

## NORDIC NOIR ON TELEVISION: *THE KILLING I-III*

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### *Abstract*

The Nordic Noir has been applied by many countries as a slightly distorting mirror of tendencies in their own societies. On the background of its international appeal, the article analyses the prevalent genre of *The Killing* – the thriller – and relates it to the genres of crime fiction, political drama and melodrama. The elements of the noir design in the introductory sequences – their common traits and the differences that match prevalent plots in each season – are highlighted. The developments taking place in the dominant points of view are traced, from the combination between the local politics and the domestic levels in the first season of the series, to the focus on foreign politics with domestic dimensions in the second season, and the reversion to domestic politics, this time combined to a global dimension, in the last season. Similarities and differences in the plots, and their relationship to (and interpretation of) events and phenomena in the modern Danish welfare state and in the Western sphere, are also investigated.

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### Introduction

Danish *The Killing I-III* (*Forbrydelsen*, 2007-2012) is interesting in an international context. The first two seasons have been screened not only in the Scandinavian countries, but also in Germany (ZDF, 2008; ARTE, 2010), Austria (ORF, 2009), Australia (SBS 1, 2010), Belgium and France (ARTE, 2010) and the UK (BBC 4, 2011). Moreover, *The Killing* was remade in the USA by Fox for the cable network AMC in 2010 and screened in 2011. The third season was screened in Denmark during the autumn 2012 and hit screens in other countries later. Especially in Britain, a public debate accompanied the screening of *The Killing*, investigating the reasons for the appeal of “Nordic Noir” to a British audience, enhancing the production model and the production values. Later in 2012, this was followed by a similar debate around the political drama serial *Borgen* (2010-), which has also been widely exported.

Thus, in 2011 and 2012 Danish TV drama has been the object of an international reception of broad dimensions; however, the recognition, in the shape of international TV festival awards, started earlier. In 2002 *Unit One* (*Rejseholdet*, 2000-2004) received an Emmy in the category of Best International Drama Series. The dramedy *Nikolaj and Julie* (*Nikolaj og Julie*, 2002-2003)

GUNHILD AGGER

continued the streak in 2003, while the crime series *The Eagle* (*Ørnen*, 2004-06) received an Emmy in 2005 and *The Protectors* (*Livvagterne*, 2009-2010) in 2009. *The Killing* received the British BAFTA award in 2012. All these TV series were produced by Radio Denmark (DR), the leading public service broadcaster in Denmark.

In connection with the international breakthrough of *The Killing*, interest has been focused on the Danish production model and the phenomenon that has been dubbed “Nordic Noir.” In this article, I will review some of the questions to which this international reception gives rise. I will focus on *The Killing* and include all three seasons (1-20, 2007; 1-10, 2009; and 1-10, 2012) highlighting the production model and its overall purpose, the genres and style of the series.

Three of the concepts from DR Drama’s strategy “Dogmer for DR-fiktion” (Dogmas for DR Drama’s productions)<sup>1</sup> deserve emphasising. Firstly, through the concept “one vision,” DR Drama focuses on original productions rather than adaptations; this concept gives the scriptwriter and producer an artistic license which allows their particular line with its distinctive features to shine through. Secondly, DR Drama’s strategy includes the concept that any drama must contain a double story comprising 1) “the good story” and 2) “an overall plot with ethical/social connotations.”<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, DR Drama encourages crossover between their production staff and those from the film industry, which has a great impact on the production design and quality of DR Drama series. These efforts are evident in *The Killing*, as I will illustrate in this article.

The art of genre mixing within the noir style is something that all seasons of *The Killing* have mastered. The question is: which genres have been mixed, in which proportion and with which perspective? I will make a characterisation of the basic genre, the thriller, and the other genres in the mixing (police procedural, political drama, melodrama) and discuss how the introductory sequences play up to the concept of the thriller. After this, I will illustrate the development in the way the genre is handled from the first to the last series – in harmony with the dramaturgy – and how genre mixing, dramaturgy and style are connected to DR’s overall strategy.

In the analysis, I will draw on some of the insights that I presented in shorter forms in three reviews published on a Danish website<sup>3</sup> and in my article “Emotion, Gender and Genre: Investigating *The Killing*.”<sup>4</sup>

## Nordic Noir

The attention from the media started in Great Britain during the winter and spring of 2011-2012, *The Killing I* and *II* received extensive media coverage considering the fact that it was just a subtitled foreign crime fiction series. This fact made the headlines in its own right, as it is illustrated in the Internet version of *The Guardian*.<sup>5</sup> The attention spread to the US, where *The Killing* was remade in an American version. In both countries, the political drama series *Borgen* received predominantly positive media coverage.

