

## Chapter 5

### Revisiting the Crime Scene: Intermedial Translation, Adaptation, and Novelization of *The Killing*

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*Forbrydelsen* (2007–12, *The Killing*), the three-season television crime drama that follows the brilliant, obsessive police detective Sarah Lund on her hunt for killers through dark, labyrinthine Copenhagen cityscapes and murky politics, while her family life slowly disintegrates, was written by Søren Sveistrup for the Danish public broadcasting company DR Drama. Originally targeting a mainstream domestic audience, it became a national obsession attracting up to an average of 2 million weekly viewers in a country with a population of only 5.5 million. However, it also became seminal to the global popularity of Nordic noir and Scandinavian crime fiction in the 2010s. To this day, it remains the most successful television drama to come out of the Nordic countries. *Forbrydelsen* has been exported to 159 countries and territories on all continents (Esser 2017; Bondebjerg and Redvall 2015), was nominated for several Emmys, and was awarded the UK International BAFTA in 2011. At the same time, *Forbrydelsen* began to lead a life of its own as *The Killing* in a much-praised American remake produced by Fox for AMC and later Netflix (2011–14). *The Killing* (US), which also achieved international circulation, at first remained devoted to the Danish original, even as it was relocated to Seattle in the United States' Pacific Northwest; yet it began to develop novel plotlines and characters over its four seasons, diverging from the Danish original.

Adding to the serial's transnational mobility, *Forbrydelsen* was also adapted into three novels by the British crime writer David Hewson (2012–14), with the first “novelization,” *The Killing*, written while the third season of the series was in production in Copenhagen. Hewson's novels have subsequently been translated into several languages including Dutch, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish, and Russian, while so far only the first lengthy novel has been translated into the “original” Danish language of the serial by Kim Langer. Within a short period of time, *Forbrydelsen/The Killing* was in simultaneous circulation in subtitled or synchronized Danish and US television serials and as an English-language novelization, also disseminated through the various translations. Yet, the many textual and medial instantiations or versions of *Forbrydelsen* account only for a part of the complex transnational and intermedial network through which the police procedural appeared to viewers around the world – including the United Kingdom.

Taking its perspective from this location *beyond* Denmark and the wider Nordic region, this chapter will examine the transnational and multimedial adaptation networks that constituted *Forbrydelsen/The Killing*. The main focus will be on the ways in which this “born adapted” audio-visual text allows us to reflect on central concerns within adaptation studies about “originality” and “locatability” in a globalized media landscape. By “revisiting the crime scene” of the globalization of this signal Danish drama serial from an adaptation studies perspective, I want to suggest that the apparently localized spaces and crime scenes of the “original” Danish television drama are thoroughly mobilized spaces. I argue that *Forbrydelsen* needs to be considered as an audio-visual text always in-translation or in-adaptation, and (as is the nature of crime fiction as a genre) a text to be revisited and remediated, which makes *Forbrydelsen* a notable example of globalized and hypermediated contemporary storytelling.

## **Nordic Noir as Adaptation Network**

According to Kim Toft Hansen, Stephen Peacock, and Sue Turnbull, the transnational impact of Nordic noir “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” (2018, 11). While at first *Forbrydelsen* was associated with Nordic productions, as a paradigmatic instance of Nordic noir it also became a transnational phenomenon with the capacity to take root in locations far beyond the Nordic region. As a prominent representative of the Nordic noir genre or brand, *Forbrydelsen* would go on to have a notable influence (one usually reserved for Anglo-American formats) on television serials produced outside the Nordic countries such as *Broadchurch* (ITV 2013–17), *Hinterland/ Y Gwyll* (S4C 2013–16), and *Shetland* (BBC 2013–) in the United Kingdom, the Czech HBO Europe drama *Pustina/Wasteland* (2016), the German Netflix series *Dark* (2017–), and the UK production *Fortitude* (Sky Atlantic, 2015–18), set in an imaginary Svalbard with *Forbrydelsen*’s Sofie Gråbøl playing a central role as Governor Hildur Odegard (Toft Hansen et al 2018, 2, 11).

As an object of cultural study, *Forbrydelsen* therefore challenges center-periphery models of cultural transfer that have dominated television, literary and translation studies for decades.<sup>1</sup> Such models tend to suggest that cultural and generic innovations exclusively take place in the global centres from where they proceed to wash over the globe as a giant wave that either threatens cultural diversity by imposing homogeneity or is only slightly disrupted by local and national traditions that, in turn, rarely give anything back to the transcultural mainstream (Even-Zohar 1990; Moretti 2000).

