TURUN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

THE SOUNDS OF NORDIC NOIR

Kaapo Huttunen

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SARJA – SER. B OSA – TOM. 689 | HUMANIORA | TURKU 2024

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ABSTRACT

Nordic noir, the distinctive form of crime fiction from the Nordic region, has become unprecedentedly successful in this millennium. Its dark crime stories have gained a global audience, especially in audiovisual form, and it can well be said that Nordic noir has become a kind of a window onto the Nordic societies and their mental landscapes. It mediates images and impressions of the North to the world but also to the Nordic people themselves. Music and other sounds are central constituents of cinematic expression and, therefore, have a significant role also in audiovisual Nordic noir. However, although Nordic noir has already been studied extensively, its sonic aspects have thus far mainly been left outside analytical scrutiny.

This article-based thesis investigates, how music and sound design operate as components of audiovisual expression and narration in representative examples of audiovisual Nordic noir, and more precisely, how music and sound design partake in the socially critical ethos characteristic of Nordic noir, as well as the depiction of the Nordic region and Nordicness. A mixed-method approach is applied, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods with viewpoints especially from cultural musicology and phenomenology. The thesis also actively participates in the current critical debate on the nature of Nordic noir.

In addition to the summary section, this thesis presents four original research articles. Of the articles, three discuss particular film and television series that can be considered key representatives of audiovisual Nordic noir, focusing in each case on the first season of the series and foregrounding the soundtrack as a central factor in the audiovisual whole. The series are *Wallander* (Sweden 2005–2013), *The Killing* (*Forbrydelsen*, Denmark 2007–2012), and *The Bridge* (*Bron/Broen*, Sweden/Denmark 2011–2018). The fourth research article, in turn, takes a notably larger sample, as it examines the title sequences of Nordic noir series. Thirty-three title sequences in total from nineteen different series were included in the audiovisual analysis.

By expanding Nordic noir scholarship to include also the sonic dimensions of the series, the study produces new knowledge on Nordic noir as a cultural phenomenon. It demonstrates that, in Nordic noir, sounds – music included – are an essential constituent in varied audiovisual strategies, through which the narrative content of the series is linked to the sociocultural reality outside the storyworld. In doing so, the series utilise existing conceptions of the North and the Nordic society and culture and also place them in a critical light. Thus this study also finds that, contrary to what has been stated in some instances – and despite certain observable family re-

semblances – Nordic noir does not have a specific distinctive sonic character, but the series are notably different in their expression regarding music and sound design – and therefore also their audiovisual appearance as a whole.

KEYWORDS: Crime fiction, crime drama, television series, audiovisual, television music, film music, film sound, sound design, integrated soundtrack, Nordic countries, Nordic region, Nordicness, social criticism, welfare society

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Nordic noir, tunnusomaisesti pohjoismainen rikosfiktion muoto, on menestynyt tällä vuosituhannella ennennäkemättömän hyvin. Sen synkät rikostarinat ovat saavuttaneet kansainvälisen yleisön erityisesti audiovisuaalisessa muodossa, ja voidaankin perustellusti sanoa, että nordic noirista on näin tullut eräänlainen ikkuna pohjoismaiseen yhteiskuntaan ja sen mielenmaisemaan. Se välittää kuvia ja mielikuvia Pohjolasta maailmalle, mutta myös meille pohjoismaalaisille. Musiikki ja muut äänet ovat keskeisiä elokuvallisen ilmaisun osatekijöitä, ja siten niillä on merkittävä rooli myös audiovisuaalisessa nordic noirissa. Kuitenkin, vaikka nordic noiria on tutkittu jo varsin runsaasti, on sen äänelliset aspektit jätetty tähän mennessä pitkälti analyyttisen tarkastelun ulkopuolelle.

Tämä artikkeliväitöskirja selvittää, kuinka musiikki ja äänisuunnittelu toimivat audiovisuaalisen ilmaisun ja kerronnan osatekijöinä audiovisuaalisen nordic noirin esimerkkitapauksissa, ja erityisesti, miten musiikki ja äänisuunnittelu ottavat osaa nordic noirille tyypilliseen yhteiskuntakriittiseen eetokseen sekä Pohjolan ja pohjoismaisuuden esittämiseen. Tutkimusotteessa yhdistyvät kvalitatiiviset ja kvantitatiiviset metodit erityisesti kulttuurisen musiikin tutkimuksen ja fenomenologian tarjoamiin näkökulmiin. Väitöskirja ottaa myös osaa ajankohtaiseen kriittiseen keskusteluun nordic noirin luonteesta.

Yhteenveto-osan lisäksi väitöskirja sisältää neljä tutkimusartikkelia. Artikkeleista kolme käsittelee tiettyä elokuva- tai televisiosarjaa, jota voidaan pitää audiovisuaalisen nordic noirin keskeisenä edustajana, keskittyen jokaisessa tapauksessa sarjan ensimmäiseen kauteen ja etualaistaen ääniraidan sarjan audiovisuaalisen kokonaisuuden olennaisena osatekijänä. Nämä sarjat ovat *Wallander* (Ruotsi 2005–2013), *Rikos* (*Forbrydelsen*, Tanska 2007–2012) ja *Silta* (*Bron/Broen*, Ruotsi/Tanska 2011–2018). Neljännessä artikkelissa on sen sijaan otos huomattavasti laajempi, sillä siinä tarkastellaan nordic noir -sarjojen alkutekstijaksoja. Audiovisuaaliseen analyysiin valikoitui yhteensä kolmekymmentäkolme alkutekstijaksoa kaikkiaan yhdeksästätoista sarjasta.

Laajentamalla nordic noiria koskeva tutkimus käsittämään myös sarjojen äänelliset ulottuvuudet, tutkimus tuottaa uutta tietoa nordic noirista kulttuuri-ilmiönä. Se osoittaa, että nordic noirissa äänet – musiikki mukaan lukien – ovat keskeisenä elementtinä hyvinkin erilaisissa audiovisuaalisissa strategioissa, joiden kautta sarjojen kerronnallinen sisältö yhdistyy tarinatilan ulkopuoliseen, sosiokulttuuriseen todellisuuteen. Näin tehdessään sarjat sekä hyödyntävät jo olemassa olevia mielikuvia Pohjo-

lasta ja pohjoismaisesta yhteiskunnasta ja kulttuurista että asettavat ne kriittiseen valoon. Täten tämä tutkimus osoittaa myös, että toisin kuin joissain yhteyksissä on esitetty – ja huolimatta havaittavista perheyhtäläisyyksistä – ei nordic noirilla ole erityisesti sille tyypillistä äänellistä ilmiasua, vaan sarjat ovat hyvinkin erilaisia niiden musiikillis-äänellisen ilmaisunsa – ja tästä syystä myös koko audiovisuaalisen ilmeensä suhteen.

ASIASANAT: Rikosfiktio, rikosdraama, televisiosarjat, audiovisuaalinen, ääniraita, televisiomusiikki, elokuvamusiikki, elokuvaääni, äänisuunnittelu, Pohjoismaat, Pohjola, pohjoismaisuus, yhteiskuntakritiikki, hyvinvointiyhteiskunta

Acknowledgements

The thesis at hand is a product of a long process. It took its first cautious steps already in early 2016, when I wrote the first draft of a research plan, with which I applied to the Doctoral Programme Juno at the University of Turku. If that plan had come to fruition, this thesis would now look very different. I am glad it did not. Along the way, many people have had their influence on the end result – direct or indirect. It is now time to thank them.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisors. I owe my deepest gratitude to John Richardson, Professor of Musicology at the University of Turku. The influence of John's profound knowledge on a wide range of issues carries throughout this whole thesis, and I will not even try to single out particular areas or topics within this work that his insights have especially contributed to. I am extremely grateful for his guidance that has always been kind but firm, and for always being available for friendly discussions and support when I had hit a snag. I am sure I have at some point almost broken his Whatsapp account, flooding it with messages – my apologies and, again, a big thank you. I thank my second supervisor, Adjunct Professor Kari Kallioniemi, for all the help and support I have received, for the comradery, and for all the vibrant discussions related to the North and the Nordic society. Also, before moving on to other engagements and positions, in the earlier stages of this process, Professor Susanna Välimäki was my first supervisor – in fact, she was instrumental in my becoming a PhD researcher at the University of Turku in the first place. I want to express my utmost appreciation for all her support in that time, for her enthusiasm towards my work, and for her always friendly way of guiding this fledgling academic. I also want to thank film music scholar, PhD Anu Juva, whose work on film music analysis has been a rock for me to build on. In the role of an unofficial mentor, as it were, when this research project was still finding its form, Anu was kind enough to show interest in my work and engage in inspiring conversations that built the confidence of a starting scholar.

I am very grateful to Associate Professor Tore Størvold and Professor Miguel Mera, two esteemed scholars and respected experts in their fields, for agreeing to perform the pre-examination of this work and for their insightful comments, for re-

commending my work to be publicly defended, and subsequently, also agreeing to act as my opponents in the public examination of this thesis.

In the School of History, Culture and Arts Studies at the University of Turku, my academic community has consisted mainly of the wonderful, clever people at the department of Musicology. There, the warm and collegial atmosphere of the research seminar has not only been pleasant but a vital resource in this often solitary work. I am thankful to everyone who has participated in the seminar over these past years, fellow doctoral researchers and members of the staff. I would especially like to thank Doctoral Researcher Sanna Qvick, Associate Professor Anna-Elena Pääkkölä (Åbo Akademi), PhD Tiina Käpylä, Doctoral Researcher Hanna-Mari Riihimäki, Associate Professor Milla Tiainen, and University Lecturer Meri Kytö. Their constructive criticism, suggestions, questions, and encouragement have often helped – sometimes even pushed – me forward, to overcome obstacles in the creative process. I also want to extend a warm thank you to the coordinator of the Doctoral Programme Juno, PhD Meri Heinonen, for all the assistance during my doctoral studies.

I have often found that if everything else is quite alright but the one thing that is not is related to money, it tends to overshadow everything else. I have several funding bodies to thank for being able to concentrate on my research for extended periods of time without having to worry too much about how to pay the bills or feed my family. I am very grateful for receiving research grants from the Turku University Foundation, the Finnish Cultural Foundation, the Otto A. Malm Foundation, the Emil Aaltonen Foundation, and the Doctoral Programme Juno. Without their generous funding, this thesis would likely never have become a reality. I also want to thank the Turku University Foundation and the Doctoral Programme Juno for their travel grants, with which I was able to travel to Skåne and conduct research there, and to attend and present papers in the Music and the Moving Image Conference in New York, at NYU Steinhardt, and the EUPOP2023 Conference at the University of Stirling.

