

NORDIC NOIR INNOVATIONS – “FOLLOW THE MONEY” AND “THIN ICE”

Professor emerita **Gunhild Agger**
Aalborg University, Denmark

Abstract

The phenomenon of Nordic noir involves a dual legacy – the tradition of social realism and the tradition of Gothic thrillers. The article focuses on the following question: How do these traditions support innovation in recent Nordic noir TV series? The answer implies an evaluation of the following issues: To which degree has it been possible to develop and sophisticate the trend of social realism? Which main functions does the Gothic tradition provide? How do the two traditions relate to production contexts? The analysis is based on two cases, the Danish public service TV drama “Follow the Money” and the Swedish “Thin Ice”, produced by Yellowbird.

Keywords: *Nordic noir, Follow the Money, Thin ice, social realism, gothic tradition.*

The dual legacy

The phenomenon of Nordic noir in visual fiction is characterized by a dual legacy, originating from two different spheres – the tradition of social realism and the tradition of Gothic thrillers, both rooted in modern Scandinavian crime novels. It is commonly acknowledged that the social realist tradition in visual fiction takes its point of departure first and foremost in Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö’s ten police procedurals *Roman om et brott* (“Story of a Crime”, 1965–1975) [Stougaard-Nielsen 2017, Agger 2010]. Their status as bestsellers *and* steady sellers paved the way for adaptations in cinema as well as TV, the latter in the series *Beck* (Filmlance International 1997–). They launched a strong critical tradition in Nordic crime fiction, often highlighted in Nordic as well as other international research.

This phenomenon has been labelled ‘crime fiction with a social conscience’ [Agger 2010: 19], and whether at home or abroad, it has exerted a huge impact on the understanding of the Nordic noir tradition. Typically, it focuses on abusive political

and social forces as the main reason of crimes, relating them to current affairs, be it trafficking, money laundering, racial abuse, gender inequality, terrorism or nepotism – all inextricably connected to the ways in which capitalist class society works. Its scenography is based on meticulous research. Its visual style relies on a variety of authentic spaces – from the skylines of Malmö or Copenhagen to the carefully styled homes of criminals and investigators [Garcia-Mainar 2020: 164].

Another defining aspect of social realism is the concept ‘local colour’, providing scenes of crime and other locations with the scent of authenticity. According to Hansen and Waade [2017], the use of ‘local colour’ strongly contributed to the appeal of Nordic noir. In Danish *Norskov* (TV 2 2015, 2017), the provincial town Frederikshavn serves as more than a decorative backdrop. The development of the harbour is part of the plot. Similarly, in Icelandic “Trapped” (RUV 2016, 2019), the location of Seyðisfjörður plays a prominent part as the place from which no one can escape. Besides, audience studies confirm that domestic as well as foreign audiences perceived the characters in series such as “The Killing” (DR 1 2007, 2009, 2012) and “The Bridge” (SVT, DR 2011–2018) as more realistic from the point of view of gender, than Hollywood characters that were labelled stereotypes [Hill 2018]. However, as pointed out by especially Yvonne Leffler [2013], Stougaard-Nielsen [2017] and Agger [2020], the tradition of social realism is far from standing alone in Nordic noir.

From the beginning, a Gothic tradition in crime fiction complemented the social realist tradition. Among the best examples are Kerstin Ekman’s *Händelser vid vatten* (“Blackwater”, 1993, under adaptation as a TV series by SVT 2021) and Peter Høeg’s *Froken Smillas fornemmelse for sne* (“Miss Smilla’s Sense of Snow”, 1992), followed by Bille August’s international film adaptation (1997). In their contribution to *Nordic Gothic* [2020], Yvonne Leffler and Johan Höglund highlight the Gothic element as a way of combining the ‘ancient’ or supernatural and the ‘modern’ or realistic romance. Where the tradition of social realism often has been considered the main trend in Scandinavian crime fiction, the Gothic element was not recognized as a movement of significance until the late 1980s [Leffler and Höglund 2020].