As I hope will be evident from the above introduction to *Forbrydelsen*'s itineraries between peripheral Denmark and the global cultural production centers of the Anglophone world, the serial has been a highly mobile example of Nordic noir, one that can productively be discussed from a perspective conceptualized by Stephen Greenblatt in his "mobility studies manifesto": as a significant transnational example with which we can "identify and analyse the 'contact zones' where cultural goods are exchanged" (Greenblatt 2010, 251).<sup>2</sup> Such mobility is always dependent upon time-bound and local conditions and the pre-disposition, even (or especially) in our globalized world, for thinking about cultural expressions as thoroughly localized phenomena. As I have discussed elsewhere, in an age of globalization, Scandinavian crime fiction and the Nordic noir phenomenon, in particular, demonstrates that crime fiction is a principally mobile and adaptable genre able to spread and take root throughout the world by adapting internationally recognizable literary and audio-visual forms to local circumstances, languages and traditions (Stougaard-Nielsen 2016). Christina Gregoriou has taken a similar position in her work on cross-cultural and adapted crime fiction, wherein she explores the "crime fiction migration effect," a term she develops to account for the widespread mobility and relocation of crime narratives such as *Forbrydelsen* (Gregoriou 2017, 2). Following Yvonne Griggs, Gregoriou understands the adaptive process, for which *Forbrydelsen* is a seminal example, as ensuring "a story's on-going rebirth within other communicative platforms, other political and cultural contexts" (Griggs 2016, 5; Gregoriou 2017, 2).

Crime fiction is arguably the most internationalized of popular genres; its basic conventions are recognizable across time, space and media, but also rich in local variations, languages and cultural contexts. This confluence of transnational forms and local specificity makes crime fiction a preeminent case for exploring the mobility of genres, contact zones,

cultural practices and social values across national borders. Particularly when it comes to transnational television formats, and the crime television serial with its universally recognizable genre traits and narrative forms should be counted among them, a key reason for the success of such formats, according to Jean K. Chalaby, “is the particular way they combine the local and the global” (2013, 54). Transnational genres and formatted television serials “follow rules that are applied across borders . . . TV formats may be transnational in the sense that they travel and incorporate cross-border rules, but essentially, they apply these rules to create characters and fashion stories that resonate locally” (55).

Adaptation studies have more recently adjusted to the complexities of such cultural transfers in a globalizing world by no longer merely considering adaptation a one-way transfer of text mostly concerned with film adaptations of literary works. As Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik, and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen describe the current field: “adaptation is viewed within a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural and textual networks into which any textual phenomena is understood” (2013, 8). To understand the *Forbrydelsen* phenomenon, we need to take a comprehensive view of the serial and its many instantiations within, or, as part of “expanding adaptation networks,” to use Kate Newell’s terms, which together make up the transnational and multi-modal “work” and cultural phenomenon of *Forbrydelsen*, and account for “the aggregate of narrative moments, reference points, and iconography that comes to be associated with a particular work through successive acts of adaptation” (2017, 26). Jan Baetens has similarly outlined the task of future adaptation studies, whose object of analysis “will be more the interaction between various texts (some visual, others literary) and contexts (the publishing world, the movie world) within a more complex and layered arena than is found in traditional approaches toward adaptation” (2018, “Introduction”)

Beyond the subtitled and synchronized versions enabling *Forbrydelsen* to travel beyond its small-nation location and viewership, most emphatically exemplified by the US remake and UK novelization, the expanded adaptation network of *Forbrydelsen* could include epitextual reference points such as reviews, fan networks, national imagologies, including wider perceptions of the Nordic region and Nordic noir, and even the iconography of Sarah Lund's sweater, as it becomes imbued with different meanings depending on diverse cultural contexts.

When considered a textual, cultural and televisual work embedded within such expanded adaptation networks, where transnational form and local specificity conflate to produce a highly mobile, constantly migrating text, *Forbrydelsen* exemplifies a broader understanding of Nordic noir as a transnational phenomenon, which I have defined as a textual and audio-visual genre that became recognized as a phenomenon only when novels and television serials became widely translated, subtitled and adapted into foreign languages and markets (Stougaard-Nielsen 2016). Nordic noir, I have suggested, is arguably only understood as a distinct regional genre as a consequence of its international success; it is perhaps only really “Nordic” when viewed or read from abroad, when published, marketed and sold in bookshops, book fairs or at broadcasting trade fairs, where the branding of national peculiarities is essential for attracting the attention of potential funders, publishers and book buyers in a crowded, globalized cultural field (Stougaard-Nielsen 2016). In other words, Nordic noir is inherently a product of expanded and multiple adaptation networks, rather than the origin of them. *Forbrydelsen*, as the following will demonstrate, is itself an audio-visual text that may initially have been conceived and viewed as an “original” Danish television drama, yet from its inception and subsequent instantiations, it exemplifies a transnational text that adapted a globalized form and style to local circumstances and proceeded to be adapted and remade for new audiences and media in other locations.