As mentioned, this has been a long process, but to me, this thesis is also the culmination of another, much longer journey, with winding, bumpy roads, and right and wrong turns along the way – as is often the case with long journeys. Looking back, many things had to first occur for this thesis to now exist at all. This is, of course true with most things in life, but I feel it is especially so in this case, that things would have gone very differently without the influence of some exceptional people who all deserve my sincere thanks.

One of the key preconditions was to have Sampsa as my big brother when I was growing up. He would flood our home and my consciousness with films, everything from Akira Kurosawa to Alan Smithee, from Tarkovski to Troma Entertainment, and spark my interest in films and thus, eventually, also in film music. A filmmaker and

also a PhD researcher, Sampsa has been an invaluable help also during the creative process of this thesis, reading and commenting on drafts and discussing ideas.

Another formative factor was to have Heikki Kiiski as my music teacher at the Helsinki Steiner School, who, by taking a young boy seriously, encouraging him to write music of his own and engaging him in discussions about the nature of music, gave him affirmation that he was on the right path. I never left that path, it just changed and grew on the way.

Some years later (quite a few, in fact!), another inspiring teacher came along, this time at the University of Helsinki. There, as he was supervising my master's thesis, PhD Alfonso Padilla, University Lecturer Emeritus, encouraged and guided me on my path to become a researcher. Moreover, it was he who said that I should apply to the University of Turku. So, in a way, Alfonso was the instigator of a very fruitful part of my life, which has also included my move to Turku, me finding my wife, and the birth of my daughter.

Many years ago now, a somewhat peculiar series of events involving a cumbersome film post-production process led me to meet Janne Jankeri, a brilliant film sound designer, who became a dear friend and colleague and whom I have worked with on various projects over the years. Janne shares my passion for many things, but most importantly in regard to this thesis, he shares my passion for sounds – and for picking apart film soundtracks down to their most minute detail and then discussing them at length. In the years I have known and worked with Janne, I have learned so much that it is impossible to imagine what this thesis would be like without him. Janne has also directly influenced this thesis by participating in my work (see Section 3.1.4 and *Article IV*).

In regard to the necessary preconditions, however, nothing could outweigh having intelligent, supportive, and understanding parents, Marja and Martti. To them I owe my most humble thanks – for everything, really, but here, I want to especially mention Kätkytsaari, "Cradle island", an island in the middle of a lake where my parents built their summer cottage fifty years ago. And that leads me also to Päivikki and Pertti: thank you for always being there – you know what I mean. Although a geographical place, Kätkytsaari is a state of mind, a way of being in the world, and even in the worst of times, it grants you energy and assures you that things will work out for the best. I consider it my second home – I have done so ever since childhood. I am forced to spend most of my time elsewhere, but already knowing that it is there is a resource. During the years, Kätkytsaari has brought me peace, perspective, and allotted me with astounding amounts of inspiration and creative urge – all things crucial for writing this thesis. But on a more general level: I would not be me without Kätkytsaari, and, therefore, neither would this thesis now exist without it.

The most important thing I have reserved for last: thanking my family. Maria-Sofia, thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the love, help, and patience – I could not have done this without you; Kristo, Julia, and Luca, thank you for bearing with me; Ella, my darling daughter, thank you for being the light of my life.

In Turku, October 2024

Kaapo Huttunen

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List of Original Publications

This dissertation is based on the following original publications, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals:

I Huttunen, Kaapo (forthcoming). Killer Music Videos: Nordic Noir Title Sequences and Concentrated "Nordicness." In Anna-Elena Pääkkölä, Mathias Bonde Korsgaard & John Richardson (eds.), *Nordic Music Videos*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press. Accepted for publication.

II Huttunen, Kaapo (forthcoming). Ambiguity and Liminality as Sonic Strategies in *The Bridge*. *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image*. Accepted for publication.

III Huttunen, Kaapo 2022. The Soundtrack of *The Killing*, its Orientalist Features, and the Implicit Other. *Music and the Moving Image* 15(3), 45–59.

IV Huttunen, Kaapo (forthcoming). The Silences of Skåne: Sonic Representations of Space and Place in the *Wallander* Novels and Films. *Baltic Screen Media Review*. Accepted for publication.

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1 Introduction

We are at a party that does not love us. Finally, the party lets its mask fall and shows itself as it really is: a shunting yard. Cold colossi stand on rails in the fog. A chalk has scrawled on the car doors.

It must not be said, but there is a lot of suppressed violence here. That is why the details are so heavy. And it is so difficult to see the other thing that is also here: a little reflection of sunlight that shifts across the house wall and slides through the unaware forest of glimmering faces, a piece of scripture that was never written: 'Come to me, for I am as contradictory as you.'

Tomorrow I work in another town. I rush there through the morning hour that is a big dark blue cylinder. Orion hangs above the frozen ground. Children stand in a silent group and wait for the school bus, children that no one prays for. The light grows as slowly as our hair.

– Tomas Tranströmer (1978, 39)[1]

1.1 Background of the study

For a long time, as I was writing this thesis, I had this thought that I should start with the above poem, "Minusgrader" ("Minus degrees" in English), by the Swedish poet and Nobel-prize winner Tomas Tranströmer (1931–2015), first published in 1978 in his book of poetry *Sanningsbarriären*. And now I have done so. But not only due to a fancy, but for a good reason: the striking similarity between the imagery and the mood the poem conveys and the cold, melancholy gloom so often associated with the distinctive form of crime fiction from the Nordic region, nowadays known as Nordic noir. In the picture the poet paints, one can almost hear the silence, feel the coldness of the air and the frozen surfaces, see the twilight and the long shadows from the scarce horizontal light. But the similarities do not end there. Tranströmer, who also worked as a psychologist and once stated in an interview that the poem

[1] My own translation from Swedish.

"deals with Sweden" (Järnefors 2011: 18), describes another kind of "coldness" as well, embedded in the society. Behind the "house walls" and the "glimmering faces", behind the facades of Nordic life, all is not well. The poem speaks of an unspoken distress, hidden under a layer of "suppressed violence", and imparts a contradictory view, contradictory especially to the contemporary reader, who is likely aware of various happiness reports in which the Nordic countries typically take the top positions (see, for example, Helliwell et al. 2021: 18–22). And often, this is what Nordic noir does as well. The crimes in these often quite dark but essentially humane stories are typically symptoms of larger social issues, stemming from social inequality, xenophobia, corporate greed, and religious fundamentalism, for example – problems that also exist in the Nordic countries despite them being "prosperous, high-performing and socially stable" Marklund 2013: 263).

In 1974, John H. Yoell wrote: "Thanks to mass media, the world's stock image of Scandinavia is of a sub-Arctic socialist utopia populated by luscious blondes and pornographers, where sex, sauna and suicide reign supreme in that order" (1974: vi). If so, this image has since then changed considerably, and arguably not least due to Nordic noir. As literature, it has spread outside the Nordic region quite successfully already since the 1990s, and its popularity has grown quite large, especially when compared to the relatively small population of the region it comes from (Arvas & Nestingen 2011: 1–2). But in this millennium, Nordic noir has become unprecedentedly successful, especially in the audiovisual form – or as Keith J. Hayward and Steve Hall put it, it "mushroomed from a niche-market to international phenomenon in a little over a decade" (2021: 1). It has won several international awards and remakes and adaptations of the most successful instances have been made in the United States (e.g., *Girl with a Dragon Tattoo*, 2011; *The Killing*, 2011–2014) and in the United Kingdom (*Wallander*, 2008–2015). To date, the hit series *The Bridge* (*Bron/Broen*, Sweden/Denmark 2011–2018) has been sold to at least 160 countries (Sveriges Radio 2015),2 and already six remakes of it exist (*The Tunnel/Tunnel*, UK/France 2013–2017; *Moct/Sild*, Russia/Estonia 2018–2020; *Der Pass*, Austria/Germany 2019–; *I Gefyra*, Greece/Turkey 2022–; *The Bridge*, USA 2013–2014; *The Bridge*, Malaysia/Singapore 2018–2020). And today, especially after the arrival of various streaming service providers, the global supply of Nordic noir series is abundant, with such titles like *Bordertown* (*Sorjonen*, 2016–2019) and *Deadwind* (*Karppi*, 2018–2021) from Finland, *Trapped* (*Ófærð*, 2015–) from Iceland, and *Wisting* (2019–) from Norway, to name a few. Just as Tomas Tranströmer provides

[2] In the 2014 documentary film *Nordic noir – Skandinaviskt tv-drama erövrar världen* (dir. Lars Hogéus, Sweden, 2014. TV broadcast aired 24 September 2015, *Yle Fem*), the creator of the series, Hans Rosenfeldt, states that there are only three countries in the world that have not yet bought the series: North Korea, South Sudan, and Kosovo.

a glimpse into the gloomier side of "the North" through "Minusgrader", Nordic noir now does the same, but on an entirely different scale: the films and series convey images and impressions of the Nordic region all over the world, and to itself as well; thus, Nordic noir has become a kind of a window onto the Nordic societies and their mental landscapes.

According to Gunhild Agger, the term "Nordic noir" was apparently first used in March 2010, when the Scandinavian Department at the University College of London started "a Nordic noir blog and a book club", (presumably) dedicated to the subject of Nordic crime fiction (2016: 138). However, if it started out as an analytical and critical term, it also quickly became a tool for branding and marketing. First, in December of the same year, the BBC – according to Kim Toft Hansen and Anne Marit Waade, "one of the very active players on the market with a great interest in Scandinavian crime fiction" – put the term out in the open with a documentary film titled *Nordic Noir: The Story of Scandinavian Crime Fiction*, and the British distribution company Arrow Films subsequently began to market Scandinavian television crime dramas via its website nordicnoir.tv (Hansen & Waade 2017: 5).[3] But this was not the first attempt at finding a brand name to market Nordic crime fiction. On 3 November 2010, at almost the exact same time as the term "Nordic noir" was taking off in the UK, the Finnish television channel MTV3 launched a time slot for Nordic – at that time, mainly Swedish – crime fiction film series named *Kylmä Pohjola*, "the cold North" in English, but also translatable as "the cold Nordic region". However, as the physical coldness of the region is so commonplace to everyone living in Finland, an utterly unarousing part of everyday life, it was clearly suggesting some other kind of coldness as well. Undoubtedly, the idea was to convey that these "Kylmä Pohjola series", as they were even called in the press (*Kaleva* 2010), showcased a certain chilling harshness or austerity, supposedly typical to the Nordic countries. Yet, the term was also suggestive of a cold reservedness in expression and aesthetics, qualities likewise often considered typical among the cultures of the Nordic region, and supposedly distinguishing these crime dramas from your quotidian – likely American – mainstream shows.

