Mediating the North in Crime Fiction

Merging the Vernacular Place with a Cosmopolitan Imaginary

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Abstract

The multifaceted idea of the north is deeply embedded in literary and visual culture. This culturally forged and globally disseminated idea embraces the narratives of fear, as well elements of the supernatural and fantastic, political dimensions or specific topographies. By departing from the Nordic Noir subgenre, a globally dispersed literary genre, this article investigates how the depiction of local and global place creates an imaginary, which is in turn bound up with a broader notion of the north as an ostensible “elsewhere.” The article argues that the Nordic Noir’s foreign allure and overwhelming success rests upon a culturally forged idea of the north, found worldwide in various cultural expressions such as myths, folklore, fairy tales, literature, and contemporary cinema and trails centuries back in cultural history worldwide.

Keywords

crime fiction – north – vernacular – cosmopolitan – world literature – marketing

Introduction

On a map, Scandinavia consists of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. On a bookstore shelf, this geography changes, for “Scandinavian crime fiction” brands *Nordic Noir*, a genre consisting of fiction from Scandinavia, Iceland and Finland.¹ In the transnational book market, place and space change further still,

1 It is notable that the term Nordic here is accurate, geographically, although its branding as Scandinavian is not.

as literatures become embedded in a globalized media landscape of popular images and digital representations. This marketing is designed to sell books. And it has become especially poignant over the last decades, with literary production in the transnational book market shifting from national publishing houses to international multimedia conglomerates.

Marketing seems undervalued in academia and few scholars have embraced it as an empirical departure to examine an international commercial literature's circulation or its connection to cultural production and the production of literature itself (Brouillette *Postcolonial and Literature*; Helgesson and Vermeulen; Nilsson "Uncovering" and "Covering"; Steiner; Squires). The relationship between a book's content and its contextual representation needs further investigation, one that intersects with the concept of *place*.

Place itself, in the Nordic countries often a white-spotted terrain, snakes through a narrative, moving between vernacular and cosmopolitan imaginary spaces. Within a theoretical framework, the vernacular and cosmopolitan—especially with regards to how to define world literature studies and its subjects—have been widely discussed, but there has been little exploration of place.

When place was previously investigated, for example by Edward Said in his work on Western world's orientalism, it emerged from a blend of geographical location and the imaginary; or in Eric Prieto's exposition of the role literature and other imaginative arts play when an emerging geographical space becomes an autonomous place, one with its own identity, the argument shows that fictional representations have a seminal impact in shaping attitudes towards a specific environment (Said; Prieto).

My interest lies in the representation of place, as outlined in fictional narratives and its journeys across a globalized mediascape, where place comes to represent both the fictional narrative and its real-world context and geography. Here crime fiction offers a highly underestimated empirical departure, as it occupies a unique niche as a genre intimately connected to place: the depicted milieus provide the *settings* for the plots and often play a thematic role in the novels (Geherin 5–8; Lutwack; Pezzotti). Portrayals of specific places, like major cities, become the forefront rather than the backdrop of some works, and readers come to associate the places with the literary depictions. Thus, Sherlock Holmes' London is our London, we see Los Angeles through Philip Marlowe's eyes, and Stockholm is the one Stieg Larsson has created. However, these descriptions in literature exist in a literary space separate from the very place depicted, despite contributing to the formation of the popular perception of a given geographical space.

In the realm of world literature, per Damrosch's definition (*What*), crime fiction is highly neglected, yet it encompasses so many literary traits: vernacular,

broaching themes like life and death, crime and punishment, conflict, values and morals, violence, society and politics, and the formulation of a social critique of its native context. The most widespread of all literary genres, crime fiction is cosmopolitan by default, located at the intersection of reality and fiction, displaying local, national and international discourses via its characters and plots, which are set in the rural countryside or major cities like Beijing, Cairo, London, Los Angeles or Milan. Collectively, these works function as travel guides for their countries of origin for international audiences (Nilsson, Damrosch and D'haen *Crime*; Bertens and D'haen *Contemporary*).

