

# European Television Crime Drama and Beyond

Editors: **Toft Hansen**, Kim, **Peacock**, Steven, **Turnbull**, Sue (Eds.) © 2018

## Down these European mean streets

### Contemporary issues in European television crime drama

Kim Toft Hansen, Steven Peacock and Sue Turnbull

The TV crime drama is one of the most popular genres for European audiences and arguably also the most culturally sensitive and nuanced. No doubt, this is an effect of the ways in which the genre feeds on social problems and cultural change. The crime drama series is therefore like the proverbial ‘canary down the mine’ when it comes to detecting significant social issues and concerns. It routinely serves as a prism from which to observe the local, national and even transnational issues that are prevalent in a society at any one time (Nickerson 1997, Brodén 2011, Bondebjerg et.al 2017). Indeed, the vitality of the genre depends on the fact that it simultaneously points to local narratives of moral and legal problems that are not only cross-cultural but also universal. And it is a recognition the universality of the local that has underpinned the increasingly prevalent transnational exchange of televisual cultural products. As the essays in this volume reveal, the television crime drama series also engages deeply in questions about localities, regionality, Europeanness and the business of cross-cultural exchange.

This book is the first to focus on the role of European television crime drama on the international market. As a genre, the television crime drama in all its diversity has enjoyed a long and successful career. While long-running British shows such as *Midsomer Murders* (1996-) continue to attract a loyal global audience, crime dramas produced for the American cable networks and new streaming services such as *The Wire* (2002-08) and *True Detective* (2014-) attract critical acclaim for their perceived innovation. While all of these shows have achieved global recognition, there are also examples of crime drama series produced primarily within specific national contexts, such as the long-running German series *Tatort* (1970-) and *Der Alte* (1976-) which while hugely popular in their country of origin, fail to attract global attention. Nevertheless, in all of these cases crime would appear to pay. To complicate this relationship between the national and the transnational, there has been the emergence of the Scandinavian brand of Nordic Noir with series such as *The Killing* (2007-12) and *The Bridge* (2011-18) that have had a considerable influence on a number of subsequent drama series produced elsewhere. For example, *Broadchurch* (2013-), *Hinterland* (2013-) and *Shetland* (2013) in the UK have all been identified as borrowing some of the characteristics of Nordic Noir in compelling ways.

While the movement from countries of origin into a transnationalized TV market may be significant, the TV crime drama is always important for its local audiences. For example, *The Bridge* is a local drama in its visual portrayal of Copenhagen and Malmö, and the first season of *True Detective* is a distinctly Louisiana-based crime drama. Meanwhile, the three British dramas mentioned above all acknowledge the specificity of their location in their titles. Increasingly, it would appear, the local can achieve global recognition. In general, we see very similar processes in normally very different regions: while the local is attracting more

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and more attention, more and more dramas from around the world are attracting transnational attention. This is partly an effect of new distribution and audience practices, but it may also be a qualitative indication of what has been called *television's third golden age*. Besides the US, this volume shows comparable developments in countries such as Spain, Italy, the Scandinavian countries, Flanders, Germany, Turkey, Australia, England and Wales. In other words, a new transnational production culture appears to be affecting the production, distribution and reception of series, and here the crime drama seems to be a powerful, cross-cultural phenomenon with the noteworthy possibility of travelling internationally. This volume considers the European nature of television crime dramas in a number of ways. First, it looks at European texts in terms of local, national and international reach. Then, it also explores the European-ness of a number of international dramas.

The first section on *noir aesthetics* explore questions of aesthetics and style from the perspective of mostly Nordic, British and American television drama indicating a deep relationship between such interlinked traditions. The section considers concepts such as Nordic Noir, bright noir, the aural soundscape of crime drama, melancholia and the relationship between spectacular and 'ordinary' crimes. The second section on *regionalism and transnationalism* deals with the specific contemporary trends that link the regional with the transnational, and it does so with an orientation towards Welsh, Spanish, Italian, German and Turkish television crime drama. The framing of these drama traditions includes considerations of both production, audiences and local/national institutional systems. The third and final section on *noir market value* section frames Danish, Flemish, Swedish and Australian television drama by questioning the genre's various local and global market value by continuing the interest in local, international and transnational television exchange in relation to questions of sustainability, spatial branding value, production and reception as well as the emergence of niche micromarkets. In general, the volume covers a wide range of countries and regions from Europe and the US in order to reveal the very currencies that are at work in the global production and circulation of the TV crime drama. In cases where the primary material is non-European the chapters include special attention towards how, for instance, North American drama also has a European influence. This, of course, is not a new story as Elke Weissmann (2012) has demonstrated in her research on the early and on-going transnational trade in TV drama between the UK and the US. Contrary to a popular misconception, Weissmann demonstrates that British television has played a significant role in the American imaginary (Weissmann 2012, 3). As is evident in the American appropriation of Nordic Noir, US TV has always been open to the possibility of other storytelling traditions in terms of both style and content, even if this involves a remake as in the case of the American versions of *The Killing* (2011-14) and *The Bridge* (2013-14). The chapters in this volume clearly identify the continual influence and power of British television drama in Europe and American television drama on both British and continental drama production.