The term "Kylmä Pohjola" was short-lived. Perhaps "Nordic noir" – the more globally marketable name – simply rendered it redundant. Even so, the short existence of the term as a small chapter in the branding history of Nordic crime fiction is still interesting. As "Nordic noir" implies an expressive style that unites crime drama

[3] The exact time of the website's launch is unclear. According to Hansen and Waade, it was about a year after the BBC documentary (2017: 5), whereas, according to Agger, it was in March 2013 (2016: 138). However, Arrow Films itself states – somewhat grandiosely – that it "single-handedly pioneered the Nordic Noir TV genre, from 2010 onwards" (*Arrow Video* 2023).

with a typically Nordic aesthetic while also connoting the natural characteristics, namely the light and – especially – the darkness of the region (more on "noir" in Nordic noir in Section 2), "Kylmä Pohjola" attempted to do a very similar thing. However, it also more clearly suggested a causal relation between "the cold North" and the crimes depicted in the series, suggesting a psychological landscape somewhat similar to that of "Minusgrader" – hinting at the underlying distress behind the crimes. Since then, Nordic noir has garnered a significant amount of academic interest, and many scholars have noted that it indeed has such an aesthetic and ethos.

Kay Dickinson begins the introductory chapter to the book *Movie Music: The Reader* by stating that, "[f]or a long while, there seemed to exist a custom for starting any book on film music with a complaint about the degree to which academics had overlooked the topic", adding that "long gone are the days when film studies seemed a mono-sensory discipline" (Dickinson 2003: 1). If so, then the Nordic noir scholarship – which, as noted above, there is already plenty of – has thus far been an unfortunate exception. At the risk of sounding like a broken record: although music and sound design are essential means of cinematic expression and narration and therefore inevitably instrumental in shaping also Nordic noir's expressive and narrative style, up until now, scholars have scarcely touched upon music and sound in audiovisual Nordic noir, leaving a significant gap in the understanding of how Nordic noir operates.

The lack of relevant scholarship was also discernible in the public debate on Nordic noir, at least in Finland, where some relatively vivid – at times even affective – public discussions took place after the release of *Bordertown*. It was also dubbed "the first Finnish Nordic noir series" (Ainamo-McDonald 2016) but considered by some to be, in various ways, very similar to – or even mimicking – the hit series *The Bridge*. A newspaper article claimed that *Bordertown* was following *The Bridge* "to the millimetre" (Laukka 2016), and in another, it was even called "a cheap copy of *The Bridge*" (Vanha-Majamaa 2017). Such views led Miikko Oikkonen, the head writer of *Bordertown*, to snap back, saying that perhaps it was the other way around, that "maybe the creators of *The Bridge* were imitating us" (Koivuranta 2016). Be that as it may, in hindsight, one may remark that the comparisons were not backed up by critical literature or a substantial analysis and were often hastily, perhaps even irritably made. The use of arial shots, for instance, was criticised as being "borrowed" from *The Bridge* (Kärki 2018), and while the title music of *Bordertown* was considered very similar to that of *The Bridge*, some unfounded assertions concerning Nordic noir music in general were also made. One writer, for example, maintained that "a typical Nordic noir title tune contains high-pitched singing in broken English

and grandiloquent instrument playing" (Mattila 2016),[4] whereas another claimed that "the noir playbook dictates that the title music of a series has to ring clearly. A fragile singing voice merges with a beautiful piano melody and murky background graphics" (Laukka 2016).[5] A closer look and a wider sample (*Article I*), however, clearly show that such assertions do not hold true.

Indeed, what eventually led to this study was the realisation that Nordic noir was an unploughed field for a film musicologist (more on this below), a topical audiovisual phenomenon on everybody's lips with almost nothing written on its music and sound design except for the sporadic comments and assertions I had read in the newspapers and magazines. In short, I was curious to find out if there indeed was a "Nordic noir sound" and if so, what did it sound like? What did it do? And now, several years later, the study at hand attempts to shed light on such questions. This is – as far as I know – still the first attempt at a more thorough, in-depth look at music and sound design in audiovisual Nordic noir. While considering all the constituents of the audiovisual whole, I foreground sound with the intent of shedding light on those cogs and wheels, which are often taken for granted but without which the apparatus would not operate. Thus, I will endeavour to advocate this multifaceted and central constituent of the audiovisual experience – not just of films and television series, but of the whole world – so often ignored in our visuocentric society and still so often left outside the analytical scrutiny in the scholarship of audiovisual phenomena. As John Richardson and Claudia Gorbman eloquently note,

> The inventor of soundscape studies, R. Murray Shafer, famously called for the "tuning of the world," intending to foster sensitivity toward the ways in which our auditory environment is encoded and nurtured. If such an awareness is carried over to experiences of cinema and other audiovisual domains, […] then a new set of questions arises, perhaps leading to answers that can enrich our understanding of both art and life. (2013: 5)

1.2 Scope of study

Nordic noir has proved a somewhat slippery concept, evading clear definitions, and scholars have understood – and continue to understand – the term in various ways. Nordic noir has been called a brand and a genre (Hill & Turnbull 2017: 1), "*not* a clearly defined genre, but a concept with genre affinities" (Hansen & Waade 2017: 9), but also a style (see, for example, Hiltunen 2020). It has been considered a synonym for Scandinavian crime fiction (Stougaard-Nielsen 2017: 14), but also not its

[4] My own translation from Finnish.
[5] My own translation from Finnish.

synonym (Badley et al. 2020: 5). There are also differing views on whether Nordic noir needs to be Nordic or not. (Here, I take the stance that it does need to be Nordic. I will discuss in detail the complexities related to this issue in Section 2.) However, there is generally an agreement on some of the basic characteristics of Nordic noir, including melancholy anti-hero characters, storylines centred around a crime plot, and the bleak and brooding Nordic imagery. In the same vein, Jaakko Seppälä notes that Nordic noir combines in various degrees (a) stylistic traits of modernist art cinema, (b) crime fiction conventions, and (c) Nordic regional elements (2020: 270). I adhere to this definition but add a fourth criterion, which could be called an underlying socially critical ethos. This is also generally agreed upon among scholars of Nordic noir, and Waade names "the political, critical, societal 'plot'" as one of the premises of Nordic noir (2020: 38), to give an example. If we then combine Seppälä's description of the Nordic elements as "a wide category that contains everything from handknitted sweaters and local nourishment via architecture and design to nature and landscapes" (2020: 267) with Waade and Jensen's formulation of "recognisably *Nordic* phenomena, settings, light, climate and seasonal conditions, as well as language(s), characters and themes, such as gender equality, provincial culture and the social democratic welfare state" (2013: 191), we get a fairly clear picture of what this category entails and also a sense of how it ties in with Nordic noir's tendency towards socially critical storytelling.

With these elements in mind and via a critical assessment of relevant research literature, I have formulated a working definition, or rather an understanding of Nordic noir: in this thesis, Nordic noir means *a stylistically distinctive form of crime fiction from the Nordic region with a tendency towards social critique*. This leaves out all films and television series which are not essentially crime dramas, which do not meet certain stylistic and thematic criteria, and which are not produced, or co-produced, in a Nordic country, or countries, and/or where the creative personnel are not primarily Nordic. Some such series that have in some instances been called Nordic noir are, for example, the Danish *Borgen* (2010–2013) and *The Legacy* (*Arvingerne*, 2014–2017), as well as the British *Fortitude* (2015–2018). I will also address the rationale behind this understanding of Nordic noir in Section 2, noting here only its obvious implications for the matter at hand: it considerably narrows down the amount of potential audiovisual research material and thus effectively delimits the scope of study. Even with this strict demarcation, however, the supply of audiovisual Nordic noir is still abundant and the field far too extensive to be covered in a single dissertation. As much must be left outside this study, I attempt to address the bigger picture by zooming in and zooming out on issues and features that, in my opinion, are revealing of the character of Nordic noir.

In addition to this summary, this dissertation consists of four peer-reviewed articles, of which three focus on individual Nordic noir series – more precisely, a par-

ticular aspect or aspects of its soundtrack in relation to the audiovisual whole of the series and the wider cultural context. The series are, in chronological order, *Wallander* (Sweden 2005–2013), *The Killing* (*Forbrydelsen*, Denmark 2007–2012), and *The Bridge* (*Bron*/*Broen*, Sweden/Denmark 2011–2018). According to several criteria (see *Article II*), these are among the most successful Nordic noir series and, to a large extent, they set the standard for what Nordic noir is considered to be. However, there are a total of thirty-two *Wallander* films, forty episodes of *The Killing*, and thirty-eight episodes of *The Bridge*. As this would still be far too much material for in-depth analysis, I chose to focus only on the first season of each series. This decision was supported also by the words of Carl Edström, the sound designer of *The Bridge*, according to whom the expressive style of the series was created in the first season, even the first few episodes (Davison & Parker 2016: 322). The fourth article, on the other hand, takes a much larger sample as it deals with Nordic noir title sequences, which I consider samples of the *concentrated audiovisual aesthetics* of Nordic noir. With a timeframe spanning between 1993 and 2019, the article contains the findings of an audiovisual analysis incorporating a total of thirty-three title sequences from nineteen series. The reason for including only series released before 2020 was purely practical. As new material is released constantly, it would have been impossible to keep including new series and seasons as they were released while keeping the workload feasible.