In spite of different perspectives and emphases, a *critical* attitude is commonly involved in both traditions, firstly opposing prevailing economic, social and political systems, secondly warning against ruthless exploitation of nature, focusing on sustainability and the Anthropocene in politics and culture [Waade 2020: 39]. During the last decade, in the area of TV series, these main tendencies have distinctly appeared in the development of Nordic noir, in the Nordic countries as well as in the Nordic noir-inspired universe elsewhere.

Three questions are pertinent considering current ramifications of the main trends negotiating continuity and innovation: 1) Acknowledging the dominant

position of the realistic trend, to which degree has it been possible to develop and sophisticate it? Which kinds of innovations can legitimize continued – imagined or real – leadership of this tradition, if any? 2) Given that supernatural or mythological dimensions form a constituent part of the Gothic tradition, which role do such dimensions play in modern fiction? Are they primarily meant to inflict an extra dimension of horror into the plot, or is their main function to interpret and emphasize the mood of characters and the role of location? 3) Is it possible to discern a pattern in the preferences of the production companies involved, privileging social realism and the Gothic respectively?

Analysing two representative cases, the Danish “Follow the Money” (DR 1 2016–2019) and the Swedish “Thin Ice” (C More, TV 2, Yellowbird in coproduction with Sagafilm 2020), I intend to provide some answers. Both series display a critical attitude to current society evils, and both excel in using the assets of the thriller. Where “Follow the Money” aims at developing new forms of social realism thematically and stylistically, “Thin Ice” includes features from the Gothic thriller tradition – avoiding supernatural traits. In “Follow the Money”, the fiction comments financial scandals from the last decade, tracing their paths through different layers of society, from the kiosk-owner to the bank clerk and their superiors. This path is visualized in details such as the different title sequences as well as in the diversity of setting and cast. Focusing on season III of “Follow the Money” (2019), my aim is to characterize the ways in which urban realism is developed and twisted in the plot. In many ways, the location and structure of the plot in “Thin Ice” reiterates Mary Shelley’s classic “Frankenstein” (1818), pointing to a main source of Gothic inspiration. Simultaneously, the Greenland location and the presence of modern Greenlanders play a significant role in highlighting alternatives in current Arctic geopolitics. In conclusion, my intention is to frame the wider implications of these developments of Nordic noir pointing to further examples, and in doing so assessing the influence of production contexts.

“Follow the Money” – traditional and new forms of realism

During all seasons of “Follow the Money” (DR 1 2016–2019), the fiction comments upon real financial scandals from the last decades, tracing their paths through different layers of society, setting up a parallel between the financial upper class and its willing helpers in the working class – and in organized criminal environments. DR launched the third season of “Follow the Money” in a way that distinctly pointed to its predecessors and their common main theme, economic crime, but also, as an innovation, stressed its connection with ordinary staff members of ordinary banks, the “seemingly respectable financial entrepreneurs” [Hansen 2018, my translation from Danish].

Seen from a superior perspective, “Follow the Money” represents a *continuation* of prevalent trends in the most illustrious Danish noir series – “The Killing” (DR 2007–2012). This goes for topicality as well as the Style noir. Just as episodes in “The Killing” seemed to comment on topical themes, for instance the war in Afghanistan, the development of the plot in “Follow the Money” seems to compete with current affairs in reality. Jeppe Gjervig Gram, the leading manuscript writer, noted this, commenting on the development of season III:

“It is as if we were writing in competition with reality in season three of “Follow the Money”. During the first two seasons, we hunted bandits in suits and business frauds in expensive CEO offices. However, there is another money circuit, I have dreamt of exploring since the first season – the money of organized crime. We had originally found inspiration for the season in a huge money laundering case against one of the world’s largest banks, which systematically laundered billions for drug cartels. And the deeper we dug into the Danish conditions, the more it dawned on us how highly topical our third season was” [Hansen 2018, my translation].

