

Abstract

A crime narrative is traditionally presented in a form that involves the story of the crime committed, the story of its mystery being solved, with the final discovery of the killer. By wide consensus, this formulaic and plot-heavy quality rendered crime stories as part of ‘popular’ leisurely culture but exceptionally ‘low-brow’. However, a critical look into the genre’s development reveals that in contemporary times, while the genre has retained its status as ‘popular’, its ‘low-brow’ quality stands duly challenged. The genre’s rather complex and non-linear evolution shows that not only have the stylistic and structural experimentations mutated over time, but a closer look at the nuances, contradictions, and tensions in individual texts reveals that the crime genre is socially informed, subversive, and has an immense potential for social commentary. With globalisation, cosmopolitanism, neoliberal market movements, and the gradual erasure of national borders, contemporary scholarship encounters emergent hybridised trends from the geographies beyond the standard British, American and French territories. Since most narratives depict the city as the place of evil, newer accounts of the relationship between crime, justice, policing and society consolidate the genre’s urban connections and reinforce the uncertain and *unheimlich* nature of the city. Nordic crime narratives, or Nordic Noir, in the form of both literary texts and television drama, use the semantic value of its natural topographical qualities and expansive built environment to scrutinise the anomalies and paradoxes of the welfare state idealism. This research finds its ground in this relationship between crime and the place it is set in, to look at the three vertices/figures of a standard crime narrative—the criminal, the victim and the detective—and investigate each of these figures’ roles vis-a-vis space and place. This triad, with ‘place’ at its centre, is examined in Henning Mankell’s Detective Kurt Wallander novels (1990-2000), from Sweden, and Søren Sviestrup’s TV noir *Forbrydelsen* (2007-2012), based in Denmark in this study, to show how these relationships de-centre the Nordic urbanity. The research further addresses how the noir genre helps in reinterpreting the asymmetry of power innate to the noir city in modern times.

Keywords: Nordic Noir, crime fiction, television noir, Swedish crime fiction, Danish Noir, violence, urbanity