend of crime shows within Scandinavia. Daniel Brodén’s extensive and detailed study of Swedish crime film establishes that the first *Beck* novel *Roseanna* was made into a film by Daniel Alfredson as early as 1967 (“Dark” 102, 103). However, the first major cinematic adaptation of Wahlöö and Sjöwall’s books was based on *Den Verdervärdige Mannen från Säffle* [*The Abdominal Man*]. Inspired by the gritty realism

of *The French Connection* (Friedkin 1971), Bo Widerberg directed *Mannen på Taket* in 1976. The film was “an outburst of violence”...[serving] a political-symbolic function, by disrupting an image of the perfect welfare state and bringing institutional violence out in the open (Brodén “Dark” 102, 103). Another prominent name amongst the forerunners of Nordic noir onscreen is Lars Von Trier, who together with Thomas Vinterberg created the Dogma 95 movement. In 1994, Von Trier directed *Riget* [*The Kingdom*], a miniseries set at the “Rigshospitalet” in Copenhagen. Jan Lumholdt and Eva Novrup Redvall both argue that Von Trier’s jaundiced colours, unconventional camera work, and use of jump cuts created a surreal and disquieting cinematic style (Lumholdt 104; WP 58). The series won international acclaim and was remade in the US as *Kingdom Hospital* (American Broadcast Company 2004).

Riget was followed by the release of the Wallander film series, where *Mördare utan Ansikte* (Berglund 1995) [*Faceless Killers*] featuring Rolf Lassgård as Kurt Wallander was the first out of nine films. The same year, SVT (Sveriges Television) also adapted the films into a miniseries, running from 1995 to 2006 (Sveriges Television AB). In January 2000, Swedish Håkan Nesser’s literary character Van Vetereen debuted in Scandinavia as a miniseries (SVT/DR) with the same name, featuring Sven Volter as the retired chief inspector. It was later produced by Arrow Films as a 2005 pan-European television series (MHz networks 2005-2006) (Peacock FT 10). Having mentioned a few onscreen precursors, Hedling specifically points to the breakthrough effect that the original *Millennium* trilogy (Arden Oplev and Alfredson 2009) spearheaded. These productions lead to a broader awareness of the brand, he states, and to more widespread interest and distribution of books, television shows and feature films. This was also mirrored in the increased international scholarly inquiry (Hedling 1).

The original film, *Män som Hatar Kvinnor* (2009), and the remake *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* (Fincher 2011), marked the audiovisual turn of the phenomenon. The high-profile television show *Forbrydelsen* (DR 2007-2012) galvanised the trend and was eventually adapted into the American show *The Killing* (Fox Television Studios 2011-2014). *Bron/Broen* (SVT/DR 2011-), was the subject for two remakes: the American *The Bridge* (FX Productions 2013-2014) and the British- French drama thriller series *The Tunnel* (Sky Atlantic 2013-). In 2008, the BBC created their adaptation of *Wallander* (Hedling 2). Anna Westersthål Stenport states that remakes and adaptations in the US,

UK and Europe of recent Scandinavian crime series are unprecedented (446, 447). For example, the premiere of *The Killing* (Fox Television Studios 2011-2014) attracted 2.7 million viewers in the United States and 2.2 million viewers in the United Kingdom (446).

This thesis analyses *Bron/Broen* (SVT/DR 2011-), a Swedish-Danish co-production, *Forbrydelsen* (DR 2007-2012) a Danish production, and the Swedish productions of *Wallander* (SVT 1994-2013), produced as both films and television series. It also explores the Icelandic film *Jar City* (Kormákur 2006) and the Norwegian/Swedish co-production *Insomnia* (Skjoldbjærg 1997).

In this research, the term ‘Nordic noir’ is applied to both films and television series, rather than treating them as clearly distinct media forms. The first reason for this decision is that several of these television productions are treated interchangeably at an industrial level. Swedish production company Yellow Bird (*Millennium* trilogin /The *Millennium* trilogy, *Wallander*) run an innovative ‘out of the box’ approach which dissolves the divisions between media forms and formats (“Isolation” 39). Redvall explains that the Danish public service broadcaster DR, which produced *Forbrydelsen* operates according to a project-based nature of semi-permanent work groups in the film industry (“Dogmas” 230, 231).² As such, DR’s doctrine means an exchange of personnel between the film and television industries, and DR has strategically moved towards ‘cinematic’ storytelling since the 1990s (“Dogmas” 231). For example, several young film directors were hired as episode directors for its first attempt at a long-running series, *Taxa* (DR 1997-1999). This movement between film and television has been recognised as essential both to the emergence of a new Danish cinema, as well as the development of TV series with a strong visual identity. Redvall also emphasises that the involvement of personnel from the film industry has also given series an international ‘look’, which has helped benefit their export potential (“Dogmas” 231).

The first chapter of the thesis examines the Scandinavian representations of the detective, particularly in relation to the issue of gender. I compare and contrast the police detectives Wallander and Lund. Daniel Brodén contends that in Swedish crime fiction

² DR also produced the political melodrama *Borgen* (Price et al. 2010-2013), *Rejseholdet/Unit One* (Thorsboe 2000-2004) and *Arvingerne/The Legacy* (Ilsøe 2014-), to name a few.

male police characters have their “future behind them”, and as such express a mournful commentary on a bygone social model (FS 231). By comparison, younger policewomen are more vigorous and are often associated with contemporary issues (FS 231). Neo-noir partly reproduces the gender stereotyping evident in the cycle of crime films and psychological thrillers of the post-World War II period (Wager 158). Philippa Gates claims that in the 1980s Hollywood film enacted a backlash against feminism. This was evident in the detective film through the representation of troubled masculinity masquerading as tough and triumphant and through the representation of women as demonised or excluded from the centre of the screen (“Serial” 42). Nordic noir, however, has been acknowledged for its carefully crafted characters and compelling representations of gender. Soraya Roberts describes the Nordic female detective as “the traditional rain-soaked sleuth has morphed into a heroine who is as alienated and obsessed as her forefathers” (Roberts np). In 1990 Julia Ormond played Smilla in Billie August’s transnational production of *Smilla’s Sense of Snow*. Roger Ebert’s review of the film stated that “the film also works as a character study: We are intrigued by Smilla, by her quietness, by her strength” (Ebert np). The deployment of intriguing female police detectives and female lead roles is not an entirely unique feature for Nordic noir. See, for example, Detective Chief Inspector Jane Tennison (Helen Mirren) in *Prime Suspect* (ITV 1991-2006), Lieutenant Anita Van Buren (S. Epatha Merkerson) in *Law and Order* (NBCUniversal Television Distribution 1990-2010), or Captain Laure Berthaud (Caroline Proust) and lawyer Josephine Karlsson (Audrey Fleurot) in *Engrenages* (Canal + 2005-2017) [*Spiral*]. However, female protagonists are one of the common features of several successful Nordic noir series and films. Forshaw describes *The Millennium* trilogy’s groundbreaking heroine Lisbeth Salander as a character with “a fierce intelligence, and ability to measure and analyse the depths of human behaviour, while standing outside ordinary lives” (65). Moreover, he refers to the pairing of Salander with Blomqvist as a form of “role-reversal” regarding generic and gender expectations (65). This arguably occurs in more recent Nordic noirs such as *Bron/Broen* and *Forbrydelsen*.

Interestingly, Salander and Norén both seem to have conditions similar to Asperger’s syndrome (Svensson Glaser np). It could therefore be argued that their identities as competent women are synonymous with, or even depend on, their exceptional psychological qualities (Turnbull 183). As a result, I have chosen to focus on Lund. Female detectives are often described as either being overly emotional (and

therefore unprofessional) or criticised for displaying an astonishing lack of emotional involvement (Åström, Gregersdotter, and Horeck 148). Like Salander, Norén, and numerous male detectives, Lund is obsessed with work and has a dysfunctional private life. At times she is also highly emotional and unpredictable. While she has some similarities to male detectives in the hardboiled genres and police procedurals, the tensions between her public and private personas mean that she can be located within the Scandinavian tradition of depicting all detectives, men and women, with explicitly human traits (“Melodrama” 27, Kärholm 61). I suggest that much of Lund’s intrigue lies in her temperament and her inner battles.

Wallander is an important case study because his portrait demonstrates that the focus on the sensitive, human and ordinary aspects of the male Nordic detective was already well established in the 1990s (Kärholm 62, 63). He belongs to a different trend within the crime genre, that of the rumpled detective. The film and televisual adaptations play down or omit some of Wallander’s behaviour in the novels. Instead, he is portrayed as an ageing, non-violent, moody, overweight policeman, as well as a representative of a fading generation of Swedish socialists. Continuing the legacy of Martin Beck (Peter Haber, Gösta Ekman, Carl-Gustaf Lindstedt), the onscreen representation of Wallander highlights the male detective’s sensitivity and vulnerability, even to such an extent that Wallander’s air of melancholy is metaphorically reflected in the landscape.

Chapter two focuses on the representation of natural and urban environments in *Forbrydelsen* and *Bron/Broen* respectively. The natural environments in *Forbrydelsen* operate in a similar way to settings in many noir and neo-noir films: spaces reflect an undercurrent of crime and social unrest (Copjec 229). Waade and Jensen have noted that the presence of natural environments in the first episode of *Forbrydelsen* is visually striking: “It is late autumn, and the grass is yellow and withered. The viewer does not know whether it is a crime scene or just an innocent meadow” (“Nordic Noir” 194). They relate this impression to Martin Lefebvre’s concept of cinematic landscape in which “the landscape imagery in itself indicates a narrative and visual style” (Lefebvre qtd. in “Nordic Noir” 194). In accordance with this observation, I expand on the role of natural environments in *Forbrydelsen* using Lefebvre’s work on landscape in narrative cinema. Although *Forbrydelsen*, for the most part, is shot in darkness, the meadow and forest are of visual and aural importance as its eerie presence is felt during the day as well as at

night. Such representation of natural space dramatises the series' atmosphere of uncertainty, gloom and dread. As noted by Agger and Jensen, these shots are visually striking, and I add that through framing, lighting and camera movement, natural space adds acutely to the series' air of anticipation and suspense. As part of the natural world, the marked presence of water also refers to the fluidity of the characters that are crucial to *Forbrydelsen*'s tone and slowly unfolding narrative.

The second part of this chapter considers the way urban space in *Bron/Broen* is aesthetically represented. Daniel Brodén observes that the depiction of crime in Scandinavian crime fiction has changed over time. Initially, crime was considered as an exceptional occurrence, but recent Scandinavian crime productions treat it as commonplace. This arguably points to growing disenchantment with the Scandinavian modern welfare state, known in Swedish terms as “Folkhemmet” (“Dark” 97). The criticism of Swedish and Danish social issues in *Bron/Broen* is not only expressed in terms of plot but is also distinguishable in the representation of its urban environments. The cityscapes in this series communicate an overwhelming tone of despondency. The impersonal qualities of the urban environment can be analysed in terms of Marc Augé's theories on modernity and Michel de Certeau's term ‘non-places’. Using Dimenberg's analysis on spaces of modernity in noir I also point out the centrifugal role of Øresund bridge, suggesting that this link of transit and commerce between Sweden and Denmark is not a connecting but a disconnecting force. Moreover, through its aesthetic representation as an anonymous site, which fragments rather than connects people, it exemplifies Michel de Certeau's term “non-places”. The despondent atmosphere of Nordic noir spills into all its components urban environments included.

The final chapter interprets Nordic noir in terms of Schrader's claim that noir is not a genre but can be thought of as a cycle of American films with a distinctive tone and mood (Silver and Ursini 53). By paying close attention to stylistic aspects to the Norwegian-Swedish psychological thriller *Insomnia* and the Icelandic noir *Jar City*, this chapter aims to look closer at the interrelation between these films' respective Nordic settings and the aesthetics of colour and light. Anne-Marie Mai recently stated that “The special light and darkness of the Scandinavian landscapes and cityscapes [...] are also important in the crime fiction as scene-setting surroundings” (126). Her observation resonates with Waade and Jensen's claim that most Nordic noirs take advantage of

preexisting Nordic phenomena such as the weather for aesthetic and thematic purposes. *Insomnia* and *Jar City* are films that employ colour and light in highly conscious ways, and as a way of reflecting their specific and unique locations.

In both case studies, daytime and sunlight evoke similar stylistic effects to the use of shadows and darkness in classic noir: it helps to create an ominous atmosphere. The use of the midnight sun and whiteness in *Insomnia* not only highlights Norway as a unique setting for a noir film but also prompts us to reevaluate previous noir conceptions of darkness and light and what they signify. Porforio pointed out that Orson Welles' film *Citizen Kane* (1941) helped to set the trend for the expressionistic style of noir by linking his visual style together with the psychological dimension of the morally ambiguous hero (213). It can be argued that Erik Skjoldbaerg has accomplished something similar with *Insomnia* for Nordic noir in the way he employs location specific aesthetic devices to draw attention to both setting and the psychological state of its anti-hero.

Nordic noir is mostly known for its criticism of the Swedish welfare model known as Folkhemmet/People's home. By contrast, *Jar City* is concerned with ethical issues related to genetic research in Iceland, something that is also expressed through its aesthetics. While most other Nordic noirs use the blue-grey end of the spectrum ("Challenging" 262), *Jar City* takes full advantage of the effects created from a dynamic between monochromatic shades and bright colours. Such aesthetics clearly evoke visceral, emotional and psychological responses to controversial Icelandic issues. They also make a significant stylistic contribution to our perception of Nordic noir by way of moving our attention away from Sweden and towards other equally compelling Scandinavian social issues.

Chapter One

The Nordic Detective

Detectives are a popular and intrinsic feature of the crime genre. The hardboiled tradition that informs film noir stretches back to figures such as Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe in the fiction of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler respectively. Detectives are also strongly associated with particular regions or cities, including John Rebus with Edinburgh and Dave Robicheaux with Louisiana. Scandinavian detectives such as Sarah Lund, Harry Hole, and Kurt Wallander have become familiar to international audiences. Other notable characters are Van Vetereen, Lisbeth Salander, Saga Norén and Martin Rhode. This chapter will examine the characters of Wallander and Lund in order to explore the ways in which Nordic noir questions traditional conceptualisations of gender.

In her discussion on detective types in literature, Sara Kärrholm observes that in the “last hundred years” a trend has become apparent in the portrayals of detectives (Kärrholm 61). She claims that authors tend to depict detectives as a blend of both eccentric and ordinary characteristics and in different proportions (61, 65). She has also identified that in more recent years heroic features in female detectives – both in literature and on-screen – have become more prominent (65). For example, she describes Stieg Larsson’s Salander as an almost mythological character whose intellect and knowledge clearly compensates for her small physique and lack in social skills (65). She also mentions Helene Tursten’s detective inspector Huss and points to the fact that Huss is a European champion in jiu-jitsu, which significantly aids her police work (65).

The combination of ordinary and extraordinary features is clearly visible in Danish police detective Lund. Lund demonstrates a contrast between her mostly placid exterior and her passionate interior. Her unglamorous appearance reminds us of Frances McDormand’s pragmatic character Margie Gunderson of *Fargo* (Coen 1996). In contrast to Gunderson’s straightforward persona, *Forbrydelsen* illustrates the difference between Lund’s inner turmoil and outward calm. This analysis states that Lund is torn between a commitment to the domestic sphere and her work. Her conflicts also reflect her sense of law and justice, between following the rules and deciding to break them.

Over the course of the narrative, Lund develops a strong sense of justice for the victims in each season. In this regard she has something in common with Helen Mirren's character Jane Tennison in *Prime Suspect* (ITV 1991-2006) although she does not share Tennison's desire to be accepted by her male colleagues (Irons 47). In season two of *Forbrydelsen* the narrative also includes the usual thematic development of the female sleuth falling in love with the main suspect ("Serial" 51). This issue of clouded professional judgment recalls the struggles of Megan Turner (Jamie Lee Curtis) in *Blue Steel* (Bigelow 1989) and or Illeana (Angelina Jolie) in *Taking Lives* (Caruso 2004). Both characters misread the case and embrace the killer as a lover ("Serial" 45, 49). Lund's analytical abilities counteract her emotional drives. However, in the final season, Lund eventually becomes a transgressive character like the rogue cop Harry Callahan (Clint Eastwood) or noir detective Mike Hammer (Ralph Meeker). She displays "sympathy and a sense of the right thing but hardened by the dangerous and uncompromising world she is forced to live in" (Brownson 98). Lund's apparent inner turmoil causes her to compromise her professional code of conduct. Her transgressive moral code can be traced back to the principles of the existential noir protagonist, such as Sam Spade.

Kärrholm also states that in literature, the investigative detective genre shows a departure from portraying investigators as eccentric master detectives and an increased preference for highlighting the detective's human aspects (61). Her observation can be used to describe the film and televisual representations of Swedish police officer Wallander. Wallander may be an authoritative character due to his job, but his personal shortcomings and challenges are all too apparent. In many ways, Wallander could be a typical middle-aged, Scandinavian next-door-neighbor. He is portrayed as a hardworking, middle-class socialist who is loyal to the legal system for which he works. His idealistic nature prevents him from becoming a transgressive character. Wallander's corporeal features represent a departure from a stoic, disciplined, Nordic masculine ideal. Indeed, over time his ageing body gradually fails him. Yet despite his physical flaws, lapses in judgment, and downbeat disposition, he is a largely sympathetic figure who is difficult to label clearly. It is obvious that the onscreen representation of Wallander aims to evoke sympathy for his flawed character.

Truth Hurts: Lund as the Northern Female Detective

Lund is a complex character who cannot be defined easily. Actress Sophie Gråbøl explained in an interview that “Lund isn’t a stereotype – she’s a character who came to life as we made the series.” (Jeffries np). Porfirio contends that film noir cuts across several genres: the gangster film, the Western, the suspense film, and the thriller (465). This delineation is a reminder that the existential hero(ine), like Lund, borrows from several established anti-hero figures. *Forbrydelsen* depicts Lund as a conflicted character who beneath a calm surface struggles with inner turmoil and existential crisis. The series creator Søren Sveistrup juxtaposes Lund’s role as a mother with her obsession with work to reveal her moral code and personal sense of justice. Lund exemplifies Kärholm’s argument that the modern detective is both ordinary and eccentric (Kärholm 65). As this part of the chapter will argue, Lund’s appearances make her look “ordinary” but her unusual qualities derive from the way she deviates from stereotypical portrayals of the female detective in both film and television.

Jensen and Waade argue that one of the reasons for the success of Nordic noir is because it encompasses gender issues (“Challenging” 262). They point to the greater emancipation of Nordic women compared to women elsewhere, such as “single mothers leading successful careers, women in power...are thematic elements arguably seen as exotic and specifically Nordic abroad” (“Challenging” 262). In situating the modern female detective in the wider context of noir, Philippa Gates and Mark Osteen have both acknowledged the role of the *femme vital* of noir. They claim that most women in film noir have jobs and their forms of labour closely reflect the actual postwar US female workforce (Osteen 186; “Melodrama” 24). Gates also argues that the female detective often found in 1930s B-films and series is an independent woman who puts her career ahead of the traditional female pursuits of marriage and a family. Glenda Farrell’s characters Florence Dempsey in *Mystery of the Wax Museum* (Curtiz 1933) and Torchy Blane in *Smart Blonde* (McDonald 1937) are just a couple of examples (“Melodrama” 24; DG 95). The aftermath of World War II had a polarising effect on gender roles. Screen representations moved from celebrating the independent and career-oriented woman to her demonisation, and the character stereotype of the *femme fatale* became prominent (“Melodrama” 25-26).

Scholars mark the mid-1990s as the point in time when Scandinavian crime tradition in film and television began to feature female police investigators (FS 220; Povlesen Klitgaard 91). The most prominent example was Leif G.W. Persson and Jan Guillou's *Anna Holt-polis* – a title based on Norway's most famous crime writer, Anne Holt (SVT 1996-1999) (Povlesen Klitgaard 93). Another important female detective was *Emma åklagare* (Filmlance International AB 1997). *Anna Holt-polis* and *Emma åklagare* were both series in which the enclosed, masculine world of the Scandinavian police was challenged by female police officers (FS 218). Along with this new gender dynamic, these police shows also demonstrated an increased interest in emotions and relationships (FS 220). Later examples of female detectives include Swedish author Liza Marklund's Annika Bengtzon featuring in *Sprängaren* (Nutley 2001), followed by the Danish police drama *Anna Pihl* (Cosmo Film, TV 2 Denmark 2005-2008), and the Swedish character *Eva Höök* (SVT 2007-2008) and the twelve *Irene Huss* films, also from Sweden (SVT 2007-2011). Linda Wallander in the *Wallander* series (SVT 2005-2014) also has an important role as her father's harshest critic.

Lund can be distinguished from former Nordic women detectives in several ways. Firstly, *Forbrydelsen* avoids the thematic issue of parental guilt, despite Lund's her apparent neglect of her son, Mark (Este Forsking Hansen). Lund's inner conflicts often involve a clash between commitment to her work and parental responsibilities. Despite these inner battles, she is a female detective whose personal sense of truth is more important to her than both her family and her job. It can be argued that Lund's determination and willingness to compromise her own personal life in order to catch the guilty is a large part of her appeal. Kim Akass compares Lund from *Forbrydelsen* with the American equivalent female detective, Sarah Lindén (Mireille Enos) from the American remake, *The Killing*. She points out that Lund's casual parenting style is never questioned in *Forbrydelsen* (747). By contrast, Akass contends that the American remake, *The Killing*, focuses on the detrimental effects of poor mothering skills (748). Lund may be a neglectful parent, but rather than *The Killing*'s development of a "judgmental and melodramatic narrative about bad mothering [...] *Forbrydelsen* focuses on the suffering of the Birk Larsen family in a complex portrayal of a family torn apart by grief" (Akass 748, 747). For example, Mark's trauma is portrayed as relative to that of the Birk Larsens' and the other victims of crime in the series. This difference is most clearly illustrated in the final episode of season three. As Lund flees to Iceland to escape

from the murder she has committed, she receives a photograph on her mobile phone of her mother, son, and daughter-in-law all smiling next to her newborn grandchild. Mark has found happiness and peace. His gesture of sending the photo of his daughter – Lund’s grandchild – is an act of love and forgiveness. Contrast this scene to Akass’ observation that the narrative of selfish maternity only becomes “ever more darker” in *The Killing* (Akass 748). Lindén’s drive to solve the case and inability to care for her teenage son are blamed on a childhood spent in foster care after abandonment by her mother (Akass 748).