Several British and American journalists visited Copenhagen to discover the “recipe” behind the international success of Danish television drama. Maggie Brown from *The Guardian* flatteringly described DR Drama as “the classiest, most efficient drama factory in world television.”<sup>6</sup> She emphasised the key concept: “original drama dealing with issues in contemporary society: no remakes, no adaptations.”<sup>7</sup> *The Guardian* covered Danish television drama intensively, but other

newspapers and magazines followed their lead, for example the *Financial Times* and *Newsweek*.<sup>8</sup> To briefly sum up, the subtitled version of *The Killing* brought into focus the relation between original language and subtitling versus dubbing, the value of remakes, which are popular in the US, and the impact of the Danish public service concept compared to a commercial system.

On a more general level, Barry Forshaw accentuates the connection to the socially created reality as one of the main attractions in his guide to Scandinavian crime fiction. In its current form, the genre contains socio-political insights including “the cracks that have appeared in the social democratic ideal.”<sup>9</sup> Those cracks and crevices illustrate that the harmony and the ideals which formerly characterised the Nordic image are dismantling.

Forshaw’s main argument is that in this way, the Scandinavian welfare states can serve as foil for the UK today through a mix of recognition and distortion: “But the appeal remains the same: we are shown a country which is different from Britain – but not too different. The lure of the (slightly) exotic, plus a vague sense of *schadenfreude* that the wheels are coming off the utopian welfare-state bus.”<sup>10</sup> This interpretation is repeated in several other characterisations, also in Lloyd’s: “Certainly we can read the darkness, violence and anarchy that erupt in these crime novels as forming part of the subsoil of life in Scandinavian countries.”<sup>11</sup> On a more well-researched level, this convergence of the social and the criminal aspects is also at the basis of Andrew Nestingen’s interest in Scandinavian crime fiction. Nestingen suggests that the trends of popular culture are a barometer for the state of society: “If we want to understand contemporary Scandinavia and its struggles over transformation, we need to study and discuss popular fictions.”<sup>12</sup>

Besides pointing out the strong societal connection, two other features are predominant in the international critics’ reception of *The Killing*; firstly, the focus on the combination of genre and style that the Brits and Americans have branded “Nordic Noir;” secondly, the intensive preoccupation with Sarah Lund as the main character and pivotal point of the investigation.

## The thriller genre

The same genre description was given of all three seasons of *The Killing* in the release and in the introductory credits: “A thriller by Søren Sveistrup.” A thriller can basically be defined as a loosely constituted genre which aims at causing a thrill in the audience, an exhilarated thrill. Lars Ole Sauerberg points out that the concept “thriller” is used differently in British English and American English. In British English the concept is used in a more restrictive manner than in American English, where it is a broad concept for stories charged with suspense within detective, spy, mystery and other types of fiction. It is this broad American understanding of the genre that is predominant in Denmark. To add to the confusion, “thriller” is sometimes translated to Danish with the term “gyser” which actually is closer to the horror genre.

A horror film moves within the realms of terror – a thriller does not. A horror film does not need to be driven by suspense. However, one of the most important plot devices of a thriller is suspense.

*Suspend means to hang up or to put out of action for a while, and this is the way suspense works in narrative fiction. [...] the principle of suspense may be defined as the prevention of immediate satisfaction of curiosity about plot issues through structural obstruction of the logic of temporal progression.*<sup>13</sup>

Suspense is central to the manner in which the plot in a thriller can twist and turn in ways that surprise the audience causing an exhilarated thrill. Other plot devices of the thriller includes the cliff-hanger ending, the protagonist's recurrent pursuit of an escaping or hidden antagonist, their dialectical relationship and the contrast between the calm and collected exterior and the underlying abyss of calculation and instinct. All these elements can be applied in the confrontation between the different sets of moral values that is at the core of the thriller.