Nordic noir and *Forbrydelsen* more specifically are, therefore, inherently transnational phenomena due to the popular genre and the inherent mobility of the television format. This necessitates a certain caution when considering the genre through an adaptation studies perspective, which has traditionally been preoccupied with the central issue of “fidelity” thus also concerns with what might be lost in the transfer of, for instance, an “original” novel into a “derived” film. Considering audio-visual and literary texts on the move within multi-directional adaptation networks necessitates an understanding of adaptation not unlike David Damrosch’s central designation of “world literature” (Damrosch 2003), as a perspective interested in what is “gained in adaptation”: an understanding of the “work” as a total sum of its “aggregate of narrative moments, reference points, and iconography,” realized in contact zones where the local meets the global and the periphery at times becomes a new center.

### **From *Forbrydelsen* to *The Killing* (UK)**

Central to the success of *Forbrydelsen*, as a simultaneously localized Danish narrative and a globally recognizable quality television drama, was its emergence out of “foreign” audio-visual storytelling and production modes. In a fortunate coincidence with *Forbrydelsen*, a wave of interest in a new style of television storytelling referred to as “complex TV” began to emerge in the early 2000s (Mittell 2015). With ground-breaking US serials such as *Twin Peaks* (ABC 1990–1) and *The Sopranos* (HBO 1999–2007), and later successes such as *Mad Men* (AMC 2007–15), *The Wire* (HBO 2002–8) and *Breaking Bad* (AMC 2008–13), television as a medium for long-form storytelling became accepted and prestigious within the industry, with mainstream viewers and in the wider cultural landscape. While Jason Mittell disagrees with the value of cross-media comparisons in his study of *Complex TV*, he explains that “contemporary complex

serials are often praised as being ‘novelistic’ in scope and form” (2015, 18). While serial television drama is by no means a novelty, productions like *Forbrydelsen* were cinematic in style and incorporated complex storylines and character development usually associated with novelistic form. This change in cultural prestige for the television serial was to become central to perceptions of *Forbrydelsen* outside of Denmark and was instrumental to its ability to adapt to other cultures and media.

Centrally, such “complex-TV” serials initiated new ways of producing and viewing television crime dramas notably by following an American “showrunner model,” which foregrounds the head writer as a new kind of television *auteur* (Redvall 2013). DR adapted the showrunner model to a Danish context, known as “One-Vision,” before Svestrup became the “showrunner” on *Forbrydelsen*, following studies of American production practices and specifically a seminal visit by DR producers to the set of *NYPD Blue* (1993–2005) in the late 1990s. Out of this visit to FOX Television Studios emerged a set of dogmas for producing domestic Danish television drama in “an American way” (Toft Hansen et al 2018; Redvall 2013; Nielsen 2016). Apart from One-Vision, one of the key tenets of the DR approach to the production of domestic television drama was the dogma referred to as “double storytelling,” which goes to the heart of the station’s dedication to public service.

According to Jakob Isak Nielsen, alongside focusing on creating entertaining storytelling of an international standard, DR set about to “build a so-called ‘deeper layer’ into their stories that address social and ethical dimensions,” which were meant to resonate with current events and socio-cultural issues at the time of production (2016, n.p.). This “public service layer” should, in effect, localize the serial in a socially and culturally specific Danish context. The three seasons of *Forbrydelsen* demonstrate this approach of joining an “American” style of storytelling

and production mode with a deeper layer of domestic content: the first season weaves the cut-throat political manoeuvrings of Copenhagen city-hall politics into a classic meandering police investigation peppered with personal and familial plots that draw the private lives of investigators into the ongoing and seemingly never-ending crime investigation; the second season explores what happens to a small country at war in Afghanistan, and the third is framed by the impact of global trade and recession on local social mores and national politics.

According to the head of DR Drama at the time of *Forbrydelsen*, Piv Bernth, it was the local, national narrative and not the potential international markets that was central to DR's strategy:

No, we do not think of foreign markets. We only strive to create a series in Denmark, for Danes. That is always our point of departure. The point is not to think of international narratives, but to delve deeper into the matter in terms of what stories Danish society can generate because that is what is interesting out there, also abroad. (qtd in Nielsen 2016)

In other words, by firmly localizing the transnational genre in its national setting and context, the serial is more likely to reach audiences abroad. Danish research into "what makes Danish TV series travel?" has suggested that "it is the Danish welfare state that 'travels,'" thereby turning the local specificity into, what Nielsen calls, the essential "comparative advantage of Danish TV series in the international market place" (2016, n.p.). The international reception on Scandinavian crime fiction and Nordic noir has to a large extent agreed with the importance of national locations and social peculiarities to their transnational reach. Slavoj Žižek has suggested that the significance of Henning Mankell's police procedural is in its "perfect illustration of the

fate of the detective novel in the era of global capitalism” (2003, 24). The Wallander series illustrates how the crime novel’s setting has become bounded by “the specific locale, a particular provincial environment” as a “dialectical counterpart” to the globalized world, where, Žižek concludes, “a detective story can take place almost anywhere” (24).