Lund’s commitment to work and personal quest for truth and justice are the narrative and thematic focal point of the original series. In other words, *Forbrydelsen* highlights Lund’s emotional attachment to her son in pivotal scenes, showing that choosing work over her son is not a simple choice for her. While Lund prioritises work over being a mother and grandmother, her personal truth is arguably even more important to her than either family or work. She is a figure who privileges her sense of right and wrong.³ Another unusual feature of Lund’s character is that, aside from a divorce, Lund’s past is completely unknown to us. To depict the female detective as a person who is free from a traumatic past is unusual. No matter how competent, female detectives are often portrayed with a psychological frailty (“Serial 42”). These problems are often connected to her relationship with her father, or other men who have hurt her, such as Clarice (Jodie Foster) in *The Silence of the Lambs* (Demme 1991) or more recently Gillian Anderson’s character Stella Gibson in *The Fall* (BBC Two 2013-2016).

Gråbøl’s ‘x-factor’ is an important factor in the success of *Forbrydelsen* (Nicol 39). As with Wallander, Lund’s unpretentious persona is connoted by her appearance. Her attire consists of knitted Faroese jumpers, jeans and stout boots; she wears her hair in a practical ponytail, and as an intertextual touch, the classic noir trench coat. Gråbøl describes the outfit as “a disguise for Lund’s sexuality” (Billen 2). Unlike many of her neo-noir precursors, Lund’s humble appearance is not a masculinization of her character because of trauma stemming from a history of sexual abuse, avoiding the familiar narrative of representation of the women detective as the victim in a man’s world (“Serial” 47). For all the poise and confidence that Lund’s posture and manners imply,

³ For a detailed analysis of Lund’s quest for truth, see Alec Charles’ essay “A Difficult Task Sarah Lund and the Crime of Individuated Happiness” in *The Happiness Illusion: How the Media Sold Us a Fairytale* eds. Hockley, Luke, and Fadina.

her character is far from straightforward. Fluctuating between transgression and hesitation, we observe a negotiation between Lund's inner convictions and her professional code of conduct. Lund's successive move from her team, the police work, her family and eventually Denmark can be interpreted as an echo of the feminist 'hard-boiled' fiction of the 1980s where the genre goes to some length to justify the woman detective's choice to pack up and light out (Tomc 49). Sandra Tomc has noted that more than often in this genre, men and women's worlds are distant and incompatible (49). Moreover, law enforcement agencies are repositories and progenitors of the worst kind of gender injustice. In the absence of a rationale for putting up with this the female detective just leaves (Tomc 49). As I will argue, despite facing many battles with colleagues and bosses alike, Lund's unapologetic nature manages to steer the narrative away from the trope of a working woman unable to cope in a man's world. Rather, what distinguishes Lund from her male colleagues is her inability to accept an unsolved crime, an incomplete job, and injustice as the status quo. Lund's drive to find the guilty motivates her extreme behaviour.

Another important difference is that Lund's personality is to a large extent synonymous with the hardboiled detective, perhaps more so than any other Nordic detective to date, the male detectives included. Jerold Abrams' description of the hardboiled anti-hero applies to Lund: "(S)he never rests and is wound pretty tight: (s)he rarely smiles and quickly gets to the point. She just goes about her business, mean as ever...trusts no one and needs no friends. Least of all [*homme*] friends: [men] are trouble in her world...she handles them very carefully" (75, 76). There is a variation between Lund and the hardboiled hero insofar as Lund is driven by a personal sense of justice and a fascination for clues, rather than the morbid curiosity that, according to Chaumeton and Borde motivates the hardboiled detective (22). Before Lund, romance and relationships were prevalent themes in the series featuring women detectives in Nordic noir. Even Stieg Larsson's extreme heroine Salander (Noomi Rapace) longs for a relationship with the womaniser Blomqvist (Michael Nyqvist). Her romantic longing contrasts noticeably with the defensive wall she creates to keep others at bay. By contrast, Sveistrup and Gråbøl have developed a character who may be interested in romance and sex but inherently prioritises herself, her work, and her sense of truth. Lund cares about her family but often finds family matters trivial. Her polite smiles, awkward mannerisms and sincere attempts to take an interest in her mother's wedding plans or the name of her

son's hockey team make us understand that her mind is elsewhere, always focusing on the case.

The few scenes in which Lund is displayed in a physically intimate situation merely represent a thematic obverse to the major concerns of Lund and *Forbrydelsen*, which is finding the guilty. In the opening moments of the first season, we see Lund and her Swedish partner Bengt (Johan Gry) embracing and kissing in the soft, warm light from a bedside lamp. They are interrupted abruptly by Lund's work phone. The disturbing noise from the phone signal cuts through the romantic atmosphere as if to punctuate the beginning of the end of Lund's love life. From here on, she will slowly but steadily drift into a state of isolation. Hence, the scene functions as a brief statement, affirming that Lund's priority is solving crimes, not dealing with relationships. Lund's physical attributes are de-emphasised, and her superior investigative skills, obsessive behaviour, competence, abilities, and uncompromising methods are in focus. Bengt's status changes over the narrative, from Lund's love interest to a mere nuisance to her, and eventually she perceives him as a threat to her investigation. This conflict is epitomised in episode fifteen when Lund realises that Bengt has withheld information on the Larsen case from her and she confronts him about it. Up until this point, Bengt has been fully committed to being the supportive partner, waiting for Lund to devote more time to their relationship. He admits that his lack of communication about the Larsen case was an attempt to make her focus on him instead of the case. When faced with an ultimatum, Lund chooses work and more importantly, her own sense of justice over domesticity, a "refrain" for all three seasons (Lindström 22).

Lund is a woman detective who is intuitive but not overly sentimental. Her fascination with clues and her ability to see consistent patterns is the driving force behind each case. As such, Sveistrup avoids the common theme of the woman detective becoming involved in cases due to succumbing to an over-identification with the killer's female victims, or due to maternal feelings for the child victims ("Serial" 42). In all three seasons, she is initially reluctant to take on each investigation. In season one, she knows about the murder of Nanna Birk Larsen but plans to move to Sweden with her partner and leave the case for someone else to solve. In season two she doubts her abilities as a police officer and works at border control. Although she takes on the case of the kidnapping of eight-year-old Emily Zeuthen, the daughter of a shipping magnate in season three, she

would rather apply for an OPA position, effectively a desk job within the Danish police force. Instead of an immediate emotional investment in the cases, Lund's all-consuming investment in finding the guilty is initiated through epiphanies in which her cerebral and intuitive self merge. Through cinematography and editing, *Forbrydelsen* bridges Lund's intuitive aspects with her intellectual abilities, illustrating the depth and complexity of her persona.

The first example occurs in the first episode of season one. Lund is connected to the Larsen case through parallel editing. After we have witnessed Nanna in the forest chase, the next scene crosscuts to a frame of Lund as she wakes up with a fright and is gasping for breath. She rapidly sits up in bed and stares with panic stricken eyes into the dark bedroom. Outside the window, church bells and the noise from traffic compete with the sounds of her panting breath. Shaking from adrenaline, she looks around and then notes the time on her alarm clock which shows the time of Nanna Birk Larsen's last moment in life. A metaphysical bond is established between Lund and Nanna and functions as a critical introduction to Lund's haunted and obsessive nature. The sequence also foreshadows Lund's commitment to finding Nanna's killer.

Similar atmospheric moments of intensified intuition recur like a whisper throughout the series, manifested via the suggestive, emotive soundtrack and subtle camera techniques. With a camera that lingers over the city and characters alike, the cinematographers (Arrildt, Tengberg and Johansson to name a few), create a brooding and uncomfortable atmosphere. After an epic, establishing aerial shot inspired by "Spaghetti Western [cinematography]" (Sveistrup qtd. in Creeber 25), the camera slowly zooms in on the Theban labyrinth of the crime of Copenhagen and its outskirts as the musical score increases in tempo. The camerawork takes us on a sorrowful but serene journey through a dark and cold Nordic web of intrigue, drawing our attention as much to facts as to the intuitive, emotional and philosophical. *Forbrydelsen*'s artistry derives from the ability to capture the viewer with a broad range of perspectives, from the furthest, most detached point-of-view to the most intimate and personal angle on crime. The camera often approaches Lund's serious and wide-eyed facial expressions in haunting long takes and close-ups and consequently, there is a strong focus on her personal processes, and we are invited to share her apprehension (Brown 65).

These arresting techniques bring out the subtle but pivotal moments that mark that significant shift in the narrative when Lund becomes obsessed with a case. In the first season, it is the rain-drenched scene set within the vast grasslands where Lund suddenly realises where Nanna's body is buried. Frans Bak's emotive soundtrack invites us to share in Lund's consciousness. As she juggles the factual realities of the case her intuition comes to the fore. She drops her mobile phone in the middle of a conversation. Her sudden shift in focus and awareness is underlined by a smooth circular camera motion rotating around her noticeably earnest face.

As a confirmation of Porfirio's genealogy of noir, Gråbøl compares her character's loner status and reserved attitude to that of Clint Eastwood's performance in *The Dollars* trilogy (Leone 1964-1966) (Turnbull 179). Sergio Leone's cinematography and Clint Eastwood's acting received attention for the way in which these factors created a stylised version of stoic masculinity (Smith 10). Similarly, Gråbøl's acting and Sveistrup's cinematography shapes a new version of the contemplative female detective on screen, one that is easily interpreted as suffering from an emotional callousness when in fact Lund is highly emotional, however – for the most part – in an unspectacular way. One example of the intensity of Lund's emotions is illustrated in season three, a few days into the Zeuthen investigation.

Lund is responsible for the delivery of a ransom to Emelie Zeuthen's kidnapper, and the operation is a matter of life and death. The criminal has given strict orders: Lund is only allowed to use public transportation, and only according to the timetable he provides her with in her headset. Meanwhile, Lund's team is undercover and follows her closely, which could seriously jeopardise the operation. It is late evening, and the only sources of light come from traffic headlights and street lamps. The music score emphasises how critical this mapped out journey is through its suspenseful, pulsating rhythm, reminding us that Emelie Zeuthen's life is hanging by a thread.

As Lund rushes across the underground platform the camera suddenly cuts to a close-up of her pale and shocked face as she is confronted with the sight of her son Mark together with his pregnant girlfriend, both looking blissfully happy. The intimate moment between the couple summarises everything that is the opposite of the cruel world of crime that Lund inhabits. In a deep focus shot amidst the bustle of the railway station, the characters appear frozen in space and time while anonymous crowds rush past. Lund's

private life is set against her professional life in this knife-edged moment. As if cemented to the ground, she does not move an inch, even when her partner risks discovery by whistling at her in a failed attempt to get her attention. The train door shuts and leaves the platform with a screech, and the young couple walks away blending in with the crowds. Lund wakes up from her transfixed state, and all she manages to say in her defence is “I’m sorry. It was my son”. As punishment for ignoring his instructions, the kidnapper forces Lund to watch as he throws a man off the roof of the Copenhagen courthouse.

In revealing Lund’s intense emotional reaction, we realise that the angst between Lund and Mark derives from her obsessive attachment to her job and the lack of solid commitment to her family, as opposed to a lack of an emotional attachment to her son. In fact, Lund’s role as a lover is overshadowed by her role as a mother, which is crucial to gain insight into her moral code. She makes several attempts to mend her strained relationship with Mark, especially in season three: when she finds out she will become a grandmother, she is apparently torn between the world of domesticity and work. Ultimately, *Forbrydelsen* departs from the standard noir narrative in which “most *noir* mothers exist primarily to shed light on the male protagonist” (Osteen 187). Mark Osteen notes that

Cody Jarrett’s smothering ma exposes his Achilles heel in *White Heat*; Bart Tare’s sister, Ruby, in *Gun Crazy*, serves as Annie Laurie Starr’s foil. In the *femme noirs*, children still appear in mostly symbolic roles – as measures of the mother’s morality, as signs of attachment to the past, as emblems of fresh beginnings, as psychological scars – and rarely as real people. Most often, children – those products of female labour – represent the conflict between domesticity and nondomestic work. In *femme noir*’s many dead or damaged children not only motivate the action; they also indicate conflicting views about a woman’s place. (187-188)

By contrast, while Lund’s lovers come and go throughout *Forbrydelsen*’s three seasons, Mark has his consistent trajectory which functions as another, parallel, narrative device to highlight Lund’s devotion to her work. In the final scenes of season three, Lund has finally regained her son’s trust and has an opportunity to enjoy family life as a grandmother. Alone in the backseat of a car with a paedophile who, due to lack of evidence, will walk free, she cannot let go of her personal sense of injustice. The man

gazes provocatively at Lund in the back mirror, and his eyes squint with self-satisfaction. He seems convinced that Lund's oath as a police officer will protect him regardless of his self-declared guilt. We observe her shaking from disgust in his presence. Her adrenaline rush makes her breathe more intensely, like an angry bull before a fight. Her eyes are wide open and glazed while she has a genuinely sad expression on her face. Her eyelids twitch, but she does not blink once as if she is absorbing every impression. She is infused with anger and the desire for revenge. Suddenly, her anger erupts and she loses all discipline. With her regular determination and poise, she gets out of the car, loads her gun, points it at the man's head and fires. Everything goes quiet, the sort of quiet of a sound insulated room, and through this overbearing silence, we hear the extra-diegetic noise of a signal, suggesting a temporary deafness that can result from a gunshot. These effects draw us into Lund's heightened mental state. A split second later she allows herself to breathe again. While we see her panting heavily through the blood-stained car window, she rouses from her transfixed state and looks around. When her partner Bosch (Anders W. Berthelsen) runs over, panic-stricken, and asks her what has happened, she appears highly confused. Her voice shakes when she states "It was him. He said it was him".

Although Lund is torn between her love for her family and her devotion to work, the thematic focus of *Forbrydelsen* ultimately revolves around her commitment to her personal sense of justice. Lund is characterised as someone who is driven by a compulsion to find the guilty and to punish them. James Cortese's analysis of the western hero can be used, to a certain extent to contextualise her erratic actions. If considering Eastwood and the western tradition as the outline for Lund's character, then "she is not a hero nor a villain but a twentieth-century existential protagonist caught up in the complex reality" (129). Cortese describes this dramaturgy as, "We are no longer in the familiar area of heroic drama or romance but in the stricter sphere of morality play [with] emphasis on the ambiguities of personal conduct, the interrelationship between subjective value and social need" (129).

Each of Lund's major cases begins with the way her character is first and foremost driven by a fascination for clues rather than sentiment. Lund's intuitive and rational qualities are in line with the dialectic of warm and cool knowledge which drove the noir transition (Brownson 100). By the end of each season, she displays far more

chaotic behaviour. In contrast to the beginning of each narrative, Lund evolves and later embodies a blend of reason and force from the hardboiled tradition (Brownson 100). In these moments, Lund's inner conflicts are revealed through sudden, exaggerated and violent outbursts showing an passionate interior driven by justice. Such impetuous expressions of the inner, authentic self can be linked to existentialist perspective. An existentialist world-view was a crucial element of noir, often expressed as "a disoriented individual facing a confused world that (s)he cannot accept" (Porfirio 213).

Despite, or because of, Lund's unprofessional mistakes, her unapologetic personality is often apparent. In the first episode of season three she is criticised for her disinterest in the kidnapping case. She just responds, "I owe you no explanation whatsoever". Her defiant attitude and violent behaviour resonate to some degree with the actions of the rogue cop figure (Spicer 160, 161). However, when comparing Lund to, for example, Harry Callahan (Clint Eastwood), she appears less convinced and confident about her violation of law and order than he does. Her lack of control and vulnerability and the firm emphasis on the randomness of her behaviour aligns her with the non-heroic noir protagonist (Porfirio 214). Existentialism places emphasis on man's contingency in a world where there are no transcendental values or moral absolutes, a world devoid of any meaning but the one man himself creates (Porfirio 213). Although not as phlegmatic as Callahan, part of *Forbrydelsen*'s controversy and triumph is that it deviates from the standard narrative of neo-noir, one which often undermines the female detective's agency through casting them as the former or potential victims of male violence. In contrast, Sveistrup lets the male detective body become the greater target for violence and brutality ("Serial", 42). Jan Mayer, whom Lund for most of the time treats with nonchalance is murdered by Nanna's killer. Her next colleague Ulrich Strange is, as the name suggests, the main suspect and is eventually killed by Lund herself. As a disobedient non-believer Lund, like the existential hero(ine), takes on a role of the ultimate authority and punishes the guilty. She does not take Strange's life with one bullet but with ten, emptying her whole magazine into his already lifeless body.

The resolution in season three unpacks and displays many of the issues that make Lund intriguing: her unpredictability, obsessiveness, and transgressive qualities. Most importantly, the ending departs from the familiar narrative of the masculinized female detective whose salvation is her re-feminization by the end of the film or series. Gates

clarifies that the female detective in neo-noir goes through this transformation “not so much through her pursuit and execution of the killer, but often through her acquiescence to a ‘healthy’, heteronormative relationship with a male love interest” (“Serial” 48). Lund and her work partner Mathias Borch (Nikolaj Lie Kaas) are clearly infatuated with each other, evident in the way he breaks the law and suggests she gets on the plane to Reykjavik to avoid prosecution. One could claim that Lund exemplifies the policewoman’s “struggle in a man’s world trying to balance a professional and personal life – and losing” (“Serial” 48). However, it can be argued that due to Lund’s determination to find the culprit – and the fact that she always does so – makes the male characters in the world of *Forbrydelsen* come across as always one step behind her. Lund’s challenges and opposes colleague Jan Mayer, her boss Lennart Brix (Morten Suurballe), and head prosecutor Bülow (Kim Bodnia) by ignoring their advice, instructions and authority. Moreover, she is paired with a new male co-worker in each season, and, as such, there is an emphasis on her capacity to find the guilty, and their professional code of conduct only represents obstacles for her to do so. Instead of regarding Lund’s sacrifice of domesticity as “losing”, it can be argued that *Forbrydelsen* presents us with a Nordic woman detective for whom alienation is inevitable, as it is for any existential noir detective.

Home Sweet Home

Kurt Wallander as the Nordic Male Detective

In 1994 *Mördare Utan Ansikte* [*Faceless Killers*] (Sandrews Metronome, SVT) was released as a film featuring Rolf Lassgård as Wallander (Bergman 53).⁴ Since then, Wallander has been the subject of several interpretations in film and television. In Sweden, *Mannen som Log* [*The Man Who Smiled*] was made into a miniseries (SVT 2003), also featuring Lassgård, who some claim best captured the shambolic physicality of the novel’s character as he “lumbers, sweats and puffs his way around the screen” (Frost 1). These episodes also highlight Wallander’s experience of guilt and of being out

⁴Kurt Wallander, the old, provincial policeman, was first created as a literary figure by Swedish author and staunch socialist Henning Mankell after years living in Africa (Bergman 55). The Wallander novels have been translated into more than forty languages; sold just under one million copies in the UK translated by Laurie Thompson, and thirty million copies worldwide (Leonhardt-Hoier). The first of twelve novels, *Mördare Utan Ansikte* (*Faceless Killers*) was published in 1991 (Leonhardt-Hoier).

of kilter through aesthetic devices such as flashbacks, voice-overs, subjective camera work, dream sequences, and the blurring of reality and fantasy (Spicer and Hanson 10). Wallander's internal battles of shame are displayed through dream-like sequences, which give this part of the series that explicitly confessional tone of noir.

In *Innan Frosten* [*Before the Frost*] (TV4 Sweden 2005) Krister Henriksson debuted as a less erratic Wallander and carried the torch with an air of sensitivity and fatigue into 2014. These episodes focus on Wallander's commitment to work, his problematic relationship with his daughter Linda, and his ageing process, which includes developing Alzheimer's disease. Here too, Wallander's internal struggles are illustrated through dream scenarios, characterised by suppressed desires, his longing for a domestic partner, his complicated relationship with his father and his fear of death. In contrast to Lassgård's loud and brutish interpretation, Henriksson brings out the quiet and vulnerable aspects of the ageing detective: "Mankell's Wallander – like Henriksson's – would far rather fade into the background" (Cooke 1). In an interview, Krister Henriksson aptly summarised Wallander as

...an ordinary man. He is not a cop from the Bronx; he is not an American hero. He is very representative of a man in Sweden around fifty or sixty years of age. He has spent a lot of time on his career, and his relationship with his woman doesn't work any longer. Then comes the divorce, and his problem begins again as he is afraid of having another divorce because he now knows how tough it is. He is rather shy, and he is working a lot [...] in order to relax he has a drink [...] then he takes two drinks...and then he drinks too much. And that is a problem which everyone can understand, and I think that most men, in Sweden at least, can recognise it. (Agorelius)

Between 2008-2015, the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) contributed another interpretation starring Kenneth Branagh, whose portrayal has been described as "less humiliated than his precursors and rather handsome in an agonised fashion" (Cooke 2). Even though the on-screen representations either tone down or altogether leave out some of Wallander's objectionable behaviours such as hitting his wife – they do consider some key issues of this character, such as his dark state of mind, sense of isolation, and his notion of himself as a man out of his time.