Just to mention a few striking examples of topicality, the case of *money laundering* in the Estonian division of *Danske Bank* began to appear publicly in 2017, and the embarrassing case accelerated during 2019, accompanied by spectacular firings of irresponsible leaders and charges against *Danske Bank*. The very focus of “Follow the Money” III are the circumstances under which money laundering takes place.

Another example concerns *leading criminals*. An illustrious case revolves around Nedim Yasar, who in “Follow the Money” plays the part of a gang leader. In real life, until 2013, Nedim Yasar lived as the leader of Los Guerrenos, an immigrant gang rooted in Western Copenhagen. Wishing to purvey an alternative to his son, Yasar decided to make use of the police’s exit programme. He rose to media darling commenting on gang crime – and was murdered in his car, returning from a press meeting about his book “Roots” (2018), telling his story. Similarly, Nicky (Esben Smed) in “Follow the Money” III, having wanted to make his exit from crime to make amends to his son, is killed in a car at the very end of the last episode. It is worth mentioning that this episode was shot before Nedim Yasar’s death.

Consequently, the *style* is imbued with darkness and shadows, following the tradition from “The Killing”. In the lives of police investigators and criminals alike, light has no place. The face of Alf Rybjerg (Thomas Hwan), the traumatized leading investigator, is marked by shadows even in plain daylight, just as the gang members are caught in darkness barely facing the light of day, even though they may long for it. Criminals and investigators are shot as mirrors of each other in their obsessive hunt

for money and justice, respectively. This is Style noir as we know it from the classical Nordic TV series.

What, then, is new? Inspired by Jacob Ludvigsen [2019], I would like to point out three features. Firstly, the *title sequences* are special. In season III, there is not just one common title sequence, epitomizing the whole series. The title sequences are markedly different, each pointing to the essence of the episode in question. Their function is to deliver a concentrated visual experience of the prevalent theme.



Figure 1. Screenshot from “Follow the Money” III, episode 1.
The title sequence illustrates the money circuit.

For instance, the first title sequence starts with an anonymous grey surface. We hear the sound of clicks. Gradually the camera reveals that the sounds stem from a cash dispenser, and we watch the withdrawal of 200 kr. The banknote is transferred from hand to hand, other notes are added, the lot is counted in a machine, and suddenly the sequence ends without further notice, having illustrated the story of money circuit in one minute. Similarly, the title sequence of episode 3 follows the transport of hashish – from a car to an apartment and then on to the customers in the streets – including a politician or a journalist seen in a glimpse smoking a joint in a gateway at Christiansborg, the Danish Parliament, then approaching the main entrance.

Secondly, the *character of the female bank accomplice*, Anna Berg Hansen (Maria Rich) represents an innovation. Untraditionally for a main character, she is not introduced until the second episode. The introduction to her appearance is also rather untraditional. The location is a bank, *Kredit Nord*, we learn from the signs.

For a couple of minutes, we only see her back, while she acts as an effective helper, first for a young couple buying their first house, then for a colleague, who is not quite familiar with the IT system. Obviously, she is kind and efficient, but nobody seems to pay attention to her qualities. What is at stake is demonstrated in the following situation, where the superior bank manager from the headquarters tells her that she has not been promoted to a position for which she is more than qualified: “We simply cannot do without you at the floor.” Slowly the camera revolves, shedding light on Anna’s face. It is a scoop how she keeps up her appearances for the next moment to subdue her sobs with paper towels at the ladies’ room. Starting as a self-effacing problem solver, Anna’s character develops into an ingenious money launderer, then to total collapse and in the end a new superior position. Anna, who had anticipated imprisonment and punishment, survives – in a new unit in the bank called ‘Compliance’ – a unit dedicated to money laundry within the frames of the law. Ironically, now her qualifications are appreciated.



Figure 2. Screenshot from “Follow the Money” III, final episode, showing Anna in her new role leading ‘Compliance’.