The other end of the time frame, however, is less arbitrary, as it entails the question "when did Nordic noir begin"? Although the term "Nordic noir" is relatively young, it points to a phenomenon that already existed when the term was coined. As literature, Nordic noir is often said to have its roots in the ten socially critical *Martin Beck* novels by Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö, published between 1965 and 1975 (see, for example, Creeber 2015: 22). Several film adaptations of these novels were then made in various countries, one also in Sweden, but it was not until 1993 and 1994 that six of the novels were adapted in Sweden into a film series titled *Historien om ett brott* ("The story of a crime"), starring Gösta Ekman as police commissioner Martin Beck. Naturally, no cultural phenomenon is without its predecessors, and one could follow different strands further back for clues on the evolutionary history of audiovisual Nordic noir. But, in my view, *Historien om ett brott* most clearly stands out as a watershed, not yet necessarily containing all the hallmarks of Nordic noir, yet already showing a direction and a basis for others to build on. Perhaps most importantly, however, similar series of Nordic crime fiction have been produced ever since, either based on the preexisting literature or original screenplays, and *Historien om ett brott* can thus be considered the starting point for an ongoing process.

1.3 Research questions and objectives

This dissertation takes as its point of departure the fact that sounds make us see differently and images make us hear differently – to paraphrase film sound scholar Michel Chion (1994: 21). Leaving the soundtrack out of the equation inevitably leads to an imperfect picture (pun intended). Thus, despite its title, this is not essentially a study on Nordic noir soundtracks, but a study that aims to widen the perspective on audiovisual Nordic noir by introducing the soundtrack as a major focus of interest. It also seeks to highlight how complex, multifaceted workings of sounds and music are involved in the creation of the audiovisual experience, how they affect the other constituents of audiovisual expression and the narrative process as a whole. With these aims in mind, my main research question is: *how do music and sound design operate as components of audiovisual expression and narration in representative examples of Nordic noir series*? In search for an answer to this primary question, I also ask the following interrelated secondary research questions:

1) *How are the dramaturgies of music and sound design constructed in the chosen representative examples?*[6]
2) *How do music and sound design relate to the other narrative and expressive constituents?*
3) *What are the primary roles and functions of music and sound design in the audiovisual whole?*

As a case in point of the complex interlacings of the soundtrack in the audiovisual texture, I take the social dimensions of Nordic noir. Crude good-versus-evil dichotomies are rarely found in Nordic noir, as crimes are typically seen as symptoms of larger social issues and the faltering welfare state. Hansen and Waade have noted that this can also be seen in the visuals of Nordic noir, in what they call “welfare melancholy” (2017: 83), for example, but my hypothesis is that it can also be heard. Therefore, I also ask the following additional research questions:

[6] Here, I do not use the term “dramaturgy” in a conventional sense to denote the design of the dramatic structure or the theory thereof (and certainly not in any “Goffmanian” sense as a reference to the metaphor of human social behaviour as “theatre”) but broadly to mean “any purposeful arrangement of events” (Romanska 2014: 2), in this case of sonic events. Thus, by “dramaturgies of music and sound design”, I do not refer to the dramatic or “theatrical” aspects of music and sound design – although they are also certainly involved – but to what we hear, in what order, where (on the filmic continuum), and why.

4) *How and to what extent does the socially critical ethos of Nordic noir manifest through music and other sounds?*
5) *How do music and sound design partake in the depiction of the Nordic region and Nordicness?*

This dual nature of these research questions – the music and sound's role in the audiovisual apparatus on the one hand, their relation to the social dimensions on the other – are reflected in the design of the original articles. Moreover, each of the original articles shed light on these broader research questions, while tackling also some more case-specific questions and phenomena.

Article I maps the interplay of music and the visuals in the title sequences of Nordic noir series and proposes that they are used to exhibit stylistic features that are relatable to people in the Nordic countries themselves, but which may also reaffirm the enduring and widely known stereotypical imaginaries of "the North" and its peoples. I also argue that, through various audiovisual combinations, they can also be used to present the socially critical character of Nordic noir. *Article II* looks at how the soundtrack of *The Bridge* takes part in the notably ambiguous narrative strategy and the idiosyncratic audiovisual style of the series; how it – in tandem with the other modes of narration and expression – creates a layer of ambiguity and liminality, that symbolically fits the narrative content of the series but, perhaps most importantly, engages the audience to participate in the narration process and connects the series to the social reality outside the storyworld. *Article III* asks how the significant amount of stereotypical allusions to Arabic and Persian cultures in the soundtrack of *The Killing* functions in the series, which does not explicitly deal with Islam or immigration in Denmark, nor does it have any discernible themes of racism or xenophobia. The article tackles this question with a viewpoint of cultural musicology and by placing the series in the context of Orientalism and Danish political history. Finally, *Article IV* investigates the question of the regional landscape, often mentioned as a central aesthetic feature in Nordic noir, of which *Wallander*, both in literary and audiovisual form, has been given as a case in point. So far, however, discussions have concentrated only on the visual aspects of the series. This article examines how – and to what extent – sounds partake in the creation of spatial experience and a sense of place in the *Wallander* films, but also how this compares to the representation of space and place in the *Wallander* novels by Henning Mankell.

1.4 Previous research

In his 2019 PhD dissertation, Tore Størvold points out that "[w]hile scholarship on Nordic noir television is beginning to emerge, the music and sound design – though explicitly celebrated by critics, time and again – are characteristically left out of the

analytical conversation" (2019: 113). To a large extent, the situation has remained unchanged. Although the style and aesthetics of Nordic noir has also received ample attention in research literature, audiovisuality – by which I mean here the interconnectedness and interplay of sounds and images, and the implications and meanings thereof – has thus far been almost completely overlooked. To my knowledge, before the publication of the articles contained in this thesis, the chapter on the Icelandic series *Trapped* in Størvold's dissertation, titled "Trapped in the Arctic: Tourism, National Aspirations, and Geopolitics", was still the only study on Nordic noir conducted from a genuinely audiovisual standpoint.[7] Annette Davison and Martin Parker have also made a valuable contribution by interviewing Carl Edström, the sound designer of *The Bridge*, who opens up the creative process and the mindset behind the idiosyncratic soundtrack and audiovisual design of the series, which are also discussed in detail in *Article II*.

As Nordic noir has become an international phenomenon, it has also garnered a considerable amount of academic scholarship, covering it from a multitude of angles, such as production, marketing, distribution, reception, geopolitics, and so on. For example, the University of Aarhus in Denmark launched its multi-year research project *What Makes Danish TV Drama Series Travel? Transnational production, cultural export and global reception of Danish drama series* in 2014.[8] Although its focus has not been solely on Nordic noir, the international success of Nordic noir has been a significant factor also in the success story of Danish television, and so the project has also produced a substantial amount of publications related to or concerning Nordic noir. But as previously noted, such research has not yet factored in music or sound in general. Nordic noir scholars tend not to discuss the matter or do so only in passing, often describing the music with one or two words, such as "melancholy", "dark", "haunting", or "gloomy". This defect seems very telling also of the continued poor status of music and sound in film and television studies – that a paradigm shift towards a more audio-inclusive thinking has yet to take place despite the aforementioned observation by Kay Dickinson. One is tempted to quote what Karen Collins wrote over ten years ago about literary works on embodied film experience: "Reading these works, one might assume that cinema is only a visual media form, existing in near silence. We are still confined, academically, to *watching* a film" (2013: 22). Of course, this does not mean that audiovisual research, the study of audiovisuality in the aforementioned sense, does not exist as an academic field – it grew out of Claudia Gorbman's seminal 1980s work on film music into a small but well-estab-

7 Robert Sholl has also presented a paper titled "Spectral Music in Nordic Noir" at the *Spectralisms* conference at IRCAM (2019: 70–71), but apparently, this has not yet led to a full research publication on the subject.

8 For a listing of the publications, see: *Aarhus University* 2021.

lished research field concerned with a wide range of topics related to film, television, and other audiovisual phenomena – only that it has so far existed as partly separate from film and television studies.

There are some rare, encouraging – albeit as yet small – exceptions to the rule, however. They do not yet make significant contributions but recognise the need for such contributions. In one chapter of their book *Locating Nordic Noir: From Beck to The Bridge* (2017: 180–181), Hansen and Waade briefly discuss music and sounds in Nordic noir, mostly in relation to its perceived melancholy in the series *The Killing*.[9] They present a short description of the types of melancholic elements they find in the soundscapes of some Nordic noir series and present a few notions on how cinematic music and sounds (may) operate. But they also make the correct observation that "the missing link considering melancholy in Nordic Noir is often sound. The visual devices of Nordic Noir and their melancholic elements are reflected in a number of works by critics and academics. But the sound of Nordic Noir is frequently overlooked" (2017: 180). They also correctly point out that "[t]o fully understand the mood and melancholy of Nordic Noir it is important to not only watch but also to listen to the series" (ibid.). Likewise, Robert A. Saunders, who in his recent book *Geopolitics, Northern Europe, and Nordic Noir: What Television Series Tell Us About World Politics* notes that "it is not just sights and sites that shape the aesthetics of Nordic noir, it is also the soundscapes" (2021: 72). Still, in his own analysis, he makes only a few sporadic observations on the involvement of music or sounds. Likewise, *European Television Crime Drama and Beyond* (Hansen et al. 2018) contains an encouraging exception but of a slightly different kind: the chapter "Locating Sound in UK/US Television Crime Drama: The Affective Impact of Sound Effects and Music in *Happy Valley* and *Hannibal*" by Lucy Fife Donaldson, who has often discussed sound in audiovisual context. Although the chapter only touches upon the subject of Nordic noir, it provides detailed descriptions of how music and other sounds take part in the creation and operation of the audiovisual whole in crime drama series; as such, it is, in my view, an important addition to the book it features in, a collection of writings that do deal extensively also with Nordic noir.

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis is divided into six sections. After this introductory section, in Section 2, I will discuss the central concepts and the theoretical framework of this thesis. First,

[9] The same topic has also been discussed in a similar fashion elsewhere by Waade (2016) and touched upon by Agger and Waade (2018).

I will take a closer look at the soundtrack in film and television series, its various layers and their connections, its spatial and temporal dimensions, theories concerning its role and functions, as well as various aspects of the perception of cinematic sound. I will keep the discussion of the history of film music and sound to a minimum, however, as it is less relevant in this case and several other publications also discuss this at length. Next, I will participate in academic debates by establishing the rationale behind my understanding of Nordic noir and by reviewing the research literature that has informed that understanding, and by discussing other issues and concepts that, in my view, have an impact on Nordic noir and need to be examined. In Section 3, I will present my primary research methods and, with each one, the methodological considerations behind them. Section 4 is preserved for the summaries of the original research articles. Lastly, in Section 5, I will present some concluding remarks, summarising the key findings of this study and reviewing them in the light of prior Nordic noir research.