As the figure of Wallander is a corpus of literary and cinematic texts, there is no straightforward approach in analysing his persona. He has some similarities to Sjöwall-Wahlöö's police detective Martin Beck: a moody, melancholic policeman with a problematic private life. Fredric Jameson once claimed that film noir and Chandler's fiction have nostalgic appeal because their definition of social types is indicated by socially specific lexicons that have disappeared (Sotelo 134). In a similar fashion, nostalgia for a Sweden lost to capitalism and crime is embodied in Wallander himself. He is portrayed as an archaic bourgeois Swedish man from a bygone era. The social and historical context for the *Wallander* series is one where traditional social democratic values are under threat – values and ideals intimately interlinked with Wallander's self-image as a man of his generation. Hence, for Wallander the public is highly personal.

Brownson observes that Wallander has on the one hand “a propensity to extralegal methods and a talent for getting into confrontations; on the other hand, is some genuine detective work along with a more complex psychology and sensitivity to moral issues and the feelings of others” (112). From a Scandinavian perspective, his moral code is relatively weaker than earlier fictional police heroes such as Martin Beck (FS 216). Wallander pushes the boundaries of conduct: he shows up drunk for work and forgets his firearm in a bar after drinking on duty. His personal sense of right and wrong is constantly at odds with those of his colleagues, lovers, and his daughter. It seems like he holds a set of values that are set apart from the law and norms of professional conduct. Despite his many *faux pas*, the films and series clearly convey his idealistic nature. He ultimately prefers communication above using his gun when dealing with criminals and aspires for a transparent legal system. However, with Wallander there are always exceptions. In *Täckmanteln* (Yellow Bird 2009) [*The Container Lorry*] he unwittingly becomes responsible for the death of a witness but is never held accountable. Henriksson's Wallander balances his assertiveness with a muted and sensitive expression. He often has a slight smile in the corner of his mouth and “bloodhound” eyes (Cooke 1) and his ruthless actions are easily overlooked, while Lassgård's more blatant acting style draws attention to such moral dilemmas.

With this in mind, the films and series always contrast Wallander's shortcomings with the deep-rooted corruption of other men around him, such as Linda's father-in-law the retired naval officer Von Enke (Sten Ljunggren) and Wallander's boss Mattson (Sven

Ahlström), both guilty of murder. In comparison, Wallander is represented as an idealistic pacifist and a sincere policeman, sometimes to such an extent that his moral convictions come across as absurd. In *Mannen Som Log* Wallander, drunk, unarmed and off-duty, decides to travel miles in a taxi to single-handedly confront the corrupted finance giant Alfred Haderberg (Claes Månsson) at his estate, only to be ridiculed and left standing in the pouring rain in the middle of the night. Wallander's pacifist nature is typical of the Nordic male detective. Tina Mänttäki argues that violent behaviour by the Nordic male detective is an exception and when it does occur it seems to carry more meaning than for other detectives (346). She argues that the Nordic detective's violent behaviour is condemned and tends to signify a personal crisis for the detective figure (346). In contrast to the rapidly increasing corruption around him, Wallander stands out as a representative of a "betrayed generation" – "a naïve, de-politicized social democrat" (SC 165). Wallander's faith in the legal system that works for can be understood as a Lutheran interpretation of the Protestant faith of the Nordic countries, which has given high priority to a state-directed centralization of governmental institutions (Meinander 600). While Wallander's moral code in the on screen representations is relatively intact, he is still a bad Lutheran due to poor self-discipline.

Wallander's lonely and sad qualities are expressed through his physical attributes and somatic symptoms, more so in the Swedish versions than the British. The Swedish versions are consistent with the legacy of Columbo (Peter Falk) and Morse (Shaun Evans and John Thaw) as rumpled detectives. *Brandvägg* [Firewall] begins with the inadequacy of Wallander's physique. Within the first moments, we see an unshaven and despondent Wallander sitting in the doctor's office receiving his test results that he has got diabetes. With the baggy eyes and anaemic face of an older man but with the look of a guilty schoolboy, he receives his doctor's orders to eat healthier and do more exercise. Needless to say, throughout the episode we then see him binge drinking soft drinks, getting snacks from the police station's vending machine, and sometimes forgetting to eat altogether as he is absorbed wholeheartedly in his work. Swedish crime fiction expert Bo Lundin used the term "The Ulcer School" to describe novels portraying such jaded and washed out male detectives in Swedish crime fiction (Bergman 36). Aside from the focus on setting, the personal predicaments of these policemen constitute its most distinguishing feature (Bergman 36).

The Swedish Ulcer School derives from a much older tradition of unglamorous British and American detectives. Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse suffers the consequences of unhealthy drinking habits, including a peptic ulcer in *The Wench is Dead* (ITV 1998). As with *Wallander*, the story sets up an apparent opposition between the limitations of Morse's body and the capacities of his mind as he is hospitalised for much of the novel (Hadley 71). Moreover, the sartorial aspects of Wallander have their most important precursor in LA detective Lt. Columbo in the television series *Columbo* (NBC and ABC 1971-1995). At a surface level, Columbo appears incompetent with his untidy trench coat, cheap cigars, and gestures of befuddlement, distraction, puzzlement, and an apparent inability to process information. His genius, like Wallander, lies in neutralising expectations about himself.

In contrast to Columbo, Wallander's neglect for his appearances is less of an anti-authoritarian attribute and more of a metaphorical expression for his self-destructive nature. Wallander does not only look dishevelled but also neglects his health, and those who love him. He also compromises his professional code until his sense of right and wrong becomes obscured and precarious. In *Mannen som Log* [*The Man Who Smiled*] Rolf Lassgård reinforces the link between the detective's scruffy appearance and his professional decline in a comedic fashion. He said, "When I first started out, I thought I was going to be like Steve McQueen in *Bullitt* (Warner Brothers 1968). I became more like [Frank] Cannon (William Conrad) in *Cannon* (Quinn Martin Productions 1971-1976)." Like his precursors, Wallander features such sartorial and corporeal elements as symbolic signifiers. Aside from his appearance, Wallander's weak state of health arguably mirrors Sweden as a nation-state in decline and under constant threat. It also illustrates the detective as a man who for private and public reasons, suffers constant physical and mental pain. Michael Tapper summarises this relationship between the corporeal and the social as, "The firm and muscular body of the past has withered away under malnourishment and diabetes, and [Wallander] has an empty, despairing soul to match. [He] is a monument of the diseased consumer society, working overtime and fattening his body with a cholesterol overload" ("Dystopia" 65). Scenes of Wallander on the exercise bike at the Doctor's office plugged into the electrocardiogram machine are juxtaposed with those of him chain smoking and drinking.

Raewynn Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (77). Fran Pheasant-Kelly points out that Nordic noir is part of a trend in film and television that stems from a real-world crisis in masculinity (215). This notion is also evident in *Wallander*. For example, in the first film *Den Orolige Mannen* (Yellow Bird 2013) [*The Troubled Man*], both Wallander and Von Enke are explicitly depicted as ageing, tormented men. Even though their characters are antithetical from a sociopolitical point of view, their social isolation and existential angst put emphasis on the notion of a generation of men in crisis. Moreover, Wallander’s ageing body and untidy appearance are symbolic of both the fading of a patriarchal masculinity of Wallander’s generation, and of the Swedish welfare system (“Kropp” 49). His poor self-control and physical inadequacy have also been interpreted as a loss of control, and as a fear of softness that implies feminization. Wallander’s sense of powerlessness and feelings of futility are physically manifested as an ageing and failing body (Mäntyäki 348). His failing physique can be interpreted as a manifestation of a Nordic masculinity in crisis signifying a self-destructive protest against traditional stoicism. Stoicism’s disciplinary virtues have infused the image of Nordic masculinity since the late 1800s, where a strong character built on self-control was supposed to be practised in favour of the dominant culture (Meinander 605). As such, Wallander represents a reformulation of masculinity. He is different to the urban individualism embodied in detectives such as *Insomnia*’s Engström (Stellan Skarsgård), but he still prides himself on being on the right side of the law and on having a diligent work ethic. Wallander has something in common with the male-dominated, breadwinner ideal of 1960s industrial Sweden. However, his wounded physicality points towards a manhood that is professional, yet ordinary and most importantly, vulnerable.

Although Wallander seems work obsessed, his job does not provide him with a sense of identity linked to “manhood” but more a sense of belonging. For him the station becomes a second home, and the colleagues become a substitute family. In both *Brandvägg* [*Firewall*] and *Mannen som Log* [*The Man Who Smiled*] he is rescued from death by his fellow police officers, and often by his more professional female colleagues – sometimes even in a ridiculous fashion. Wallander may be the chief police officer due to his experience and intellectual capacity but the series also make a point of showing that

within his police team everyone depend on each other. Povlesen Klitgaard and Brodén both observe respectively that the Scandinavian police procedurals follow the trend of the 1980s and 1990s American television tradition in which the police station is depicted as the ‘home’ of an extended family (92; FS 218). Brodén points out that the 1990s trend of highlighting the police officer’s private lives has not only been a way of conveying a certain sense of realism of the “everyday life” but also as a way of combining crime fiction with relationship drama (FS 218). As such, work is not Wallander’s purpose but an escape from his sense of solitude.

The fact that the series is as much about Wallander’s disconsolation, loneliness, and suffering as it is about solving crime become apparent through slow-paced scenes of a contemplating Wallander which punctuate the suspenseful storylines. During long takes, the camera often zooms in a closeup of his apathetic facial expression and lets us examine his tired, unshaven look and depressed disposition to the downbeat tones of electrical strings and soft percussion of the musical score. His physique and mental state are firmly linked, made apparent in the way he first contracts diabetes and then Alzheimer’s disease. To his great frustration, both medical conditions threaten his position at work. It becomes evident that numerous factors dictate Wallander’s mood, his health included.

In *Brandvägg* [*Firewall*], Wallander’s plummeting glucose levels causes him to burst into a fit during a witness interview. In his aberrant state, he throws all the paperwork on the floor, shouts and rushes out of the police station while the soundtrack underscores his nausea through an unpleasant electronic noise. The camera sways from side to side. His heavy build, hidden under a large, grey, woollen jumper, matches the gloomy winter skies. He stumbles passed some younger, athletic colleagues in neat, bright blue uniforms. In the freezing, snowy courtyard he falls down on a bench. His work partner, also his ex-wife, runs after to tend to him. Between his heavy breathing and with squinting, pledging eyes Wallander whispers “Don’t go”.

This defeatist tone adds a Nordic quality to Scandinavian cinema and can be traced back to the history of Scandinavian literature. In both of these art forms from the Nordic countries, nature and melancholy are abundantly represented (Soila *et.al.* 227). Until the eighteenth-century melancholy denoted physical disease in Europe but has since then its meaning has expanded to signify a negative mood itself. An interpretation of

human depression coupled with gloom appears to be inherent in the Nordic, natural scenery (Soila *et.al.* 227). The series creates visual links between Wallander's depressed state and the southern Swedish landscape. *Mannen som Log* opens up with a wide angle shot of a light-blue sky, scattered with clouds and a piercing bright sun in the centre, blinding the viewer. The camera circulates slowly in a hypnotic fashion while grey smoke creeps in from the corners of the screen. Wallander, in a voice-over, recalls a childhood memory of a friend moving out of town before he got to say goodbye. He concludes that throughout his whole life he has felt disconnected and distant from the people he loves. The gentle camera tilt towards the ground reveals the characteristically yellow, high-yield oil seed flower fields of southern Sweden, contrasted with the blue skies, recalling the colours of the Swedish flag.

Despite the bright colours, Wallander's solemn voice-over, the eerie soundtrack and the grey smoke (hinting at the car explosion which will occur later on in the episode) create a sombre atmosphere. The sequence is infused with a stark sense of sadness. Suddenly a flock of birds crosses the screen with their wings majestically swaying up and down in slow-motion. The imagery of birds is a recurrent metaphorical device in several Wallander episodes, underscoring Wallander's loneliness, heavy-hearted disposition and limiting physique. The images of free flocks of lightweight birds crossing the sky in synchronisation, and in winter migrating to warmer climates contrast with those of Wallander, who is "stiffed and frozen on the same spot in life" ("Dystopia", 68). When Wallander gets older, he retreats to a house by the sea. We watch him in recurrent long takes framed as a small figure. He often stares at the horizon while the bitterly cold earth and grey, gloomy skies seem to merge. At other times he walks slowly away from the camera into the far distance. Over the seasons, our perception of him changes from a stressed and anxious police chief to a lonely, ageing man who is longing for companionship.

Arvas and Nestingen point out that the atmosphere of Scandinavian melancholy is a trademark of its national cinema (9). While preoccupied with solving crimes, Scandinavian police procedurals also paint a detailed portrait of the disenchanting everyday lives and problems of the protagonists. "By now, Nordic noir has become famous for its miserable detectives who are silent, depressed, diligent, thirsty and so on" (9). Hockley and Fadina state that although Ruth Rendell's Wexford and Camilla

Läckberg's Patrik Hedström may seem uncharacteristically homely sorts, the crime genre is littered with confirmed bachelors and spinsters (Holmes, Poirot, Marple, brothers Cadfael and William of Baskerville, Father Brown). Many of these characters are alcoholics or drug addicts, such as Morse, Rebus, and Jimmy McNulty to mention a few (183).

Wallander's legacy belongs to the bitterly, cold mood of Nordic existentialism within Scandinavian crime fiction, consisting of a group of confirmed bachelors and spinsters such as Lisbeth Salander, Hanne Wilhelmsen, Harry Hole, Joona Linna, and Malin Fors who have similar problems with mental illness and drug and alcohol addiction. In these characters the alienation of the fictional detective meets that curiously Scandinavian sense of absurdity, angst, and alienation illustrated in Nordic culture by such figures as Søren Kierkegaard, Ingmar Bergman and Edward Munch (Hockley and Fadina 183). Nestingen and Arvas also state that the social realist tradition reveals problems with relationships, all sorts of abuse, loneliness, and depression (SF 9). Their observation echoes Kärholm's analysis that Scandinavian detectives represent a focus on the ordinary. Karsten Mind Mayhof confirms that "a focus on the everyday experiences of people undermines the traditional tendency in crime fiction to describe the characters as heroic or morally superior; on the contrary, the characters are portrayed as ordinary men and women fighting ordinary problems in modern society" (SF 64).

It is Wallander's need for domesticity rather than work that is a common thread across the different versions. As with his weak physicality, his inability to find a partner becomes yet another expression of his self-destructive nature. Rather than stereotyping women as seductive and manipulative, Wallander ruins his personal relationships with remarkable force. This theme dominates the first few episodes, mainly those featuring Lassgård. Henriksson's Wallander makes several honest attempts at developing romantic relationships and evokes greater sympathy than the character does in the first seasons of the series. Wallander suffers greatly from his strained relationship with his daughter Linda (Johanna Sällström and Charlotta Jonsson), whom he neglected when she was a child. Moreover, he is distressed about his divorce and tormented with longing for a domestic partner. The camera often frames him in an over-the-shoulder shot, sitting in his armchair, alone with a whisky and the sound from one of his 2,373 classical music records as his only comfort. At other times he sits alone in a bar, glaring at loving couples

while ordering drink after drink. Plagued with desire, he initiates a relationship with a married psychiatrist, Anja Sörensen (Cecilia Nilsson). However, she has no serious intentions towards him.

Their first meeting, in the episode *Den Svaga Punkten* (Yellow Bird 2006) [*The Tricksters*], occurs under unusual circumstances. On a beautiful summer's day, Wallander drives along a deserted country road, listening to opera on his car stereo. He suddenly steps on the brakes as he almost hits a woman walking in the middle of the road. Listening to music in her headphones, the woman walks on, completely unbothered. Wallander runs after, screaming at her but she doesn't seem to notice his annoyed state of mind and just asks him what the time is. He then apologises and offers her a ride, and she eventually accepts. The air is misty, stopping the sun from reaching the dense forest, enveloping them both in a soft, magical light. Wallander immediately glances at the woman next to him in the car with apparent interest and tells her to buckle her seat belt. Such curious moments of Wallander determinedly enforcing traffic laws, give us glimpses into the solid and honest side to him. It becomes apparent that in Anja's company Wallander has an opportunity to fully endorse the identity of the responsible, reasonable and moral policeman that he aspires to be. As such, a relationship with Anja signifies an opportunity to reflect a desirable self-image. Without explanation, Anja asks to spend the night, and she sleeps on his sofa. In the morning, Wallander makes her breakfast. The camera slowly wanders over Anja's body as she wakes up, suggesting we see her through Wallander's eyes as he admires her with a big smile on his face. They go for coffee and walks on the beach. The otherwise grave and sombre tone that dominates the scenes from Wallander's private life changes into something brighter. She makes him laugh. In these domestic scenarios, Wallander is at peace.

Sadly, the ending of *Den Svaga Punkten* [*The Tricksters*] is suggestive of the way their relationship unfolds. After a date at the town square in Ystad, Anja asks Wallander to shut his eyes and count to one hundred. When he opens his eyes, she is gone. In *Fotografen* (Yellow Bird 2006) [*The Photographer*] Wallander storms into her office during a session with a patient after which she tells him that their affair is over. His frustration eventually manifests as moments of vivid daydreaming. In *Sorgfågeln* (Svensk Filmindustri 2013) [*The Sad Bird*], he watches his latest love interest Bea (Marianne Mörck), from a safe distance through his car window as she is raking golden autumn

leaves in her garden. A golden light washes over him, manifesting his state of emotional warmth that his fantasy evokes, distinctly in contrast with the otherwise characteristically cooler colour schemes of grey, blue, white and black of the series. While his imagination carries him away to a happier place, the golden light increases in intensity along with his smile, and the camera cuts to a vision where he imagines himself in this domestic scenario with Bea. The projected dream image of himself is then abruptly cuts, and darkness suddenly creeps back in, surrounding him once more in an atmosphere of utter abandonment reflected in his face as a stern look – a low-spirited shadow of his ideal self. Through such repeated metaphorical scenarios of happiness just out of Wallander's reach, loneliness is reinforced as his ill-omened destiny.

Wallander's unhappiness is reflected in the *mise-en-scène* which continuously embeds Wallander and his team in an atmosphere of quietness and contemplation. We regularly witness the tediousness of the routine, the file and record keeping, the watching and waiting all contributing towards that sense of low-key realism for which Nordic noir has become known. "In the Swedish version [of *Wallander*], its offices are more like sleepy cupboards ... the detectives must use the world's creakiest machine, and they drink from pathetic plastic thimbles" (Cooke 2). Thomas Leich's observation that when the police outside Hollywood movies are seeking a criminal, their watch-world is routine [and] their most potent weapons are informants and databases fits with the representation of the Ystad police force (216). Here, Wallander is in his right element and exudes calm and confidence as he gives out orders and directs his team. Wallander seeks comfort in the routine of his work where his team becomes his only haven, symbolising the family he does not have. Consequently, as Wallander develops Alzheimer's disease and is forced to resign, the idea of retirement becomes overbearing for him. It could be argued that Wallander cannot accept retirement due to an overidentification with work as a way to sustain his identity. This dilemma can be perceived in a different way. In contrast to Lund, Wallander's identity is not directly linked to work but domesticity, or rather the lack of domesticity. Wallander's inner conflicts are partly a result of his problematic relationships and his angst related to ageing alone. In other words, retirement is not Wallander's worst enemy, his loneliness is. His fear of becoming older and being alone is reflected in delicate metaphorical moments, such as in *Cellisten* (Yellow Bird 2010) [*The Cellist*]. Svartman (Fredrik Gunnarsson) inspects Konsalevska's (Sandra Stojiljkovic) burned damaged cello and concludes that she should get a new one. Wallander quietly

maintains that not everything that is old loses value with time. The moment is subtle but illustrates that the primary source of this character's torment is, in fact, the process of ageing, with all that it involves. For Wallander, work offers an escape but not a resolution.

In the final episode of season three, *Sorgfågeln* [*The Sad Bird*], we see Wallander walking through the snow towards the seashore – a space to which he frequently has retreated to regain strength, long for better times, and to dream. Having been told that he needs to resign due to his advancing Alzheimer's disease, he stands on the edge of the cliffs and stares down into the depths of the sea. His facial expressions reveal that he is contemplating to jump into the freezing, black waters. We realise how important this moment is, what retirement signifies for this elderly, forlorn man's ability to go on with life. The gloomy atmosphere continues in following sequences. In a drawn out, almost ritualistic, scene we see Wallander in front of a mirror, dressing up in a black suit, pouring himself a glass of whisky. His hollow, anaemic face blends in with the overall bleak, blue, grey and white colour scheme. His gun is placed in front of him on the coffee table, and he slowly inserts it into his mouth with his eyes wide open and during heavy breathing. He then removes it, loads it and puts it back in this time while voicing out desperate cries of angry despair. The moment Wallander realises he is unable to go through with suicide, the camera cuts to still imagery of the quiet, wintry landscape and its black birds crossing the sky while large snowflakes hit the ground. His heartbroken scream cuts through the still air but is muted by the snow covered ground. No one can hear him. He is all alone. The scene exemplifies Tapper's observation that "Wallander's landscape is bleaker with something more than crime. While the world and everybody else seems to have moved on, Wallander – perhaps like Mankell – is left standing alone in limbo, abandoned by everyone" ("Dystopia" 64)

It seems that despite Wallander's ongoing struggles, there is a desire to let the distressed ageing man find peace. Through aesthetically vivid and starkly melodramatic moments, this narrative asks the audience to empathise with the flawed detective. In a deep focus long shot, Wallander is seen as a small black figure walking along a jetty stretching out into the icy, grey sea, surrounded by fog, heavy skies and snow. His late father then appears as a manifestation of his mind, telling him to "let go", that there is "nothing to hold on to". Because Wallander has been stricken by guilt towards his

daughter and ex-wife, the scene of facing his father's ghost is illustrative of Wallander's ageing process being a form of redemption from his self-condemnation, and a journey towards self-acceptance. In a flash forward we see him in his armchair, embracing his granddaughter and smiling towards Linda who promises to come and visit him often.