Because the thriller is so loosely defined, it is ideal as an element in the mixing of genres. The thriller is commonly used in alliance with the crime genre (be it police procedurals or detective fiction), spy fiction and other action genres. Not least in the alliance with political drama, a number of subgenres have crystallised in Great Britain and in the US. Examples of this tendency are the psychological thriller, the Secret Service thriller or the legal or military thriller that questions the power apparatus and the execution of power, and, in the last resort, the state of contemporary society and the sense of justice and jurisdiction. The filmic examples are legion.<sup>14</sup> The use of the thriller as main genre might have been a contributing factor for *The Killing's* breakthrough in an international context. The series draws on a well-established genre while simultaneously unfolding the genre in a new geographical and social context.

## Introductory and signature sequences

In all three seasons of *The Killing*, the combination between thriller, crime fiction and political drama is the pivotal element, which is expressed from the very beginning in a noir design underlined by introductory and signature sequences, release material and the official website. All of the series take place in November, and this month provides the necessary rain, mud and bleak atmosphere. The daylight is fading, which perfectly suits the demands of the noir style. The introductory and signature sequences are in all episodes after the first linked with a résumé making the narration dynamic from the onset. The lead-in is brief; the storyline is recapped with relatively few clips and the story quickly moves forward. At the same time, the viewer receives hints of contexts and key metaphors to ponder about – important features of a thriller.

In *The Killing I*, the noir design is spectacularly presented in the introductory sequences through the background motif of a fingerprint, magnified to indicate the intricate passages through which this story must pass. The design visualises how the plot will twist and turn in the labyrinth of this crime. The fingerprint points to the unique and lonely killer whose actual fingerprint matches the killing of the teenage student Nanna Birk Larsen and simultaneously indicates that only good old-fashioned police work will solve this riddle.

In *The Killing II*, an identification tag is the leitmotif in the signature sequences. But there is no name engraved on the badge; it merely says "Denmark." The dog tag is associated with soldiers, and reminds us of their mortality. Besides the lawyer Anne Dragsholm, who is the legal advisor for the Ministry of Defence, the story concerns the professional soldier Allan Myg Poulsen, who is considering reposting, the former soldiers David Grüner, Lisbeth Thomsen and Præst (literally "Preacher") – men and women who are all connected to a certain "incident" in Afghanistan. From the very beginning, the dog tag is connected to powerlessness – we see a glimpse of a Lady Justice

statuette blindfolded by the chain of a dog tag. Those who exercise power are powerless, and they take up the roles of executioner, middleman and victim at different times in the story.

The function of the signature sequence in *The Killing III* is more vague. We see an undefined section of a hull of a ship or some other kind of rusty metal. The metal matches the resonant sound in the lead-in of the first episode of *The Killing III*. The sound design is extremely important to a series that is so visually blackened, and in this sequence there is plenty of reverberation. The sound of emptiness is later followed up in the harbour warehouse. The metallic sound is a recurrent theme, also in the abandoned boatyard in Western Jutland, where the recurrent investigator Sarah Lund (Sofie Gråbøl) and her new partner Matthias Borch from the Danish Security and Intelligence Service “PET” (Nikolaj Lie Kaas) are incarcerated. The emptiness also resonates in the Department of Forensic Medicine (episode 3) and at the haunt of the homeless in Copenhagen (episodes 6 and 7). Emilie and Carl have made a sanctuary in the loft which the adults do not know about. In keeping with the theme of transport and transit, the children have named their sanctuary the “Interspace.” This is the place they withdraw to when the adults fight.

From *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008) we already know that harbours, freighters and containers are well suited as a hotbed for crime, and this knowledge is effectively applied in *The Killing III*, which from the very onset focuses on the space of transit. The first location – the deserted, freight emptied and scrapped freighter – was scarily well-suited to the mode of the killing and set the tone for the series. The naked body indicated the elementariness of the storyline, while the freighter’s name, Medea, heralded the mystic dimensions of the set of actions surrounding the killings on the freighter.

Across the three seasons, the introductory, résumé and signature sequences are dark, establishing a tone in line with the style and effects of the noir tradition. These sequences emphasise the essential features the viewer must pay attention to: the fingerprint implying a labyrinth, the identification tag implying the link and clue, and the resonating sound in the transit space signalling emptiness.