The third major innovation is connected to the ethnically mixed cast. Other ethnicities than Danish have often been represented in Danish TV drama, but usually with a twist involving ethnic issues. In “Follow the Money” III, different ethnicities are not an issue. There is an environment consisting of young immigrant gangs, but it is paralleled by an environment consisting of criminal ethnic Danes. Alf Rybjerg is of Korean origin, which does not appear as an issue in his otherwise deeply problematic relationship with Isa (Marie Askehave). Nicky is attracted to his fellow student at Copenhagen Business School, Sahar (Özlem Saglanmak) – without a comment on different ethnicities. The reality of a culturally and ethnically mixed Copenhagen is conveyed as a matter of fact.

In this way, “Follow the Money” especially in its third season represents a blend of tradition and innovation. In Denmark, the critical reception was favourable in all the leading newspapers and magazines, the ratings were satisfactory, and the series has sold well, among others to the Nordic countries, the UK, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Portugal and the USA [Dohrmann 2019a, 2019b].

“Thin Ice”: Geopolitical scrambling

Genrewise, “Thin Ice” is an eco-thriller or, as Sagafilm has it, an “Environmental Thriller”.¹ The political setting of “Thin Ice” is provided by the Arctic Council.² The isolated location of Tasiilaq on the eastern coast of Greenland plays a major role. In a greater perspective, the element of sustainability and the Anthropocene is closely connected to current issues of international geo-politics caused by documented climate changes in the Arctic region transforming it from a remote and inaccessible place to a possible future location for oil drilling, enterprise and trade [Mehtonen, and Savolainen 2013]. The new interest in the Arctic region was announced in 2007 when Russia spectacularly planted its flag at the bottom of the sea covering the North Pole to designate its claim of territories. This claim was met by the Ilulissat declaration 2008, signed by Russia, the USA, Canada, Norway and Denmark, an agreement to cooperate under international law in the region, re-confirmed in 2018. This, however, did not prevent the nations from divergent territorial claims during the following years. In 2019, a report from the Danish Institute for International Studies stated: “Both of the great Arctic powers, the US and Russia, and the self-proclaimed ‘near-Arctic’ great power, China, are assigning growing geostrategic and geo-economic importance to the region and are strengthening their presence” [Olesen and Sørensen 2019: 5]. In 2019, Donald Trump offered to buy Greenland from Denmark – a proposition dismissed by Mette Frederiksen, the Danish prime minister, as “absurd”. Ten years before, in 2009, the Greenlanders voted for extended home rule and gradual taking over areas administered by Denmark, the only exception being foreign policy. Search for oil in Greenland had been an issue since the 1970s [Grønlands Hjemmestyre 2008]. Due to lack of results, the international oil companies abandoned Greenland in 2014. However, as an initiative to bolster Greenland economy and obtain increasing independence from Danish block grants, the Home Rule government launched a new strategy in 2020 re-inviting international companies to find oil and gas on- and offshore in Greenland.

¹ <https://sagafilm.is/film/thin-ice/>

² The Arctic Council, established in 1996, consists of eight member nations – Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, the USA and Russia. Six permanent members represent the indigenous Arctic people. <https://arctic-council.org/en/about/>

Klaus Dodds and Mark Nuttall use the metaphor of ‘scrambling’ to designate the ongoing processes: “While there are plenty of actors eager to imagine the Arctic and Antarctic as ripe for further resource extraction and colonization, political appropriation and security, there are others warning about environmental scrambling” [Dodds and Nuttall 2016: 226]. An inevitable part of the scrambling is formed by ideas and imaginations. In a review of Dodds and Nuttall’s book, Aant Elzinga precisely points to “the symbolics – one might say – of positioning and posturing, opinion building and various actors’ mobilization of events of the past in their efforts to construct potentially alternative futures” [Elzinga 2016]. “Thin Ice” is an illustrative exhibition of this international positioning and posturing, opinion building and mobilization of previous events.