Work for Wallander is not "a cure for an ailing masculinity" (Vincendeau 147) as Wallander's masculinity has no final template (Lander *et al.* 6). Work may be imperative to his self-perception but not the solution to his problems. As opposed to professionalism as the cure for his sense of isolation, Wallander's drinking and obsessive work routine are ways of continuing and enduring his ongoing pathos. The scene of Wallander battling with the idea of retirement can be compared to Ginette Vincendeau's analysis of Jean-Pierre Melville's character Jansen (Yves Montand) from *Le Cercle Rouge* (Melville 1970). Jansen is an ex-policeman suffering from delirium tremens. Lying in a dingy room, "unshaven, sweaty and uncoordinated" (Vincendeau 147), he shouts out as the telephone rings. His parlous state is a result of being "out of work" (Vincendeau 147). As Jansen is invited to join a heist, he transforms into a smartly dressed assassin who performs a successful single shot and later comes to the other's rescue in an act of virtual suicide – which attests to a recovered masculinity (Vincendeau 147). Wallander's clumsy, temperamental and sensitive persona is yet another manifestation of Nordic noir's preference for the sympathetic and familiar male characters. Wallander's ongoing desperation and loneliness construct a vulnerable masculinity as opposed to the extreme masculinities of the hardboiled tradition. Neither does he share the complete downfall of the male victim, such as Chris Cross (Edward G. Robinson) in *Scarlet Street* (Lang 1945). Wallander's world may be one of angst but not destruction. He is in a state of isolation, yet he is not an outcast. He might feel lonely, but he is not alone.

The case studies discussed in this chapter were chosen on the basis that Wallander and Lund have undoubtedly established themselves as distinguishable figures within the Nordic noir tradition, followed by British and American re-imaginings of their characters. A pattern emerges where Wallander can be thought of as the archetype of the ordinary male detective of Nordic noir, whereas Lund is an exceptional figure whose quest for justice precedes her personal concerns. By now, the body of Nordic detectives can be regarded as part of an international trend that points to a shift in the crime genre. Heroic traits previously associated with the hegemony of male detectives, such as a

devotion to work, leadership but most of all, a strong sense of righteousness and entitlement can now also be found in female detectives.

Conversely, characteristics associated with female roles in noir, and in crime fiction in general, such as a desire for domesticity, destructive actions, social stigma and a sense of shame or guilt are associated with the male detectives. It is important to note that Nordic noir does not just reverse the hegemonic masculine ideal in a binary relation to everything “feminine”. Rather, Nordic detectives question these stereotypes and the very concepts of “masculine” and “feminine” by acknowledging a spectrum of traits in each character, male or female, asking us to question and contest hegemonic hierarchies and gendered character traits in general. This approach to gender construction in Nordic noir exemplifies the long tradition with what Gunhild Agger has termed “‘a social conscience’” in crime fiction from the Scandinavian countries (Agger qtd. in WP 162).

In comparing these two detectives, Wallander exemplifies an ordinary Scandinavian detective, while Lund displays a combination of ordinary and extraordinary traits. To a certain extent, Lund and Wallander both share a narrative of a journey away from the domestic sphere. Lund’s character is realised through law-breaking and the “disavowal of domestic potential” (Mattes 188). By contrast, Wallander is not a transgressive character but is defined by his ongoing sense of abandonment and guilt towards his family, and whose only resolution is reconciliation with them.

Chapter Two

Natural and Built Environments in Nordic noir

Following the release of *Bron/Broen*⁵ (SVT/DR) and *Forbrydelsen* (DR 2007-2012), Jensen and Waade asserted that it is the “exoticism of the Danish setting, landscapes, light, climate [...] and everyday life” that adds to the perceived quality of onscreen Nordic noir (“Challenging” 259). Accordingly, by way of close textual readings of specific spatial components, I will examine the role of natural and urban settings in these local, Scandinavian productions. While *Forbrydelsen* by and large is set in the urban environment of Copenhagen, the representation of natural environments in this Nordic noir has a vital narrative significance and a dynamic aesthetic presence. The natural environments in *Forbrydelsen* contribute notably towards the show’s distinctive aura of apprehension and foreboding.

By natural environment, I first and foremost refer to elements such as the forest, woodland, grassland, and marshes of the nature reserve Kalvebod Fælled on the outskirts of Copenhagen, Denmark. The filming location of Kalvebod Fælled makes a crucial thematic and atmospheric contribution to the series. Hence my argument resonates with David Melbye’s observation on Hitchcock’s choice of outdoor locations. He points out that Mount Rushmore for *North by Northwest* (1959) or Bodega Bay for *The Birds* (1963) initiated the creation of the narrative. It was the locations that attracted Hitchcock before any script existed, “as if their innate poignancy was sufficient to dictate a suspenseful situation to him” (Melbye 144). In a similar vein, I suggest that the natural setting of Kalvebod Fælled and its surroundings are as crucial spatial components of *Forbrydelsen* as the Øresund bridge is for *Bron/Broen*. As a matter of fact, both *Forbrydelsen* and *Bron/Broen* disperse the action over the natural, suburban and metropolitan environments and consequently highlight the elaborate composition of the noir plot in both structure and theme.

The analysis of natural environments in *Forbrydelsen* will complement Jensen and Waade’s work on landscape in Nordic noir by using Martin Lefebvre’s work on the

6 The Scandinavian title, *Bron/Broen*, can be read as a metaphor, gesturing to the bridge as a dividing, rather than a unifying force between Sweden and Denmark.

role of landscape in narrative cinema (Lefebvre 63; “Nordic Noir” 194). By employing natural elements such as rain and water Sveistrup’s cinematography highlights the show’s profoundly emotive components. It is no coincidence that all seasons of *Forbrydelsen* are set in the month of November because the weather conditions create a consistently gloomy look in the series (“Thriller” 4). Accordingly, the first part of this chapter will also expand on Jensen and Waade’s claim that “[the noir elements] of cold weather, rain and the wind are used to indicate Nordic climate conditions and to underline the characters’ troublesome lives and dilemmas” by paying close attention to the marked presence and role of water in *Forbrydelsen* (“Challenging” 262). On an aesthetic and thematic level this element ties in with the notion of the natural world, and also acts as a visual reminder of the narrative.

The second case study considers the urban locations of Copenhagen and Malmö in *Bron/Broen*, mainly in the first season. Nordic noir often features gloomy representations of undistinguished environments, such as 1960s functionalist architecture, referred to in Swedish as *funkis* and *post-funkis*. These sustainable rental apartment blocks, office spaces, and hospitals are a product of the Swedish modernity project, a welfare model known as *Folkhemmet*/The People’s Home (“Dark” 96). Because of its uniform and unspectacular appearance, it can be argued that the *funkis* architecture is a component of the series that contributes to a sub-current of dread and despondency associated with the ordinary and the everyday.

Following Dimenberg’s theories on centrifugal spaces in film noir, I will analyse the ways in which the Øresund bridge is deployed as a separating force that signifies disconnection and character isolation. Thus, while Emily Gray aptly contends that the bridge is a liminal space that is represented as a “key visual image throughout the show” (Gray 73), the urban spaces in *Bron/Broen* can be interpreted in accordance with Marc Augé’s theories on modernity, especially his use of Michel de Certeau’s term “non-places”.

In acknowledging the unique location of the Scandinavian nations, it can be observed that the sense of isolation found in Nordic noir is, in fact, an integral part of the geography and culture of Scandinavia. The deployment of border zones in *Bron/Broen* can be linked to current sociocultural notions of fluid nationalities and identities in an era of supermodernity that result in a sense of indistinctiveness of the urban sphere (Augé

63). Although a space of transit, “Øresundsbron” is, in fact, a site of disconnection and like the fragmented world of its surrounding cities, the bridge too functions as a form of non-place.

In general terms, film noir is the expression of a modern conception of American society, a society that is corrupt and alienated. Urban life was a typical hallmark of classic film noir (Schrader 55). Neo-noir, as Foster Hirsch has established, “is as likely to take place in vast open spaces as in the pestilential city of tradition. Think of *Touch of Evil* at the very end of classic noir: it moves the action out of LA and into another country, Mexico, and into the desert, giving noir a new kind of danger” (Hirsch 14,15). *Bron/Broen* and *Forbrydelsen* offer distinctive perspectives on the natural and built environment in noir. Both series employ the Øresund region as a principal site for conveying “a thriller genre element” reflecting “character ambiguity” (Waade and Jensen “Nordic Noir” 193, 194).

The first part of the chapter will analyse the role of natural spaces in *Forbrydelsen*, the forest and woodland in particular. Jensen and Waade highlight Barry Forshaw’s observation that location and climate have become remarkable elements in the Scandinavian literary crime fiction tradition, landscape being one core component in the characterisation of Nordic noir (“Challenging” 260). In comparison to *Bron/Broen*, they claim, Copenhagen might be the primary location for *Forbrydelsen* but that it does not have an especially important narrative or stylistic role (“Challenging” 262). By contrast, as we will see below, the opening sequence of the forest in the first season of *Forbrydelsen* is quite distinctive in this respect. Furthermore, water has an important function in the first season. It functions as marker of the eerie presence of natural space, inscribing the forest and wet grasslands as a threshold between the living and the dead. Water also symbolises the intangible, affective connections between characters. Thus, the use of natural elements in *Forbrydelsen* is consistent with the interdependence between setting, character and mood within the noir corpus.

Nordic noir demonstrates a marked difference between its literary history and filmic/televisual productions in terms of settings. The literary tradition in Scandinavian crime fiction emphasises towns and cities (Bergman 18). By contrast, films and television series have included more uses of Scandinavian natural environments. *Wallander*, for example, often juxtaposes terrible crimes with rural locations. The Norwegian/Swedish

co-production *Insomnia*, transnational production *Smilla's Sense of Snow* (Denmark, Germany, Sweden), and the Icelandic film *Jar City* are other noteworthy productions in which a striking natural Nordic location plays an important role. Camilla Läckberg's *Fjällbackamorden* (Lind Lagerlöf, Petrelius 2012–) and the transnational production *Fortitude* (Donald 2015–) are two recent texts where the natural environment features prominently. The first features a small-town coastal setting and the latter a fictional town on the edge of the Arctic Circle. Still, the “adroit evocation of the chilly countryside” has been attributed to the literary canon of Nordic noir, with an apparent affinity for the British small-town police novels (Forshaw 41, 43; Bergman 75).

**But First She Had to Learn How to Float:
Natural Spaces in *Forbrydelsen* (DR 2007-2012)**

Forbrydelsen invokes the stylistic traditions of classic noir. The majority of the scenes are lit for night, and Copenhagen is portrayed as “a world of dark, slick city streets, crime and corruption” (Schrader 54). However, by including a large nature reserve as a major site for crime *Forbrydelsen*'s *mise-en-scène* expands the size of this Nordic labyrinth. The cinematography of the natural environments in *Forbrydelsen* can be linked to Nordic noir films and series such as *Jar City* and *Bron/Broen* that also employ a monochromatic aesthetic and naturalistic lighting. Often, forests, grassy wetlands, and city spaces all seem part of the same dreary, waterlogged canvas. Occasionally the sun breaks through the opaque clouds of the gloomy Nordic skies, serving to remind us of the dark, rainy, claustrophobic world in which all characters are trapped. The cinematography can also be linked to an older, visual tradition of noir where setting reflects either the inner corrupt workings of the characters or a tangible reflection of a social malaise that Sveistrup associates with a Dickensian vision of evil (Collins 7). Thus, natural space in *Forbrydelsen* is an additional stylistic, metaphorical expression of contingency and entrapment: “the whole idea of Copenhagen being like Thebes. Copenhagen is captured. There's a big mystery. No one can breathe, no one can move” (Sveistrup qtd. in Collins 7).

Martin Lefebvre has conceptualised the meaning of landscape in narrative cinema. In considering several theorists on landscape in photography and cinema, he identifies a fluctuating transition between ‘intentional landscape’ and ‘spectator’s landscape’ which he also calls ‘impure’ (Lefebvre 65). Within this dynamic, landscape holds various degrees of autonomy that resist or exceed strict diegetic motivation or subordination, as well as real world referentiality (Lefebvre 66). Landscape can also function as setting, subjugated to a human gaze that renders the environment as subservient to characters, events and actions (Lefebvre 64). How we perceive landscape on screen can be illustrated as a form of tension between autonomous landscapes as visual attraction versus landscape as setting (Lefebvre 64).

In respect to Lefebvre’s framework, the forest and grasslands in *Forbrydelsen* exemplify the way in which filmic landscapes have the ability to haunt the spectator’s experience of landscape as it acts both as an aesthetic attraction and narrative device (Lefebvre 66). It holds clues to the story’s murder mysteries: the murder of Mette Hauge and the substantial size of the area (twenty-five square kilometres) complicates the investigation and enforces for the viewer a sense of the unfamiliar (Hansen 1). In Lefebvre’s words, “In ghostly fashion film landscapes appear momentarily only to disappear, often seconds later, existing in a regime dominated by the ebb and flow of spectatorial consciousness” (Lefebvre 66). The natural spaces in *Forbrydelsen*, then, have both an informative and sympathetic function. They hold clues about characters and narrative, while simultaneously complementing and further enhancing the eerie ambience. We are invited to contemplate the area of land in which both Nanna and Mette were killed through a range of shot types, atmospheric moments, and through dialogue. This environment stages some of the most determining and pivotal events within the murder story and the importance of this space is also underlined by the fact that the series begins and ends here.

The first season of the Danish atmospheric television thriller *Forbrydelsen* is about “who killed Nanna Birk Larsen (Julie R. Ølgaard)?”. Police officer Sarah Lund is about to leave her position at *Rigspolitiet* (The National Police of Denmark) for Sweden when she is drawn into the case, and her search for Nanna’s killer stubbornly continues throughout twenty episodes, each episode standing in for one day of investigation. The first episode of the first season opens with pitch-dark screen accompanied by a

thundering soundtrack. Eventually the screen vaguely reveals a young woman, who we later know as Nanna Birk Larsen, running for her life. Her entrapment within this natural environment is what encapsulates the action and propels us into the story. This notion is reinforced by shots of a black and blue fingerprint, the pattern of which suggests the intricate, confusing, dark maze of crime (“Thriller” 4). Her bare feet stumble on muddy, mossy soil under leafless branches that stretch out in the misty air against a blue-black sky. The only source of light is from the faint moonlight reflected in the water on the ground and on her bloodstained nightgown. We hear her panic-stricken cries and the splashing of water around her ankles as she runs across puddles and rivers; these diegetic sounds are accompanied by a rhythmic soundtrack. Slightly later we see a ground level shot of a man’s feet walking slowly and with determination. He is following Nanna’s path by flashlight. The camera intercuts between shots of the killer’s feet and Nanna; the editing sets a suspenseful tone. His steady pace implies that he feels in control and knows that he will catch his victim eventually. The darkness, fog, wet ground covered in moss, and the naked, crooked branches point to a chilly, hostile terrain. We are somewhere in a Northern European environment.

In the next shot, Nanna’s despairing face and bloodstained body are lit up as she looks up to see the bright lights of an aeroplane taking off. Not only can she see that there is a way out of the dark maze of the forest, but simultaneously she is forced to realise that she will most likely be dead before reaching it. She breaks out in a silent cry, shaking with devastation. The promise of a civilised haven somewhere ahead only reinforces the character’s utter vulnerability. The scene of the crime as we know it so far is an enclosed area of land in which a tormented character is trapped and about to be killed. This sense of contingency conceptually transforms this space into a boundary, not only between the forest and Copenhagen, but also metaphysically between life and death. This moment of liminal terror ends abruptly as the camera crosscuts to police officer Lund waking in her bed after a nightmare. In that very moment, Lund’s alarm clock shows the time of Nanna’s death.

When considering the role of the forest in Northern cultures (such as in Scandinavia or Germany), it is important to acknowledge that many northern cities have expanded into nearby forests. Such areas are an important part of the national economy and in the everyday lives of the people (Konijnendijk *et al.* 154; Ritter and Daukstra 93).

Just like in other parts of Europe, the conception of the pastoral landscape's particular *Gemeinschaft* (a sense of community) was fruitful in Scandinavia already in the 1930s and was revitalised during and after the second world war (SL 89). Correspondingly, landscape and nature were also closely linked with a sense of national identity in Scandinavian film and literary culture. Additionally, with the rise of Romanticism and Romantic nationalism, the folklore tradition was enforced by the tales of the Grimm brothers, as well as Elsa Beskow, and the illustrations by John Bauer, to mention a few (Zipes 65; Bauer np). In folklore Northern forests are often represented as places of possible danger but are predominantly regarded as spheres of spiritual and physical recreation (Zipes 65). The cinematography and editing of *Forbrydelsen* subvert this romanticised view of the Nordic forest culture as a recreational landscape and reinforces the forest as a place of uncertainty and danger but not only in relation to death. Within this area, characters also transform. Before Lund enters the forest area, she is a police officer about to quit her job. Once she steps into these woods and finds Nanna's body, she becomes obsessed with the case to the point of self-destruction. In the final episode, we also witness drastic transformations of key characters; Nanna's father Theis from father to murderer, and the Birk-Larsen's family friend Vagn (Nikolaj Kopernikus) from murderer to victim.

During a later sequence shot on a cloudy and rainy day we are presented with the site of Nanna's murder in a wider context. The crime scene is a wet, cold and grim grassland shot in washed-out yellow tones surrounded by bare, brown-grey trees, altogether depicting a barren environment. Despite the daylight, the desolate, uninhabited area appears dreary and soulless. The impression created by the opening credits remains intact. The murder site is situated in Kalvebod Fælled, which covers one-fourth of the Danish island of Amager on the outskirts of Copenhagen, near Kastrup airport, and near Copenhagen's side of the Øresund bridge (Hansen 8). A state highway also runs along the Pinseskoven forest on the west side. Although several routes run in and out of the Copenhagen area (the bridge, the airport, the highways), the damp grassland is on the outskirts of the city and can only be accessed via logging roads, something that is also mentioned by the police team during the investigation.

The daunting qualities associated with the forest area can be contrasted with the sometimes pleasant and alluring shots of urban spaces. Copenhagen's sophisticated

architecture is highlighted in establishing wide-angle shots. The city is presented as an inviting space as sunlight saturates the city's copper turrets and tower roofs. Meanwhile, the civic squares teem with people. The shots of the polished interiors of the Danish parliament Christiansborg Palace also make another stark contrast with the muddy and sombre forest area.

The camera lingers over the extensive forest in brooding aerial shots that are both striking and unsettling, presenting us with “an ominously still, waiting [Nordic] world” (Hirsch 11). These shots recall Lefebvre's assertion that feelings created from “shot duration, soundtrack and lighting” may draw us into the landscape, hence our experience of it is not purely visual, it is also an affective experience (Lefebvre 71, 72). The forest's spatial and thematic disconnection from the parallel storyline of the election campaign that is set within the city further enhances a sense of fatalism within the narrative world where two young women have been killed and their bodies dumped.

One of the most memorable scenes from the first season occurs when Lund and her team partner Jan Mayer (Søren Malling) cross the flooded grassland into the forest. The camera follows them in a crane shot that suggests that the forest area is an epic, unexplored, and threatening environment, containing clues buried under water, beneath the soil or amongst the trees. Several shots featuring natural space stand out as particularly haunting; in the opening credits; during the misty nighttime search for Mette Hauge's body in episode seventeen; or as in the daytime shots, soaked in rain and under grey skies. Overall, the nature reserve in *Forbrydelsen* is presented as a strange and ambiguous place – a notion which is reinforced later in the narrative by a member of the forensics team, who answers Lund's question “Who comes here?” by stating “During the day, nursery school children. At night prostitutes with their tricks.”

As the narrative proceeds, the physical qualities of the murder site assume greater significance. Kalvebod Faelled, we learn, is a reclaimed nature reserve in which canals lead drainage water to a reservoir supplying water to 150, 000 households, hospitals and nursing homes (episode sixteen). Indeed, the land in which Nanna is running for her life is saturated with water. It is filled with puddles, lakes and marshes. The area is surrounded by water, and 80% of the land is below sea level (episode sixteen and twenty). The symbolic meanings of this watery environment become apparent during the series. Nanna Birk Larsen was drowned in the canal and Mette Hauge in the waterways in

Kalvebod Faelled. The moment where Lund gets a hunch of where Nanna's body may be found occurs when she stands in the wet grassland, soaked by the rain, and she sees some children biking down a road with fishing rods (episode one). She drops her mobile phone in the middle of a conversation with her partner as the camera spins around her, which reinforces a sense of epiphany and she asks Mayer 'What's over there?' He replies, 'More woods and a waterway.' Lund, who was not inclined to investigate this murder case initially, now becomes obsessed with the idea of solving it to the extent that her relationships with her colleagues, son, partner, and mother all suffer.

Paul Schrader has asserted that an almost Freudian attachment to water is a common trait in film noir. "The empty noir streets are almost always glistening with fresh evening rain (even in Los Angeles), and the rainfall tends to increase in direct proportion to the drama. Docks and piers are second only to alleyways as the most popular rendezvous points" (57). Although neo-noir films are sometimes set in desert landscapes, night shots of rainy streets are found in noir influenced films such as *Taxi Driver* (Scorsese 1976), *Thief* (Mann 1981), and *Blade Runner* (Scott 1982).⁶ Sveistrup not only recycles this effective visual component of rain and water in *Forbrydelsen* to indicate emotional and spatial emptiness and coldness, he also lets water become a visually arresting and thematically significant device.