### *The Killing I*: The local and the domestic

Throughout all three seasons of *The Killing*, the thriller is connected to crime and political drama but accentuating different features. The melodrama is also applied in varying degrees against the backdrop of the story. The interlacing of the thriller and crime genre with the political drama started with the local mayoral elections in Copenhagen in *The Killing I*. As in *The Killing III*, campaign cars and spin doctors are involved as well as the politicians’ personal crises and skeletons in the wardrobe. And naturally, the mapping of the individual politicians’ activities during the incriminating times also proved difficult this time, which served to enhance the thriller element: the plot could twist and turn in unanticipated directions. Considerations and misguided considerations, small and big lies, evasive explanations, trust and betrayals all intertwined the plot. Even though the probability of it all did not always bear closer examination, the plot was well thought out and the British-American thriller tradition was well applied. The combination, which was introduced in Denmark in Nikolaj Arcel’s *King’s Game* (*Kongekabale*, 2004), was innovative in a Danish TV series.

As it turned out, the many devious courses represented as many dead ends – Nanna Birk Larsen’s killer was to be found in her near surroundings. It was the naïve, mentally unbalanced yet cunning criminal. This storyline effectively demonstrated how a series of apparently independent

events can nevertheless be connected, and how the inclination of a family friend to overprotect his friend and benefactor in many cases had threads to what happened at the political level.

*The Killing I* was unique in its extensive pursuit of one single killing – the murder of the teenage student Nanna Birk Larsen – through twenty episodes. The most obvious international predecessor is David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990-91) which also unfolded its story around one single killing – the murder of Laura Palmer. However, where *Twin Peaks* ended up in cascades of mystery and metaphysics that brought Agent Cooper's world-view to collapse, *The Killing I* is told in a way that, although it changes between different tracks that are introduced by the criminal and political threads, understands the art of limitation. Thus, the dramaturgy counterbalances the devious courses of the labyrinth.

On the visual side, the action in *The Killing I* is set in three different locations: the Copenhagen Police Headquarters, the Copenhagen City Hall and Vesterbro, a district in Copenhagen. The Copenhagen Police Headquarters is the place where the threads of the investigation are gathered, but also where it is disrupted. The Police Headquarters is presented as a monolith from the outside, but a labyrinth from the inside – it is difficult to get in and out, and once in, the many levels and dead ends confuse. The City Hall is mainly the setting of the local mayoral elections, but through these elections it is connected to crime. Investigation and election; in both cases, the countdown has started. Vesterbro is the place where the Birk Larsen family removals firm is located. Here, the countdown has also started to the scheduled move to the new house. Nightly helicopter shootings over Copenhagen interconnect these locations in an overall pattern. The labyrinths, roads and lost roads of the big city down there are well-known from British and American TV series and have been used as an ingredient in Danish TV drama since the drama series *TAXA* (1997-1999).

In spite of the obvious differences in the environment and characterisation of the three places, the distinctive features of colouring, camera movement and the diffuse, disturbing underscore (by Frans Bak) first used in *Twin Peaks* (by Angelo Badalamenti), are the same. The dominating colours are shades of grey, black and blue. In all cases, the camera seeks out the rooms in a manner intending to expose the clues of what has happened. The camera pans across living rooms, bedrooms, corridors, offices and storage rooms, over floors, panels and doorways in an exquisitely disturbing manner. The similarity of colours and optics indicates the shared theme: everybody has secrets, everybody is hiding something, and their hiding places are alike, after all. Nature is only included in the shape of the naked November wood by the lake where the dead body of Nanna Birk Larsen is found in one of Troels Hartmann's (Lars Mikkelsen) campaign cars. Thus, the connection between the places and the crimes are pointed out through the style of the series.

Even though the political level is not directly involved in the essential crime, clear parallels can be drawn between politics and crime. At his sickbed, former Mayor Bremer passes on advice on the mechanisms of power to Hartmann, the Mayor to be: "Remember you have to live with it." Advice that he himself forgot in his function as Mayor – and advice Hartmann also needs to forget if he wants to be elected. It is only possible to become Mayor by becoming a Bremer clone, which is lethal in the long run as Bremer's heart attack demonstrates. The lesson from City Hall is that the road to power is not without political "killings:" the destruction of character and parts of oneself, i.e. one's morality.

Rather than City Hall, the origin of the crime is Pernille and Theis Birk Larsen's (Ann Eleonora Jørgensen and Bjarne Henriksen) combined workplace and apartment in Vesterbro: the home. The

sinister feeling is glaringly exposed at Anton's birthday party in episode 20. Everybody, even the family "shadow uncle" Vagn (Nikolaj Kopernikus), is gathered around the table singing birthday songs. This scene illustrates the well-known cliché that the killer is among us; it is someone we know without knowing the depths of character.