Finally, a few words about the original research articles, attached as appendices at the end of this summary. They are not in chronological order of completion or publication. In fact, only *Article III* has already been published; the other three will come out shortly after the publication of this dissertation. Although the articles are stand-alone works and can be read in any order, I have placed them in an order that I feel is the most logical, proceeding from a wider image to close-up shots, as it were. *Article I* is based on a large sample of Nordic noir series, and it thus works better as an overview or an introduction to the aesthetics of Nordic noir. *Article II* then partly continues the topic of the previous article, as it also contains an analysis of the title sequence of *The Bridge*, which is not a feature in *Article I*. Although it focuses on a single series, *Article II* also provides a wider perspective, as it addresses a number of issues related to the possibilities of music and sound dramaturgy and of modern soundtracks (of which I consider *The Bridge* a good example). Finally, while *Articles III* and *IV* both inform a wider discussion on Nordic noir and audiovisuality in general, they more clearly focus on particular aspects of a particular Nordic noir series, especially *Article IV*.

2 Reconsidering Nordic Noir

2.1 The question of definition

As mentioned above, after over a decade of an ongoing discussion about what exactly Nordic noir is, commentators are still undecided. Part of the debate has dealt with the connection between Nordic noir and *film noir*; although it is generally agreed upon that a connection exists, the views on its nature vary. For example, Glen Creeber sees the “dimly-lit aesthetic” of Nordic noir as an “implicit reference” to film noir (2015: 22), whereas Voitto Ruohonen (2018) considers Nordic noir as just one more variant of *noir*. Audun Engelstad notes that “noir” in Nordic noir has been understood at least in three different ways: (1) it suggests that Nordic noir is a new phase in the evolution of noir, (2) it functions as a more marketable brand name for Nordic crime fiction, and (3) the concept is not so much related to crime fiction as it reflects features characteristic to Nordic countries, such as mindset, climate, landscape, and the light and darkness of different seasons (2018: 24–25). From my stance, all three are partially true, as is implicit in my discussion in Section 1, where I described Nordic noir as being (A) a stylistically and thematically distinctive (B) form of crime fiction (C) from the Nordic region. I hesitate to use the word “definition” in this case, however, as that would imply that an exhaustive description of the phenomenon at hand – of what it *is* – has been provided, which in my understanding is practically impossible with such a fluid cultural phenomenon as Nordic noir. In fact, A+B+C may seem like a strict delineation, yet it is a set of fairly loose variables. That said, I believe Nordic noir to be a slightly less nebulous affair than one might think based on the available scholarship, and the way Nordic noir is understood here can provide clarification regarding the matter, at least when supplemented with a more thoroughgoing explanation and commentary below.

Once the term “Nordic noir” was coined in the UK, it started to stick, and before long, it was already used as a brand name. But alas, branding – that is marketing – is not interested in keeping things tidy for scholars of audiovisual culture, and as the name stuck, it began to be used quite loosely. As Hansen and Waade observe, “[a]nything can now be included under the brand name *Nordic Noir*” (2017: 6). For this reason, it seems obvious that we must take a step back from this inflated, “analytically cumbersome brand name” (ibid.). This does not mean discarding it, as there is

nothing wrong with the name itself, but trying to see the phenomenon more clearly from all the clutter floating around it and arriving at the thing that “by any other name would smell as sweet”. As I take a closer look at A, B, and C (although not in that order), I am obliged to argue for the rationale behind the stance taken. I feel that it needs some defending, as the scholarly discussion on Nordic noir has lately diversified and been taken to directions where the concept itself is becoming broader and more inclusive, which, in turn, seems to correlate with the expansion of the markets, as more and more audiovisual material is being sold as Nordic noir.

I do not wish to imply that a broader scope would be categorically inaccurate, nor that different approaches would be mutually exclusive. On the contrary, when appropriately applied and depending on the research aims, a more inclusive focus can be beneficial – for example, when dealing with such questions as how Nordic noir influences other styles and genres, what role Nordic noir plays in influencing how the region is perceived from the outside, and how, to what extent, and to what purposes Nordic noir is emulated elsewhere. As a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, Nordic noir can – and should – be approached from multiple angles. However, too much inclusivity in definitions can also create problems. An example of this, in my view, can be found in the book *Nordic noir: Adaptation, Appropriation* (Badley et al. 2020). It approaches the subject from various perspectives, attempting to “[reframe] the prevailing critical understanding of Nordic noir” by striving for an umbrella term that is “more inclusive and accurate”, while also demanding that “the conceptualisation of Nordic noir must be linked to its mobility” (ibid.: 5–7). I disagree, and I will attempt to demonstrate below that advocating such an increasingly broad and inclusive definition can be counterproductive, especially if one simultaneously focuses on some particular aspects of how Nordic noir operates and thus, ultimately attempts to home in on what Nordic noir *essentially is*. In the following, the purpose is not to cover all bases, as that would be neither practical nor necessary. Instead, I discuss some of the issues that arise when critically evaluating arguments that advocate broad and inclusive conceptualisations of Nordic noir.

2.2 The question of style

In “*Law of the Land*: Shades of Nordic Noir in an Artic Western” (2020), a book chapter on the Finnish/Norwegian film *Law of the Land* (*Armoton maa*, 2017; dir. Jussi Hiltunen), Kaisa Hiltunen looks at how an ‘“arctic western’ adapts elements of Nordic noir and how this exemplifies the dispersion or mutation of Nordic noir” (2020: 73). Hiltunen draws the following conclusion:

> *Law of the Land* is an example of how Nordic noir infiltrates other genres in ways that are complex and often impossible to specify. Nordic noir can certainly

> be found in the dark, melancholy mood of this contemporary arctic western. But we should keep in mind Toft Hansen and Waade's reflection on whether Nordic noir means anything more than "that the stories include something 'dark/black' in the Nordic region" and the fact that they have questioned the analytical value of the concept Nordic noir (Hansen and Waade 2017, 5–7). It would be tempting to conclude that *Law of the Land* proves them right. Such a conclusion would be possible, because it is easy to see the influence of Nordic noir all around. It is arguable that in addition to the location, only the film's "dark style" connects it to Nordic noir. The crimes and the family issues that the film deals with are familiar to both Nordic noir and the western, but not specific to them. Moreover, the plot lacks a police investigation and the intricacy characteristic of Nordic noir. (2020: 82)[10]

Attempting to decipher this conclusion, it speaks to the caveat of understanding Nordic noir as a loose set of appropriable stylistic features while also insisting on a more precise definition, as it leads to some irreconcilable paradoxes in this case. Firstly, this conclusion entails the assumption that when one appropriates features from something, it automatically leads to a fundamental change in the thing being appropriated. Hiltunen observes some elements of Nordic noir being put to use in an 'arctic western' and interprets this as evidence of the *whole* of Nordic noir being "dispersed" and "mutated". Secondly, Nordic noir is seen here to "[infiltrate] other genres in ways that are complex and often impossible to specify", but in *Law of the Land,* this infiltration seems easily specified: it takes place through the use of a Nordic location and a "dark style". These two are also the only elements found connecting the film to Nordic noir – meaning that there are also others, but they are just not present in this case. However, at the same time, Hiltunen is tempted to conclude that this combination of a "dark style" and a Nordic location is *all* that Nordic noir is. But then, apparently, that is not all Nordic noir is, as the plot of *Law of the Land* "lacks a police investigation and the intricacy characteristic of Nordic noir". Here, it seems to be necessary for the contents – or substance – of the concept to be narrowed down to its bare minimum in order to allow Nordic noir to be defined as a style that adapts through its appropriation, but this then leaves out features that Hiltunen also recognises as characteristics of Nordic noir.

[10] Admittedly, Hansen and Waade do reflect on whether Nordic noir only means "that the stories include something 'dark/black' in the Nordic region" (2017: 6). However, despite admitting that, as a concept, Nordic noir is not "unproblematic" (ibid.: 18), or that it has become "watered down" (ibid.: 292), a view that is not contested here either, they nonetheless use it as a critical concept throughout their book and note that their "main new insights derive from the implicit reference to place in the concept Nordic Noir" (ibid.: 20).

According to Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, "Nordic noir […] 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" (2020: 93). But what do "regional" and "abroad" mean in this case? Watching the Icelandic series *Trapped* in Finland, for example, is watching a regional drama abroad. With five nation states, three autonomous territories, and a multitude of peoples, the Nordic region is very much international in itself, and so is the domestic audience of Nordic noir. Moreover, "Nordicness" also stems, arguably even more so, from how it is understood among the nearly 28 million people living in the various countries of the region, not only how it is perceived outside of it. It is evident that what is "Nordic" and what it means for something to be "Nordic" is constantly renegotiated among the peoples of the Nordic region themselves, and cultural products, such as Nordic noir films, television series, and – apparently – also video games nowadays (Lasausse 2020), play a role in this ongoing process – arguably even an important one (the construction of "Nordicness" is discussed further below). As such, they provide a means of collective self-reflection, perhaps even a sense of unity within the Nordic cultural sphere. Gunhild Agger also recognises Nordic noir as having "a series of essential common features […] [that] comprise a feeling of community between the Nordic countries in the fictions of social conscience, dark storylines and bleak urban, as well as rural settings, while touching on the weaknesses of the welfare state in the respective countries" (2016: 139).

Elsewhere, Stougaard-Nielsen argues that "[a]s a brand, Nordic noir has become thoroughly mobile, loosening its ties to 'actual' Nordic topographies, writers, languages, and cultures. The British television drama *Fortitude* (written by Simon Donald, 2015) is an example of how late Nordic noir has transformed the 'Nordic' from its 'authentic' locations into a set of loose references to previous series" (2021: 204). However, Stougaard-Nielsen also makes an observation which is difficult to reconcile with this statement, as he notes that "the cosmopolitan consumption of Nordic noir and a concomitant desire for Nordicness is a complex phenomenon to locate, as it is stimulated partly by Nordic self-presentations and a receiving culture's analogous use of the Nordic to express its own local desires and concerns" (ibid.: 198). Stougaard-Nielsen seems to agree that "Nordic self-presentation" is at the heart of Nordic noir. But that, by definition, can only be achieved from within the Nordic cultural sphere, and if we understand the "analogous use of the Nordic" as the appropriation and recontextualisation of the Nordic noir style to another "receiving culture", to address its "local desires and concerns", it becomes self-presentation and self-reflection from within *that* other cultural sphere, not the Nordic.