The element of water connects the backstory with present events, signifies grief and callousness, and geographically ties together the urban space of rainy streets and ponds with the natural landscape and its waterways, swamps, and tidal marshes. More importantly, water both evokes and enhances emotional and intuitive moments through illustrative and coded events, such as symbolic water leaks and emotionally charged conversations about water. To elaborate, the notion of Nanna's temporary water grave is reinforced in the scene of the first morning of her death (episode one). Her parents are still unaware she has gone missing. Nanna's mother, Pernille (Ann Eleonora Jørgensen) is seen mopping the kitchen floor, up to her feet in water as the dishwasher has broken. Nanna's father, Theis (Bjarne Henriksen) takes a look at the damage and causes the machine to burst out a fountain of water, soaking them both as they embrace, laughing, kissing and rolling around on the wet floor with water spraying everywhere. The

⁶ In *Blade Runner*, the tears of replicant Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer) amidst the final rainy scene have symbolic importance, signifying a blurring of distinctions between human and replicant (Kerman 60).

soundtrack lets us know that this is an emotionally charged moment. The two parents are blissfully unaware that their daughter has been brutally assaulted and murdered and is buried under water a few miles away in a desolate area.

The melancholic quality of the music heightens the emotional tension that arises in the incongruity between the innocent happiness of the characters and the audience's awareness of the despair they are about to face. The mismatch between the laughing lovers, rolling around in water, and the emotionally intense humming of a woman singing in a harmony with tender tones creates a shattering notion of a happiness doomed to transform into endless grief. In a symbolic sense, it appears as if water has crept into the safe space of their suburban home as an ill-fated sign, a notion which is further reinforced in episode fourteen.

Pernille buries Nanna's ashes at the graveyard when a flower wreath without a card is sent over by a cemetery worker. Pernille looks around for whoever sent them and her eyes fall on the pond next to the grave. The camera zooms in on the water, and a high-pitched noise enhances the uncanny mood. In a reaction shot, Pernille's distressed expression suggests that she is reminded of her daughter's drowning. Immediately she decides she wants a new grave spot for Nanna's ashes and she refuses the gift. Once more she walks over to the pond and stares at the surface with an angst-ridden look on her face as the (yet unrevealed) killer (Nikolaj Kopernikus) walks up and tells her that he was the one who sent it. Here, the motif of water highlights the suspense for the audience. As Pernille attempts to deal with her grief in the company of the man who murdered her daughter, the audience is reminded of how Nanna and Mette were killed and where their bodies were found.

A similar moment occurs in episode fifteen when Pernille allows Nanna's murderer to drive her home through a misty and dark Copenhagen. Pernille stares despondently out of the car window and quietly tells him the story of when she was teaching her daughter to swim: "We stood out in the sea, her and I. I told her that first, she had to learn to float. She was scared. But I told her I would hold onto her. No matter what I would always hold onto her". Once again the theme of water creates an uneasy link between mourning and evil. It is no coincidence that Pernille tells her touching story of trust, parental responsibilities, and maternal bonding to the man who let her daughter drown. The element of water is a subtle clue within this Nordic maze and is linked to

intuitive moments in the series. Water is used to enhance the visual style of the series by coating it with dreary rain. It brings together the spatial configurations, the urban spaces with the natural areas like metaphorical glue. It also concentrates and reinforces the emotional dimensions of those intimately involved in Nanna's murder: her family, the man who killed her, and Lund.

I have argued here that the use of the forest as a natural space is significant as it offers insight into the complexity of Sveistrup's Nordic noir maze and leads down a path where the striking cinematography, such as those haunting aerial shots of grass and woodland, come to signify more than just an aesthetic pleasure. *Forbrydelsen* represents natural landscape in a sophisticated manner that reminds us of Lefebvre's point that landscape in narrative cinema may perceptually engage us in a number of ways. The natural landscape in the series is the locus of horror and death. It helps to create a haunting mood in the series, and this is reinforced through the use of rain and water. The series thus creates a threatening, even deterministic, equivalent of film noir's 'mean streets', a place from which no one may escape and where signifiers of the natural environment act as a painful reminder of this enclosed world of evil and grief.

Non-Places in *Bron/Broen*

The narrative, thematic, and aesthetic focal point of *Bron/Broen* is the nearly sixteen-kilometre long Øresundsbron (Øresund bridge) that connects Denmark's capital København (Copenhagen) and Sweden's third largest city Malmö (Croner np). While the Øresund bridge can be understood as a symbol of Swedish and Danish modernity, I argue that in the series it can be interpreted as a site of physical and cultural division, as well as a marker of spiritual disconnection. This notion is reinforced by the representation of the urban spaces surrounding the bridge. Together, these environments create a mood or tone that conveys a bleak and dismal view of Scandinavian life in the 21st century. Marc Augé defines a non-place as "a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity" (Augé 63). These non-places, he argues, are products of the era of "supermodernity". This is a world surrendering to "solitary individuality" where "people are born in the clinic and die in hospital" (63). The stylised representation of the Øresund bridge and the surrounding urban environments alike convey a bland,

impersonal impression that exemplifies Augé's concept. There is a continuous emphasis on the seclusion of characters in the series which reinforces this idea.

The first episode begins with the lights on the Øresund bridge shutting down suddenly for forty-eight seconds, leaving the bridge and the strait below in complete darkness. When the lights return, a dead body lies on the middle of the bridge, one-half in Sweden, the other in Denmark. Two police officers, Martin Rohde (Kim Bodnia) from Copenhagen and Saga Norén (Sofia Helin) from Malmö, are assigned to investigate the crime scene. Norén and her team soon discover that the body has been bisected, and the post-mortem reveals these halves belong to two women. One victim is a young Danish prostitute who went missing thirteen months earlier, while the other is the former conservative mayor of Malmö who went missing the same week. As the victims were from Denmark and Sweden, Rohde and Norén are obliged to form a professional partnership to solve the case, leading them on the search for a man, whom the press labels the 'Truth Terrorist' (Lars Simonsen).

The precise alignment of the two body halves in this manner and the professional unison between a Swedish policewoman and Danish policeman highlights the border itself. The first episode of *Bron/Broen* is primarily concerned with the negotiations that arise as a result of the bridge murder; degrees of responsibility for the crime investigation; who may pass through the crime scene and under which conditions; what the constructed border signifies in itself, and what it signifies for the investigation. The problems of demarcation continue throughout the series as characters deal with the confusion and negotiation around border law, levels of responsibility, and significance of nationality. Even Martin's descent into lawlessness due to the peculiar rules set out by his previous friend and colleague the Truth Terrorist, who himself is a hybrid figure of identities, can be linked to these issues.

The bridge as the locus for a murder involving two body halves with different national identities calls attention to previous cinematic uses of national borders and the parallel theme of transgressing boundaries in film noir. As Barton Palmer points out: "The American film noir is a cinematic tradition whose representations are thoroughly liminal" (Palmer 66). Borders have been deployed in film noir in a variety of ways to depict national and international tensions. The Mexican - U.S. border is a recurring motif in noir, most notably in *Touch of Evil* (Welles 1958) where it functions in a self-

conscious fashion (Auerbach 123). In many classic noir films Mexico and the border operate as a conceptual threshold. They represent a kind of receding horizon or a safe haven that fugitives never reach, such as in *Double Indemnity* (Wilder 1944), *Where Danger Lives* (Farrow 1950) and *Gun Crazy* (H. Lewis 1950). In *Too Late for Tears* (Haskin 1949) Mexico is a fatal destination, while in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Garnett 1946) it is a space for temporary sexual transgression (Auerbach 123, 124). More recently, the same border has also been deployed for the American remake, *The Bridge* (FX networks 2013-2014).

The act of separating countries through administrative division emphasises the concept of borders as human artefacts. This impression is further reinforced by the – literally – fluid natural border between Denmark and Sweden: the strait separating Zealand (a large island off Denmark on which Copenhagen is situated) from the southern province of Scania (the southernmost province of Sweden). The abrupt and violent introduction to the series, with the topical issue of disunion and detachment laid out before us, asks of us to conceive of the two Scandinavian countries joined by a bridge, as a socially and culturally fragmented Nordic region in need of connection and collaboration.

Consequently, analysing the role of the bridge in the context of the Nordic setting demands particular attention to the issues of isolation and encapsulation. It is important to appreciate the physical isolation of Scandinavia. This part of northern Europe is predominantly a region of peninsulas and islands separated by inlets or open sea. The second characteristic, encapsulation, can be interpreted as a derivative of Scandinavia's insularity, meaning "of or relation to an island or by extension to isolated conditions similar to an island" (Hudman and Jackson 225). Major islands in the region include Iceland and the Faroes in the North Atlantic, Spitsbergen and Jan Mayen in the Arctic, the Danish archipelago, the Swedish islands of Gotland and Öland in the Baltic, and the Åland archipelago at the entrance to the Gulf of Bothnia (225). This isolation has played an important part in the historical and cultural development of the region and largely explains the distinct regional consciousness of the residents of Northern Europe (225). While employing a Scandinavian symbol for social connection, transit and increased commercialism, *Bron/Broen* is ultimately about disconnection.

The fact that border issues dominate many political controversies is evident in debates amongst scholars such as Zygmunt Bauman and Tony Judt. They point out not only the fluid quality of borders but also their central role in understanding the public sphere. They specify that European borders have become phantasmic due to their mobility and as a result of fluid border areas; zones, countries and cities are not marginal to the constitution of a public sphere but rather are at the centre (de Medeiros 103, 107).

In his analysis of the American centripetal metropolis of film noir, Dimendberg claims that “representing the metropolis is never an innocent gesture but one that is always motivated by cultural needs and ambitions” (Dimendberg 89). The Øresund bridge in *Bron/Broen* exemplifies this statement. The structure links the outskirts of the prosperous city of Copenhagen with Malmö, which is less affluent (Andersen *et al.* 1). Inaugurated in the year of 2000, the bridge became a key symbol for many residents of Malmö because it provided a vision of an expanding financial and social future. This impression was reinforced by local newspapers which presented it in optimistic terms (Steiner 369).

On the other hand, Malmö is often described as a place of crime and despair. It is associated with a high crime rate and poorer suburbs, which are “full of immigrants, drugs and social problems” (Righard *et al.* 25; Steiner 369). In the narrative context of the series, these issues are represented by the social problems the Truth Terrorist brings to the fore including politically sanctioned Islamophobia, the plight of the homeless, and the death of children in non-Western conflicts (Gray 78). The fact that the official symbol of a future socioeconomic vision functions as the prime site for the macabre murder scene evokes a similar conceptual notion of space to Dimendberg’s analysis of the film noir metropolis. As a cultural and geographical symbol, the bridge brings out the anxieties permeating its status as a centrifugal space and highlights a crisis in Nordic modernity, where tensions are generated between the “spatial and temporal voids between the modern as ‘yet-to-come’...and the urban past” (Dimendberg 91).

The Øresund bridge is often represented in a stylised way in the series. For example, Emily Gray has noted the way the action in *Bron/Broen* is often interspersed with static shots of the bridge. She argues that “The bridge is used as a negative aesthetic, its purpose is ambiguous, and the sea underneath is flat and grey. The bridge haunts us like a lonely ghost” (80). The series features several sequences in which characters drive

through fog and mist across the immense structure during the day, or travel through blistering wind and rain at night. As Gray suggests, these sequences give the bridge a foreboding presence, an impression which is reinforced by its aesthetic qualities as an anonymous site. As a result, the Øresund bridge is an exemplary non-space: a space formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relation that individuals have with these spaces (Augé 94). As I argue below, the consistently dreary weather and the deliberate framing of unexceptional and uninspiring urban environments gives the impression that the destination that awaits the characters is merely the mirror image of the ill-omened city from which they came. Consequently, the bridge functions as a means of transit that does not seem to have an end point, instead it appears as an intrinsic part of a limitless, ill-fated and discomfoting universe.

A prominent aspect of the representation of the bridge in the series is the emphasis placed on its sheer length, and the time it takes to cross from one side to the other. Synonymous with the urban environments, the bridge is also aesthetically represented as an anonymous site and as a means of transit for long, tedious journeys. Some sequences which show characters driving across it reach a minute and a half in length, providing the viewer with a sense of a duration that points to its magnitude. In the opening credits, we follow the Truth Terrorist in an over-the-shoulder shot through his car window. As the journey towards the middle of the bridge goes on, we feel the kilometres passing as we see the pillars marking the middle in the far distance, underscored by the terrorist looking at his watch to make sure his intricate plan will carry out according to his time schedule. Similarly, in two scenes in episode three we follow Rhode and Norén as they travel across the strait, going from Denmark to Sweden and back again. Thick fog and mist obscure the sun and consequently the vision of the characters as well as the audience. As a result, the presence of the Øresund bridge is highlighted through the length of the scene – the time it takes to cross it. The opaque, misty air and stylised colour scheme result in an overbearing sense of an endless journey, going nowhere to a “non-place”.

The sight of the bridge also contributes towards our perception of the two cities as part of a sinister world in which lonely characters are trapped. In the opening sequence of each episode aerial shots present the bridge as a stream of light across the dark strait. This recurrent image of a “beacon of light” functions as a false promise, a metaphorical

reverse of the show's thematic issues. The traffic suggests movement, travel, trade, interaction, and communication. These scenes correlate with an explicit form of imagery, which Augé describes as "the dominant aesthetic of the long shot of the global world" (xiii). He points out that when we look closer, this is in fact a world of discontinuity. He claims that observation satellites and aerial shots, "habituate us to a global view of things...which tends to make us forget the effects of this rupture...The smooth flow of cars on a highway, aircraft taking off from airport runways...create an image of the world, as we would like it to be. But that mirage disintegrates if we look at it too closely" (xiii).

In accordance with Augé's observation, the sense of progression and continuity between the two countries from the opening sequence is frequently disrupted. The most obvious example is found in the first episode, when the Truth Terrorist shuts down all electricity. A few moments later, and in a more subtle fashion, the camera cuts to a lone figure observing the bridge from a distance. He watches a stream of headlights flowing in unison as vehicles travel back and forth endlessly from the dark outskirts of the city. These images provide the viewer with a sense of detachment and separation: people are either part of an anonymous line of traffic or spatially disconnected. The bridge murder becomes the symbolic epitome of the layers of fragmentation which permeate the series, such as Martin's dysfunctional family, Jens' (The Truth Terrorist's) hybrid identity (who has surgically altered his face and changed his name), and his mapped out plan which is dispersed across the city, its centre and its outskirts, as well as Norén's and Rohde's relationship.

Other scenes emphasise the bridge's monumental, industrial structure, enforcing an impression of the Øresund bridge as an impersonal site. In the final episode of season one, the camera is placed on its mid-point, focusing on one of its end-points. The most striking feature is the monochromatic grey tonality of all structures and elements within the frame. The sharp angles of the concrete and steel framework blend with the water channel below. The further we look into the distance, the more the elements merge into a grey, anonymous and infinite whole. The aesthetic representation of a gigantic structure as colourless, stringent and "never ending" enforces the concept of discontinuity as the predominant tone setter of the series and as such, the bridge functions as a disruptive influence of the series. As Emily Gray notes, in an aesthetic sense the bridge is to a large

extent “[a place] without allegiance or nationality” (80). This particular depiction of the bridge recalls Foster Hirsch’s summary of noir cinematography having an “elegant simplicity...a mise en scène of minatory absence” (Hirsch 11).

This portrayal of the bridge as a symbol for disconnection and alienation extends to other spaces. The gloomy, washed out appearances of Copenhagen and Malmö give a sense of two drab cities deprived of culture, character and vibrancy. This bare and simple-looking aesthetic is not achieved through the documentary style sometimes found in classic noir films, but rather through heavy filtering, colour manipulation, and careful framing. The visual strategies of *Bron/Broen* are often highly stylised with an emphasis on large, uniform, urban landscapes that are frequently devoid of people. The series consistently depicts a disquieting atmosphere of isolation and anxiety. The clear focus on contemporary urban life as impersonal, unemotional, lonely, and frightening is most markedly underscored in the opening credits.

Every episode opens to distinctly colour coded scenes of urban and industrial areas accompanied by a wistful soundtrack. Heavy filtering creates unnatural looking green shadows and neon blue spotlights stream on to deserted streets. Urban views set in overwhelming darkness are contrasted with bright neon lights. Factories spew smoke into an unnatural looking green-grey night sky. In extreme aerial long shots, heavy traffic moves in fast-forward next to anonymous black figures running around like ants in a nest. Low-angle shots depict leafless, black trees set against uniform high-rise buildings in some desolate suburb. Other shots employ the washed out, blue-grey end of the colour scale common in Scandinavian noir look (“Challenging” 262).

Framing plays an important role in *Bron/Broen*. A typical scene in the series commences with aerial shots which then move closer to lonely characters in medium or long shots, framing neat rows of identical concrete buildings, offices or apartment buildings alike, in clusters across the city. The impression created is that the urban landscape is uniform and impersonal. In its way, this effect is as disquieting as the skewed camera angles of classic noir. Aside from the main protagonists, most characters are framed standing alone in wide angle. Both shallow and deep focus shots emphasise the sense that these individuals are enclosed within immense, malignant spaces. An interesting example of this strategy occurs after the discovery of the bodies on the bridge in the first episode. We are presented with a view of Malmö at night via an overhead shot.

Grey, tall apartment blocks dominate the foreground. There is little evidence of life. The windows and balconies of the apartment buildings appear empty, apart from a few emitting a cold fluorescent light.

The camera cuts to a shot that frames one of the apartment blocks. We see a solitary woman standing at the window staring despondently out at the monochromatic, concrete landscape. Surrounded by the empty, dark, fog-covered city, she seems lonely, even forsaken. An interior shot shows her standing on a linoleum-covered floor; she could be in any one of thousands of identical Malmö apartments. The woman walks over to the radio where the news reports on the recent bridge murder but turns it off. She telephones a man who appears to be a social worker, asking for his help; “I can’t sleep...I have a sore tummy...Can we meet up?” He is standing by his car smoking, overlooking the inlet and the Øresund bridge from a far distance. Interestingly, neither of them have any connection or involvement with the bridge murder. Their presence merely gestures to the unsettled, detached qualities of urban life.

The subdued colour scheme and stringent employment of uniform spaces combine to provide the urban environments with a consistently desolate look. This is reinforced by the frequent presence of the grey, rainy weather typical of Scandinavia in late autumn. The subdued colours have been toned down even more, which further obscures the misty air. Consequently, we perceive the urban landscape as highly stylised. Because of our obscured vision, it becomes difficult to appreciate the passing of time, as we hardly witness any apparent changes in the sunlight. The cinematography appears washed out, dismal and anaemic. Consequently, what characterises its urban sphere is a distressing sense of emptiness, conformity and homogeneity. On the other hand, the series also develops a stark contrast between the grey, desaturated or black canvas and the use of unnatural looking hues. Radiant greens and yellows that are more typical of neo-noir in for example *Fight Club* (Fincher 1999) and *Taxi Driver* (Scorsese 1976) (Glitre 16, 17), and also in *Jar City* (Kormákur 2006), as I discuss in chapter three.

Neon colours are often applied in *Bron/Broen* to enhance an atmosphere of angst and dismay. In one critical scene in the final episode of season three, Norén and her co-worker Henrik Sabroe (Thure Lindhardt) are facing each other on each side of a train track. Norén is contemplating suicide. Against the pitch-dark backdrop, neon green filtering covers her face as a reflection of her anxious state. The frame is cluttered with

emitted shades of neon blue, green and yellow-green light. This dynamic between “bright light and pools of darkness” is the fundamental principle of chiaroscuro lighting of noir (Glitre 12). As Katarina Glitre points out, neo-noir uses varying saturation of neon colour in in order to create a “visual energy” (14). Similarly, *Bron/Broen* applies shades of cooler neon colours to bring out a notion of the squeamish and disorderly effects the harsh urban environment has on its characters. In this scene, it is expressly applied to emphasise Norén’s distressed state.

From the larger scale of the aerial shot to the medium shot, *Bron/Broen*’s “city-world” mainly conveys an impression of an urban environment that lacks diversity or energy. Stripped of crowds it is deprived of any form of dynamism. The stylised aesthetic of *Bron/Broen* creates a mood or tone of unease and uncertainty. Completely without sentiment or nostalgia, the series offers a particular version of a noiresque urban dystopia, as it harmonises visual and narrative aspects of social realism with Gothic implications (Gray 73). As such, the show differs from the semi-documentary interpretations of modernity in noir films such as *Naked City* (Dassin 1948). It does not provide an account of real-life organised crime like *The French Connection* (Friedkin 1971), nor does it contain bright, pastiche-like allusions to the classic noir era such as *Chinatown* (Polanski 1974). *Bron/Broen*’s urban landscape is not heavily decorated with lavish exteriors and expressionistic climaxes, nor is it charged with fast-paced chase sequences through crowded urban melting pots. Rather, it can be argued that it exemplifies Foster Hirsch’s observation that neo-noir often functions in a neutral, even deadpan range. “Instead of the energy that characterises the set-piece, the films work for a flattened effect, an almost zombie-like verbal and visual mode” (Hirsch 86).

Despite the representation of urban spaces in *Bron/Broen* as non-places, these sites carry historical and cultural significance. As anonymous and interchangeable as they seem, the majority of the urban landscapes in the series are an extension of the attempts of the Scandinavian welfare state to engage in rational social engineering. These numerous examples of Functionalist architecture are a reminder of the social democratic efforts to minimise class differences (SK 90). However, the twentieth-century modern Scandinavian city never managed to replace the countryside in popular culture, despite rapid urbanisation (since the mid-1930s the majority of Swedes have lived in cities). Instead, the modern metropolis in its *funkis* or *post-funkis* appearance became a negative

imprint of *folkhemmet* (People's home) and modernity (SK 91). Consequently, the largely empty, uniform town squares, hospitals, apartment buildings and police stations in *Bron/Broen* exemplify Augé's claim that architecture transmits the illusions of the current dominant ideology. The representation of these spaces alludes to a "planetary society that is yet to materialize", and that "architecture suggests the . . . fragments of a splintered utopia in which we would like to believe" (xvii).