Vagn's mixed position as insider/outsider in the family makes him the perfect suspect. Theis and Vagn have a shared criminal past twenty years back. This old criminal bond between Theis and Vagn makes it easy for Vagn to appeal to Theis' instinct of taking the law into his own hands. We already saw this instinct unfolded in episode 8 in his confrontation with the teacher Kemal. The suspicion against Vagn is intensified in episode 17 where a connection is made to the murder of Mette Hauge fifteen years before and a removals firm Vagn used to work in. And the suspicion is enhanced when Sarah Lund connects Meyer's last words: "Sara 84" with the shirt Vagn is – still – wearing. The shared suppressions of the past make it a logical course of events for Vagn to drag Theis into his situation, making him a killer, and Theis accepts the role of the executioner like a lamb.

In continuation with the introductory sequences, the long serial places itself within the film noir tradition and its love of grey and dark shades, rain-soaked locations where streetlights are reflected in the tarmac and oblique angles. The genre knowledge is also marked by the intertextual references. The ending thus quotes the end situation in David Fincher's thriller *Seven* (1995) in a parallel set-up where the morality and organisation of the crime leads to the law being taken into one's own hands, turning the victim into a perpetrator.

### *The Killing II*: Foreign politics with domestic dimensions

Genre mixing, production design and noir style are recurrent ingredients in *The Killing II*, as I have illustrated previously. However, the plot and thereby the dramaturgy is different. Dramatic turnovers in actors have occurred and only the dubious Detective Chief Inspector Brix (Morten Suurballe) is still working at the Police Headquarters. The disavowed detective inspector Sarah Lund has become a passport officer in the port town of Gedser and has to be brought back to Copenhagen. The rest of the gallery of characters have been changed. This effectively signals a new beginning – and thereby also a different type of serial from the usual model, e.g. Scandinavian crime serials such as *Wallander* (2005-) and *Beck* (1997-) where the recurrent ingredient is the constant gallery of characters, also in terms of familiar subsidiary characters and the unique constellation of characters within the department. In this way, *The Killing* instigates a certain type of innovation, which cannot be replicated in an adaptation or character based serial.

The parallel between politics and crime is maintained, but the focus has shifted. The municipal environment surrounding the Copenhagen City Hall has been swapped for national politics at Christiansborg Palace, home of the Danish Parliament. Where the focus in *The Killing I* was on solving the original killing of Nanna Birk Larsen, the main concept in *The Killing II* is not just the aforementioned parallel, but the direct connection between politics and crime – another example of innovation.

The relation to reality has also shifted, in that *The Killing II* takes a number of events from the real life and places them in the story in a way that suits the thriller dramaturgy. The Danish

involvement in the war in Afghanistan has provided ample material to choose from. Many controversial issues were brought to the public at the time of the screening of the production, increasing the sense of a frightening (and from the point of the producers unforeseen) topicality. For example, civilian killings during the operation in Afghanistan and the subsequent compensation from the Danish state (mentioned in the Danish newspaper *Politiken*, 17 October 2009). The former elite soldier Thomas Rathsack's book *Jæger. I krig med eliten* [*Hunter. At War with the Elite*], which shows the fluid boundaries between what is legal and what is accepted during military operations, was made public by *Politiken* in September 2009 at a time when the Defence Command had banned it.<sup>15</sup> This resulted in an extensive public debate about the then Minister of Defence Søren Gade's administration of his office and initiated a set of events that led to the resignation of the Minister.

These examples emphasise the topicality of the plot in *The Killing II*. On the political level, the newly appointed Minister for Justice, Thomas Buch (Nicolas Bro), is looking to reach a broad settlement on a terror bill across the political parties and thus become everyone's friend instead of only of the aptly named "Folkepartiet" (People's Party) – a name that in real life can reflect either the right-wing anti-immigration party, The Danish People's Party, The Conservative People's Party or the left-wing EU-sceptical party, the Socialist People's Party. However, the settlement is obstructed by a series of lies, concealments and misrepresentations of the truth, all connected to a certain case kept secret for two years. The crux of this case is that civilians were killed by Danish soldiers during the operation in Afghanistan. The exposures happening at the political level have their firm counterpart in the killings consequently committed on Danish soldiers connected to the dark event in Afghanistan. These killings lend to the dramaturgy another pace, resembling Agatha Christie's classic set-up: a group of people of a certain number stay together to conceal a certain crime, but are picked apart one by one. Many thrillers are based on this model, often in combination with a race against the clock.