Rather than claiming that Nordic noir exemplifies a “provincial” trend where local specificities are exploited and made desirable in a world dominated by neoliberal global capitalism, Bruce Robbins has convincingly argued that the location of *Forbrydelsen* in a recognizable Danish welfare state may produce different responses in US and Danish audiences. “In the US,” Robbins explains, “the critique of the welfare state [a trait often associated with Nordic noir] is largely a right-wing or pro-capitalist phenomenon. The ideological energy behind it comes in the main from what we have come to call neoliberalism” (Robbins 2015, n.p.). The success of *Forbrydelsen* both in and outside the Nordic region relies on its ability to paint the welfare state in darker hues, as potentially corrupt and undermining civil liberties; however, as the protector of the (welfare) state, detective Sarah Lund does not “equal blind legitimization of state power” neither does she represent an antidote to political corruption, which remains largely a red herring in the Danish *Forbrydelsen*. Instead, through the figure of Lund, the emotional pressure that leads her to the brink of suspension and to personal sacrifices as she cares for the family grieving the loss of their daughter, the serial presents the Danish welfare state “as a desirable antidote to the power wielded by global capitalism” (2015, n.p.). Therefore, “the narrative puts the audience on the side of the protagonist’s sacrifice, and thus on the side of the state,” making *Forbrydelsen* an example of, what I have elsewhere called, “welfare crime fiction” (Stougaard-Nielsen 2017).

It appears to me a convincing conclusion that DR initially learned from American practices and models and successfully exploited a universally recognizable genre to produce localized television drama for a domestic mainstream audience (see also Bondebjerg and Redvall 2015, 227) – an audience that would expect a crime drama to tap into common anxieties about the fate of the Danish welfare state in a globalized neoliberal age but also find relief in its reconfirmation of self-less care embodied in Sarah Lund and, by association, the Danish welfare state. With its emphasis on providing stylish and entertaining stories to rival American serials, infused with content and social issues relevant to the domestic audience through “double-storytelling,” this “glocal” form of storytelling fared exceptionally well with certain segments of cosmopolitan viewers in the Anglophone world, where a figure like Sarah Lund became the “competitive advantage” – perhaps particularly in the United Kingdom where the serial’s transnational appeal has arguably been most visible.

The global success of *Forbrydelsen* accelerated when it was broadcast with subtitles in the United Kingdom on BBC FOUR (2011–2012) – a unique occurrence as until the 2010s Denmark was still seen as at the periphery of the global television market (Jensen 2016; Esser 2017, 412). At the time, as Andrea Esser explains in her study of the importance of platforms to the UK success of *Forbrydelsen*, BBC FOUR was going through severe budget cuts “including to its foreign acquisitions,” which had predominantly come from the US. The channel had to find novel and inexpensive ways to live up to its commitments, which were, according to the BBC Trust, “to be a mixed-genre television channel for all adults offering an ambitious range of innovative, high quality output that is intellectually and culturally enriching,” including the objective to provide “the best international and foreign language feature films, programming and documentaries” (qtd in Esser 2017, 418). In fact, very few international serial dramas had been

broadcast on the channel before *Forbrydelsen* aired for the first time in January 2011. However, BBC FOUR had found some success with the Swedish Wallander serial (2005–2013) featuring Krister Henriksson as Henning Mankell’s eponymous cop Kurt Wallander in 2008–2010. This first Nordic noir serial to be screened in the UK, was broadcast to coincide with the British adaptation of Mankell’s original novels *Wallander* (2008–2016) on BBC ONE with Kenneth Branagh as the now English-speaking Swedish cop. The UK adaptation of *Wallander* on BBC ONE regularly had around six million viewers, while the Swedish subtitled serial broadcast on BBC FOUR had just below 150,000 viewers. Still constituting a relative success for the niche channel as it was fighting for its survival, the acquisitions team set out to find similar inexpensive but good-quality foreign dramas that could provide the channel with a particular character and a recognizable brand (Esser 2017, 420).