Occasionally, the camera frames the central districts of Malmö and Copenhagen with the *funkis* architecture side-by-side with the distinguished and decorous buildings of the European Baroque and Classical eras. These contrasting architectural styles⁷ which appear equally dreary behind the dim lighting and subdued colour scheme remind us of Dimendberg's observation that "nostalgia and longing for older urban forms combined with a fear of new alienating urban realities pervade film noir" (7). Rather than a postmodern hybridization of styles merging into a loud but coherent whole, *Bron/Broen* presents these architectural sites as markers of a fragmented, incoherent society. Outdoor locations are by and large empty and devoid of any day-to-day activities adding to the uncanny sense of estrangement and the cultural, emotional and spiritual disconnection between people and their environment.

This chapter has elaborated on Jensen and Waade's observation that Scandinavian crime fiction has a tradition of conveying a distinct aura of melancholy through landscape and climate ("Challenging" 262). By applying Lefebvre's work on landscape in cinema, the analysis has demonstrated that the deployment of natural settings and the element of water in the first season of *Forbrydelsen* are vital components to the mood and tone of the series. Furthermore, it has expanded on the perception of urban environments in *Bron/Broen* by acknowledging the aesthetic representation of Copenhagen and Malmö as identity deprived cities. The Øresund bridge is thematically significant in the sense that it functions as a centrifugal force. As such *Bron/Broen* is not only a critique of Swedish and Danish modernity but can also be interpreted as a representation of Augé's concept of

⁷ In the opening sequences of each episode, iconic Scandinavian landmarks are depicted, giving the series a strong sense of place and identity. In addition to frames of Øresundsbron, Santiago Calatrava's skyscraper "The Turning Torso", Edward Eriksen's statue "Den Lille Havfrue" (The little mermaid) and "Slottsmöllan" windmill are also recurring. Although these images will have different connotations for those acquainted with these national icons and for those who are not, the cities in *Bron/Broen* are far from what Spicer refers to as "symbolically homeless" (67). However, I argue that the focal point and aesthetic representation of the urban environments are that of uniformity, the identical, and the homogeneous.

“supermodernity”. Additionally, the bridge embodies the absolute representation of this era of indifference, fragmentation, and misery (Augé xxii). In accordance with Nordic noir’s affinity for the tension between the ordinary and extraordinary, *Forbrydelsen* and *Bron/Broen* remind us of the fact that despite the byzantine complexity of the plots, the most precarious danger is found in our proximity and within the familiar. The relationship between dreary and impersonal appearances and the evil brooding beneath is reflected in both the natural and urban environments.

Chapter Three

Evil Whiteness and Macabre Colour: Aesthetics in *Insomnia* and *Jar City*

Colour and light are co-dependent aesthetic components that are crucial for the tone and mood associated with Nordic noir. *Forbrydelsen*, for example, employs a notable contrast between darkness in the urban settings and naturalistic light that brings out the subdued earth tones of its natural environment. *Bron/Broen* emphasises the grey tones associated with rain and fog. More broadly, Jensen and Waade have established that Nordic noir has become known for the frequent use of the blue-gray end of the colour spectrum (“Challenging” 262). This chapter expands the research on Nordic noir’s visual style by examining the use of colour and light in the films *Jar City* (Kormákur 2006) and *Insomnia* (Skjoldbjærg 1997). Both films integrate distinctive features of the northern light conditions and rely on specificities of their locations to achieve a distinctive visual style. Consequently, a stark sense of place is reflected and enhanced through the stylistic elements of light and colour. This also enables the films to create fresh perspectives on established noir concepts, such as the moral ambiguity of the noir detective and the revealing versus concealing qualities of light and darkness.

Firstly, the application of “white” and colour in Nordic noir ought to be situated within the context of noir more generally. In his 1972 essay “Notes on film noir”, Paul Schrader declared that the definition of film noir must return to its cultural and stylistic elements (54). He argued that film noir is a film “noir”, as opposed to the possible variants of film grey or film off-white (53, 54). In reducing film noir to its primary colours, which to Schrader are “all shades of black”, we arrive at a certain “tonality”, essentially synonymous with the term “*film noir*” (54). In 1974 Place and Peterson summarised noir’s characteristic tonality thus:

it is the constant opposition of areas of light and dark that characterises *film noir* photography. Small areas of light seem on the verge of being completely overwhelmed by the darkness that threatens them from all sides. Thus faces are shot low-key, interior sets are always dark, with foreboding shadow patterns lacing the walls, and exteriors are shot ‘night-for-night’. (67)

When making noir films in colour, the thematic and atmospheric phenomena of “darkness” demanded fresh critical perspectives. Glitre explains that in black-and-white cinematography a desaturated red would be the same shade of grey as a saturated red. Consequently, colour noirs often enhance the tonal contrast of chiaroscuro by adding colour contrast (14). As a revisionist genre, neo-noir style is known for taking full advantage of colour to contribute towards a “dark” mood and tone and also using colour to enhance our subjective perception of narrative or simply to create a visual interest (Glitre 19).

For example, Sci-Fi or Tech noirs such as *Dark City* (Proyas 1998) and *Blade Runner* (Scott 1982) use bright or mismatching hues, as well as neon colours against a black backdrop, to create a sense of defamiliarisation. Puzzle films such as *Memento* (Nolan 2000) use colour to differentiate between temporal shifts. Films set in the desert, such as *U-Turn* (Stone 1997), use red, brown and orange filtering to enhance our perception of the hot, dry and dusty locations. In *Body Heat* (Kasdan 1981) the imposing heat of the Florida sun becomes the focal representation for the sexual tensions and increasing anxieties between the criminal duo of Ned Racine (William Hurt) and Matty Walker (Kathleen Turner). Glitre contends that “the association of orange with neo-noir is more about the quality of light and atmosphere than other aspects of *mise-en-scène*: it is the dusty, desert sunlight, the flame of the fire, the aura of body heat” (17). The neo-noir *Fargo* (Coen 1996), on the other hand, became celebrated for its distinctive modest small-town setting and snowy, “white” appearance. Glitre also explains that cool colours (shades of purple, through blue to green and greenish yellow) tend to recede visually, whereas warm colours (shades of yellow through orange to red to reddish-purple) tend to advance visually (15). The overbearing sense of “whiteness” in *Insomnia* could enhance our perception of the protagonist as unapproachable and obscure. Similarly, in *Jar City*, the use of bright, ‘institutional’ greens in a natural environment, otherwise dominated by subdued earth tones, creates clear contrasts for the viewer that point to a distinction between the natural and the unnatural, or the organic and the inorganic.

In several Nordic noir films, such as *Insomnia* and *Jar City*, actors’ faces are at times shot in bright light, interior sets are regularly depicted in white with bright sunlight glaring in through windows, and exterior shots are often shot ‘day-by-day’ (as well as ‘night-for-night’). As mentioned, exterior shots also often emphasise Northern weather

conditions. The cinematography in brightly lit settings can be equally unsettling. As for snow and whiteness in Nordic noir, the film adaptation of the novel *Smilla's Sense of Snow* demonstrated that the qualities of snow, boundless, icy landscapes, and the visual effects of whiteness and light in Nordic noir could be equally evocative as rain, darkness, and busy cityscapes. The narrative begins with a meteorite, which hides a prehistoric worm, striking the Gela Alta glacier in Greenland. A more recent example of the different and contradictory properties of snow is the transnational production *Fortitude* (Donald 2015-). Similar to the film *Smilla*, snow and ice obscure, not only the vision for ice bear hunters but also hides some fictional, aggressive parasite.

Sukhdev Sandu argued in his review of *Låt den Rätte Komma In* (Andersson 2008) (*Let the Right One In*) that the film's "'brittle textures and haunted ambience seemed, in some strange way, to have sprung originally from the nation in which it was set'" (Sandu qtd. in Mazdon 201). David Fincher expressed a similar appreciation for the specific look of the Scandinavian locations when remaking *Män som Hatar Kvinnor* (Arden Oplev 2009) [*The Girl with The Dragon Tattoo*] in Sweden. He explained his preference for working with a local cinematographer thus: "'It was an aesthetic choice. We wanted it to look and feel like a Swedish film'" (Fincher qtd. in Holben 1). In his version Fincher chose to put emphasis on location and harsh weather by filming during winter while the landscape was covered in thick snow (Mazdon 205).

The particular qualities of Scandinavian locations are expressed in Nordic noir through the use of colours, textures, weather conditions, the qualities of northern sunlight, and the region's characteristic darkness during winter. Jensen and Waade have stressed the role of colour and light in conveying the bleak and despondent atmosphere of the genre ("Challenging" 262). Similar to the way in which grey weather may convey a sense of gloominess and melancholia, an overbearing sense of whiteness is often used in Nordic noir to represent impersonal and dispirited spaces such as hospitals, empty apartment buildings, and police stations. In *Insomnia*, the white northern light functions as a reflexive element by drawing our attention to the moral corruption of a Nordic police detective. Regarding Schrader's point about the "darkness" of noir, one could claim that Nordic noir in many ways reflects an intrinsic darkness as a result of Scandinavia's specific location, conveyed as a metaphorical darkness through a range of colours, white

included. Hence light and whiteness become the key stylistic aspects, which will be analysed in the following discussion.

White Ambiguity in *Insomnia*

The small-scale but critically acclaimed Nordic noir film *Insomnia*, directed by Erik Skjoldbjærg, takes advantage of the filming location of Tromsø in Norway. The primary source of light in *Insomnia* comes from an unlikely source in a noir film: the midnight sun. The film's stylistic triumph lies in the way it fully exploits this phenomenon as a stylistic and thematic device. As with many classic noir films, the tone of *Insomnia* is sardonic and consistent with noir, it welds seemingly contradictory visual elements into a uniform style (Schrader 56). Moreover, I argue, it adds a Nordic specificity to a long visual tradition.

At first, *Insomnia* appears to be about solving the murder of a seventeen-year-old girl Tanja Lorentzen (Maria Mathiesen). Two Swedish detectives from Stockholm, Jonas Engström (Stellan Skarsgård) and Erik Vik (Sverre Anker Ousdal), are flown in to assist local police with the investigation. However, while in Tromsø Engström finds it increasingly difficult to sleep due to the imposing presence of the midnight sun. After accidentally shooting Vik during a stakeout, Engström's notional moral superiority over Tanja Lorentzen's murderer is severely questioned. Throughout the slow-burning narrative, it becomes evident that the plot is not essentially a "whodunnit" but rather a visual feast which tells a parallel story about character morality and psychology.

White features prominently in *Insomnia*. It is used as a colour in the representation of Norway's natural elements such as fog and snow. It is employed in the form of light to mark the ongoing cycle of the midnight sun, resulting in a disruption of the audience's perception of time. Bright white light is also used to mark Engström's hallucinatory moments. It is the dominant colour of all interior settings in the film. Conversely, it also functions in an achromatic fashion. Glitre clarifies that monochromatic tonal scale refers to black-and-white ('one colour') but it can also mean achromatic ('without colour') (14). Monochromatic images have one tonal scale, in this case from white to black, through shades of grey; this scale is about brightness – precisely about degrees of light (*chiaro*) and dark (*scuro*) (14). Instead of classic noir's affinity with black, the film creates a white noir that points to the protagonist's

‘darkness’. As Robert Warshow acknowledged “originality is to be welcomed only in the degree that it intensifies the expected experience without fundamentally altering it” (583). In line with the noir tradition, *Insomnia*’s high contrast lighting, anonymous spaces, use of visual obscurity (overbearing light and fog), and fluidity (sudden changes in weather) mirror the changing qualities of the protagonist (Spicer 11). However, the focal point is the uncomfortable properties of whiteness and what is exposed in the daylight as opposed to what hides in the dark. As a result, Skjoldbjærg has created a ‘noir blanc’, or as he classifies it, a slow-paced, psychological thriller: “a reverse noir” (Norðfjörð CN 64; Romney 1).

Let us examine the way Erik Skjoldbjærg relies on the locality in regards to the concept of “whiteness” for most of his film’s *mise-en-scène*. In neo-noir, white attire is often used to signal emotional control and single-mindedness of the *femme fatale* (Glitre 20). By contrast, in *Insomnia*, white is not confined to a single meaning or fixed to a single form. It is represented in exterior shots as sunlight, snow, and fog and in interior shots, subdued greys and blues appear further washed out due to the imposing sunlight that seeps through windows, blinds and curtains. Consequently, white light does not solely function as a mirror image of Engström’s psychotic mental state. Furthermore, the explicitly bright, white environment becomes an overwhelming, omnipresent force and a reminder of the power that nature has over humanity.

Insomnia emphasises the role of light and location from the beginning. Filmed in Super 8, the first image of the film is pitch-black and is accompanied with the non-diegetic sound of a woman singing tenderly. A scene of the Norwegian archipelago emerges as a door of a coastal hut opens up, revealing a young woman wearing a black dress with a white print. She turns around to face the camera. She squints in the bright daylight and smiles innocently. The gesture of opening the door suggests that she presents the setting from the point of view shot of her murderer. Immediately we understand that the natural milieu with its overbearing sunlight is the film’s most prominent feature: the woman is saturated in white light; it smudges the edges of her face, it shimmers as reflections on the surface of the ice blue Barents Sea. The characteristic rounded, polished rocks of the Scandinavian archipelagos are scattered around, signifying the glacial growths and recessions of the landscape. The scenery is visually striking but static. So far it functions only as a backdrop, focalising the film’s

geographical context. A similar cinematographic move features in *Män som Hatar Kvinnor* (the original *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*). Here, a bright Swedish summer evening by the sea is used to stage an event of the past: a recollection of Michael Blomqvist's (Michael Nyqvist) memory of his babysitter Harriet Vanger (Julia Sporre). This particular foregrounding of location and the way Skjoldbjærg takes advantage of the luminosity of Scandinavian light differentiates his work from the characteristically grey and pitch-black backdrops of later Nordic noir productions. For example, the introductory and signature sequences of *Bron* and *Forbrydelsen* feature Denmark or Sweden in late November, either in an urban setting in the fading light, rain and gloomy atmosphere, or deep in the forest at night ("Nordic Noir" 193).

Skjoldbjærg sets up the general dynamic between light and darkness, where the bright midnight sun illuminates to such an extent that overexposed areas are blinding. The result is that the primary role of light is not to clarify but to conceal, blur or obscure while competing with those inconspicuous qualities of the dark aspects of the screen. For example, *Insomnia* begins with the traditional notion that the killer is "hiding in the dark". However, with the detective's arrival, the cinematography carefully moves our attention from what hides in the shadows to what is, or may be hidden, in the light. It is the bright light, as opposed to shadows of darkness that is outlined across characters' faces and demands our attention. In neo-noir, light breaking through blinds is often diffused to create a soft haze, which in effect tends to flatten our perception of space on the screen, as opposed to the depths created by the unnatural and expressionistic lighting onto realistic settings in the classic noir era (Glitre 21; Schrader 56). Bright light is assigned a new role in neo-noir through *Insomnia* as it provides a stark sense of eeriness deriving from daylight rather than classic noir's affinity for night (Schrader 57). It also operates in a reflexive manner, drawing our attention to the screen, its visual layers as well as the layers of the crime story itself.

The opening scene continues to the pulsating sound reminiscent of a heartbeat heard through a stethoscope. It is accompanied by the woman's humming and the title sequence displays in a clear-cut black and white. Thereafter, the plot of the crime is played out during the Super 8 shoot: the girl is grabbed by the neck – still in a point-of-view shot – by a man's hands and pushed repeatedly against the wall of the shed. The grainy look of the film and the frequent editing convey a sense of confusion, panic and

violence. Together with the extreme close-ups of the girl's face, the imagery produces a level of confusion and obscurity. The tone of complexity to this story is now set: this is not only an investigation of what is concealed and what is hidden but, more importantly, to whom.

In the second scene, we see Engström and his partner Vik flying into Tromsø. Engström squints in the bright sunlight while his partner sleeps on his shoulder. Engström takes his partner's pen and crosses over the white face in the crime photograph of murder victim Tanja Lorentzen. This act is a subtle insinuation of Engström's morality. The gesture signifies Engström's attempts to hide his prior misconduct in Sweden, where he got caught sleeping with a witness from a murder investigation, an incident which is widely known by his new, Norwegian colleagues. It also foreshadows Engström's repressed sexual drive, which will continue to cloud his professional judgment throughout the narrative.⁸ Engström's act of crossing out Tanja's face also speaks of his limitations in acknowledging humanity in others. The scene subtly recalls the scrapbook of photographs seen in the opening credit sequence of *Se7en*. By implication it places Engström in the role of John Doe (Kevin Spacey) in Fincher's film and points to Engström's disturbing psychological qualities. Here, the bright light of the midnight sun is already introduced as a powerful motif in the film. It is not just a static characteristic of the Northern location. It is also a fluid force that hints at the inner workings of Engström. Symbolically, the white surface of Tanja's photographed face becomes a reflective surface onto which Engström's attempt to hide his corruption is in fact disclosed through this reflexive act. This impression of Engström's character is reinforced shortly afterwards when he runs a red light while driving into Tromsø, despite claiming it was "green".

In the next scene at the morgue Tanja's white body functions yet again metaphorically as a whiteboard, this time for a competition between Engström and the man who killed her: a local crime writer. Engström is looking for marks, clues, or any other form of "writing", but these have all been erased by the writer/murderer. During his investigation, he is drawn closer to Tanja's pale corpse. Framed in a medium close-up, he slowly removes his protective mask and leans over to smell the victim's hair. He

⁸ See Romney, J. "Insomnia: Unbearable Lightness" for a detailed analysis on the way Engström's suppressed sexuality is hinted at through POV shots and a lack of wide-angle shots.

concludes that the murderer's immaculate cleaning of her *post mortem* was a job done by a perfectionist: the killer has scrubbed her nails and even washed her hair. For a moment Engström seems impressed. The murderer's ability to erase every forensic clue is a trait that he greatly admires – this is an ability that he lacks. The same emotive music from the opening scene is heard on the soundtrack, creating a connection between the autopsy and the murder. The impression we have is that Skarsgård's character is partly moved by the tragedy while his cerebral self is identifying and appreciating an example of perfection, or a job “well done”. His meditative state is abruptly disrupted by the voice of his boss Hilde Hagen (Gisken Armand), but Engström's duplicitous nature has been signalled to the audience. Skjoldbaerg has created a visual puzzle that hides several clues: the photograph of Tanja Lorentzen, as well as her white corpse at the morgue, stand in as a means for revealing the perverse depths of Engström's persona. Every moment up to this point has suggested that he is enmeshed in an intricate web of lies, concealed not only from his colleagues but, more importantly, from himself.

As the story proceeds, we observe Engström's resistance to change and his inability to control his surroundings. He insists on speaking Swedish instead of Norwegian during interrogations as a way of maintaining power over witnesses, such as with the young female witness whom he also assaults while on duty. As per the social critique that permeates crime narratives from Scandinavia, Nestingen argues that Engström's character embodies a Swedish urban individualism that is set against the rural Norwegian collective. For example, Engström carries a gun while his fellow Norwegian colleagues do not, which is another strained attempt at maintaining an impenetrable façade, (CF 97). The fact that he later misuses his gun and accidentally shoots Vik becomes the narrative climax of this ongoing conflict between his internal and external self. However, the most important sign of his inflexibility is his constant attempts to shut out the midnight light from his bedroom. Unable to sleep, every night he twists and turns in his bed while the blinds slowly move in the light breeze. His battle with nature, which both the viewer and Engström perceive as an autonomous force, is a device comparable to those pervasive birds in *The Birds* (Hitchcock 1963). Thus, in *Insomnia* the environment becomes a character of its own.

Within the unique Norwegian natural location, all interior shots reveal a conscious use of geometry, such as high angle shots of stairways, wide-angle shots of nearly empty interrogation rooms, and deep focus shots of white corridors. Romney refers to *Insomnia*'s configuration of its interiors as a "Mondrian-like grid" (4). Noir's affinity for anonymous locations is also visible where most of the interior scenes trap the viewers inside cars and cramped hotel rooms, together with the disturbed protagonist. Those scenes in which horizontal lines and white uncompromisingly dominates the interior, the *mise-en-scène* is also sparsely decorated. The bleached, sterile and empty look is further intensified by the extra-diegetic force of bright sunlight beaming through the windows of the police station, hospital, morgue and, most importantly, Engström's white hotel room. This use of light can be contrasted with the dark suits neatly organised in his closet and the charcoal suit he is wearing, an indication of his dubious moral status. This employment of white looks as a form of reversed negative space. As opposed to noir's infatuation with black, white enhances the sense of generic, impersonal space in *Insomnia*, mirroring Engström's cold and dispassionate persona. White light bursts through the cracks of the monochromatic composures as if drawing our attention to the film canvas itself. White washes out all hues into cool tints, making those frequent close-ups and medium close-ups of Engström's haggard expressions and his grey and black attire seem particularly depressing as he is struggling to keep his eyes open to all the light around him after "nights" of lost sleep.

Skjoldbjærg also takes advantage of the fact that our ability to perceive colour is dependent on any light source available. The film uses sunlight in a highly conscious fashion where daylight brings out the perception of a brisk and chilly atmosphere of an unmistakable northern location. In the opening scene, for example, the shimmering surface of the sea behind Tajna Lorentzon looks particularly cold due to its light-blue shade in what appears to be a direct effect of white light from the sun.

In the following scene, during the ride in from the airport to Tromsø, the fir trees that decorate the horizons of exterior shots fade into a pale, desaturated green in the overexposed environment. By contrast, in the sequence of the stakeout by Holt's seaside cabin (circa seventeen minutes into the film) all green tonalities alter depending on the sunlight or its disappearance. The sun is obscured by light fog. The grass is at first a striking, deep green hue that dominates the screen. As the fog creeps in and thickens, the

notable green colour of the grass and moss blends in with the greys and light blue tints of the rocks and waters. Altering the brightness of tonalities and saturation of colours is yet another subtle way of hinting at the significance of natural sunlight in the film.