## **Transnational cop stories**

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At a time of great cultural upheaval in Europe, just before the fall of the Berlin wall, the transnational television drama *Eurocops* (1988-93) premiered on several European national screens. This drama was a creative and financial co-production between production companies and broadcasters in seven countries around Europe (West Germany, later Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, France, Spain and the United Kingdom). The series' title in itself indicates a clear interest in establishing a European sensibility in the drama. The production model had great similarities with the above mentioned series *Tatort* that, still today, produces single episodes in specific regions around Germany. For *Eurocops*, the result was instead "local, national versions of the overall concept and storyline" (Bondebjerg 2016: 5). This stands in some contrast to the trans-European locative title sequence of the drama. Here, alongside presentations of the local detectives in the series, we "fly" across an animated map of Europe and the different countries participating in the narrative as well as in the production, ending in the national setting of the specific episode. The Swiss sixth episode "Justice pour Elise" (1990) in season three is representative of this method of establishing the local setting. After the title sequence, we cut to a panoramic helicopter shot of the city Basel, from there to a closer bird's eye view of the river Rhine running through Basel, then to a bridge crossing the Rhine where we pick up and zoom in on a specific orange car crossing the bridge in full speed. From here, we cut in to an image of the Gate of Spalen, the historic city gate of Basel, in front of which we see the orange car pull up in street view, ready for the narrative to commence. We see two suspicious looking men step out of the car and silently break into a building. Clearly, they are bad company. In other words, *Eurocops* quickly establishes a common European context around the series, a specific and highly recognizable setting for the episode and, lastly, a clear indication of genre. A comparative example of this strategy, though poorly received by both critics and audience, is the Spanish-Italian-French co-production *Pepe Carvalho* (1999) that tells the story about a Barcelona detective investigating criminal activity in the co-producing countries (Palacio & Cascajosa 2012).

For Bondebjerg, however, *Eurocops* only points towards what he refers to as *natural transnational cop stories*: "Here transnational crime stories deal with an actual, transnational reality, because police work is often done across national borders. This makes it more obvious to work with a transnational creative team and with actors from different countries in one, coherent storyline, with characters reappearing in all episodes and with a common style and editing" (Bondebjerg 2016: 5). One main example of such *natural* transnationalism is the series *Crossing Lines* (2013-), a German-Italian-French-American co-production in which an explicitly transborder investigative team is set up, much in the same way as it is in the Swedish crime author Arne Dahl's literary quadrilogy about the so-called OpCop-group (2011-14) in which an investigative unit is established within the framework of Europol, the EU law enforcement cooperation. Another striking example of *natural* transnational cop stories is *The Team* (2015-), a Danish-German-Swiss-Austrian-Belgian co-production in which the complex international case is solved in a transnational environment with three main detectives from different European countries. In addition to these series, the recent Danish-German-Swedish series *Greyzone* (2018-) also establishes a very similar transnational investigative milieu revolving around international terror and sociopolitical tension.

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Such explicitly transnational television productions are becoming more and more common in contemporary European television drama, establishing both a transborder production ecology as well as increasingly international crime narratives. To a greater extent, such *Euronoir* stories institute a sense of Europe that moves further and further away from former ideas of the television drama produced for a national broadcasting environment. However, such productions are not without problematic issues, and many of such series, not only crime stories, have been critically evaluated as *europudding*.