After the gargantuan success of Stieg Larsson's *Millennium Trilogy*, crime fiction has surged in Nordic countries. Known as Nordic Noir, this subgenre is given, as noted above, the inaccurate descriptor of "Scandinavian crime fiction."² The ensuing media discourse perceived Nordic crime fiction as exotic, and it began to circulate in the transnational book market with its hibernal aesthetic and frost-and-snow book jackets. This take, echoed within academic discourse, belies the complexity of the circulation of domestic literatures on a transnational book market, dismissing the marketing strategy, where *place* holds a key position. It simplifies the impact of literatures' display as representation in the globalized mediascape, though in reality this is where the book becomes a form of visually framed glocal literature (Nilsson "Covering").

Starting from this crossroad of place and marketing, this article examines how Nordic Noir visually merges into the transnational book market's cosmopolitan mediascape. Using marketing as a source, along with the books themselves and film adaptations, the article will show the complexity of a domestic crime fiction's becoming a globally shared literature. Once a book is translated, its circulation beyond borders is a multilayered and multifaceted process, of which the narrative is only a part. The media is influential in introducing a domestic book to potential international readers.

The perception of literature is a negotiation between content and contexts, such as marketing or media discourse, in relation to the concept of place, which opens up an understanding of the interplay between culturally-rooted imaginaries and contemporary literary production. This theoretical framework and methodological approach draw upon Arjun Appadurai's concept of "global imaginary," Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discourse theory, and Claire Squires' understanding of marketing.

2 As mentioned before, the Nordic countries consist of the Scandinavian countries—Denmark, Norway and Sweden—along with Finland and Iceland. It is common to label crime fiction from these five countries as "Scandinavian," even though Finland and Iceland are not a part of Scandinavia. The term *Scandinavian* has become a way of branding literatures.

In *Marketing Literature*, Squires defines marketing as a *representation* transcending the actual sale of a book. Conceptually, this entails different agents such as publishing houses, the entertainment industry or print media collectively “packaging” a book for sale by creating the “stories” around the books. Per this definition, a magazine article functions as part of the representation, as does the jacket design, a movie poster or a remake (Squires 51).³

With globalization, the world of commodities has blended with that of news and politics, a change that Appadurai illuminates in his analysis of the mechanisms that govern contemporary society’s global mediascape. Experiences of the surrounding world—through media like print, celluloid, electronic screens, billboards—form a narrative that blurs the lines between the fictional and the real (Appadurai “Disjuncture” 31). Art, news and entertainment cultures coalesce in the twenty-first century’s global mediascape, inviting the viewer to create “imaginary worlds.” Media, private or state-based, is image-centered and narrative-based, delivering a mosaic of reality. These elements easily transform into plots and characters, providing the spectator with a narrative. Here a “global imaginary” rises of not only the spectator’s own life and context, but also of people in other geographical places (Appadurai “Disjuncture” 31). Unseen places and unknown actions therefore unfold every day, transforming into known territories and knowledge through film, posters, books, art, or news reports, whether in print or on a screen.

Crime fiction functions as entertainment and a social critique, tied to a specific vernacular and local place that, once circulating in a transnational context, becomes a cosmopolitan imaginary. Thus, crime fiction should be understood as a discursive field—a network consisting of elements and nodal points that are connected to and build on each other. The nodal points forming this discursive field can include subgenres, iconic works, authors, and domestic literature. This discursive field is not static but flexible, yielding openness where new nodal points can emerge. An established genre, crime fiction holds a hegemonic position in the book market, intersecting with a number of discourses: entertainment culture, social critique, self-positioning as a literature that is political and that challenges cultural norms and views on gender, ethnicity, morals, ethics, etc. This approach follows Ernesto Laclau’s and Chantal Mouffe’s development of discourse as a system of social relations consisting of both linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena, including forms of behavior or visual representations (Howarth 101).