Figure 3. Screenshot from “Thin Ice”, episode 1. The conference venue in Tasiilaq displays the flags of the eight nations. The Greenland flag is missing.

Frankenstein, or the modern Prometheus

As pointed out by Leffler and Höglund [2020], since the Arctic region was introduced by Mary Shelley in “Frankenstein”, it has been at the centre of intense attention from Gothic writers and directors. Creation is the overall theme of “Frankenstein” – and the question constantly asked is where the limits go between natural and artificial creation, and ultimately, which kind of responsibility humans have for inventions against the laws of nature. The novel is composed as a system of matryoshka dolls where different voices are heard in letters and notebooks, among them the voice of Robert Walton, the fictive polar explorer. He sets out with a combined geographical and scientific purpose – to find the North Pole and a passage northeast of Siberia, and to investigate the mechanisms of magnetism, as explorers have done before and after, suffice it to mention Vitus Bering and

John Franklin.¹ Then follows the voice of Victor Frankenstein, the scientist whose ambition is to challenge the laws of physics and chemistry by creating another human being. At the centre is the voice of the nameless creature, created by Victor Frankenstein, telling about his process of formation, his reaching out to society, his disappointments and finally his revenge and remorse.

As a thriller, “Thin Ice” is composed in a similar way. The plot opens up one matryoshka doll after another. During the first episode, the staff at a research vessel is taken hostage. Nobody can imagine by whom or why. This happens just as the Arctic Council are assembled in Tasiilaq with the purpose of reaching an agreement to ban oil drilling in the Arctic. Sweden is in possession of intelligence information and moral resources, exemplified by Liv (Bianca Kronlöf), an agent of the Swedish Security Police, SÄPO, and Elsa Engström (Lena Endre), Sweden’s foreign minister. Though the latter is not impeccable, she fights for the environment – and her treaty. Even if this is the case, Sweden temporarily figures as a prime suspect for the hijacking, due to secret alliances with Russia. Contrarily to Sweden, Denmark is defined as a minor, more pragmatic doll. Martin Overgaard (Nicolas Bro), the foreign minister, as well as Katarina Iversen (Iben Dorner), the Danish superintendent, are ambiguous characters and unstable alliance partners. The Western and Nordic members of the Council are ready to blame the Russians. And the Russians naturally participate in the scrambling, playing their part as a doll.

In “Thin Ice”, Victor Frankenstein, the creative mind unable to stop, is represented by the Swedish company of Ville Berger (Reine Brynolfsson), who, just as Victor Frankenstein, eventually finds himself in a position he did not wish for and cannot control. Behind Ville Berger, more powerful forces are in action, and as revealed in the end, the US have the most massive interests and the least ethical means of pursuing them. Accordingly, Berger ends as a victim to his own creation, a complex of prevailing economic interests that are part of the monster and act like a monster, killing if necessary. However, this modern Prometheus is created by human greed rather than the relentless scientific curiosity and urge to break down borders that lead Victor Frankenstein’s ambitions. Ultimately, this new monster is controlled by Greenland’s (and Denmark’s) allies, the US government. The US is the next, but not the last doll.

Which role is attributed to the Greenlanders in this truly international scrambling of the Arctic region? To evaluate this, we must distinguish between the regional police force, represented by Enok Lyng (Angunnguaq Larsen) and his colleagues, the lost generations and the self-assured, modern politicians. Opposite the Danes, the Americans and most of the Swedes, Enok Lyng knows the country

¹ Vitus Bering (1681–1741) – Danish explorer in Russian service, leader of the two Kamchatka expeditions. Sir John Franklin (1786–1847) – naval officer and Arctic explorer. Both died on expeditions.