An even more remarkable feature of *Insomnia* is the way Skjoldbjærg subverts the use of darkness and light in order to convey a sense of obscured vision. Possibly one of the most captivating effects of overexposure from sunlight can be seen towards the finale of the film (at circa one hour, twenty-three minutes and forty seconds into the film). During Engström's search for Holt amongst the rotting boatsheds, Engström is seen as a dark, almost indecipherable figure towards a backdrop of grey rocks, green grass and white wood. This dark silhouette of the detective's stature is not a result from the vague light from a streetlamp during a scene shot in darkness. The image derives from the position of the film camera in broad daylight, creating an overexposed effect. As such we are reminded that what may obscure our, and possibly Engström's, vision is not darkness but overbearing sunlight. Consequently, there is an important relationship between the natural environment and the way it is represented.

The different ways in which white is used influences our understanding of character and setting. White light functions as a disruptive force at times. In addition to affecting Engström's sleep, it also blinds and bothers Vik and him while flying, causing them to squint or close their eyes. During scenes featuring cloud and rain, it is as if both Engström and the viewers get a sense of relief from the overbearing sunlight. Shadows are not foreboding signs but momentary breaks from the blinding sun. This effect can be contrasted with the overwhelming sense of darkness in *Fobrydelsen*, or the smothering ambience caused by the consistently grey overcast in *Bron/Broen*. Light is what keeps Engström awake around the clock, demanding constant attention from him which reverses the convention of identifying the unconscious with darkness (Romney np).

When Engström executes his search warrant in Holt's apartment, the 'filthiness' of Holt's character is metaphorically hinted at in a close-up of distasteful stains on the white bed sheet. Similarly, Engström's inability to conceal his corruption is mirrored in a colour-coded contrast between the writer Holt and himself. Situated high up on a mountain top, in the monochromatic shades associated with a winter landscape, Skarsgård's character wears a dark trench coat and Holt a white coat. What began as a confrontation of Holt by Engström, ends up with Holt questioning Engström's morals. As

viewers we are not certain who is “good” and who is “bad”. As a result, the audience is invited to question the meaning of “white” as well as “black” alike. The metaphorical mirror image of Engström and Holt is quite typical of noir and neo-noir alike where such reflections suggest deceptiveness, doubling, neurotic narcissism, and disordered fantasy (Spicer 47). Their *doppelgänger* status is further reinforced as Holt reveals he also has hallucinations in which Tanja’s ghost speaks to him, telling him about Engström’s sleepless nights and increasingly fragile mental state.

Skjoldbaerg’s use of location recalls films such as *Fargo*, more so than any other Nordic noir, *Wallander* included, due to the emphasis on the natural environment and its small-town setting. Like the Coen brothers used Minneapolis near their childhood home in Minnesota, Skjoldbaerg uses his hometown as a location. He claims that the choice of setting derived from a desire to depict the place as something less spectacular than what he had seen in other productions (Cowie 1). Like *Fargo*, *Insomnia* predominantly features achromatic hues and has a strong sense of locality. Contemplative silences draw our attention to the discomfort that the glaring light evokes, the impact it has on Engström, and his gradual fall into madness. Even though *Fargo* features far more establishing shots than *Insomnia*, there is a similar emphasis on the blandness of both exterior and interior settings (Adams 3). Like *Fargo*, *Insomnia* also has an interest in the everyday, the ordinary, and the banal, as well as a preference for the atmospheric use of shadows and fog, which are standard noir conventions (Spicer 15). *Insomnia*, like many other Nordic noirs, brings our attention to the potential uneasiness and dread of the ordinary and familiar of small-town settings.

Because of the unique look of the Norwegian archipelagos covered in overwhelming bright sunlight, it would be tempting to overlook the fact that Skjoldbjærg still employs elements of classic noir, such as its distinctive contrasts between shadow and light, half-lit faces and deep focus photography. However, instead of creating a delicate balance between black and white, or dark and luminous across the whole screen, *Insomnia* features a distinct interchange regarding whiteness and luminosity between its interior and exterior spaces. Luminosity is the perceived light given off by any given object, and is a prominent feature of chiaroscuro, referring to the lightest part of the screen image (Bleicher 79). The more light that appears to be emitted from an object or area of the screen, the closer it will appear to the viewer in the picture frame (Bleicher

80). Remarkably in *Insomnia*, chiaroscuro is not the effect from limited light sources but from the marked presence of one prevailing light source. Additionally, the reflection of sunlight is intensified by the fact that the colour white is the predominant feature of all interior settings, the killer/writer Jon Holt's (Bjørn Floberg) apartment included. In effect, the luminous qualities of the film do not only impact the protagonist in diegesis but also the viewer experience. As a result, we are to some extent aligned with his perspective as we are invited to empathise with Engström's overwhelmed state.

In contrast to these predominantly white, bright scenes of interiors, the exterior environments are at other times smothered in overbearing brightness while interiors are marked with shadows, such as the final scenes played out amongst the abandoned, wooden boat sheds. Other examples include the car ride into Tromsø from the airport: the horizon is barely discernible due to the overexposed cinematography, and the general exterior setting is a blurry composure of desaturated greens, greys and yellows. The interior of the car provides a space of relief from the blinding light. In this fashion, the high contrast composition alternates between exterior and interior settings. The result of such a dynamic between the overpowering, bleached effect of the sun with those sharp shadows and dark areas that result from glaring, intense light is a look that is inversely connected to the location. During summer the imposing midnight sun brings out the whiteness of the environment, and in winter, as Vik explains to Engström, darkness dominates, and it is "pitch black". In yet another self-conscious cinematographic touch, Skjoldbaerg perfectly recreates an expressionist noir setting of a dark, cramped space in the tunnel scene. This sequence is played out beneath the killer's coastal hut and is lit by sparse light sources in the form of flashlights reflected in skewed angles. Aside from the final scene, this is the only dark space of the film.

As for the corruption of Engström's character, the essential part of the film is the stakeout of Holt's cabin when Vik's death occurs. This event takes place over several hours: the vibrant colours of the grass are replaced by a crisp, blue monochrome, which eventually gives way to the creeping fog. Beforehand, Engström has carefully prepared his team's positions using a map of the coastal area where Holt's cabin is situated. As the police wait for their foe, the editing rhythms of the film slow down noticeably, and the audience begins to share their tedium. Shortly afterwards, we see Engström and Vik standing in the foreground, aligned as a team, in a wide angle shot while their colleagues

stand in the background. Engström's smart, charcoal suit and neat black coat make a noticeable contrast to the earthly colours of his colleagues' casual wear and the uniforms of the police officers who are surrounding Holt's hideout. This subtle colour connotation signals to the viewers that Engström stands apart from the police team.

The fog creeping into the sequence from all angles recalls the grainy vision from the Super 8 footage of the opening scene. The rapid movement of the fog suggests strong winds and Engström wraps his coat tighter around him. The fact that dialogue is kept to minimum forces us to look for visual clues. However, the slow fade-outs used in the sequence in conjunction with fog create a sense of boredom and brooding – we are waiting for something to happen. Through a series of cuts, the camera progressively tightens on Engström. The fog thickens, surrounding and isolating him further while restricting his vision. All colours of the surrounding nature, such as green, have now faded into a cold, blue monochrome indicating a brisk, cool temperature. Suddenly, Engström gets a glimpse of Holt walking towards the shed. Shrouded by the fog, he hears the sound of a thermos cracking, which cuts through the quiet, opaque air. As Holt escapes, the team is re-directed by Engström, who explicitly tells Vik to turn right. However, in the dense fog Engström shoots Vik. In his last moments, Vik whispers "You said left", suggesting that the murky environment has confused and engulfed Vik.

After the murder of the chatty, ordinary policeman Vik the film takes a far more serious tone. From here on, *Insomnia* has little in common with the low-key, quirky, and sometimes funny 'esprit de corpse' of *Fargo*. Instead, Skjoldbaerg plunges into a far more intricate stylization than before, underscoring the deviant and highly-strung characterisations of Engström and Holt. By noticing the way the natural phenomena such as the weather have been manipulated to serve specific visual purposes and the effects that result from this stylization, it can be concluded that *Insomnia* departs from a sense of realism towards a formalist mode. Despite a naturalistic setting, the predominant use of medium shots and lack of establishing shots means that the film prompts confusion and disorientation rather than clarity.

Engström's continuous struggle with his guilty conscience lapses into a state of madness as Vik now reappears diegetically in the form of internal 'voices'. Despite eventually succeeding in shutting out all sunlight from his hotel room, Engström lies with his eyes open in the darkness. He seems to have accepted his transformation into a

corrupt figure. Later, Vik materialises twice as a ghost accompanied by a bright, golden beam of light shining through a hole in the curtain. This light is aimed Engström, recalling the gun wound he inflicted, and he alternates between laughter and crying. When searching Holt's house for the second time, Tanja's ghost also appears before him. This figure rests on a divan recalls Holt's remarks about Tanja's traumatised reaction to her rape. "She just wanted to rest. She slept and slept and slept." Although his colleagues surround Engström, the representation of Tanja's ghost functions as a point of view shot visible only to him. The angle is clearly an allusion to the early footage of Tanja shot from Holt's perspective. The implications are clear: Engström is linked inextricably to Holt because they occupy the same position of a murderer. The scene epitomises the delicate unfolding of madness, carefully intertwined and in harmony with the visual fabric.

Film commentators have argued that visual style is the foundation upon which noir films built their legacy. The interplay between shadow and light – and those patterns that arise from lighting oppositions – creates the visual dynamic recognised as the quintessential 'look' of film noir (Schrader 55). *Insomnia* features whiteness as its most arresting stylistic feature. It operates symbolically as colour, as an abstract reflexive space, and also as an achromatic in the context of setting and in relation to light. As a result, the use of white in *Insomnia* assumes the properties associated with black in classic noir. Where Skarsgård's controlled and introverted acting style a fine line between sanity and madness, light acts as a transcendental, urgent force that points to his character's downfall. This interrelation between narrative, setting and style demands undivided attention from its audience. Skjoldbjærg's approach to location, character and space is to renew these factors for distinctly reflexive purposes in a symbolic fashion. While we might regard Engström as something of a "dark daemon" in the final scene, in fact, his ice blue eyes glow with "whiteness". Although Engström's responsibility for Vik's death becomes evident, his boss Hilde Hagen allows him to escape the confines of Tromsø. At this point it is no longer necessary for him to struggle with or even conceal his corrupt identity to those around him, his departure also means a complete metamorphosis into his white, evil self.

The Colours of *Jar City* (Kormákur 2006)

The film *Jar City* (Kormákur 2006) is based on Arnaldur Indriðason crime novel *Mýrin* [*Tainted Blood*]. The narrative deals with two parallel investigations that eventually converge. The first concerns the murder of a retired police officer, Holberg (Þorsteinn Gunnarsson). The second explores the continuing genetic research into Iceland's population. Örn (Atli Rafn Sigurðsson) tries to deal with the death of his three-year-old daughter Kola (Rafnhildur Rósa Atladóttir), who has just passed away from a brain tumour caused by a hereditary disease neurofibromatosis. Because Örn himself is an asymptomatic carrier of the disease, he wants to find whoever passed on the genetic fault to him and his daughter. He begins an unofficial search into his family tree by using the databases at his workplace “Íslensk erfðagreining”, or, as it is referred to in English, deCODE Genetics, Inc. – the biopharmaceutical company in Reykjavik. Eventually, his findings reveal that he had a half-sister, Aude, who died from neurofibromatosis before reaching the age of six in the 1970s. Meanwhile, police detective Erlandur (Ingvar Eggert Sigurðsson) and his team investigate the messy murder of Holberg. Erlandur also tries to mend his strained relationship with his drug-abusing teenage daughter Eva (Ágústa Eva Erlendsdóttir). The two investigations gradually reveal long-hidden secrets about wide-ranging corruption within the Icelandic police force stretching back to the early 1970s, which include rape, a mysterious disappearance, and murder.

Jar City employs a broader colour palette and uses contrasts in a more pronounced fashion than *Insomnia* does to create its narrative and thematic effects. In the next section of the discussion, I will explore the ways in which *Jar City* contrasts the bleak colours of Iceland's natural environment with the use of vivid colours such as green, blue and red. The particular combination of colour and light in this film enables the director to represent the hidden, deeply disturbing, dimensions of Icelandic society. Kormákur describes Iceland as ““a cell”” (Kormákur qtd. in Brooks). Despite this claustrophobic feel, he points out that nobody believed a thriller could be set in Iceland because serious crimes were unusual and seldom planned. ““If you had a murder it usually wasn't prepared and you couldn't make a whole thriller about it...because it was somebody who got drunk and killed their wife with a bottle...so the murders on Iceland are messy and when the cops get there, there is nothing to do””(Kormákur qtd. in Brooks). On the

surface, the murder is straightforward and easily solved but the film probes Icelandic self-contained culture (Brooks).

This Nordic noir explores the gruesome and malignant qualities of Iceland's population on several levels. A sense of foulness is evident in the story, characterisations and symbolism. The phrase "It stinks" is frequently repeated. The elderly mother of the police officer Gretar, who mysteriously disappeared several years earlier, recalls the inner clique of the police force of Reykjavik from the 1970s. She describes their corruption as a nauseating odour: "There was something rotten in the air...It stank. The whole business stank." This core of foulness is summarised by police chief Erlandur when he lies in the arms of his daughter Eva and tells her: "You think you can put on armour and defend yourself against it. That you can watch the filth around you from a distance like it is none of your business. But all this repulsion haunts you like an evil spirit." This corruption or malaise is a central feature of the narrative.

Kormákur depicts Reykjavik as having a small-town mentality where the abuse of power is common. Faithful to the dispiriting tone and mood of Nordic noir, *Jar City* uncompromisingly resists any glamorization of crime by virtue of its distinct and harsh cinematography. The film weaves together the gloom and oppressive sense of entrapment of Nordic noir with a sense of the grotesque, morbid, and repulsive. The result is a raw depiction of Iceland as a remote environment where serious problems stem from its limited population of just over 300,000 (Burke 323). Even though most characters silently hide behind closed doors, the film uses a range of stylistic techniques, such as colour filtering and varying qualities of light, to create a palpable impression that the country's genealogical secrets are seeping out of the Icelandic soil and from under the floorboards of Reykjavik.

The film also conveys a sense of incongruity between the Icelanders and their island, apparent in the conflicting images of the country that *Jar City* delivers. There are numerous aerial or wide-angle shots of the raw, Icelandic lava fields, stormy grey Atlantic Ocean, glaciers, and snow-covered plateaus. However, it also depicts anonymous and depressing apartment and office buildings. The built environment of the film is often consistent with the look of "old Soviet-era" cities and towns (Bell 2). Characters are framed walking through long, empty corridors, stuck inside police cars filled with cigarette smoke and alone in their offices, glaring out of the windows. Some sequences

contain shots in which the interiors of soulless office rooms in the foreground compete with the natural landscape elsewhere in the shot. Kormákur's juxtaposition of urban and natural settings creates the impression that the population seems detached from the soil and the land while simultaneously appearing trapped in it due to Iceland's remoteness. Thus, despite the rugged appeal of the Icelandic landscape (and strong impression of place), the characters seem uncomfortable with their surroundings. For example, in one sequence aerial shots of Reykjavík frame the city as surrounded by stunning snow-covered mountains. Reminding us of the representation of urban environments in *Bron/Broen*, the camera then cuts to a low-angle shot of one of the tall, uniform apartment buildings. In the next shot, a low, wide-angle shot reveals Erlendur standing alone on his balcony on the top floor of the building having a cigarette. Through editing, he is presented as a small, lone figure trapped in a characterless building, far from those mountains that represent the origin of the land that is Iceland.

Jar City makes substantial use of natural light. In this respect, Kormákur was influenced by the "similar stark, stencil-like feel" cinematography of the Russian war film *Come and See* (Klimov 1985) (Bell 2). He claims that the drab Iceland he presents is the one he grew up in, a place reminiscent of a Soviet-era Eastern European country (Bell 2). He also explains that *Jar City* is filmed in late autumn and the beginning of winter. He motivates this particular colour schema by stating that: "I tried to be very true to Icelandic colours as they are when we don't have tourists – in the late autumn and winter, when everything is monochromatic" (Bell 2). What Kormákur refers to as "monochromatic" in this context is black and white, such as black soil, grey rocks and white snow, but also a subtle range of subdued earth tones, which dominate the natural environments and office spaces alike, such as brown, grey, brown-yellow. This drab colour scheme develops a strong sense of place. It also provides a solemn backdrop to, and sharp contrast with, the more vivid and dynamic colour schemes associated with the act of dissecting bodies and the chemical preservation of organs and tissues at the deCODE lab. The monochromatic scheme often used in the exterior shots reinforces the impression that much of the Icelandic landscape is barren, rough or craggy. This approach also creates a cold, dreary feel to the shots of those urban spaces, where the wet snow, apartment buildings, streets and sky all reflect different shades of white, brown and grey – coincidentally the same colours as officer Erlendur's Faroese jumper. This washed out look contributes to the impression we get of Iceland reminiscent of a place from a 'Soviet-era'.

Jar City's cinematography takes advantage of the varying quality of natural light and changing weather conditions in Iceland to create different effects. As in other Nordic noir texts, the film develops a distinctive impression of the location in which it is shot. Most of the time the film uses diffused light that seems to be fighting to find its way through the fog, smudging the dreary colours of late Icelandic autumn. Yet there are times when the sunlight helps to create several moments of undeniable natural beauty. There are also subtle shifts in the quality of sunlight throughout the film that are captured in several aerial and establishing shots. In some scenes, the film uses a saturated, golden and warm light. In others, bright white rays breaking through clouds on an otherwise wet, grey day. At other times, sunlight is reflected in and shimmers on water surfaces. Capturing these changes in weather and sunlight becomes a way of hinting at the power of nature. The constant presence of the natural world provides a prominent and beautiful backdrop to the film's bizarre and freakish occurrences. As such, the rough-hewn beauty of the Icelandic natural environment only enhances the sense of rottenness and corruption that permeates the narrative.

The natural setting of the Icelandic landscapes and cityscapes creates a regional atmosphere to the film – the *pièce de résistance* of Nordic noir – as its constant presence envelops and immerses all of the film's significant characters. Kormákur based his vision on the thugs and crimes that he read about in the papers back in the 1970s and 80s: "I wanted it to be clear that these were crimes committed in broad daylight. Apart from a few scenes, the film takes place in daytime and I think that makes it creepier" (Kormákur qtd. in Bell 2). As a result, Iceland's natural light becomes the stage for the display of despicable acts carried out by various characters, and the 'make-up' that reveals every line on the tormented faces of its cast. This is evident in officer Sigurður Óli's (Björn Hlynur Haraldsson) daylight chase of thug Elliði (Theodór Júlíusson) across heath and mud. In a wide-angle shot, we see the overweight, brutish Elliði attempting to run across dry, white grass in a clumsy fashion. Sigurður twists his ankle when jumping a fence. Elliði falls into a pile of water and mud. Eventually, Elliði realises that he is physically stronger than Sigurður and for a short moment the chase is reversed until Sigurður receives backup from colleagues. Clearly, there is a comical slapstick element to this sequence. The daylight, and foggy weather conditions is reflective of the unglamorous and unspectacular representation of crime. The fog, mud and rough landscape provide a perfect stage for the Icelandic roughnecks. There is nothing mysterious, decorous or

intelligent about *Jar City*'s outlaws. Curiously, the sight of the old and unkempt sergeant *Rúnar* gobbling his dinner in his kitchen, surrounded by the bright, northern sunlight, sets a far more uncomfortable mood than any stranger lurking in the darkness ever could because these morally compromised people live in the open. They are hiding in the plain sight of day.

Iceland's wet, snow-covered environment, and its urban spaces are depicted in monochromatic or a desaturated manner. As a result, the use of a bold colour such as red, sparse as it might be, is quite noticeable. In a typical neo-noir application, red works as a contrast or offset colour within a large area of neutral colours such as traffic lights on a grey, gloomy day (Glitre 17). In *Jar City*, its chief association is with blood. The colour red functions to visually recapitulate the core issue of the plot: the tarnished bloodline passed down generations via the despicable character of Holberg. The framing of Örn's blood trace on a sharp piece of glass when he breaks into Holberg's house is the first manifestation of the invisible congenital link that connects the murderer with his victim on both a genetic (Holberg is Örn's father) and a social (Örn is Holberg's killer) level. By the time Holberg's body is discovered, the colour of blood in the crime scene has become a deep, saturated red due to an extended period of oxidation.

Blood in *Jar City* is a signifier of the way Holberg, Örn and Aude were all part of the same bloodline and carriers of the same disease. As such, the use of the colour red draws our attention to the "natural" (blood indicating family and a sense of the "organic") as well as the "unnatural" (children as a result of rape and the bloodline tarnished with a genetic disease). Firstly, the 'realism' associated with the change in the colour of the blood over time lends an organic feel to the fluid. However, Örn is forcibly linked to Holberg, the man who raped his mother and passed on the disease to him, his half-sister Aude, while Örn unknowingly passed it on to his daughter Kola. Örn cannot accept this aspect of his identity. In the pitch-dark night, Erlendur finds Örn on the tundra, standing in Aude's resurrected grave, ready to commit suicide with a shotgun. Erlendur hands over a jar containing Aude's brain. The gesture is symbolic. It is an attempt to make Örn reconcile with his shattered identity and to bury the past. Örn's inability to come to terms with this morbid self-image as a murderer and son of a rapist is summarised by his words "What are you if you are not yourself?" before he shoots himself in the chest. Blood sprays all over Erlendur's shocked face. It is as if Örn's unwanted heritage exudes from

his body. In *Jar City* red signifies the bloodline from which one cannot escape, as well as permanent connections between the Icelandic people. As Ambrose Hogan puts it, “DNA has the power to cut through all the lies, with a very scientific answer to that question, ‘who am I?’” (1).