3 For a deeper understanding of Claire Squires’ definition of marketing, see especially Chapter Three in *Marketing Literature*.

Within this discursive field, elements appear continuously, striving to establish identities and subject positions. The elements then compete to strengthen their position and become nodal points, which are constructed through linguistic as well as non-linguistic practices. Elements can be unknown writers of a foreign literature, trying to position themselves in the field through connection to other nodal points. For example, a Swedish crime writer can connect to Nordic Noir, which has become its own nodal point and acknowledged worldwide, or to another established genre or theme in the field. Through articulatory practices, including the many elements involved in constructing a compelling paratext, these can merge successfully into the field, connecting to other nodal points, then establishing independent identities to become independent fixed nodal points which, in their turn, connect to others. As discourses are open, identities continuously change and evolve. Meaning, therefore, is only partially fixed within the field (Howarth 101–107).

Nordic Noir as a whole, and as separate national-representing nodal point, I submit, has gone from foreign element to well-established nodal point in many markets via successfully articulating its own identity and connecting to other nodal points of the discursive field through genre, nationality, author-branding, bestseller status, place-representation and specific geography. Following discourse analysis, a subject position can possess a number of social relations, all providing different identities. Thus, a domestic literature may represent the vernacular or national, and circulate within the transnational field as a cosmopolitan literature. A crime fiction novel may spur film or television adaptations, which entertain and spotlight a specific social problem (thereby connecting to another discourse).⁴

This essay discusses how the articulatory practices surrounding Nordic crime fiction connect to the crime fiction's international discursive field and how it, as a domestic literature, visually merges with a cosmopolitan mediascape, especially focusing on the role ideas about place, landscape, and climate play in a transnational book market. In the case of Nordic Noir, I argue that the marketing and media discourse visually merged a local literature with crime fiction's global discursive field and its mediascape by successfully connecting to a cosmopolitan imaginary of the *north*. Here, media discourse should be considered an ally to marketing as a representation.

4 Compare with the marketing of Swedish crime fiction and its connection to popular culture and cultural tropes (Nilsson *Crime Fiction*).

Media's Frosting Discourse

Scandinavian crime novels have a special appeal to non-Nordic readers. Densely atmospheric, a sub-Arctic chill creeps into the stories and darkness descends on the characters like winter twilight. They have their own genre: Nordic Noir.

The quote above, from Canadian *Metro's* review in 2016 of Anne Holt's *Dead Joker*, exemplifies foreign audiences' perception of Nordic crime fiction. For such readers, the Nordic climate and location frame the genre as "special." This dovetails with the current appeal of crime fiction to foreign readers, supporting the genre's reputation for delivering bestsellers. Nevertheless, many bestselling Nordic Noir novels achieve this status in the domestic market before arousing interest abroad, as happened with Swedish writers Arne Dahl, Håkan Nesser or Camilla Läckberg. Similarly, Henning Mankell began writing crime fiction as a social critique of the Swedish welfare state and the escalation in racism following increased immigration, a subject matter targeting the domestic market.

Perhaps this critique inadvertently propelled Mankell's success abroad, as it coincided with a major theme in the media discourse surrounding crime fiction: namely politics, which recur in crime fiction, as a series of representations that overlap with the ideological dimensions imminent in the genre. These themes co-exist along with that of the Nordic landscape (often referred to as Scandinavia) and its impact on human psychology, yielding *why* Nordic crime fiction sells.

For example, Julie Bosman writes in the *New York Times* that Nordic Noir "often includes a cold, stark setting and a grizzled detective figure," bolstered by a "bleak and icy" jacket adorned with "frozen lakes, barren forests" and sometimes "foreboding bloodstains." According to Jeremy Megraw and Billy Rose, writing an overview of Nordic crime fiction for The New York Public Library, the appeal stems from the "stoic nature of its detectives" and their "close relationship with death." The detective, "a Bergamanesque figure," is enhanced and mirrored by the "bleak Scandinavian landscape," as s/he contemplates "the long dark winter."