Having learned that AMC had bought the rights to remake the series for the US market, BBC took a chance on this extraordinarily lengthy Danish series, running over twenty episodes in its first season, to see it, surprisingly, become the biggest success of an international drama in the UK, by its second season attracting an average of 1.2 million viewers (Esser 2017, 420) and selling around 300.000 DVD box-sets through the UK distributor Arrow Film’s sub-label Nordic Noir TV (later renamed Nordic Noir & Beyond) – the two distributors responsible for much of the Nordic programming before the arrival of Netflix (2012–) and Channel 4’s video-on-demand service for foreign-language drama, including several Nordic dramas, curated by “Walter Presents” (2016–).

Despite its comparatively limited share of viewers in the UK, *Forbrydelsen/The Killing* quickly became a much wider cultural phenomenon within a significant segment of British viewers, who demonstrated an insatiable thirst for everything to do with *The Killing*, Sarah Lund,

her iconic Faroese knitwear, and *Nordicana* – also the title of an annual festival, which took place in London (June 15–16, 2013; February 1–2, 2014; June 6–7, 2015), organized by Arrow Films to celebrate and promote Nordic television drama and culture, where fans of *The Killing*, *Borgen* and *The Bridge* were able to meet the stars of the Nordic television dramas.

*Forbrydelsen*, therefore, did not travel to the UK “unaccompanied” – it was mobilized through a concerted effort to brand a struggling channel for a particular segment of viewers with a taste for “intellectually” stimulating foreign productions, and was broadcast on the back of a successful British adaptation of a famous Nordic police procedural. However, despite these contextual elements *Forbrydelsen* soon became perceived as *the* original breakthrough Nordic noir serial in the UK.

The cross-cultural iconicity of the series was propelled by stellar reviews, a wave of newspaper features with titles such as “The Killing: Want to live like Sarah Lund?” (Kingsley 2012), and a blog on *The Guardian* that provided a dynamic online community for readers to share their experiences of watching the series as it was screened– experiences that led to comparisons between British and Danish television productions as well as socio-cultural differences (Frost 2011–12). Additionally, *Forbrydelsen* aired following the BBC documentary *Nordic Noir: The History of Scandinavian Crime Fiction* (December 2010), was accompanied by Emma Kennedy’s tie-in “fan-non-fiction” *The Killing Handbook* (2012), a surprisingly persistent appetite for Scandinavian crime fiction in translation, new subtitled Danish and Nordic drama series, and a veritable obsession with all things Danish as captured in a publication such as Patrick Kingsley’s *How to Be Danish: From Lego to Lund. A Short Introduction to the State of Denmark* (2012).

Television scholars have explained international flows in television programs with the thesis that audiences prefer domestic or, at least, culturally proximate programs, suggesting that, for instance, a drama series diminishes its value when leaving its country of origin (Esser 2016, 28). The case of *Forbrydelsen* in the UK suggests an equally persuasive dynamic that the value of a television serial within a particular cultural context and audience segment may on the contrary increase due to its foreignness, its difference from what is domestically available. It is notable that the local source country, Denmark, became a highly “competitive advantage” in the UK reception of *Forbrydelsen*. *The Killing Handbook*, for instance, explains the British infatuation with the serial as embodied in the character of Sarah Lund and her iconic representation of a multifaceted and adaptive Danishness, through which the foreign viewer may access an authentic cross-cultural experience:

This book is your step-by-step guide to everything you’re going to need to pretend you are Danish, bone up on everything suspicious and transform yourself into Sarah Lund herself. You’re going to learn Danish, eat Danish food, study Danish history; you’re going to wrap your noggin round the subtle intricacies of Danish politics (TROOOOOOEEEEELLLLLS), throw yourself into dating Danish-style, transform your living space into Danish interior design heaven, knit a jumper, wear it – and then, and only then, you can travel to Copenhagen, track down all the locations and shout ‘Tak!’ at the top of your voice. (Kennedy 2012, “Introduction”)

While obviously tongue-in-cheek, this fan-non-fiction book is representative of how *Forbrydelsen* and other Danish television serials have been negotiated in the media and in fan

communities in the UK. Made accessible through a recognizable genre and televisual style, *Forbrydelsen* was surprisingly preferable to a British audience for its unintelligible foreign language (seemingly made accessible by way of subtitles and dedicated “binge watching”) and socio-cultural differences; and *not* by its cultural proximity. The tendency, however, of perceiving foreign cultural artefacts as necessarily iconic of and reducible to their national source is noticeable in the often “banal-transnational” British reception of Danish television drama. It reveals a persistent centre-periphery perspective in the way *Forbrydelsen* and other serials have been “adapted” for and received by a UK audience, exemplifying, what Greenblatt has described as, “the allure (and, on occasion, the entrapment) of the firmly rooted” (2010, 252). However, the contact zone of multi-directional gazes on the Danish drama needs equally to be considered a product of the double-storytelling approach adopted by DR and its displacement of the firmly rooted location through the creative merging of foreign forms with domestic content.