Jar City’s clear achromatic and monochromatic visual strategies can be contrasted with the ways in which the film uses blue, green, and red for different purposes. As Katharina Glitre has identified, this is a frequent application of colour and light in neo-noir (17). Kormákur uses a blue monochrome colour scheme when conveying a cooler atmosphere. Neo-noir films such as *The Underneath* (Soderbergh 1995) have used green or blue monochrome filters for similar purposes. *Forbrydelsen* employs a blue-grey colour scheme to the same effect. James Naremore suggests that such monochromatic blue and green tints can evoke the monochromatic tradition of high contrast, black-and-white thrillers (193).

In *Jar City*, the blue filters are associated with emotional grievance or melancholy. For example, a deep blue-green filtering dominates the scenes involving Kola’s illness. Kola’s yellow pillowcase, printed with smiling and dancing clowns, and pink bedside lamps decorating her bedframe, are colours that punch through the muted filtering as cruel reminders of her inevitable death. The saturated blue immerses her parents in an atmosphere of complete despair after her passing. Kola is then prepared for her burial in white clothes, placed on white fabric, and in a white coffin as per Lutheran customs (Bleicher 187), yet the scene is filtered through a blue light. To the diegetic soundtrack of a male choir, blue surrounds Kola’s grief-stricken parents and reinforces their suffering as well as the sombre mood of the sequence. This blue-green tint from the scene of Kola’s death remains as a visual tone-setter, enhancing the sense of sadness and illness that permeates the narrative. This shade increases in saturation and intensity to indicate exceptional emotional difficulty. After Erlendur has encountered his daughter in the city centre, learning that she is homeless, pregnant and desperate for drugs, the blue-black tint successively increases in intensity. After Eva has gone off with an anonymous group of strange men, we see Erlendur driving away. Although we only spot his car in a line of other vehicles, his grief is reflected in the now completely blue-black palette, with only a snow-covered volcano in the horizon to mute the sad ambience.

Moreover, this particular blue filtering indicates the passing of time. Early in the film Erlendur finds Holberg's dead body lying on the living room floor, murdered with an ashtray. The scene of Holberg's murder is later played out through the distinct black-blue filter, indicating nighttime as well as a lapse in time. One of the most remarkable sequences in the whole film is of Erlendur eating the Icelandic delicacy sheep's head while reading a passage from the Bible aloud to Eva, who is recovering from substance abuse. While his apartment is predominantly in brown shades, the Reykjavik we see from his window is distinctly blue which slowly becomes deeper and darker as time passes. The camera cuts to a scene of Kola's mother twisting and turning in her bed to the soothing sound of Erlendur's voice-over. She is broken by grief and saturated in a blue light. It is as if Erlendur is reading to comfort all tormented characters of this enclosed, depressing, godforsaken island. The blue light appears to indicate a state of isolation, the way they are all cut off from the God that Erlendur is referring to, as well as from the rest of the world. Blue is engraved as a colour linked to emotion through a shot in the final scene. This time, as a sense of relief as the camera sweeps across the Icelandic coastline's deep blue water, and the clouds are reflected on the surface as a frame within a frame. Here nature and the colour blue merge into a peaceful whole, free from those disturbing elements that the characters brought with them. The camera then tilts downwards, taking us along into the black depths of the North Atlantic.

Another stylistic feature of *Jar City* is its affinity for distinctive greens. These shades of green are sometimes found in neo-noirs and tech noirs, and also within the science fiction and horror genres (Glitre 17). In films such as *Robocop* (Verhoeven 1987), *Superman* (Donner 1978), *12 Monkeys* (Gilliam 1995), *The Matrix* (Wachowski 1999), and *The Exorcist* (Friedkin 1973), green is a colour used to represent something with dangerous properties. It is associated with foreign, radioactive, and poisonous gases, liquids, space rocks, and other harmful substances. In *Jar City*, green is also mixed with yellow, mainly to indicate potent preservatives such as formaldehyde. These colours create a creepy ambience and evoke visceral olfactory responses.

The colour green is used in a perceptible manner in the film. These contribute to the macabre atmosphere of a narrative that is concerned with death, corruption, chemicals, human tissue, and genetic maladies. The first is in the morgue where Holberg's body is taken. His corpse is embedded in an environment that is dominated by

several shades of saturated greens on the walls, floor, protective clothing, and pathology instruments. This green filtering creates a hostile, sterile space evoking stark smells of death and chemicals. The second occurs in the deCODE laboratory. When Erlandur enters, he sees a dominant shade of green. The collection of brains, fetuses, sections of skulls, and similar objects in specimen jars are all filtered through this unnatural tint. All of the human tissue is viewed through a green-yellow light filter, possibly an indicator of Erlandur's visceral response. At first glance, the preserved organs in jars at the deCODE lab could easily be considered the most repulsive aspect of the whole film, but *Jar City* reflects disease through a prism where green is only one of its many shades. The hues of the organic material emit varying unnatural reflections of this light, ranging from desaturated brown, grey, orange and reds to a bright shade of teal in one instance. The spectrum of colours adds to the shock value of the scene and dramatises Erlandur's impression of the disembodied, dissected and preserved human tissue.

The film also uses the contrasts between the prominent and highly conscious use of colour (usually connected with death, decay, and mourning) and the drab, monochromatic look derived from location shooting to reinforce its thematic dimensions. About half way through the film there is a scene in which the police team Sigurður Óli and Elínborg search for a potential 1970s rape victim from a list of 166 women. The enquiry ends up being longer and more uncomfortable than they first had thought. The duo spends a whole day driving, going from door-to-door and asking the elderly women on the list whether they had been raped in the 1970s. Some women think they are on candid camera, while another lady mistakes them for salespeople and closes the door in their faces with an abrupt "no thank you".

Giving into the absurdity of the situation, Elínborg bursts into laughter. Her chuckling is accompanied by Handel's "The Arrival of Queen Sheba" as the camera cuts to a majestic, circulating aerial shot over Reykjavik and the Lutheran Hallgrímskirkja Church of Hallgrímur, the design of which is based on the basalt lava flows of the Icelandic landscape (Stubbs and Makaš 185). Until this point earthly browns, greys and achromatic whites have dominated the look of the film. The combination of the music and the high angle shot arguably places the audience in a God-like position as if we are watching the pettiness of human behaviour from a divine state. There is an abrupt cut to a deep focus, long shot of Erlendur walking down a narrow corridor. This shot is filtered

through an institutional green and further illuminated by white fluorescent light recalling the patches of snow and ice from the exterior shots. The contrast between the predominant grey and brown palette and this nauseating green is striking. This new scene's only link with the preceding one is Handel's music, which at first seems out of place at the sight of the hard working, ethical and stoic Icelandic character of Erlandur on his way to the morgue to inspect Holberg's body.

The music initially appears to be from a non-diegetic source but as Erlandur steps into the doorway of the morgue with his nose and mouth covered, the forensic pathologist turns down the track on his stereo. Along with Erlandur, we are brought back into the enclosed world of *Jar City/Jar City*. Once more we are confronted with the corporeal, morbid and sickly, from which we cannot escape. Once Erlandur enters the morgue, all other hues are filtered and overshadowed by this nauseating green, creating a far more saturated blend of hues than the previous scene, suggesting a cramped space as well as an imposing stink confirmed by the way Erlandur covers his nose and mouth. Despite the intense hues and tones of the morgue, Holberg's skin remains within a realistic spectrum of what Caucasian skin colour may look like a few days *post mortem*. The tonalities of his skin alter slightly depending on the lamp's movements towards or away from his body. When held up to the light, Holberg's heart has maintained its realistic brown-red hue, thus creating a complementary contrast between primaries that suggest colour filtering has been used to enhance a supposedly preexisting atmosphere, rather than altering reality (Bleicher 208). These shifts between realistic and unnatural tints indicate that, despite the use of distinctive colours in these sequences, the concept of morbidity is not bound up with one single hue in the film.

Bright hues are used to draw attention to the scientific aspects of narrative or lapses in time. Monochromatic tonalities emphasise the dreariness of the landscape, while the daylight exposes the widespread corruption, which can no longer hide in the past or the dark. Therefore, the purpose of using green is not to connote morbidity per se. If we take a wider approach, considering Kormákur's use of colour in combination with editing and soundtrack, he has communicated the notion of something divine observed from two completely separate perspectives; one disengaged through a God's eye, and the other in the midst of all the gore. The incongruity between these shots highlights Kormákur's ability to create an abrupt shift in atmosphere and mood. Through this cut he forms a

visual and thematic discord – an unorthodox play between the disconcerting and disturbing, and the pure and divine. This ironic play is further reinforced through the wordplay between Erlendur and the pathologist and their sarcastic discourse on heaven and hell, Holberg's constipated body, and the bizarre story about Einstein's brain, which was infamously kept in a jar on pathologist Thomas Harvey's mantelpiece.

The notion of miasma and morbidity runs through the whole narrative. One of the most macabre scenes features in broad daylight: police officer Erlendur and his team find the corpse of Gretar (the policeman who disappeared without a trace back in the 1970s) beneath Holberg's house. The rotten body is wrapped in a bin bag, floating in water and covered in rats along with photo negatives of one of Holberg's rape victims, Katrín (Kristbjörg Kjeld). In these pictures, she is naked and in the act with a lover she took while her husband was at sea. Holberg had used the photos for blackmailing her to keep silent about his rape of Katrín. Erlendur and his team are sick from the smell and can barely do their job. The unravelling of a corpse and its secrets along with the reek of rotten flesh symbolises the several layers to the crime story while also reinforcing the engraved associations between women, sex and death, a theme reproduced in both noir and neo-noir (Norðfjörð 46). Equally important, the scene points to the preservation and decomposition of organic tissue, and, by implication, the complex relation to the past in the film. The notion of rat-eaten flesh emitting a ghastly stench underscores the continuous hints that something is rotten in the state of Iceland. Björn Norðfjörð argues that the crimes in *Jar City* expose widespread and multifaceted abuse where women in particular are stigmatised through institutionalised power (46). In this regard the film has similarities to Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* trilogy.

Kormákur treats the Icelandic people interlinked as being part of one single body whose failing, amputated and dissected parts illustrate moral corruption, both in regards to Iceland's law enforcement as well as its Bioresearch culture. This symbolism is epitomised in the continuous desecrations of Aude's grave and her remains. This particular emphasis on crime and its victims buried underground is part of what Lucy Burke describes as an anti-heroic construction of Icelandic culture (195). One of these myths concerns the genetic purity of the Icelandic population. Iceland was supposedly uniquely homogenous, and Icelanders had a superior Nordic ancestry because of their ability to trace their lineages back to the original Viking and Irish settlers. This is

something heavily promoted by DeCode (Burke 195). However, the focus in the film on death, decay, and corruption indicates that the buried secrets of Icelandic institutions can no longer stay hidden. Arnaldur Indriðason's deconstruction of Iceland's cultural mythology and his stark criticism of the ethical agency of deCode is supported by the scientific discovery that Icelanders actually have the most genetic diversity of all Europeans (Burke 199).

Spicer argues that the noir world has no values or moral absolutes and is devoid of meaning except those that are self-created by the alienated and confused 'non-heroic hero', a reflection of social pessimism and angst (2). *Jar City* is not just a doomed universe – it profoundly mourns the loss of innocence by way of juxtaposing a morbid, inhospitable place with the death, or ill-treatment, of the naive and weak. *Jar City* portrays the grotesque and gruesome in an innovative fashion. Natural looking light and hues are found in some of the most uncomfortable scenes in this film. Conversely, institutional or nauseating green is partly used to point out the horror of innocent lives lost (images of Aude's skeleton enveloped in green light), and unethical scientific methods (the discovery that her brain was stolen). The use of colour is associated with emotional states of the characters, but emphasises deeper concerns about crime and corruption. *Jar City* takes a cross section of Icelandic people and magnifies their dark secrets through a stylised lens. The result is that Icelanders are represented as silent, sick, and deeply troubled and – perhaps more importantly – forcibly connected.

Colour and light are crucial stylistic components in *Insomnia* and *Jar City*. Both these Nordic noirs constitute the cornerstone of Swedish crime fiction – critiques of neo-liberalism and urban individualism. They apply colour as an aesthetic tool to enforce their thematic issues in both overt and subtle ways. Both films question the concept of a Nordic genetic ideal: *Jar City* by deconstructing the myths about scientific evidence to Iceland's homogenous population, *Insomnia* by subverting the meaning of "whiteness". The natural environments provide the most crucial source of light and colour palette to emphasise the unique locations and the interdependence between the Northern location and theme. Additional colour is then applied to enhance the atmospheric components further and to interweave past with present, thematic issues with visceral responses and to make us question our understanding of these films' respective essence and importance.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to investigate Nordic noir in regards to detectives and the representation of gender, to further explore the use of natural and urban environments in Nordic noir, and to analyse Nordic noir aesthetics. Chapman once made the verdict on neo-noir “the techniques used in noir are still available and used all the time – but the soul isn’t there” (qtd in Hirsch 1). However, this project has focused on social issues as well as the tone and mood of Nordic noir in order to bring attention to invigorating forms of Nordic contributions to the neo-noir genre. Nordic noir is fertile ground for scholarly work. Thus, this conclusion will briefly consider some of the implications of this project and possibilities for further research.

My analysis of Lund and Wallander indicates that Nordic noir reworks the relationship between gender and the role of the detective in interesting ways. Lund can be connected to the lineage of male figures within the noir and neo-noir traditions. She is as obsessive as her “rain-soaked [. . .] forefathers” (Roberts np). As we know, her devotion to her work and personal sense of justice affects her relationship with her son. Moreover, her professional behaviour has moral consequences. However, Lund’s character demonstrates that the noir protagonist’s continuing dilemma of transgressiveness and isolation now applies to female detectives, but without a clinical label, a history of sexual trauma, or a focus on social stigmata from failing her motherly duties. As such, Lund exemplifies Porforio’s claim that noir depicts “[woman’s] contingency in a world where there are no transcendental values or moral absolutes, a world devoid of any meaning but the one [woman] [her]self creates” (213).

Lund’s acts of violence point to another important issue in Nordic noir: the link between gender and violence. Forshaw’s observation that Nordic noir contains “role-reversal” regarding generic and gender expectations (65) can be further unpacked by comparing the transgressive qualities of Lund and Salander, which are partly connected to their use of violence. At the same time, some male detectives in Nordic noir are noticeably reluctant to embrace violence. Following Judith Butler, authors such as Lander, Ravn, and Jon assert that gender is a social construct. This enables them to question the notion that violence is necessarily masculine. Like Lander *et al.*, perhaps we should reflect in terms of the genre on “how violence – or other connotatively masculine

actions carried out by women – should be interpreted as doing masculinity or femininity or as undoing gender” (4). Such research might intersect with that of Hilary Neroni and Janice Loreck amongst others.

In a different way, the increasing frailty of Wallander traces a move away from conventional understandings of gender. In the last decade or so Scandinavian researchers, such as Michael Kimmel have shifted away from R.W. Connell’s well-known concept of hegemonic masculinity in favour of investigating the notion of ‘unmanliness’. They regard masculinity as continuing project. While it can be achieved, it can also be lost (Hearn *et al.* 37; Lander *et al.* 6). Wallander’s unmanliness is evident in his ageing body, slovenly behaviour, and melancholy disposition. Despite, or perhaps even because of, these characteristics, Wallander’s flawed masculinity makes him a sympathetic figure for the audience and his legacy carries on in younger male Nordic detectives. In terms of additional research, Martin Rhode and ‘The Truth Terrorist’ in *Bron/Broen* would make for an interesting case study on the links between masculinity, melodrama and domesticity.

Nordic noir has become known for the contrast between picturesque landscapes and urban and suburban locations where there are increasing levels of crime. Wallander’s Ystad and the surrounding flatlands of the southern province Skåne are prominent in critical discussions. Waade’s works such as “BBC’s Wallander: Sweden Seen Through British Eyes” and “Små steder - store forbrydelser. Stedspecifik realisme, provinsmiljø og rurale landskaber i skandinaviske krimiserier” are two essential texts on this topic. Chapter two demonstrated the importance of analysing the role of landscape in other Nordic noir texts. In Lefebvre’s terms, it functions as a character of its own. For example, while films such as *Millennium* trilogin [*The Millennium* trilogy] featured striking Scandinavian locations, *Forbrydelsen* employs the natural environment as more than an aesthetic backdrop. It shifts and alters in the viewer’s consciousness. The trees, the presence or absence of the sun, withering meadows and muddy soil demand attention from us. The nighttime forest chase of Nanna has formal significance, particularly when compared with, for example, the less memorable daytime chase of Michael Blomqvist through the forests surrounding the Vanger estate in *Män som Hatar Kvinnor* (Arden Oplev 2009) [*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*]. The chase sequence in *Forbrydelsen* borrows stylistic devices from noir to create a suspenseful and visually rich experience.

The investigation of landscapes in Nordic noir could examine three different issues. The first is the Gothic dimensions of natural landscapes. Forests often carry Gothic connotations in Scandinavian literature. Regarding the Gothic in Nordic noir, Grey has aptly pointed to the Gothic qualities of *Bron/Broen* (73). As a continuation of this discussion, *Forbrydelsen* would make an apt case study. This is perhaps most obvious in the way the first season moves towards its conclusion. As Bottling suggests the natural environment becomes a dark stage for “disturbances of sanity and security [including] displays of uncontrolled passion, violent emotion [and] portrayals of perversion and obsession” (qtd in Gray 76). More broadly, the Gothic qualities of the landscape can be discerned through the way the series uses frequent shots of moss and mud at ground level, creates visual contrasts between natural light and darkness in the frame, and employs panoramic views via crane shots. These strategies develop contrasts between the familiar and the unknown in the series that have a deeply unsettling effect on viewers.

Despite the prominence of the bridge in the series *Bron/Broen*, it does not function as a symbol of connection, commerce and transit. Instead, the visual representation of the bridge contributes to a sense of emptiness. Just as characters are portrayed as lonely and disconnected, both Sweden and Denmark are painted in the same, grey, uniform palette. Modernity and urban life appear so dim and murky that Malmö and Copenhagen appear to dissolve into anonymity; they become non-places. *Bron/Broen* illustrates a sense of cultural and spiritual void experienced in parts of Scandinavia. The analysis of urban environments in *Bron/Broen* could also be extended to other texts. The use of anonymous spaces could also be discussed in relation to thriller elements by way of the use of ports, docks and ships in the third season of *Forbrydelsen*. An additional case study could be to investigate the employment and representation of Saltholm Island in the third season of *Bron/Broen* and look at the way this area functions as a mirror image of the killer's psyche.

The study of landscape in Nordic noir could also further consider the role of islands, waterways, and peninsulas. Parts of the Øresund region, such as the Øresund strait, the Danish island Amager, and the Limhamn area in Malmö, feature in both *Forbrydelsen* and *Bron/Broen*. As Grey has pointed out, the liminal qualities of the Øresund region mirror the fluidity of the characters' identities (83). This geographical

area both connects Sweden and Denmark and also signifies the transnational nature of the productions. As such they point to thematic and stylistic tensions between the individual and the state, as well as between notions of the regional and the international. *Fortitude* (Sky Atlantic, Cineflix Rights 2015-2017), a transnational co-production between United Kingdom and Denmark, which set on an fictional Scandinavian island and includes characters from several nations, would be an interesting case study in this respect.

The visual style of Nordic noir alternates notionally between a representation of rural environments that borders on naturalism on the one hand, and a gritty social realism associated with urban spaces on the other. However, chapter three indicated that Nordic noir texts deploy visual style in more complicated and overtly formalist ways. Jensen and Waade argue that Nordic noir “highlights the way Danish producers employ colours in the blue and grey end of the spectrum” (“Challenging” 262). *Jar City* uses a range of blues, reds and greens to emphasise the problems caused by historical trauma and unethical biomedical research. At the same time, the film includes numerous shots of distinctive Icelandic locations, while also highlighting the drab qualities of the built environment. In this respect, *Jar City* has some affinities with Richard Allen’s assessment of Alfred Hitchcock’s colour designs. He concluded that “Hitchcock’s approach to color design is one that balances the expressive demands of color with the constraints of realism” (132).

Insomnia offers a different variation on the realist and naturalistic norms of Nordic noir through the manner in which it utilises the specific qualities of the midnight sun in its Northern location. The film uses light to point to the disturbed mental state of its protagonist. While this is consistent with the strategies of classic noir, *Insomnia* reimagines the use of light in noir cinematography. It challenges and even reverses the usual connotations of ‘black’ and ‘white’ as well as ‘light’ and ‘darkness’.

It can be seen that light and colour are used for different purposes in *Insomnia* and *Jar City*, as opposed to later productions such as *Forbrydelsen* and *Bron*. However, what these texts have in common is that they employ a range of expressive aesthetic devices to explore the specific themes of (Nordic) noir. While Scandinavian crime fiction and Nordic noir often deal with matters of social realism, Nordic noir also addresses established noir concepts, such as paranoia and existentialism. Nordic noir dwells on uncertainties: fear of our closest friend (*Forbrydelsen*), our neighbour or colleague

(*Bron/Broen*), and of our own selves (*Insomnia*). These fears are linked to particular Nordic locations and a tension between the present and nostalgia for a perfect past that has disappeared and perhaps never existed. And, as the populations of the Nordic nations diversify, the Scandinavian imaginary will continue to evolve, thereby providing further opportunities for scholarly research on the interconnected and overlapping relationships between detectives, location and style in Nordic noir cinema and television.

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