and its challenges. He knows how to cope with isolation, deprivation and disorientation. He is self-dependent and loyal to common human values that guide him through the moral and real wilderness without superfluous fuss. Ina Lynge (Nukâka Coster-Waldau), his wife, incarnates perhaps the darkest side of existence in Greenland. As an addict to alcohol, she cannot help neglecting her child and her own dignity. Pipaluk, the premier of Greenland home rule (Kimmernaq Kjeldsen) on the other hand, represents the self-confident openly critical voice, resenting Danish superiority in favour of a new, independent Greenland in charge of its foreign policy, even if it means giving in to US claims and interests. In their reflections on what constitutes Arctic cinemas, a guiding principle for Scott MacKenzie and Anna Westerståhl Stenport [2014] is whether Arctic scenery and culture is seen from the point of view of insiders or outsiders. In the case of “Thin Ice”, different voices are competing, following different perspectives, but the last of the dolls seems to belong to the voice of Greenland represented by Pipaluk.

Whether intentional or not, the composition of “Frankenstein” is mirrored by “Thin Ice”, linking the Gothic element to the thriller plot. Simultaneously, the mood of the characters largely depends on the isolated location and the atmosphere of Eastern Greenland. Arctic nature is exposed in a variety of scenes, embracing a tighter darkness than usually seen in Nordic noir. The wilderness is more extensive, ice and snow appear in spectacular forms and in a variety of connections with water and rocks. The in-between small houses and boats seem so tiny. In this way the tradition of rendering Arctic nature by means of the extraordinary and the sublime, pointed out by Anne Marit Waade [2020: 40] is continued. The irony in “Thin Ice” is that the leading politicians in the Arctic Council wish to make important decisions in their own interests, but with the exception of Elsa Engström, they can hardly wait to escape the awesome territory they aim to control.

Gunnar Iversen [2020: 56] has drawn attention to Nils Gaup, the Sámi director, as a person questioning traditional images of Sámi culture. In different ways, the characters of Lynge and Pipaluk may be interpreted as an attempt to update traditional images of Greenland culture. As shown by the example of Enok Lynge, interaction between man and Arctic nature depends on a deep practical knowledge. Experience may provide man with calmness and a chance of surviving, and – to a certain extent – mastering nature. As a talented political practitioner, Pipaluk takes advantage of the intrigues between her political partners and adversaries, finally taking control of the territory. However, the updating of independent Greenland identity has its limits. The two strong Swedish women figure as the recurrent main characters in the preceding conflicts, not Lynge or Pipaluk. The Swedish point of view is highlighted in the poster of the production.



Figure 4. The poster of “Thin Ice”.

The two women at the top of the poster belong to different generations. The young dark-haired one with her brown eyes (Liv) is opposed to the older, grey-haired, more experienced woman with blue eyes (Elsa Engström). Their parallel positions, however, indicate that similarity outmanoeuvres difference in the balance of the two characters. Via their posture, the two women mirror each other, seriously looking at the spectator. Both are strong Swedish women, inclined to impose their will on the Greenlanders – in the interest of humanity *and* Sweden. Behind them, we see the Greenland ice sheet. In the centre, an instrument with numbers, letters and abbreviations forms a circle of modernity, in which a traditionally dressed Greenland sealer is observed from the back, confronting a polar bear. Both are placed in an unstable situation on ice floes. A ship with a derrick and a helicopter loom in the

background. The precarious situation is expressed by the dark blue drops of water that form the lower edge of the poster, indicating the melting ice as a major threat. In the vein of Gothic horror movies, the black drops are reminiscent of blood as well as oil. This poster does not support any modernization of Greenland identity, but rather confirms the traditional version.

Context and conclusion

“Follow the Money” is exclusively produced by DR, the primary Danish public service company. It is – as has become the rule – financed by classical cooperation with the Nordic public service broadcasters NRK, SVT, RÚV and YLE. Nordic Film and TV Fund and Nordvision Fund have supported the production. The conceptual director is Per Fly, known from his film trilogy “The Bench” (2000), “Inheritance” (2003) and “Manslaughter” (2005), depicting the lower, middle and upper classes in Denmark. Per Fly’s engagement of characterizing social classes in his realism may have had impact on the innovations in “Follow the Money”.