All the emotions portrayed in the Birk Larsen family in *The Killing I* in connection with the killing and the potential suspects have effectively been peeled off this plot. The emotions and thereby the melodramatic moments are relegated to the storyline about Jens Peter Raben (Ken Vedsegaard) and his family. In this storyline, the melodramatic moments function in a classic manner: in a case of injustice a man is subsequently incarcerated and cannot escape no matter what he does. He is therefore forced to take the law into his own hands and break out of his incarceration at the psychiatric hospital in order to make an attempt to solve the case himself in direct competition with the police and under the scrutiny of the actual perpetrator.

Here, the naïve killer from *The Killing I* has been replaced by the refined, plotting and highly intelligent type – the mastermind – personified by Lund's colleague and closest partner, Ulrik Strange (Mikael Birkkjær), married with two children and the perfect family man. As killer type and serial killer he is – like the plot – close to the mainstream traditions. This approximation is underlined by the place where *The Killing II* started and ended: the Memorial Park Ryvangen, where the three poles for executions from the period of occupation during WWII are found, and where the graves serve as backdrop of the killings in the present. The topicality made *The Killing II* a unique experience in Danish television history.



*The Killing III*: Domestic politics with global dimensions

In *The Killing III*, the Prime Minister himself and his office are in the line of fire on the political level, almost as in *Borgen*. Similarly, the tragedy that unfolded in an ordinary removal man's family in the centre of Copenhagen has moved out into the torn shipping magnate and doctor's family in the wealthy suburbs. The crime that the title is referring to is the abduction and hostage taking of Robert and Maja Zeuthen's daughter Emilie, however, it is actually rooted in a completely different crime – the assault and killing of Louise two years previously. Louise's fate is gradually pinpointed: she was a girl no one wanted to care for; a girl who had been in contact with Zeeland's children's home; a girl who presumably was meant to be a role model for children in foster families in the Centre Party's planned advertising material, but instead she ended up on the bottom of a harbour in Western Jutland. Louise thus represents a victim of society.

The first episode refers to Medea, as mentioned. In Greek mythology, Medea is the granddaughter of the sun god Helios, a woman of incredible strength and magic powers. In Euripides' tragedy *Medea* (431 BC), she changes her status to the betrayed, avenging woman: she inflicts a cruel revenge on her husband, Jason, who betrayed her, by killing their two children. In *The Killing III*, the crimes are first and foremost connected to abandoned children. The Medea reference can, on a basic level, be understood as a symbolic expression of the victimisation of the children in the conflict and failings of their parents, be it Emilie, Carl or Louise. In any case, killings follow in the wake of Medea: the killings of the sailors on board, followed by the killings of assistant public prosecutor Schultz, and the police pathologist who performed a post-mortem on Louise and kept the correct result quiet. Whether the officer who covered up the inadequate investigation of the killing of Louise was killed or committed suicide is unsure, but the incident has nonetheless resulted in his death.

In contrast to the case in *The Killing I* from 2007 and *The Killing II* from 2009, Denmark is a society in crisis in 2012. Prime Minister Christian Kamper, the leader of the party named The New Liberal (Olav Johannesen), has called a general election. "We must all contribute" is the slogan of the campaign and it is featured on the campaign bus we see in episode 3. The slogan echoes the actual campaign led by the liberal parties in the Danish elections in 2011. All alliances have started to dislocate and the political options are in turn opened and closed. The salient fact is that this coincides with the Prime Minister's handling of the case, which does not have anything to do with the elections and the abduction of Emilie.

The connection between the two is Robert Zeuthen (Anders W. Berthelsen), the man who is to save the Danish economy and is the guarantor for the government's economic crisis management. If the outsourcing process that the board of directors believe to be the most profitable strategy for the firm is carried through, it is not only the old firm's successor Robert Zeuthen who is finished; Prime Minister Christian Kamper and his crisis plan will also go down the drain. This is why it becomes paramount for the PM to demonstrate his ability of crisis management and leadership in connection with the concrete abduction case. On the perpetrator's computer, an indictment against the state and Big Business is also found. Where the storyline in *The Killing II* was unfolded around the foreign politics and its domestic implications, it is the domestic politics and its global implications that serve as glue in *The Killing III*.