### **Based on ...: *Forbrydelsen* Remade**

British journalists and bloggers tended to promote the serial as desirable authentic representation of a contemporary Danish culture and welfare society. When the US remake of *The Killing* was broadcast on Channel 4 in 2011, following the success of the first season of *Forbrydelsen* on BBC, the fear of “loss in adaptation” was palpable. In *The Guardian*, Vicky Frost wrote:

For a start, there won’t be any shouts of Troels!, any sing-song Nanna Birk Larsens, no choruses of TAK! as British viewers kid themselves they can speak fluent Danish. I know it sounds ridiculous but the language, while largely still a mystery to me, did add something to the show, along with those long, dark Danish winter days. And then there

was the complex world of Copenhagen mayoral politics that became incredibly important; the weekly Scandi interiors lust. Can *The Killing* be as good without any of that? (2011, para.3)

By relocating the US version from Copenhagen to Seattle (though it was mostly filmed in Vancouver), the remade serial gestures towards *Forbrydelsen*'s wet and gloomy northern weather, as well as allowing for a whiff of Nordicness in its use of the Ballard location as the home of Rosie Larsen, the murder victim Nanna Birk Larsen in the Danish version. Ballard is the long-time Scandinavian-American neighborhood in the city of Seattle, and is still home to The National Nordic Museum. The relocation also gestures towards David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, the seminal "complex" noir, which, like *The Killing*, followed the murder of a young woman over an entire season, and also had its fictional location in the dreary forests of Washington State, shot as it was around North Bend, WA, some 50 kilometers east of Seattle. *Twin Peaks*' pop-cultural "meme" "Who killed Laura Palmer?" was also recycled in promotional materials and DVD covers for *The Killing* where it became "Who killed Rosie Larsen?" (Akass 2015, 747).

[Fig. 5.1 here.]

However, as the opening credits imply, the US version is loosely "based on the Danish series *Forbrydelsen*." In fact, only the pilot closely follows the source as the following episodes proceed to diverge, interestingly, from *Forbrydelsen*. I shall refrain from a more detailed discussion of how *The Killing* departs from its source, as Lynge Stegger Gemzøe's chapter in the present volume provides an in-depth discussion that considers such changes motivated, in

particular, by the showrunner Veena Sud's assertion of her own authorship. One aspect, however, of the remake's divergence from the source is striking for the way in which the new cultural location imposes itself on the "deeper layer" of the narrative. As the remake was broadcast with *Forbrydelsen* readily available with subtitles, naturally *The Killing* (US) had to introduce a new twist to the ending. The solution was one that is arguably telling for the serial's "rebirth" in a new "political and cultural context." In *Forbrydelsen*, the implication of local politicians in the murder of Nanna Birk Larsen turns out to be a red herring; instead the murderer is a family friend motivated by racism. This chimes well with the serial's double-storytelling dogma as it references current national debates about trust in the political system and growing scepticism about migration and multiculturalism. However, in *The Killing* (US) Rosie Larsen dies almost by accident, although her death implicates political suspects in a cover-up of political corruption, which she witnessed. Arguably the remake delivers a more palatable solution resonating with a more widespread anti-statist trend in American genre fiction and matching audience expectations.

Despite British fears of "loss in adaptation," the first season of *The Killing* (US) fared well with reviewers and viewers alike. Richard Berger notes that it reached two million regular viewers for its first season in the UK, and viewer comments seemed to express less prejudice against adaptation as such and a more complex understanding of how different versions may intersect with each other (Berger 2016). Less preoccupied with fidelity to an original, and more preoccupied with comparing and contrasting the different versions, the reception of *The Killing* (US) when it was broadcast back-to-back with *Forbrydelsen* exemplifies an adjustment to a more contemporary media landscape, where media texts may produce desirable representations of local conditions and identities but ones that may productively be relocated and remixed (Berger

2016, 152). As one reviewer wrote about *The Killing* (US): “The credits for *The Killing* say it is ‘based on’ *Forbrydelsen*. Abridged and remixed might be a better description” ([Tyler 2011](#)).

### **Not Just a Novelization**

How to name and define the relationship between versions, instantiations, remakes, adaptations or remixes and how they relate to the source text are also pertinent considerations when it comes to the lesser-known variant of adaptation, novelization; often considered a “stepchild of adaptation,” according to Jan Baetens (2018, “Introduction”). Associated with mass literature and driven by publishers’ desire to exploit the box-office success of blockbuster movies, novelization remains largely unrecognized in scholarship. It is, according to Baetens, “a form of writing intimately tied not to an author’s inspiration but to a publisher’s strategy, hiring a writer to perform a more or less predetermined job” (“Introduction”). However, beyond the dominant “industrialized” tie-in “screenplay-to-novel” product, there are also examples of a less conventional kind of novelization, “a legitimate cultural variant, close to the forms and status of innovative literature” (“Introduction”).