This leads to the seemingly paradoxical conclusion that while the style of Nordic noir can "travel", Nordic noir itself cannot, as it is as a whole irremovable from the Nordic context. Evidently, Pei-Sze Chow et al. also recognise this, as they point out

the following: "[j]ust as geopolitical television programming from South Asia like *Ghoul* (2018) tells us about the 'emotions' of the Pakistani-Indian rivalry and the Australian series *Secret City* (2016–2019) screens fears about China's growing influence over Canberra, so too do Nordic noir series provide a mirror of contemporary concerns across Northern Europe" (2020: 16). Consequently, they do not call the Malaysian/Singaporean adaptation of *The Bridge* Nordic noir but "tropical noir", as it "transpos[es] the critical dimensions of the Nordic Noir genre to culturally, geographically, and media-systematically distant contexts" (ibid.: 17).

Looking at the arguments above, there seems to exist an ontological confusion arising from not making a clear distinction between Nordic noir *being* a style and *having* a style, or even from equating the two. For example, in the book chapter "The Style of Nordic noir: *Bordertown* as a Stylistic Adaptation of the Prototype", Jaakko Seppälä makes some valuable observations on the style of Nordic noir and how it operates while also arguing that "it is productive to understand Nordic noir as a style" (2020: 256). However, building on David Bordwell's position that, "[i]n the narrowest sense, […] style [is] a film's systematic and significant use of techniques of the medium" (Bordwell 1997: 4), Seppälä proposes that "employing a specific style is a way of producing crime films and television series in an identifiable manner as Nordic noir" (2020: 256). In other words, Nordic noir constitutes a style as it employs a specific style.

While such reductive views of Nordic noir as a style are ontologically problematic, Seppälä also makes a very compelling case for what kind of elements the style of Nordic noir consists of. In his analysis of *Bordertown* and how it relates to other Nordic noir series, Seppälä presents a tripartite constitution of Nordic noir style, according to which it combines in various degrees (1) characteristics of modernist art cinema, (2) conventions of the popular crime genre, and (3) elements typical to the Nordic region; and they are used, Seppälä concludes, "to create a tone that is dark and melancholy, expressing contemporary fears and uncertainties. While the elements obviously are not original as such, the combinations are idiosyncratic" (2020: 270). In the following, building on Seppälä's categorisation and findings, I take a closer look at what these categories contain and how they are connected. Doing so also clarifies why Nordic noir should not be considered a synonym for Nordic crime fiction, as also Seppälä points out (ibid.: 256). It is not because not all Nordic noir is crime fiction, but rather because – to a large extent due to the following stylistic particularities – not all Nordic crime fiction is Nordic noir.

2.2.1 Crime fiction conventions

Thus far, I have argued that Nordic noir should be considered crime fiction, as its stories have a crime plot. Hence, in contrary to film noir, which, according to Paul

Schrader, "need not necessarily concern crime and corruption" (1972: 9), Nordic noir does. It is, as Hansen and Waade observe, "a further development or continuation of Nordic crime fiction" (2017: 293), and crime is such a prevalent feature and continues to be at the core of Nordic noir, as it has been from the beginning, that there is arguably little or no reason to consider Nordic noir as anything but crime fiction; or, inversely, it is wrong to call such fiction Nordic noir that is not centred around a crime, or crimes. Of course, having a crime is not yet enough to make a crime plot. Discussing the origins of crime stories, Badley et al. point out that there are stories with crimes already in the Old Testament; for example, David murdering by proxy Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, the woman David wants for himself. However, in a modern sense, this is not a crime story because it does not involve initially not knowing and investigating to find out. As Badley et al. succinctly remark, "God does not need to investigate David; He knows. Modern detectives do not know; so, they investigate" (2020: 2).

Naturally, a crime plot does not have to be a murder mystery, nor does there have to be a professional crime solver involved, but – at least how it is understood here – a crime plot entails a person, or persons, shedding light on an immoral deed, or deeds, shrouded in mystery, that has been committed or is being committed by an individual or a group of individuals. In Nordic noir, there can be – and there usually are – several intertwining storylines, dealing with various issues, but the crime plot is the central one that binds the others together. That said, a "whodunnit" – most commonly, a so-called police procedural – has proved to be persistently popular also in Nordic noir, where the crime is typically a homicide – or rather homicides – which are then investigated by a police officer, assisted by colleagues, or some other similar character trying to solve the crime, such as a journalist, from whose perspective the events are also mainly experienced. Moreover, as Seppälä points out, "in its mise-en-scène Nordic noir circulates conventional crime fiction iconography such as police vehicles, murder weapons, and dead bodies" (2020: 264).

These detectives, whether professional or amateur, tend to be "morose", as Glen Creeber calls them (2015: 21), or otherwise socially dysfunctional, as is also the case with all the main protagonists of the series discussed in the articles of this thesis: Sarah Lund (*The Killing*), Saga Norén (*The Bridge*), and Kurt Wallander (*Wallander*). And, as Hansen and Waade concur, "Scandinavian crime fiction, especially the police procedural, has a long tradition for morose detectives, and […] they are an important aspect of Nordic Noir" (2017: 15). As Anne Marit Waade describes, "the Nordic noir anti-hero is often a lonely investigator […] characterised by emotional complexity including traumas, struggles and melancholic thoughts and emotions" (2017: 385). Via such protagonists, a connection can be drawn between Nordic noir and the detectives of the American "hard-boiled" tradition. For example, Steven Peacock calls Martin Beck the "most pronounced example of the hard-boiled

detective in Swedish crime fiction" (2014: 48). Of course, after Beck, many have followed, and not only in Sweden.

2.2.2 Modernist art cinema traits

The connection to film noir – albeit that its level and manner have been debated – undoubtedly exists, as the hard-boiled detective tradition already links Nordic noir to film noir in which "the hard-boiled school" was well represented (see, for example, Schrader 1972: 10). But this connection is arguably far more clearly discernible due to other stylistic devices. According to Gunhild Agger, for example, Nordic noir brings "the atmosphere of film noir" to the Nordic setting (2016: 139). In *The Killing*, as Waade observes, "the Nordic setting is shown in a dark and rainy winter season and extremely dim lighting, […] with only a few striking light sources, sometimes backlight, sometimes red and green lights reflected in raindrops and water", thus "setting the standard and inspiring the very notion of 'Nordic noir'" (2017: 388). In a similar vein, as Seppälä notices, in *Bordertown,* interior spaces are often dimly lit, and police officers do not even open windows or turn on the lights when inspecting a house but use flashlights instead (2020: 269). Such visual features – darkness, rain, strong accentuated contrasts of lights and shadows (*chiaroscuro*), are all staples of the film noir style (Schrader 1972: 11), and although the level of this attraction to film noir aesthetics varies between Nordic noir series, many – as if as a conscious recognition of kinship – still have it as a notable feature at least in the title sequence (see *Article I*).

However, this connection to film noir does not only link Nordic noir to other crime story traditions, but also to modernist cinema aesthetics in general. In his seminal essay, "Notes on Film Noir", discussing the German expressionist influences, Paul Schrader recounts that "when, in the late Forties, Hollywood decided to paint it black, there were no greater masters of chiaroscuro than the Germans. The influence of expressionist lighting has always been just beneath the surface of Hollywood films, and it is not surprising, in *film noir*, to find it bursting out full bloom. Neither is it surprising to find a larger number of German and East Europeans working in *film noir*" (1972: 10). If film noir was not, strictly speaking, part of the modernist movement, there was, as James Naremore notes, at least an "affinity between noir and modernism" (1998: 45), and it is noteworthy that, of the Nordic modernist film directors, Ingmar Bergman, for example, used similar expressionist stylistic devices in several films, such as *The Seventh Seal* (*Det sjunde inseglet*, 1957), *Through the Glass Darkly* (*Såsom i en spegel*, 1961), *Winter Light* (*Natvardsgästerna*, 1963), *Silence* (*Tystnaden*, 1963), and *Hour of the Wolf* (*Vargtimmen*, 1968). Thus, the use of stylistic features characteristic to film noir can well be considered as belonging also to the modernist cinematic traits of Nordic noir.

It has been mentioned that Nordic noir is notably slow. Creeber, for example, names "a slow and melancholic pace" as being characteristic of Nordic noir (2015: 22). Measuring the average shot lengths (ASL) of *The Bridge*, *The Killing*, and *Bordertown*, Seppälä observes that they all fall between 4.4 and 5.0 seconds. This is far less than in so-called "slow cinema", where the ASLs can be ten times longer or even more, but significantly more than 2.8 seconds, the ASL of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (USA, 2000–2015), which Seppälä takes as an example of a widely popular mainstream series that likely has influenced audience expectations regarding television crime drama (2020: 259–260). A longer ASL indicates a slower editing rhythm, and as these three Nordic noir series have notably longer ASLs than the American mainstream series, they can feel slow to audiences used to such fast-paced editing. However, as Seppälä observes, they are not remarkably slow in regard to editing; although the editing rhythm tends to correlate with the narrative tempo, there are other factors that likely contribute to the feeling of slowness in this case, such as the tempo of the action within a scene, the style of acting, and music (ibid.).

Seppälä focuses on the minimalist acting style of Nordic noir, which – with less facial expressions and sparser dialogue than in the American counterpart, where the thoughts and intentions of the characters are made much clearer – can contribute to the feeling of slowness (ibid.: 260–264). In a similar vein, although less explicitly, Creeber links the "slow and understated pace" to the "often sparse, monosyllabic" dialogue but also to the scene lengths, which in Nordic noir, Creeber finds, "tend to be much longer than we have come to expect from contemporary TV drama, allowing sufficient time for its various narrative levels to gradually develop" (2015: 24–25). According to Creeber, such techniques also "move television away from its sometimes slavish reliance on dialogue and towards a more *visually orientated aesthetic as a whole*" (ibid.: 25).[11] However, Seppälä also draws a direct link between the perceived slowness of Nordic noir and Nordic modernist art cinema by bringing up the similarity between the acting conventions of Nordic noir and the "minimalist tendencies" in the works of Nordic modernist directors, such as Carl Theodor Dreyer, Ingmar Bergman, Aki Kaurismäki, Roy Andersson, and Ruben Östlund, but in other Nordic arts as well (2020: 264). This is an important point to make, as it not only connects the restrained acting style and de-emphasis on speech typical to Nordic noir with modernist cinema but also with Nordic culture in general. This leads us to Seppälä's third category, "elements typical to the Nordic region", and already hints at a more complex matter than simply showcasing "all things Nordic". In fact, what

[11] Italics added. Here, again, a visually biased attitude towards audiovisual expression is evident. Moving away from the dialogue as a means of providing information does not place emphasis only on the visuals but also on other sounds. As discussed at length in *Article II*, this is actually a central aesthetic and narrative feature in *The Bridge*.

is typical to the Nordic region and how it manifests in Nordic noir is far too large a subject to be discussed merely as a stylistic device in this section. Indeed, the following section takes a closer look at various intertwining aspects related to Nordicness, or – to paraphrase Hansen and Waade – deals with the issue of *Nordic* noir.