Such descriptions evidence the patterns present in media perception and depiction of the genre within the transnational discourse on Nordic crime fiction. It is this mediascape that produces vivid articles, reviews, film adaptations and remakes of the novels. A Google search of Nordic crime novels and authors yields abundant film and book reviews, interviews with authors, directors, actors and actresses, book blogs, web pages like the Ameri-

can Scandinaviancrimefiction.com, the German Krimi-Couch.de, the British Crimefictionlover.com, and the *Swedish Book Review*, which, like *Crime Scene Magazine*, a fellow entertainment publication, has a printed edition. It is important to note that in the discursive field of Nordic Noir all the above cited media and digital clusters of readers, contribute to the creation of a global imaginary of Nordic Noir as well as the novels' true geographical location—the Nordic countries.

The media's repetitive descriptions of the Nordic countries, found in publications like *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, as well as the culture-oriented digital magazine *Word and Film*, forge a discourse of how to talk about and perceive crime fiction from these nations. When describing Swedish crime novels, the wordplay in headlines and descriptions is standard, "thawing" cold cases and "Bleak landscapes" house the "Viking spirit," and at the core of the "depraved" murder-swamped north is its "stoic nature." These impressions blend with stories about the genre's authors, such as Stieg Larsson. Phrases like "it all began with a dead body" refer to his sudden and tragic death, and how the Millennium-trilogy paved the way for emergent Scandinavian writers, described as the new "stars of a lethal genre". When *New York Magazine* published a minor piece about David Fincher's remake of Larsson's first Millennium-trilogy, the article headline dubbed Fincher's remake as "Iced in Ice" (Crace; Ebiri; Miller "Thawing"; Miller "The Strange Case", Piesner; Spines).

This wordplay uses common dichotomies like hot and cold, e.g. "hot literature" from a "cold country," or blood drops (once warm) on cold white snow. This trend carries over to the business side of crime fiction, high sales lead to considering the novels "very cool cases" that make "exceptionally hot properties." Another frequent term is "dark," contrasted with "light." Established authors are described as "Kings" and "Queens," while a new writer is considered "Another Northern Star" (Tucker; Berlins; Romei; France).

The dominant view of Nordic crime fiction as alluring tales set in a mysterious northern landscape, which inflicts itself on the minds of its inhabitants, extends beyond merely marketing the novels (e.g. snowy covers). It is a strategy for catching readers' attention and maintaining their interest in a book review. Such media discourse reflects Nordic Noir while contributing to its creation and visual framing.

Nordic Noir's aesthetic, framed by geography and climate, relates to the other fundamental question: why is Nordic Noir so successful? In an article in *The Wall Street Journal* on Nordic crime fiction, Miller claims the recipe for an international bestseller is a "wintery landscape," a "dead body," a "mopey main character," and a location near the Arctic Circle ("The Strange Case").

In 2009, *L Magazine* and *Slate* published articles that argued against each other on how Scandinavian crime fiction became so successful. In these articles different answers were given. Writing for the *Slate*, Nathaniel Rich argued that the crime novels were not unique due to “Nordic grimness,” but because of an “almost sublime tranquility.” According to him, readers perceived a “dark bloodstain in a field of pure, white snow” as “far creepier” than “a body ditched in a trash-littered alley.” In this vein, he noted that corpses in a Mankell novel are often discovered in “serene” and “bucolic” environments. Larissa Kyzer, writing in the *L Magazine*, argued that reviewers separated the Nordic crime fiction from its American and European counterparts, attributing to Nordic Noir an exotic otherness seen in the characters’ mindset and geographic location. The appeal exists, she debates, in how the novels depict political and social problems, representing “an existential crisis” ensuing from a changing society (e.g. the decay of the welfare state and increased immigration), with narratives deeply rooted in “everyday life societal tensions.”