David Hewson’s *The Killing* presents itself as a hybrid of commercial and “serious literary” novelization. The book version of *Forbrydelsen* was instigated by the British publisher Pan Macmillan, who bought the international rights in competition with several other international publishers (as no Danish publisher had shown interest in the project). At first resembling the practice of an industry-lead novelization, the publisher then approached David Hewson, by no means a freelance writer-for-hire but instead a well-known crime writer of a series set in Italy featuring the detective Nic Costa. Hewson agreed to the project with two important provisos that align the adaptation more clearly with “literary novelization,” as he

explains: “I would only work with my normal book editor, as I didn’t want to have anybody on the TV side having input at an editorial level. Secondly, I wanted the right to change things” (Hewson 2019). Therefore it may be assumed that the publisher treated the project as less of a tie-in novelization and more as a legitimate “literary” project, at the same time as they saw a commercial opportunity for extending the life and success of the television serial by adapting it for the written medium of a novel.

Baetens argues that we should approach novelization as a practice different from what is conventionally understood by adaptation, as a transmedial transfer between a written text and an audio-visual one, since “[t]he majority of novelizations are based on one form or other of the screenplay, thus a verbal pretext, meaning among other things that the problem of ‘translation’ from one semiotic system to another is systematically eluded” (“Introduction”). However, in the case of Hewson’s *The Killing* the artistic ambition led to a circumvention of this practice to claim a degree of authorship (and thereby originality) for the book version – interestingly by distancing the resulting work from the phenomenon of novelization altogether, according to Hewson:

There are people who call it a novelization. It is not a novelization. A novelization is where you just take the script and turn it into a book. I wanted to do something that was much more interesting than that. It was to take the skeleton of the story from the screen, and then to develop it into a novel in its own right, and change things as I saw fit. The Danes [scriptwriter Svestrup and the producers] were very open and said, ‘we are cool with that.’” (Hewson 2019)

The published trilogy does not mention the term novelization in its paratexts; however, on the cover of the first volume we find traits usually associated with industrialized novelization: a portrait of Sarah Lund, the star of the television serial, sporting her Faroese knitwear in cold, blue Nordic-noir tones; the more unusual genre ascription “the novel by” followed by the author name, David Hewson; and finally, at the bottom of the cover in smaller type, the accreditation of the source: “Based on the original screenplay by Søren Sveistrup.” The wording of the accreditation is likely due to a contractual agreement because, as Hewson explains, even if he had wanted to base his version on the screenplay or, more likely, a translation of the screenplay, no such “verbal pretext” existed for the first season that had been shot five years previously. Instead, Hewson worked from the subtitled television drama on DVD, consulted with the original scriptwriter and did research on location in Copenhagen.

[Fig. 5.2 here.]

From these available sources, Hewson created not a novelization but, as he notes in the acknowledgements, his “reimagining of the original story,” which is, as he writes, “mine and mine alone” (Hewson 2012, “Acknowledgements”). In the third novel, Hewson again credits Sveistrup as the creator of the series, but now describes his work as “an adaptation of the TV original story, not a scene-by-scene copy,” although the cover still states it is based on the original screenplay (Hewson 2014, “Acknowledgements”). Apart from affirming a characteristic of novelization, which, according to Baetens, “avails itself of a well-stocked peritextual apparatus,” the negotiation of authorship and a (not entirely consistent) determination of the relationship between “original” and “adaptation” clearly signals an intent to differentiate the

novel as an original in its own right (Baetens 2018, ch.3, para.1). Such differentiation suggests that the initial target audience was imagined to be already familiar with the television serial, necessitating a balanced adaptation that would be recognizable to a UK audience at the same time as adding value to a well-known story (see also Gregoriou 2017, 27).

Recognizability is partly achieved through Hewson's ekphrastic narrative style, which imitates the experience of watching the series on television, but also by adapting the narration to the gaze of the British fan base. For instance, when the narrator provides the reader with the backstory to how Lund ended up wearing her iconic Faroese sweaters, including a subtle nod to the fans themselves who started ordering their own from the small Faroese knitwear company Guðrun & Guðrun:

She still wore the black and white sweater from the Faroes. It was warm and comfy.

Bought it on the holiday just after the divorce, with Mark, trying to ease him through the shock. She liked them so much she got some more. Different colours. Different patterns.