2.3 The question of Nordicness

2.3.1 Nordic regional elements

Here, it is worth reiterating the view presented above, that the three different understandings of what "noir" in Nordic noir means (to recap: it denotes that Nordic noir is a new phase of noir; it is a more marketable name for Nordic crime fiction; it refers to the use of features characteristic of the Nordic countries), are all partially true. However, it is indeed more accurate to state that the three are inseparable. On the one hand, it is the depiction of the Nordic regional characteristics – "atmosphere, landscape, mindset, political system, […] seasonal changes of light" (Engelstad 2018: 25) – and the socially critical crime stories that are at the heart of Nordic noir's *noirness* (I use this term only to avoid confusion). On the other hand, it is this distinctly Nordic noirness and the features characteristic of the region that are essential for much of Nordic crime fiction. However, Nordic noir also reflects its Nordicness through its regionally tinted noirness, as well as its socially critical crime stories (more on this below). The three are inseparable, but it is also practically impossible to discern where one ends and another begins, and so, too, is often the case with the stylistic categories identified by Seppälä. They undoubtedly exist but also conspicuously overlap.

As probably the most obvious example of this, contrasts of light and darkness are not only tropes belonging to *noir* aesthetics but are also strongly related to ideas of Nordic nature and culture (an aspect discussed especially in *Article I*). In the North, as the Norwegian architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz poetically describes, "the sun does not rise to the zenith but grazes things obliquely and dissolves in an interplay of light and shadow. The land consists not of clear massings and distinct space; it disperses as fragment and repetition in the boundless" (Norberg-Schultz 1996: 1). Consider, for example, the first paragraphs of *The Man on the Balcony* (2007; Swedish original *Mannen på balkongen*, 1967), the third *Martin Beck* novel:

> At a quarter to three the sun rose.
>
> An hour and a half earlier the traffic had thinned out and died away, together with the noise of the last night revellers on their way home. The street-sweeping machines had passed, leaving dark wet strips here and there on the asphalt. An

> ambulance had wailed down the long, straight street. A black car with white mudguards, radio antenna on the roof and the word POLICE in white block letters on the sides had glided past, silently and slowly. Five minutes later the tinkle of broken glass had been heard as someone drove a gloved hand through a shop window; then came the sound of running footsteps and a car tearing off down a sidestreet.
>
> The man on the balcony had observed all this. The balcony was the ordinary kind with tubular iron rail and sides of corrugated metal. He had stood leaning on the rail, and the glow of his cigarette had been a tiny dark-red spot in the dark. […]
>
> It was quiet now, as quiet as it could be on a mild early summer's night in a big city. A couple of hours still remained before the women who delivered the newspapers appeared, pushing the converted prams, and before the first office cleaner went to work.
>
> The bleak half-light of dawn was dispersed slowly; the first hesitant sunbeams groped over the five-storeyed blocks of flats and were reflected in the television aerials and the round chimney pots above the roofs on the other side of the street. Then the light fell on the metal roofs themselves, slid quickly down and crept over the eaves along plastered brick walls with rows of unseeing windows, most of which were screened by drawn curtains and venetian blinds. (Sjöwall & Wahlöö 2007: 1–2)

It would not be wrong to say that, in this excerpt, the authors employ a distinctly *noir* style of writing. But it can also be seen to convey inherently Nordic aspects: describing features of everyday life and typical Nordic architecture, the people somewhere unseen; evoking the silence, the darkness, and then describing in detail the horizontal light of the Nordic region and its slow movement. As such, despite taking place in the summer, it also bears notable similarities with Tomas Tranströmer's "Minusgrader" quoted in the beginning of this thesis, which, as mentioned, "deals with Sweden".

Although according to Waade and Jensen, "[t]he difference [between Nordic noir and film noir] is that Nordic noir uses recognisably *Nordic* phenomena" (2013: 191), the above excerpt – albeit a literary example – attests that Nordicness and noirness are not necessarily so easily distinguishable. Clearly, the light and darkness of Nordic noir can be considered both a Nordic and a *noir* feature. But likewise, as is discussed in *Article IV* in relation to the *Wallander* novels and films, the restrained acting style and de-emphasis on speech can also be construed as a Nordic regional characteristic, as well as a modernist art cinema trait. Studies on Nordic speech culture show that Nordic people are not particularly talkative (see, for example, Tulviste et al. 2003; Wilkins & Isotalus 2009), and also the sparse dialogue of Aki

Kaurismäki's films has often been seen as representing the Finnish national character (Kivimäki 2010: 34). Likewise, as John Richardson observes, slow speech is valued in Finland, whereas faster enunciation may not be viewed in a positive light, and "[t]he stereotype of the slow Finn (natively considered an ameliorative quality) is nowhere more evident than in the films of the Kaurismäki brothers" (2016a: 485). Thus, if we consider Sarah Lund, for example, as a "morose" melancholic detective who tends not to speak too much, her character can be seen simultaneously as a crime fiction convention, a minimalist (modernist) trope, and a Nordic regional feature. This then indicates that the Nordic regional elements are not limited to only visual aspects.

Indeed, as is discussed in *Article I*, several title sequences of Nordic noir series incorporate in their music a string instrument drone (a static long note of a fixed pitch) in the tonic (the root note of the key the piece of music is in), often with a distinctively grainy sound. This drone is then typically coupled with a simple melody line. Such musical features can be seen as tapping into some very long traditions of Nordic folk music. The *nyckelharpa* (or keyed fiddle), the national instrument of Sweden, was likely a fairly common instrument across Northern Europe from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, after which it became a Swedish speciality (Ternhag & Boström 1999). Typically, it has four played strings (and twelve sympathetic) of which the lowest one is a drone string that does not have tangents (or "keys") for changing pitch. The *jouhikko*, a Finnish version of the bowed lyre, is an ancient instrument still played today, of which regional variations have existed throughout the North from Estonia to the Shetland Islands (Kolltveit 2010: 167). It typically has three strings of which only the highest string is usually used for playing a narrow-ranged melody while a continuous drone is played with the other two. And, of course, the *hardingfele* (or Hardanger fiddle, the national instrument of Norway, also with sympathetic strings) has been played for centuries. Traditional hardingfele playing also includes a drone with the melody, although the technique is different, as all four strings are variably used as drones below and above the melody line (see, for example, Kleiberg 1996: 47).

What further adds to the complex interconnectedness and ambiguity of these different aspects is that it is not only a question of what these "Nordic regional elements" are but how they are presented – in fact, one could even argue that the *how* is in itself a central regional characteristic. Anne Marit Waade argues that practically all the things that Nordic noir is characterised by display *melancholy* (2017: 384). Hansen and Waade, in turn, note that there "seems to be a tendency towards the notion that [melancholy] may be something particularly Nordic, or that a specific type of melancholy is deeply embedded in Nordic cultures" (Hansen & Waade 2017: 81). This idea also appears to be quite old and widespread, as already in 1911, Daniel

Kilham Dodge – an American – had this to say about Scandinavian folk music and the "Scandinavian character":

> Attention has often been called to the fact that almost all Scandinavian folk-music is in the minor key. If this were true of the Norwegians and Swedes alone, we might be tempted to attribute it to the depressing effect of the bleak mountain scenery by which the people are so generally surrounded. But unfortunately for this theory, the music of the low-lying Dane, whose highest hill would be called a valley in Norway, is no less melancholy than that of his neighbors to the north. It is safest to regard it as an expression of race temperament, without trying to discover the natural sources of that melancholy, if there be any. (Dodge 1911: 279–280)

Of course, Nordic people are not essentially melancholic and all talk of a "Nordic race" is hopelessly outdated, but this "specific type of melancholy" admittedly has an established standing and a special importance in the arts of the Nordic countries, where it is nowadays practically a "label and trademark" (see Hansen & Waade 2017: 83–84). Despite Dodge's insistence that the environment is not to blame, however, the natural conditions of the region are central aspects of this "Nordic melancholy", the "Nordic light", for example, which has been "nationalized into a special mood, as well as a tourist marketing resource", to quote Orvar Löfgren and Billy Ehn (2007: 10). This has been a central feature in Nordic arts ever since the latter half of the nineteenth century, and the "particular light, the landscape, the colours, the mood and the melancholic figure" in the works by Edvard Munch and his contemporaries well exemplify this (Waade 2017: 382–283). As many Nordic noir series could be described with the exact same words, they clearly also seek an association with this "label and trademark" and position themselves on this long continuum, as Hansen and Waade also observe (2017: 83). Moreover, Dodge's statement regarding Nordic music was also not without substantiation. In 1842, the Danish composer Andreas Peter Berggreen, who had amassed a significant collection of folk songs from various countries, was in the opinion that all Nordic songs are commonly melancholic, serious, and in a minor key (Fjeldsøe & Groth 2019: 6). Therefore, it is hardly a coincidence that in practically every title sequence (the one segment where the affiliation with the "Nordic melancholy" is perhaps most manifest) of a Nordic noir series analysed for *Article I*, the music can – again – be described in the exact same way.