These two different views are not always in opposition; often they co-exist. In the marketing of Nordic Noir, the media discourse has become an important ally. Different media expressions serve as hubs for the subgenre’s transnational spread by alerting readers to new works by established or debuting authors. Such discourse is accompanied by captivating images, mostly lurid book covers or promotional photos from movie adaptations, which create a visual package for the novels, framing the genre in a transnational market, through an aesthetic and dramatic flair (Nilsson “Uncovering”).⁵

Per Squires, these media expressions are part of Nordic Noir’s representation that can be re-used in marketing and vice versa. Thus, the media creates an expectation of Nordic Noir, consequently influencing the novels’ marketing. In turn, book jacket designs are stark images inciting display and discussion in the media surrounding Nordic Noir. Therefore, the marketing *and* the media discourse should be regarded as two separate activities that influence each other. The media also creates stories about the subgenre, leveraging the Nordic climate and landscape to add a dramatic, aesthetic layer and glaze the northerners in a mysterious allure. As discursive analysis shows, an element needs to position itself, intersect and merge into the dominating discourse to become a nodal point. Thereby—as argued above—the media discourse also leads the way for marketing, as readers become trained to associate the frosted cover with Nordic Noir, creating a strategy for positioning the novel in the book market.

5 Compare with Brouillette, *Postcolonial and Literature*.

To fully understand this media discourse, it has to be contextualized and placed in a wider historical perspective. However enticing these Nordic Noir covers are outside of its domestic market, snowy images do not furnish an exotic and unique framing for the Nordic countries in general. Part of Nordic Noir's foreign appeal rests on a longstanding culturally forged idea of the north, found worldwide in cultural expressions such as myths, folklore, fairy tales, literature and contemporary cinema.

Old North, Contemporary Crime Covers

Renaissance historian Peter Davidson writes in *The Idea of the North* (2005) that everyone carries a notion of the "North." In its most tangible form, the north appears as topography linked to a specific region on the map: jagged Alpine glaciers, the ice-bound poles and arctic floes; but the north can also be a regional experience. Besides the Nordic countries, Canada serves as another example of a geographical place with a strong and complex connection to the ideas and imaginaries of north. In her seminal study, *Canada and the Idea of North*, Sherrill E. Grace examines how different signifying practices, like film, literature, drama, painting or music shaped a vivid representation of the Canadian north that is connected to ideas of national identity. Grace explores how the north is used to signify numerous aspects of human behavior and society, and influences a wide array of practices besides the arts, like political and spiritual activities or human psychology. North, she writes, describes a deadly, cold, empty and barren place, isolated and mysterious, yet at the same time a location for sublime beauty, friendliness, and inhabited by gods (Grace 16–17).⁶

This idea of north transcends different geographical locations. In China, the Great Wall marks the beginning of the north, the place from where invaders come. In Japan, the north is Hokkaidō Island, home of Ainu people. For a Swede, the north entails Lapland or, farther still, Iceland or the North Pole. For an Italian, though, north could be Switzerland as well as northern Italy. For a Catholic in southern Europe, the north is from where Protestants hail. No matter where one is, "north" is always elsewhere, a compass pointing beyond. Often, in tales of north, it is inhabited by the Other, home to people perceived

6 The idea of north has been investigated from different angles, especially within Canadian research. For further reading upon the theme, see: Epstein, Atwood, Strange and Loo, Ísleifsson and Chartier, Jakobsson, Jørgensen and Sörlin.

as culturally different, with their own traditions and/or representing a different kind of mentality (Davidson 7–20, 38).

Northern locations manifest in literature, painting, travel writing and modern science as locales to be discovered and defined. An imaginary north, intimately entwined with ghost stories and the fantastic, appears often. It is often gendered as female, as in Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen* (1844). Another example is Zembla, an imaginary land in a distant north in Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Pale Fire* (1962). Zembla is a place from where Kinbote recounts memories and stories from his earlier past (Davidson 9, 109 f.).