## **Euronoir and Europudding**

As a concept, Euronoir needs qualification. Especially in the wake of the proliferation of the phrase Nordic Noir, specific *noirs* have become popular references to local (Tasmanian Noir, Berlin Noir or LA Noir), national (Tartan Noir, Belgian Noir or Brit Noir) and regional (Euronoir, Southern Noir or Asian Noir) crime fiction traditions. This is not only due to the popularity of Nordic Noir, but after *The Killing* (2007-12) there has been a plethora of different framings of certain geographically specific or general types of noir. The idea of Euronoir has now become – just like Nordic Noir – a critical concept that for the most part refers to crime fiction that comes from a European country. Barry Forshaw's 'pocket essential' *Euro Noir* (2014) is a case in point. Here, he introduces the reader to select examples from 14 different European countries, but does not nominate definite traits from the novels and series that would qualify them as essentially *euro noir*. As a result, *Brit Noir* (2016) – another book by Forshaw – is as much about Euronoir as his book *Nordic Noir* (2013). In that sense, Euronoir refers to crime fiction with a mere geographical specificity (whatever Europe then actually means). If the stories, however, clearly cross borders in the narratives, and if the films or television series also appear multilingual and international in their financial and creative collaboration, then Euronoir may indeed be a way of articulating transborder identities and investigative collaboration. Euronoir is, then, more than just crime fiction from a European place; Euronoir may rather comprise narratives that identify, negotiate, criticize, establish or even destabilize cross-continental realities, translocal signifiers or transnational geopolitics.

Nevertheless, a notion of Euronoir as transnational co-productions, narratives and, as a result, even reception, is not without difficulties. The embedded transnationality of such a framing of crime fiction may suffer similar drawbacks as the “negatively branded ‘Euro-puddings’” (Liz 2015, 73). The notion of Europudding made its way into film and television criticism during the 1990s, a decade that spawned a wide range of new funding opportunities both locally, nationally and regionally (Hansen and Waade 2017, 145). According to Liz, “the word Euro-pudding does not critique the need to attract funding from different sources (such as television channels) and nations *per se*; rather, the target of its disapproval is the artistic implications of such processes” (Liz 2015, 74). At a present time when television drama costs have greatly increased, seeking transnational co-funding and, perhaps, a consequential larger audience may appear to be a tempting solution, even though too many cooks may spoil the broth: “In opposition to those co-productions necessary to sustain the European film

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industry,” writes Liz, “the Euro-pudding becomes a perversion of the system, forcing filmmakers to alter their projects” (Liz 2015, 74). Contrary to the ideal intentions, Euro-puddings may, as noted by Barbara Selznick, even “limit a programme’s distribution potentiality”, due to its blandness and poor reputation (Selznick 2008, 24). Bondebjerg suggests that the concept has been descriptively used in the reception of the above mentioned television drama *The Team*. However, contrary to the idea of a perverted system he also indicates that the concept may be shifting towards a new meaning: in the Danish press *The Team* was referenced as “a successful Euro-pudding” (Bondebjerg 2016, 5).

The concept of the Euro-pudding is, however, not exclusive to the crime drama but it is a broad term that suggests a narrative which takes place in several European countries that involves funding from, and creative collaboration with, a range of different European creative industries and funding bodies. While the notion fits well with *The Team*, *Eurocops*, *Pepe Carvalho*, *Greyzone* and *Crossing Lines*, it also highlights the basic frameworks of television dramas such as the French-German-Czech-Italian series *Borgia* (2011-14) and the Italian-British-French series *Medici: Masters of Florence* (2016-). For Liz (2008 & 2016), historical narratives in particular appear appealing and appropriate for co-production. According to Carole Baraton, co-producer of *Medici*, European producers have now “learned the pitfalls of ‘Euro-pudding’.” She mentions Nordic and Dutch producers who have been successful in this venture and foresees that “we’ll see more and more international co-productions” (cited in Keslassy 2016). As co-production increasingly becomes the *raison d’être* of television drama production, co-financed and co-produced Euronoir may have started to move away from the intrinsic pejorative connotations of Euro-pudding and towards a more positive notion involving transborder cultural representations. The internationally and transnationally co-produced crime drama has become so common that it may now be the most widespread genre in European co-productions.