The perpetrator, as is often the case in the thriller genre, is known to the viewer. We have seen

him in action and we have heard his voice. In episode 3, he appears as GM, presumably short for “GerningsMand” (meaning “perpetrator”), and in the credits the actor Thomas W. Gabriëlsson is listed as GM. Among the homeless, he is apparently known as the “Cat man”. It is revealed that he used kittens, which Emilie adores but is allergic to, as an allurements. In the introduction to episode 8, we see him once again attaching a shabby photograph of Louise to the rear-view mirror; we see his arm which is scribbled with the infamous license plate numbers of cars that were nearby when Louise disappeared – and we experience the reflection showing Z as S<sup>16</sup> that we have been waiting for. He is not short of resources; it is impressive how many different vehicles he has had access to: a lorry, a van, passenger cars of various kinds and a four-by-four vehicle. The transport and transit area is his element.

Apparently, the perpetrator is driven by the urge for revenge on that or those persons responsible for the abuse and murder of Louise, and the reason is that he is her father. Allegedly, his motive is to subject another father, Robert Zeuthen, to the same experience of loss he himself experienced. He asks what the value of a human life is and Zeuthen’s answer is DKK 100 million (equivalent to about 13.5 million Euro). However, the question is rhetorical; it is not a classic hostage situation and the money is never the ultimate objective. Even though he is skilled in logistics and stage-managing the events, he has not done his homework properly before venturing on his rampage of revenge. This is the reason why Sarah Lund, who is better skilled at police work, can reach him by mobile phone from time to time. He is irrational and a mastermind at the same time; and another perpetrator with close relations to the Zeeland Corporation is lurking behind him – a much more cunning and resource-rich perpetrator, who is the cause of the original crime.

Sarah Lund is once again the opponent. Just as in the previous season, she must be brought in from a pre-retirement job. In the beginning she seems tired and fatigued – not prepared to show her former energy and inveterate strength. At the same rate as she changes sweaters, she makes one mistake after another. In the first episode, she chose not to examine the suspicious ship in the harbour. Later she was distracted by the sight of her son and his pregnant girlfriend and missed her train connection in the process, which – possibly – could have prevented the death of the public prosecutor.

Quite a few pieces from the puzzle of her past emerge and this disturbs her and keeps her from being fully functional and attentive to the crimes she is meant to solve. She seeks out her son, Mark, who rejects her. He does not know what he wants and he blames her for him being too much like her. His girlfriend’s pregnancy both pleases and torments her. Matthias Borch, an old flame of hers, expresses it in a crystal clear manner: “You know that when there is something emotional that you have trouble relating to, you have a tendency to walk out.” Detective Chief Inspector Brix has let go of his dubiousness and seems more mellow and involved. He is now giving the investigators his backing. Eventually Sarah Lund is in gear and from episode 6 to 7 her old characteristics start shining through – the one-eyed and individual effort, guided by an indispensable intuition, coupled with a certain empathy for GM, who also carries the traumas of abandoned children. And a strong opposition to the wirepuller in hiding who she wants to catch as much as GM does. She succeeds in the end, however with fatal consequences. As opposed to the shipping magnate and the Prime Minister, Sarah Lund is as usual unable to compromise. This fact places her in a situation which once again quotes Fincher’s *Seven* in the final confrontation and thus connects with *The Killing I*.

## Conclusion

In its entirety *The Killing* illustrates that original productions rather than adaptations have great advantages as regards innovation. As the extensive turnover of actors between the first and second series and similarly between the second and the third seasons showed, it has been possible to vary and renew the serial within the overall concept of “one vision,” that is the vision of Søren Sveistrup, the manuscript writer. During all three seasons Sveistrup carefully scrutinises the complicated structure of modern Danish society as it is reflected in fictitious crimes and investigations, dysfunctional gender roles and absent role models and in necessary but hideous compromises at the level of both politics and investigation.