The idea of north also intersects with the western history of technology and natural sciences, as scientists and explorers—following the scientific revolutions and the idea of modern progress (Jørgensen and Sörlin)—considered the north a challenge to both use and examine.

Nordic Noir represents the exoticism of the north, as an imaginary space and a geographical location, in the perception of its works outside its domestic context. The north lies in imaginations, situated in the local vernacular, the regional and national, and in cosmopolitan ideas, along with literary and visual imaginaries. Here, marketing and the literature's aesthetic framing in the media discourse impact the notion of the narratives. The power of the north, following Davidson's understanding, comes from the concept's elasticity. This makes the idea of north a very attractive nodal point for an element trying to establish itself on the discursive field; for example, an unknown writer from a country or region characterized by a cold, wintery climate.

The north carries an intrinsic allure for crime fiction because of its reputation as the site of extremes and extraordinary natural phenomena. In the north, the spectacular—like foxfires and auroras—rises out of harsh cold and darkness. Such is the multifaceted notion of the north, gravitating between its physical reality and the fantasy surrounding it. This vision functions as a dramatic setting to frame Nordic Noir, both in marketing and in the media discourse. Thus, Nordic Noir and its literary and visual narratives are bound with this historic legacy, centering on this idea of the north deeply embedded in cultural history.

This same fascination infusing the ideas of north, resonates in *how* the media frames and perceives Nordic Noir. Along with being a marketing trope, snowy landscapes and winter climates commonly add flavor, drama and aesthetics to plots. When examining the articulatory practice for establishing Nordic Noir as its own set of nodal points, the north has functioned as an important nodal point in the discursive field for crime fiction as whole. Nordic Noir, therefore, has successfully (been) connected to the idea of north and thereby to other nodal points sharing the same tropes, positioning itself through its geography.

It is not strange that snowy covers and a frosty media discourse swirls around these crime fiction narratives. The northern landscape and its cold climate are significant to the stories. Camilla Läckberg's *The Ice Princess* (*Isprinsessan*) opens with a woman's corpse turned blue in a water-filled bathtub. The water's surface is covered by a thin layer of ice and bitter cold wind wends through the house. Similarly, Henning Mankell's opening scene in *The Man from Beijing* (*Kinesen*) takes the reader into snow-covered woods where a hungry wolf sinks his teeth into a frozen corpse—a scene carefully rendered in *Los Angeles Times* review of the book. The common jacket designs for both authors' books include natural landscapes like barren forests and lakes or an abandoned road. The Nordic climate and a northbound location are central themes in Åsa Larsson's series about the lawyer Rebecka Martinsson that takes places in Norrbotten County, in Sweden's north. In *Until Thy Wrath Be Past* (*Till dess din vrede upphör*) an ice-covered lake hides secrets from the past.

The problem, per Franco Moretti's approach (*Conjectures* 161) is how this commercially rooted aesthetic and the perception of this subgenre intersects with a wider cultural context and history. Book covers have to make sense and situate the novel in the market of genres and in the discursive field for crime fiction. Employed as a marketing tool, the northern imagery gives Nordic Noir a dramatic setting and labels the domestic crime fiction through its home geography and topography. This strategy visually connects the domestic literature to an already established cosmopolitan aesthetic which then situates crime fiction in the market of genres, as in the discursive field for crime fiction. These ideas of the north, contemporary marketing strategies and its belonging to a globally spread popular culture come together in the articulatory practices surrounding Stieg Larsson's Millennium-trilogy.