## **Transnationalism in financing and production**

A review of the economic underpinning of almost any new European television series will demonstrate that the financing of television has become at once both local and international. Motivated by new funding practices, in the space of two to three decades, TV series have become a financially *glocal* phenomenon marked by local, national, regional and transnational players. The most recent decade (2008-2018) has also seen the introduction of new global streaming services into this mix. In the 1990s, Roland Robertson introduced the idea of *glocalisation* as a counter-conception of globalisation as “a process which overrides locality”:

what is called local is in large degree constructed on a global, or least a pan- or super-local, basis. In other words, much of the promotion of locality is in fact done ‘from above.’ Much of what appears at first experience to be local is the local expressed in terms of a generalised recipe of locality. Even in cases where there is no concrete recipe as in the case of some forms of contemporary

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nationalism there is still, or so I would claim, a translocal factor at work.  
(Robertson 2012, 192)

Rather than an explanation of recent structures in media industries, for Robertson, the theory of glocalisation is a sociological model of identity and business concepts, a structure that may well be illustrated by the way that the family restaurant concept of McDonald's both disperses a global production concept and a sensibility towards local tastes and interests (e.g. the German McNürnburger with sausages, or the vegetarian Indian McPaneer Royale). For contemporary television production, the idea of the glocal is related as much to the financial dimensions of the production as it is to what we see on the screen.

The recent fourth and closing season of *The Bridge* is a telling example of today's glocal funding and narrative perspective. Obviously, all seasons of the series revolve in different ways around criminal cases that necessitate a two-nation investigative perspective, which repeatedly mock Danish and Swedish legislation, identity and prejudice (Hochscherf and Philipsen 2017, 121). In some ways, *The Bridge* appears to be highly local in the way that the series plays with less than internationally recognizable identity and language issues across Sweden and Denmark. However, the international trade in the format of the series and the distribution of the original drama suggests that the narrative of the series is more universal than particular. In this sense, *The Bridge* is simultaneously both local and global. Considering the financial collaboration involved in the fourth season in particular, *The Bridge* provides a very concrete, illustration of the glocal economic processes operational in transnational television funding (see figure 1): The production companies Filmlance and Nimbus Film represent the producing parties in a co-production made for the Swedish and Danish public service institutions SVT and DR. However, the drama was also co-produced by two other public service broadcasters: ZDF (Germany) and NRK (Norway). Furthermore, ZDF's distribution branch, ZDF Enterprises, and the Belgian Lumière Publishing hold the international distribution rights for the series in different territories. Alongside such different interests, *The Bridge III* was also co-financed by three local film and television funds: the two Swedish Film i Skåne and Ystad-Österlen Filmfond and the Copenhagen Film Fund. These encompass the so-called Greater Copenhagen area that also includes Southern Sweden. The last funding party is Nordvision, an institutional collaboration between 'traditional' public service broadcasters (i.e. non-commercial) in the Nordic region. Established in 1959, the Nordvision Fund has more recently endeavoured to establish a closer collaboration between the Nordic broadcasters and the fostering of cultural intra-regional exchange.

Although *The Bridge III* is a much-awaited international production, such diverse financial underpinnings is not unusual in Nordic television drama production. The development of this combination of local, national, regional and transnational funding bodies dates back to production and funding changes around 1990 (Hansen and Waade 2017, 156). In the Nordic region, financial collaboration such as this is standard for both crime series and non-crime series, as in the case of the Danish crime drama *The Killing*, the Norwegian political drama *Nobel* (2016-), the Swedish historical drama *Vår tid är nu / Our time is now* (2017-) and the

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Danish crime drama *Norskov* (2015-). Indeed, the creative collaboration of the Euronoirs discussed above may be even closer. Historically, such moves have been developing in the Nordic region and in other European areas since the early 1990s, motivated by the pressure of international competition, new European media policies and the political dream of what Collins refers to as the “creation of the putatively indispensable bonds of collective European sentiment” (Collins 2014, 176). Like the trans-Nordic distribution and reception of television series, the embedded vision of new European policies has been to create the classic public service remit of social unity on a continental level, however criticized and debated this notion has been (Pauwels 2014).