There was a mail order place ... (Hewson 2012, 67)

Apart from using the novel form to add background stories and, through interior-monologues, to provide insights into the thoughts and motivations of the characters unavailable in the television version, Hewson also re-imagined a different ending to the novel – adding a third alternative ending to the available Danish and US endings. However, most notable from a cross-cultural adaptation perspective is Hewson's "cultural translation" of the "foreign" text only made available to him through the limited resource of subtitles. In fact, Hewson's adaptation points to its foreign location and source text through an extended use of Danish place names

(Pinseskoven, Politigården, the Rådhus), titles (Vicekriminalkommissær, overborgmester) and phrases (borgfred, undskyld), to a degree that an English reader might find the alluded foreignness overdetermined.

However, the linguistic foreignization may also correspond with the widely shared experience of UK *Forbrydelsen* fans that the Danish language, in fact, added value to the television series, recalling Vicky Frost's wonder about the attraction of the incomprehensible Danish: "while largely still a mystery to me, [it] did add something to the show." Rather than simply attempting to domesticate the source text, Hewson adds Danish cultural references where the source text points to more internationally known phenomena, as for instance when Sarah Lund's partner Meyer has a delivery from Burger King in the television series, Hewson instead gets him a hotdog from a traditional Danish *pølsevogn* (sausage stand) (Hewson 2012, 117; Gregoriou 2017, 32). Hewson's adaptation hereby emphasizes not only a sense of place in a way made possible by the written medium, he also taps into a British touristic desire, at first generated by *Forbrydelsen*, for exotic Danish locations, society, food, interiors and language. However, Hewson's novelistic treatment of *Forbrydelsen*'s locations not merely overdetermines their Danishness; he treats them in an international noir style as well not unlike the style of the television serial. The simultaneous location and dislocation of the narrative is made explicit in the narrator's extended commentary on cultural contexts and locations including Copenhagen:

the capital city, a sprawling metropolis where more than a fifth of Denmark's five and a half million natives lived and worked, bickered and fought. Young and old, Danish-born and recent, sometimes half-welcome, immigrant. Honest and diligent, idle and corrupt. A city like any other. (2012, 12)

Apart from providing the non-Danish reader with localized cultural context, Hewson's hardboiled narration makes Copenhagen reminiscent of Raymond Chandler's Los Angeles, "a city no worse than others," illustrating the ways in which the adaptation at once constructs and disavows its cultural connotation (Archer 2014, 222). The English-language novelization of *Forbrydelsen* demonstrates that the successful transnational mobility of the television serial hinges on equal measures of performative authenticity (e.g. in foreignizing or "Danifying" the English text and giving verbal form to the experience of *watching* the "original" Danish television drama) and domestication (e.g. through a hardboiled narrative style and intertextual references to an Anglo-American tradition, and by rewriting a plot that was originally meant to conform to the DR "double-storytelling" dogma).

That Danish readers would accept a translated version of Hewson's novelization of, what in Denmark has become celebrated as, a seminal Danish contribution to global television, would probably have been too much to ask. While the first volume was indeed published by Lindhardt og Ringhof in Danish, reviews were mostly lukewarm complaining variously that the novelization was either too similar or different from the serial. The same could be said of the translation itself, which on the one hand tends to "normalize" Hewson's hardboiled, visualizing narration, and on the other maintains redundant contextual cultural information (such as explaining how many of the Danes live in Copenhagen), which may appear strange to a Danish reader. So far, the two remaining volumes remain untranslated into Danish, while in several other languages all three have and continue to reach large numbers of readers. Now more than a decade since *Forbrydelsen* first aired on Danish television, it is likely that audiences outside of

Denmark might think that *Forbrydelsen* is an interesting Danish television adaptation of an original British series of novels.

Adding the British “novelization” to the expanded adaptation network of *Forbrydelsen*, wherein “one version is no worse than others,” emphasizes the extent to which the crime fiction television serial presents an opportunity for transnational and transmedial relocations. The migration of *Forbrydelsen* from a peripheral Nordic location to Anglophone centers has been driven not only by the quality of the screenwriting, production and the adapted international style of the Danish serial: *Forbrydelsen* has proven pliable to cross-cultural negotiations and to particular local needs, desires and circumstances, through which new “Killings” have been imagined to lead investigations down other possible alleyways – and, eventually, back to *Forbrydelsen*, whose notable originality entirely rests in its inherent adaptability.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Mette Hjort’s study *Small Nation, Global Cinema* (2005), for a comparative example of how Danish “small-nation” cinema, in particular the Dogme 95 films, successfully created an alternative peripheral model of cultural globalization to challenge the dominant center of Hollywood.

<sup>2</sup> Greenblatt borrows the term “contact zone” from Mary Louise Pratt, who defines such zones as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (1991, 34).

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