Defrosted Covers

In April 2012, *Los Angeles Times* heralded the success of the Swedish crime fiction through David Fincher's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, a remake of the Swedish movie based on Stieg Larsson's novel (*Män som hatar kvinnor*) launched in English translation under the same title. The article on Fincher's remake included a promotional photograph and an eye-catching flow of book covers, emblematic of the media discourse on the mysterious north—in this case, Sweden. The article's headline, "Mysterious Sweden," and the accompanying photo for the article, shot by fashion-photographer Jean-Baptiste Mondino, depicts a half-naked Rooney Mara as the film's lead character, Lisbeth Salander.

Mara is in a snowy landscape, her hands covering her bare breasts. While this serves to visually frame Lisbeth, it simultaneously portrays an idea of north: a harsh snow covered Stockholm. The photograph was originally published in the American fashion magazine, *w*, as part of a photo spread of Mara, showing the multilayered circulation and reproduction of images in the media (April 2012).

The bold headline and promotional photo of Mara draw attention, much in the fashion of book covers, and her partial nudity against a stark winter landscape harkens to the eerie vulnerability of more universal crime fiction tropes: silhouettes and body parts against urban landscapes or behind clouded glass, lurking at the tops of stairs, jarring images like blood spattered women's shoes.⁷ Here the visual embedding keeps to the aesthetic of a bestselling novel following a film adaptation and blockbuster Hollywood remake. The article also demonstrates how the idea of north is *renewed* and given a new imaginary in the global mediascape, where the film spurs a new set of images, and generates a new host of articles in magazines worldwide about the movie, its director or actors, which are, in turn, affiliated with the adapted novel. This puts the literature in the limelight for those who perhaps neither read the book nor knew the movie was based on a book. Thus, opportunity is created for new translations of the original work and new promotional campaigns of the original book, such as re-releasing it as a movie tie-in, images from the movie on its cover. The connections, then, ultimately cast back to highlight the subgenre Nordic Noir. In this way, often other works and other writers in this genre gain exposure.

There are, however, a few differences between the domestic film adaptation of Larsson's first novel and Fincher's remake. Generally, Fincher follows the script of the domestic film, but there is one obvious change in the film's ending.⁸ The Swedish movie, *Män som hatar kvinnor* (2009), ends with Lisbeth Salander stepping out of a limousine, a close-up of her face lets us glimpse a subtle smile. Salander is in disguise, wearing a blond wig and a fancy dress. She walks away along a palm-tree-lined sidewalk by a shimmering blue ocean. She disappears into a tropical paradise—the Cayman Islands—before the fade-out and the closing credits. She walks off-screen empowered, having gotten

7 The writers of the novels on display here are: Leif G.W. Persson, Anders Roslund and Börje Hellström, Lars Kepler, Liza Marklund, Åsa Larsson, Håkan Nesser, Kristina Ohlsson, Katarina Wennstam, Karin Alfredsson.

8 There are differences in the portrayal of the characters; but it is not possible to elaborate further on this within this article's limits.

away with stealing millions of Swedish crowns from one of the story's many villains. Though this scene occurs in the novel in the last plot-solving chapter, it is not the very ending. Fincher's adaptation ends in a manner true to the novel.

In Fincher's version, Salander disappears into the dark, snowy night on her motorbike, departing from Södermalm, outside the journalist Mikael Blomkvist's apartment. Before she takes off, she watches Blomkvist from afar, leaving in a cab with Erika Berg, lover and colleague, just as in Larsson's original ending, after the tropical scene.

These two film adaptations of the same crime fiction novel show, through their depiction of place, how a physical environment ties into the plot and characters' psychology. These final scenes show the significance of place: the domestic version chose to end with Salander in a tropical paradise, while the American version returns her to Larsson's snowy, dark Stockholm. It is an example of two exotics: a snowy, northbound Stockholm for the foreign audience, a tropical paradise for the domestic one. However, it is important to note that both "exotics" exist within the original work Larsson penned, the directors simply chose which aesthetics to highlight.