As discussed by Weissmann in this volume, transnationalism has become an academic buzzword and, as a result, it has become increasingly difficult to define precisely. For her, it suggests a discomfort with the notion of globalisation, but the lack of precision and specificity in the all-inclusive term ‘globalisation’ may also result in an academic reluctance to define cultural processes as global. Transnationalism may rather propose a somewhat narrower position that regards a ‘transnational’ phenomenon as an issue involving two or more countries and *not* a global, worldwide view. This does not mean that transnationalism becomes less complex, but it introduces transnational co-production, narratives and audiences as a parameter that can be more or less transnational – and the examples mentioned above illustrate this perfectly with the production of *The Team* as a more transnational production than *Greyzone*. The complex implications of transnationalism is meticulously showcased in Rawle’s analyses of transnational cinema (2018). As opposed to globalisation, the idea of the transnational does indeed transcend the national. However, as Rawle (2018, 2-3) warns: “transnational cinema does not replace thinking about national cinemas, but supplements it. National cinema remains an important and relevant emphasis in film cultures [...], but the ‘trans-’ prefix denotes thinking about how cinema crosses and transcends national boundaries.” As suggested by Weissmann as well as Bondebjerg et.al. (2017), such a cautious perspective on transnationalism includes television culture too, a culture that in different ways sustains a national television production and reception ecology while connected ever more deeply with transnational processes. On all three basic communicative levels, i.e. production, narrative and reception, a television series may be more or less transnational: the production may involve co-producing partners from different countries, the narrative may deal with issues that naturally (or unnaturally) cross borders, and the audiences may be increasingly transborder recipients of content. All communicative instances may be (and are today) deeply influenced by new VOD viewing and distribution practices, something that is either regarded as a new opportunity or as a threat to national cohesion.

## **The influence of Nordic Noir**

One interesting prism through which to view the recent developments in European television crime drama is Nordic Noir. Originally referred to as either Scandinavian crime fiction or Scandi-crime, specific television series marked a turn towards an aesthetically dark version of crime fiction in the Nordic region. As noted by Hansen and Waade (2017), a number of core texts work for critics and distributors as quintessentially Nordic Noir TV series. For instance,

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the British distributor Arrow Films has, since they started selling DVD box sets under the brand name *Nordic Noir and Beyond*, referred to *The Killing*, *The Bridge*, *Wallander* and *Borgen* (2010-13) as the ‘prototypes’ of Nordic Noir. Of course, one could argue that the embedded reference to crime fiction in ‘noir’ seems to miss the fact that *Borgen* deals with political issues rather than criminal concerns. However, *Borgen* shares an engagement in political debate with *The Killing* and does, in some form, also involve the darker, autumnal aesthetics of other crime dramas. However, after the critical and distributional proliferation of the concept, Nordic Noir has become an all-encompassing reference to crime film, television crime drama and crime literature. As indicated by Arrow Films’ label *Nordic Noir and Beyond*, the concept of Nordic Noir extended beyond both the original geographical reference and the generic allusion towards crime fiction. Indeed, the development of the concept demonstrates a transnational exchange of both critical and business ideas. Initially instigated as a critical concept in the British press, Nordic noir has emerged as a significant game-changer in the contemporary television drama. After the Nordic Noir phenomenon other normally minor players in the European television industry (e.g. Spain, Belgium, Wales, or Italy) have realized that there is a global potential in producing drama from small nations, especially crime drama. As present, television crime drama appears to be a powerful force of attraction for smaller or minor European nations on the international market.

In style and narration, the influence of Nordic Noir is noticeable, and it comes as no surprise that many of the chapters on different national crime traditions in this volume include references to the influence of Nordic Noir. Recent European dramas such as the Czech HBO Europe drama *Pustina / Wasteland* (2016), the German Netflix-series *Dark* (2017-), British series such as *The Missing* (2014-) and *Broadchurch* and the French *Disparue* (2015) all involve the disappearance and/or death of a young child or a youth, and all appear decidedly influenced by the serial structure and style of especially *The Killing*. This suggests that the locative implications in *Nordic Noir* has turned into a set of identifiable stylistic and narrative tropes that, as a result, extends beyond the Nordic region to the specific places used in the mentioned dramas. In a few dramas such as the French *Ø* (2016), the mostly German production *Der Kommissar und das Meer / The Inspector and the Sea* (2007-) or the British production *Fortitude* (2015-), the settings and landscapes are Nordic, respectively Danish, Swedish and Norwegian/Icelandic. In most cases, however, it is not the locations and landscapes that are Nordic so much as it is the stylistic and discursive way that the settings and landscapes are used in the *mise en scène* that share a great number of similarities with Nordic television crime dramas.