“Thin Ice” is a Swedish coproduction with European affiliations and a distinct Nordic profile. It is produced by Yellow Bird for C More/TV4 – in coproduction with Iceland’s Sagafilm, and in association with France TV, DR, NRK, YLE, RÚV, Lumiere Group in the Benelux. Nordisk Film & TV Fond has supported the production. The conceptual director is Norwegian Cecilie Mosli and the producer Danish Søren Stærmosé.

Returning to my initial three questions, I shall conclude that the trend of social realism is still going strong, following recurrent themes of topicality and darkness, but also experimenting with innovations in style, new forms of character development and a new reality in terms of mixed ethnicities, primarily in Copenhagen. The money circuit is visualized in details demonstrated by the different title sequences as well as the diversity of the cast. In “Follow the Money”, the fiction comments financial scandals from the last decades, tracing their paths through different layers of society, from the kiosk-owner to the bank clerk and their superiors. Location and ‘local colour’ are important ingredients in the style. It is not surprising that the public service company DR has been the primary production company to maintain the stout tradition of social realism. However, also TV 2, the Danish commercial public service company, has produced new TV series along this line, among others “Warrior” (TV 2 2018) thematising criminal gangs, and “The Investigation” (TV 2 2020), focusing on the investigative process in 2017 of the murder of the Swedish journalist Kim Wall in a submarine. The Norwegian series *Wisting* (Cinenord and Good Company Films for Viaplay 2019) provides another example of renewing social realism. In this case, by confronting it with an American mass murderer and American ways of investigation – in an icy Norwegian setting.

Where “Follow the Money” aims at developing new forms of social realism thematically and stylistically, “Thin Ice” combines real dilemmas from the Arctic region with features from the Gothic thriller tradition. Avoiding supernatural traits, the Gothic element inspired by Mary Shelley’s “Frankenstein” forms a sounding board of ethical and Anthropocene reflections, permeating the structure of the plot and accentuating the arctic scrambling, constantly supported by images of the icy waste land. Simultaneously, the presence of modern Greenlanders plays a significant role in highlighting dilemmas in current Arctic geopolitics, be it with a tone of Swedish superiority.

As a coproduction, “Thin Ice” has been screened in the participating nations – and in Greenland. In interviews, the Greenlandic actors have positively foregrounded the revelation of prejudices in the series [Steenholdt 2019]. There has been no unanimous critical reception in Sweden and Denmark. Critics have pointed out the role of the Arctic from political and ecological points of view, but the images and the structure inspired by the Gothic dimension have been largely neglected. In other recent examples, however, the Gothic tradition is less discreetly administered.

The Gothic trend was heavily launched by the British “Fortitude” (Sky Atlantic 2015–2018) and followed up by for example French-Swedish “Midnight Sun” (SVT, Canal+ 2016) and Finnish-German “Arctic Circle” (Yellow Film and TV, Bavaria Fiction 2018–). Where “Thin Ice” uses the Gothic as an extra layer supporting the plot via the matryoshka structure, and as an extra dimension specifying the location, these examples, primarily connected to a commercial production context, provide evidence of more banal uses of the Gothic dimension.

Sources

- Agger, G. (2020). Realistic and Mythological Appropriations of Nordic Noir: The Cases of Shetland and Ø. In: Linda Badley, Andrew Nestingen, Jaakko Seppälä (eds.). *Nordic Noir, Adaptation, Appropriation*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Agger, G. (2010). Krimi med social samvittighed. In: Gunhild Agger & Anne Marit Waade (ed.). *Den skandinaviske krimi*. Göteborg: Nordicom, pp. 19–34.
- Dodds, K., and Nuttall, M. (2016). *The Scramble for the Poles: Geopolitics of the Antarctic and Arctic*. Polity Press: Cambridge.
- Dohrmann, J. (2019a). “Ugens TV top 10”. March 4, <https://www.dr.dk/om-dr/nyheder/ugens-tv-top-10-769000-saa-nicky-have-politiet-i-haelene-i-bedrag>
- Dohrmann, J. (2019b). “Stor udenlandsk interesse for ’Bedrag’ og Coster-Waldaus Grønlandsserie”. November 19, <https://www.dr.dk/om-dr/nyheder/stor-udenlandsk-interesse-bedrag-og-coster-waldaus-groenlands-serie>