Before Salander walks away—in both adaptations—there are two other scenes, which bridge to the films' final frames. In the domestic version, Blomkvist is watching the news on his computer. The news anchor, who talks about the villain Wennerström, brought down by Blomkvists and Salander, announces that police are searching for a woman. Here the news shows a still of a surveillance camera, capturing Salander in disguise, on the Cayman Islands. Salander is therefore away, physically and emotionally out of Blomkvist's reach. However, the viewers are just about to see her empowered as a happy woman on her own, strolling through paradise.

In the remake, Blomkvist is out of reach for her. The news scene remains but ends with Blomkvist watching a TV-screen at his haunt, the Kaffebär in Stockholm, located on Södermalm. There is a quick cut to Salander writing a card, then another to her outside Blomkvist's apartment on Södermalm. She sees him disappear with Berger, for what appears to be a romantic encounter. The look on Salander's face is that of an utterly lonely woman, and not that of an empowered woman standing alone, as she is depicted in the book. Then she disappears into the Stockholm night, frozen and dark as her mind.

Both endings exemplify how the vernacular draws on cultural tropes circulating in a cosmopolitan mediascape. The very last frames of both movies also show two Salanders: a cold, lonely woman in a wintery cityscape, versus an anti-heroine, rich in stolen money, in paradise. Her locations in these specific places then become bearers of two imaginaries.

Depictions of a *specific vernacular place* are often visually adaptable to *other vernacular places* outside a literature's national context. A non-Scandinavian reader living in a climate resembling Scandinavia may identify with the text. A reader in tropical setting might perceive the cold climate exotic, while identifying with scenes that take place in a warm climate.

Through literature, fictional depictions merge with real places, which create, per Appadurai, a "global imaginary." The frosted Nordic Noir embeds the Nordic countries in a perception of the dangerous *north*. This notion is then used by media and marketing towards the subgenre's transnational circulation, contributing to its representation in a global mediascape. These associations of a cold, dark exotic north can transcend, then, what seems at first a contrasting marketing move and intersect with a cosmopolitan spread of international popular culture, instead of being images solely linked to the exotic vernacular Swedish north (Nilsson "Uncovering").

In sum, in this article I have delved into the interplay between place and marketing in relation to a literature's circulation. I have applied an understanding of marketing as a representation, and its ties to media discourse and film adaptation, and how these expressions govern our perception of the novel narratives and understanding of a specific literature. I have contextualized the marketing strategy, the wintry tropes, to show how the contemporary visual framing of literature in different media belongs to a wider cultural context.

The transnational circulation where different literatures strive to establish themselves should be understood as a discursive field where new literatures or subgenres function as elements, connecting to other nodal points and clusters through, for example, cultural tropes of marketing, in their positioning to become their own nodal points.

The underpinning aim with this article's analysis has been to exemplify the circulation—by using a subgenre defined as a bearer of the vernacular and exotic—of domestic literature in a cosmopolitan mediascape and how the visual contexts embedding the novels may govern the perception of the literature. A highly fruitful methodological approach to problematize and gain a deeper understanding of this circulation is offered by discourse analysis, as outlined by Mouffe and Laclau, which integrates the non-linguistic dimension with the linguistic in their conceptualization of discourse. This approach, I argue, is applicable to literature as a whole, and Nordic Noir only serves as an example of the strategies surrounding literature today.

Nordic Noir exemplifies how a foreign literature, as an unknown element, can successfully become its own cluster of nodal points within the discursive field for crime fiction by positioning itself and connecting to other nodes. For

Nordic Noir, the dynamic, worldwide spread and folkloristic infused narrative of the north becomes a seminal component of the articulatory practice that manages, through marketing and media discourse, to hit a nerve among possible readers as well as movie goers.

An important aspect to consider here is that even if a spectator perceives a specific location through a narrative in novel or film, or even its visual embedment in the media, this representation of the vernacular place might be drawing upon other imaginaries, already circulating in a cosmopolitan mediascape.

In the end, the snow, the mystery, the unknown with its edge of danger, has always been here, in a northbound elsewhere. Even before Nordic Noir.

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