In addition to the transnational interest in style and narrative, the influence of Nordic Noir also includes new ways of producing and receiving television crime drama. At first, the development of new production methods in Denmark, at the public service broadcaster DR, was directly influenced by the American showrunner model. This resulted from a visit by the DR producers to the set of *NYPD Blue* (1993-2005) in the 1990s, which emerged as the 15 DR dogmas for producing television drama (Redvall 2013, Nielsen 2016). Thereafter, the DR model was in itself exportable as seen by changes in the Norwegian public service



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broadcaster NRK (Lavik 2015), and the ways in which the DR dogmas have been commonly referenced as the Danish model (Hansen and Waade 2017); even Australian producers visited Nordic sites of production before embarking on *The Kettering Incident* (2016-), yet another non-Nordic drama clearly influenced by Nordic Noir. While Nordic production models were having an impact on different European and non-European production traditions, series like *The Killing* and other Nordic Noir dramas may also have motivated specialized viewerships to confront drama from smaller non-English speaking nations normally not broadcast on television outside of the national or regional arena (e.g. Nordic or Mediterranean) (Jensen and Waade 2013). In this way, since the early 1990s Nordic television dramas are increasingly co-productions between different national broadcasters and production companies, more often co-financed by pre-buy agreements with other broadcasters, creative and not just financial co-production agreements and directly exported television series. In other words, from the perspectives of production, style/narrative and reception, Nordic Noir is not only a prism through which we can view contemporary trends in European television drama in general; Nordic Noir has at the same time followed the trends and developments influenced the very same structures of production and reception.

## Gender and genre

What is up next for European crime drama in a #MeToo, #TimesUp, post-Weinstein-scandal world, and in the wake of being woke? A survey of mainstream British critical commentary at the time of writing may prove instructive in this regard. According to Wise in *The Guardian*, pop culture has had a ‘re-awakening,’ in which social conscience is at the heart of contemporary creativity:

The term, once linked to the struggle of black people in the United States – to “stay woke”, or awake, to injustices committed daily – has now come to mean the awareness of ills done against oppressed groups, and often the willingness to do something about it. It has circled around mainstream parlance for at least 50 years, but in the past tweet-heavy decade, in which identity politics has gained dominance and extra currency – and, in some cases, a greater capacity for dilution – it has become ubiquitous.

In early 2018, we are arguably at peak woke. A year into Trump’s presidency, he has become the nightmare for most minorities that he first suggested he might – and, as a result, culture has responded. From TV dramas such as *The Handmaid’s Tale* to the film *Mudbound*, Kendrick Lamar’s *Damn* (and even, to some extent, this year’s UK *Celebrity Big Brother*), rare is the art form that doesn’t now engage with a struggle. (Wise 2018)

After the socio-political debacle of 2017’s #OscarsSoWhite response to a widely perceived paucity of diversity and equality at the annual awards ceremony, The Oscars in 2018 have been pronounced by many as the most socially conscious and boundary pushing in history. Even the high cultural realm of opera is in significant transition, with headlines such as “Divas find a new voice – and more roles – as opera relaxes gender divide in casting” (Thorpe 2018). And yet, according to others, intrinsic and intrinsically gendered problems remain. The British television celebrity Holly Willoughby (as cited in Eva Wiseman’s

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column in *The Observer*) encapsulates the tension in a couple of Instagram posts about her attendance at the 2018 Brit Awards: “At the beginning of the night we held white roses and walked down a red carpet full of the hope and pride that comes with the #timesup campaign” and “At the end of the night, cameras were held low to get a photo up our skirts...time’s apparently up on #timesup.” In the same column, Wiseman also offers a useful summary of our contemporary cultural see-saw, suggesting that “We are in a kind of feminist limbo, a place of change, where women striding forward are routinely tripped up by those for whom the Time’s Up or Me Too movements, at best, are just another ding on their phone” (Wiseman 2018).