In spite of the interchange between several genre tracks, the entire series of *The Killing* inscribes itself into the noir thriller genre, and it is important to the dramaturgy, which in all series is labyrinthine and characterised by cliff-hangers, perpetual pursuits through rain soaked streets, dark basements and store rooms of a perpetrator who narrowly escapes until the final episode. However, the differences between the series are also important to the production value of *The Killing*. These differences range from the circular movements in the local, domestic environment in the first series, through the fluctuation between events in Denmark and Afghanistan in the second series to the third series’ refocus on human nature at the top and bottom of society – and of a Denmark in economic and moral crisis. The different levels in the story allow ethical and socio-political issues to be at the core of the build-up of suspense and offer that extra dimension – completely in line with DR Drama’s articulated strategy on the double story.

Vis-à-vis genres, the use of political drama alternates while the different levels of crime within local, national and corporate politics are being investigated. Within the police procedural, the various levels in the police force and the special branch play their parts in the creation of conflict, and on the private level melodrama enhances emotional conflicts within the families. The continuity of the entire series does depend on character – Sarah Lund’s intense, persistent and yet human role as investigator. But it also depends on the concept of “one vision” and the concept of the double story.

- 1 Eva Novrup Redvall, “Dogmer for tv-drama,” in *Kosmorama*, no. 248, 2011, pp. 180-198.
- 2 *Idem*, p. 185; see also Gunhild Agger, “Adaptioner, spinoffs og selvstændige produktioner. Strategier i svensk og dansk tv-krimi,” in *Kosmorama*, no. 248, 2011, pp. 161-179.
- 3 Gunhild Agger, “Er der gået for meget *Borgen* i *Forbrydelsen*?” 7 November 2012, <http://www.kommunikationsforum.dk/artikler/anmeldelse-af-forbrydelsen-iii>, last visit 30 November 2012; *Idem*, “Pres- sen, plottet og den sure pasbetjent,” 3 November 2009, <http://www.kommunikationsforum.dk/artikler/pres- sen-plottet-og-pasbetjenten>, last visit 30 November 2012; *Idem*, “Forbrydelsens forbrydelse,” 6 March 2007, <http://www.kommunikationsforum.dk/artikler/forbrydelsens-forbrydelse>, last visit 30 November 2012. See also, *Idem*, “Inside Danish TV’s Thriller Factory,” 15 August 2012, <http://www.kommunikationsforum.dk/artikler/dansk-tv-dramas-internationale-succes>, last visit 30 November 2012.
- 4 Gunhild Agger, “Emotion, Gender and Genre: Investigating *The Killing*,” in *Northern Lights*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2011, pp. 111-125.
- 5 Vicky Frost, “*The Killing* puts torchlight on subtitled drama,” *The Guardian*, 18 November 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/tv-and-radio/2011/nov/18/the-killing-torchlight-subtitled-drama>, last visit 30 November 2012.
- 6 Maggie Brown, “*Borgen*: Inside Danish TV’s thriller factory,” *The Guardian*, 14 January 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/tv-and-radio/2012/jan/14/borgen-danish-tv-thrillers>, last visit 30 November 2012.

GUNHILD AGGER

7 *Ibidem*.

8 John Lloyd, "The Art of Darkness," *FT.com*, 25 March 2011, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/6d092842-5664-11e0-84e9-00144feab49a.html#axzz2E4gvp8JA>, last visit 30 November 2012; Andrew Romano, "Borgen: The Best TV Show You've Never Seen," *Newsweek*, 29 July 2012, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2012/07/29/borgen-the-best-tv-show-you-ve-never-seen.html>, last visit 30 November 2012.

9 Barry Forshaw, *Death in a Cold Climate. A Guide to Scandinavian Crime Fiction*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2012, p. 2.

10 *Idem*, p. 8.

11 John Lloyd, "The Art of Darkness," cit.

12 Andrew Nestingen, *Crime and Fantasy in Scandinavia. Fiction, Film and Social Change*, University of Washington Press/Museum Tusulanum Press, Seattle-Copenhagen 2008, p. 9.

13 Lars Ole Sauerberg, *Secret Agents in Fiction*, Macmillan, London 1984, p. 81.

14 See for example <http://www.filmsite.org/thrillerfilms.html>, last visit 30 November 2012.

15 Thomas Rathsack, "I krig med eliten," in *Politiken*, 16 September 2009, section 3, pp. 1-16.

16 Lars Borberg, "Hævneren fra havnen," *Nordjyske*, 12 November 2012, <http://nordjyske.dk/nyheder/haevneren-fra-havnen/765b4e84-fe23-4934-92cf-ee27f298af1c/4/1513#/0>, last visit 15 June 15.