- Elzinga, A. (2016). Book review of K. Dodds & M. Nuttall: *The Scramble for the Poles: Geopolitics of the Antarctic and Arctic*. Polity Press: Cambridge. *Antarctic Science* 28(3), 233–238.
- Garcia-Mainar, L. M. (2020). Nordic Noir: The Broad Picture. In: Linda Badley, Andrew Nestingen, Jaakko Seppälä (eds.). *Nordic Noir, Adaptation, Appropriation*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Grønlands Hjemmestyre (2008). *Olieeftersforskning i Grønland 2008*. Nuuk: Grønlands Hjemmestyre Råstofdirektoratet.
- Hansen, K., & Waade, A. M. (2017). *Locating Nordic Noir*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hansen, S. C. S. (2018). “Bedrag’ vender tilbage med et brag”. DR Presse d. 12.12.2018. <https://www.dr.dk/presse/bedrag-vender-tilbage-med-et-brag>
- Hill, A. (2018). *Media Experiences: Engaging with Drama and Reality Television*. London: Routledge.
- Ilulissat Declaration (2008). <https://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/2008-Ilulissat-Declaration.pdf>
- Iversen, G. (2020). Revitalizing Sámi Culture Through Film Noir. In: Linda Badley, Andrew Nestingen, Jaakko Seppälä (eds.). *Nordic Noir, Adaptation, Appropriation*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Leffler, Y. (2013). The Devious Landscape in Scandinavian Horror. In: Matti Savolainen and P. M. Mehtonen (eds.). *Gothic Topographies: Language, Nation Building and ‘Race’*. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 141–152.
- Leffler, Y., & Höglund, J. (2020). The past that haunts the present: the rise of Nordic Gothic. In: Maria Holmgren Troy, Johan Höglund, Yvonne Leffler and Sofia Wijkmark (eds.). *Nordic Gothic*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Ludvigsen, J. (2019). Det nye take på ‘Bedrag’ viser vejen frem for DR’s nødstedte dramaserier. *Soundvenue*, January 1 2019. <https://soundvenue.com/film/2019/01/det-nye-take-paa-bedrag-viser-vejen-frem-for-drs-noedstedte-dramaserier-343626>
- MacKenzie, S., and Stenport, A. W. (2014). Introduction: What are Arctic Cinemas? In: Scott MacKenzie and Anna Westerståhl Stenport (eds.). *Films on Ice. Cinemas of the Arctic*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Mehtonen, P. M., and Savolainen, M. (2013). Introduction. In: Matti Savolainen and P. M. Mehtonen (eds.). *Gothic Topographies: Language, Nation Building and ‘Race’*. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Olesen, M. R., and Sørensen, C. T. N. (2019). *Intensifying Great Power Politics in the Arctic – Points of Consideration for the Kingdom of Denmark*. Copenhagen: DIIS.

- Steenholdt, P. (2019). Angunnguaq Larsen: Stor oplevelse af spille med i ny nordisk serie. *KNR* October 13, 2019.
- Stougaard-Nielsen, J. (2017). *Scandinavian Crime Fiction*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Waade, A. M. (2020). Arctic Noir on Screen: *Midnight Sun* (2016–) as Mix of Geopolitical Criticism and Spectacular, Mythical Landscapes. In: Linda Badley, Andrew Nestingen, Jaakko Seppälä (eds.). *Nordic Noir, Adaptation, Appropriation*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.