It is too early to judge whether these gender-led social shifts mark a fundamental restructuring to the face of Hollywood and beyond, and not mere lip-service to the unmasking of ugly truths. Come what may, crime fiction’s involvement in kindred issues appears remarkably prescient. In the written form, two award-winning works from 2017 are noteworthy in this respect. The Costa Novel of the Year *Reservoir 13* (2017) by John McGregor sensitively reshapes the landscape of the ‘missing girl’ crime drama, centring on the villagers’ fractured everydayness rather than on the case itself. In this way, the novel provides a startling corrective to the tired and sometimes grubby emphasis on the killing of a woman in so many police fictions. The 2017 Baileys Award for Fiction was given to Naomi Alderman’s *The Power* (2017), a high-concept sci-fi/thriller which imagines a world controlled by women’s ability to wield electrical pulses from their bodies at will:

There are men trying to drag their women from the glass. And there are women shrugging off their hands. Not bothering to say a word. Watching and watching. Palms pressed against the glass. He knows then that this thing is going to take the world and everything will be different and he is so glad he shouts for joy, whooping with the others among the flames (Alderman 2017, 59).

One of UK’s most acclaimed playwrights David Hare returned to small-screen crime drama in 2018, with the BBC’s *Collateral* (2018): a police procedural about under-the-radar workers in modern Britain. Its release came with an at-first alarming-sounding pronouncement from its writer. In *The Times*, Hare announced that he was “sick to death of hearing about the need for strong women as protagonists.” However, the declaration quickly keys into the zeitgeist, as Hare continues:

What’s a much more important cause is to show women doing jobs equally, as the normality of the thing. Throughout the cast list ... It’s very limiting to say you only want to see strong women. I have claimed, because I have written so many women, that I have the right to represent all kinds of women. If I want to represent a murderess, I want that right. Without being called misogynistic. Similarly I want to be free to portray silly women and weak women and clever women; I want to be able to portray all women. When we can portray all women equally, that will be equality. Having just women who storm through the film or play being rude to everyone, and that’s called ‘strong women’,

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that's not my idea of equality. Women should not be presented as the moral conscience of men's actions either. I hope I have 100 per cent avoided portraying girlfriends saying to men, 'Are you sure you're doing the right thing, darling?' (Hare in Maxwell 2018).

One way in which certain examples of contemporary European crime drama avoid the pitfalls of either lingering on lustily despatched girls in a bloody fashion, or self-consciously foregrounding 'strong women' is through generic hybridity.

## **Hybridity, crime and the supernatural**

At present, European crime dramas are increasingly exploring what happens when the genre's established tropes are spliced with those from horror and the supernatural. Leading the way (again), is the Nordic output. As Barry Forshaw suggests in his book *Death in a Cold Climate*, "Scandinavian crime fiction is more prepared to toy with notions of improvisation and destabilisation of the generic form, producing writing which may sketch in the rough parameters of the crime novel but also attempts to expand the possibilities of the medium – those possibilities which so often remain unexplored" (Forshaw 2012, 3). This is certainly the case in recent times on the small screen as well as the page, especially in the shape of Norwegian TV dramas such as the 'end-of-the world' chop-shop crime thriller *Valkyrien* (2017), Noir-Western *Norskov*, and gay teen-melodrama-whodunnit *Oyevitne / Eyewitness* (2014), with a US remake released in 2016, and a French version *Les innocents* (2018). Yet in Nordic crime fiction, there has historically been extensive hesitance towards narratives about spiritual and supernatural phenomena. One possible reason for this is the predominance of Nordic genre developments with strong ties to a realist welfare modernity. Since the turn of the millennium we have, however, seen a definite increase in attention towards such phenomena in written crime fiction (Hansen 2012, 2014), but in Nordic television crime series the interest in the supernatural has only recently found its way to the screen.

The Swedish series *Jordskott* (2015-) marks a departure from mysterious 'man-made' acts of crime, venturing into a growing sense of a supernatural basis underneath the familiar trope of the disappearance of a little girl. The series also differs from the common coastal settings of much Nordic crime drama by employing the well-known mythical trope of the forest. Such a crime series opens up the generic vocabulary of television crime drama by involving an elaborate relationship between supernatural horror tropes and an ecocritical response to man's intervention of nature. As explored by Turnbull and McCutcheon (2018), the Australian series *The Kettering Incident* is also worth mentioning here as it deals with exactly the same themes and motifs: the disappearance of a little girl made complex by supernatural themes, in an enchanted forest. Visually there are a great number of similarities between *Jordskott* and *The Kettering Incident*. In this relationship and these examples, the original *Twin Peaks* series (1990-91) and its important attention towards spiritual nature and the enchanted forest cannot be underestimated.

Beyond Scandinavia, linking tales of crime with the supernatural is not at all without historical precursors. The strong separation of tales of ratiocination and supernatural tales of

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fear is predominantly a product of modernity's focus on philosophical realism, and in this process, a number of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories hold a liminal position. In contemporary popular written crime fiction, Stephen King has played a decisive role in establishing links between investigative police plots and supernatural sensibilities, and his uses of locations, especially the forest, has also been linked to subjects of ecocriticism (Sears 2011). Nevertheless, in a presently oversaturated market, it seems very reasonable that developers of crime fiction seek out innovative ways of advancing the generic content, and glancing back to the genre's complex roots in gothic and supernatural sensationalism appears to be one contemporary tactic to expand the potentials of the genre. The Danish series *Rejseholdet / Unit One* (2000-4) was probably the earliest Nordic crime series to seek out this relationship between investigation and the paranormal by involving the character La Cour, a crime scene investigator with special abilities. Later, the series *Hamarinn / The Cliff* (2009) not only marks a qualitative turn in Icelandic television drama production, it also revolves around a special relationship between crime investigation and elven mythology. Recently and with great topographic similarity to *Jordskott*, the Swedish drama *Ängelby* (2015) also establishes an investigative plot around mysterious, supernatural incidents in a small, rural town and its surrounding forest – once again not without glancing towards *Twin Peaks*.

Moreover, this expansion of the television crime genre's topicality with supernatural/horror elements seems to be a contemporary international trend, seen in the Nordic examples as well as the UK (or Nordo-pudding?) *Fortitude*, Germany's creepy time-travelling *Dark*, Australia's *Glitch* (2015) and *The Kettering Incident*, the Belgian noir *Hotel Beau Séjour* (2017) and the US shocker *The Sinner* (2017). French drama *Le passager / The Passenger* (2014) synthesizes many aspects of this trend, and emphasizes an ongoing aesthetic discourse between European and US crime texts. As previously noted, *Twin Peaks* remains a keystone work, and to that, in the case of *Le passager*, we can add *Hannibal* (2013-2015) and *True Detective*. For the first few episodes, and with a focus on grotesque crimes emulating classic (classical) Greek mythology (a bull's head sewn to a corpse, for example), the series' *mise-en-scene* recalls the gory tableaux of *True Detective*, and the modus operandi chimes with that of John Doe in *Se7en* (1995). Yet quickly its concerns turn to time, and to the layering of identity in a manner more reminiscent of the Jason Bourne cycle of movies (2002-).

## **...and the time has come**

And it is here that we want to draw these introductory remarks to a close, on the subject of time. While generic hybridity and a dose of the gothic in particular may inject European crime drama with a renewed vigour, a sub-genre also emerges, refreshingly free of many 'missing girl' tropes, with an alternative fascination for aspects of temporality. In the UK, *Reellik* (2017) moves its narrative ever backwards, à la Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000), to reveal the motives of a serial killer. *Dark* flits between decades and drops its protagonists across time to tell a moving tale of displacement. *Le passager* combines elements of personal history with identity politics, keying into many modern neuroses about technology and intimacy as its protagonist traces back his previous personalities. It may seem a stretch to connect this current compulsion to explore elements of time with European (and indeed

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global) politics. However, for example, the UK press has delighted (with dread or desire) in emphasizing the ‘ticking-clock’ countdown to Brexit. With its ability to address socio-historical matters within its generic mould, most often without appearing ‘preachy’ or polemically unwieldy, crime drama may once again prove especially instructive in the future of Europe and the UK. There is, of course, an underlying irony in the fact that Brexit is being enacted at the precise moment in which television production is becoming increasingly Europeanised. As Bondebjerg et al observe, “It is possible that Brexit—the UK leaving EU—is a sign of a broader decline in European cooperation and integration. If so, this could have serious consequences for the new cultural dynamic and the transnational trends [...]. Even though the trend towards stronger cultural integration, towards increased European co-production and transnational distribution has clearly developed since 2000, European TV culture is still very fragmented and fragile as a transnational enterprise.” As the authors inform, “things have started moving in that direction, and for TV drama there are now much more convincing transnational possibilities. We are watching products from more European countries than ever before, and this [...] has created new forms of mediated cultural encounters” (Bondebjerg et.al. 2017, 20).

This collection is intended to continue and develop this project, celebrating a transnational exchange of TV crime drama across Europe, and beyond.

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