2.3.2 Immanent social critique

In the final episode of the Swedish series *The Case* (*Fallet*, 2017), the murderer has taken hostages, and as the police, attempting to negotiate, try to appeal to the man by recognising the problems in society and the hardships he must have had in life, he dismisses such thoughts as nonsense and announces that "people like me are just malicious bastards" ("såna som jag är elaka jävlar bara"). Very likely, the creators of the series were aware of Kurt Wallander's sentiment from the novel *The Fifth Woman* (2012; Swedish original *Den femte kvinnan*, 1996), penned by Henning Mankell: "There aren't many people who are truly evil, […] At least I think they're few and far between. On the other hand, there are evil circumstances, which trigger all this violence. It's those circumstances we have to tackle" (2012: 442). What makes the scene in *The Case* special is that the series is a comedy, a Nordic noir parody, and as Henri Bergson noted on the essential difference between tragedy and comedy, "the former [is] concerned with individuals and the latter with classes" (1921: 165), and "[c]omedy […] takes note of similarities. It aims at placing types before our eyes" (ibid.: 163). Indeed, being concerned with the underlying circumstances, or structures, in society is a *type* in Nordic noir. Practically without exceptions, scholars writing on Nordic noir bring up the socially critical ethos as a central characteristic. They do not always burrow deeper into how and why it is central, but they mention it as a recurrent feature. Indeed, like the stylistic features discussed above, its quality and degree of presence varies, and it is sometimes quite obvious and other times more implicit, but it is always there in one form or another. But here, I also argue that it is characteristic to Nordic noir at least partly due to a certain kind of social criticism being characteristically Nordic.

Far from being the first Swedish crime writers, Maj Sjöwall (1935–2020) and Per Wahlöö (1926–1975), with their ten novel series *Roman om ett brott* ("A novel of a crime," 1965–1975) and the police commissioner Martin Beck as their main protagonist, were the first to put social criticism on the agenda. They presented a Sweden that, under the surface of the welfare state, "was turning into an increasingly capitalistic, harsh and brutal society where the class divides were growing" (Bergman 2014: 34). In this millennium, decades after the *Martin Beck* novels, Jens Lapidus (1974–) has, in a way, continued this work with his *Stockholm noir* stories (as he has himself named them). As Bergman insightfully explains, "his portrayal of the city [Stockholm] represents the very Sweden that Sjöwall and Wahlöö warned against in the 1960s and 1970s: a country corrupted by capitalism and greed" (ibid.: 101). Another writer, whose influence in the developmental history of Nordic noir cannot be overlooked, is Henning Mankell (1948–2015). Having been an author and playwright for nearly two decades, after some time in Africa, he picked up crime stories specifically to critique Swedish society. He recounts in a television interview: "I returned from Africa to Sweden in 1989. I noticed right away that xenophobia had

starkly increased. I decided to write about it. In my opinion, racism is a crime, so I chose a crime plot. For that, I needed a policeman".[12] That policeman was, of course, inspector Kurt Wallander. But what started out from the will to tackle racism turned to a more general concern over the condition of Swedish society. In the foreword of *The Pyramid* (2009; Swedish original *Pyramiden*, 1999), a collection of *Wallander* stories published after Mankell had initially decided to end the series, the author writes:

> It was only after I had written the eighth and final instalment in the series about Kurt Wallander that I thought of the subtitle I had always sought but never found. When everything, or at least most of it, was over, I understood that the subtitle naturally had to be 'Novels about the Swedish Anxiety'.
>
> But of course I arrived too late at this insight. And this despite the fact that the books have always been variations on a single theme: 'What is happening to the Swedish welfare state in the 1990s? How will democracy survive if the foundation of the welfare state is no longer intact? Is the price of Swedish democracy too high and no longer worth paying?' (Mankell 2009: 1)

Stieg Larsson's (1954–2004) three novels, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (*Män som hatar kvinnor*, 2005), *The Girl Who Played with Fire* (*Flickan som lekte med elden*, 2006), and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' Nest* (*Luftslottet som sprängdes*, 2007), also called the *Millennium* trilogy, were instrumental in turning Nordic noir into an international phenomenon.[13] In these novels, the author tackled issues, such as corporate greed, corruption, and the feeling of entitlement by the wealthy, but was also "intensely concerned with the violation and enclosure of women" (Peacock 2012: 110) and presented an "indictment against a violent, patriarchal society" (Stougaard-Nielsen 2017: 6). However, these issues had already been taken on in Swedish crime literature prior to Larsson, as Sweden saw a rise in women crime writers from the 1990s onwards – Kerstin Bergman sees especially Liza

[12] "Min sanning: Henning Mankell," first broadcast 16 September 2014, SVT2. My own translation from Swedish.

[13] According to Steven Peacock, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* was the best-selling novel in Europe in 2008 and fourth on the *New York Times* best-seller list in 2009 (Peacock 2014: 187n7). In 2017, the trilogy had apparently sold over eighty million copies and had been translated into fifty languages (Ahlander 2017). The novels were also adapted into a film trilogy (*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* [*Män som hatar kvinnor*, Sweden/Denmark/Germany 2009; dir. Niels Arden Oplev], *The Girl Who Played with Fire* [*Flickan som lekte med elden*, Sweden/Denmark/Germany 2009; dir. Daniel Alfredson], and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' Nest* [*Luftslottet som sprängdes*, Sweden/Denmark/Germany 2009; dir. Daniel Alfredson], which was also edited into a six-episode television series *Millennium* (2010).

Marklund (1962–), with the *Annika Bengtzon* novels, as belonging to the socially critical tradition of Swedish crime fiction (Bergman 2014: 72). Although some Swedish female authors have been less concerned with social criticism – and thus, according to Bergman, not classifiable "in terms of being the new heirs of Sjöwall and Wahlöö or Mankell" (ibid.: 73) – many have also done so, especially with the intent of bringing feminist viewpoints to crime fiction, dealing also with violence against women and skewed power relations in the male-dominated society. Such writers include, among others, Katarina Wennstam (1973–), Aino Trosell (1949–), Camilla Grebe (1968–), and Åsa Träff (1970–) (see ibid.: 81–84). Of course, this development is not limited to Sweden alone, and writers like Leena Lehtolainen (1964–) from Finland, with the *Maria Kallio* cycle, can well be added to the list (see, for example, Nestingen 2007).

The will to address problems in society by means of crime fiction has remained steady in the Nordic countries, and the ethos of social conscience has continued as a recurrent theme in Nordic noir also in its audiovisual form.[14] Arguably, it even gained some new wind under its wings. As Ingolf Gabold took over as the head of drama at DR (formerly Danmarks Radio, the Danish public-service radio and television broadcasting company) and introduced new production principles, or "DR dogmas", one of these dogmas was "double storytelling". In double storytelling, in addition to the primary storyline (the crime plot, for example), another plot is introduced, one that deals with or reflects important political or societal issues (Hansen & Waade 2017: 165–166). The DR Dogmas proved to be very successful, one of the successes being the *The Killing*, the series that became a central representative of Nordic noir. As also Hansen and Waade point out, such a narrative strategy is "very much in line with the ambition of Scandinavian crime fiction to contribute to contemporary political and societal discussions" (ibid.: 166).

In Nordic noir, as mentioned, the fundamental reasons for criminal behaviour are seated deeper in the structures of society, and – as if Wallander's words of "evil circumstances" were still being used as a guiding principle – crude good-versus-evil dichotomies are practically non-existent in these stories, where often the real culprit, or enabler, is ultimately the slowly disintegrating Nordic welfare state itself, not keeping its promise. According to Pekka Kosonen, the formation of the Nordic welfare state, which took place after the 1950s and, in many respects, ended by the end of the 1980s, brought about a set of institutionalised goals, or standards (1998: 104–105). Kosonen lists them as follows:

[14] Paul Schrader argues that film noir "is more interested in style than theme" and expresses the belief that "style determines the theme" not only in film noir but "in *every* film" (1972: 13). If this is indeed so, a clear difference between Nordic noir and film noir can be observed here.

a) universal social rights
b) public policy's responsibility for guaranteeing wellbeing
c) equality (in income distribution, as well as between sexes)
d) aspiring for full employment and a high work participation rate. (Ibid.)[15]

Kosonen points out that although these goals have not always been met, they became "the normative legacy of the Nordic countries", an implicit contract, creating legitimation pressure and inhibiting political operations contrary to these ideals (ibid.). Moreover, Pauli Kettunen calls Nordic society "a self-criticising and foreseeing society", applying a method or a mode of thinking called *immanent criticism*, criticism from within, which is not necessarily concerned with "revealing the suppressive reality".[16] On the contrary, according to Kettunen, "the aim of criticising society according to its own normative standards does not require proving the speciousness of those standards, but it can also entail a strong commitment to the normative standards that society perceives as its own" (2001: 262).[17] Although noting that immanent criticism is not a Nordic speciality, Kettunen infers that it has had in Nordic countries a "special kind of political potency" as there, "society has had a dual meaning as representing the normative standards, as well as the reality to which they must be applied" (ibid.: 263).[18] In this light, Nordic noir appears as a distinct form of immanent criticism, which also supports the understanding of Nordic noir as a characteristically Nordic phenomenon, a product of – but also for – the Nordic society, presenting features that do not fit the vision or idea of what a functioning Nordic welfare society should be or entail, and an effort to remind it of its own standards, its normative legacy. Making a very similar observation, Stougaard-Nielsen states that "Scandinavian crime fiction is centrally preoccupied with how to restore the health of the social body in an age where state and its representatives have lost their former self-evident moral authority" (2017: 6–7).

Social criticism can take many forms in audiovisual Nordic noir. At one end of the spectrum is bluntly articulating that the system is broken, like in *The Bridge*,

[15] My own translation from Finnish.

[16] Immanent criticism as a method originates from Hegel, for whom philosophy was a means to "[criticize] a culture on its own terms, on the basis of its highest ideals, rather than some apodictic first principle or transcendent, abstract moral standards" (Good 2006: 1). However, the earliest written record of the term "immanent criticism" is in Walter Benjamin's doctoral dissertation from 1919 (Finlayson 2014: 1147). It is possible that, from there, the concept found its way to the other members of the Frankfurt School and its "critical theory" (ibid.).

[17] My own translation from Finnish.

[18] My own translation from Finnish.

where Saga Norén – a police officer after all – reacts to the claim made by the killer, that people are not equal before the law, simply by saying: "It is true." As her superior officer notes that there are many who would beg to differ with that sentiment, Saga replies in her idiosyncratic style: "That doesn't make it any less true." At the other end is social criticism subtly embedded in the audiovisual design. In the "Nordic melancholy" discussed above, Hansen and Waade also recognise a kind of subcategory, which they call *welfare melancholy*. They describe it as "lamenting the erosion of collective social welfare structures" (Hanse & Waade 2017: 83). They argue that in Nordic noir, the oft-gloomy depiction of the Nordic region "perform[s] a very spatial criticism of the fall of the welfare society rooted in the ten novel series by Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö collectively entitled *Roman om ett brott/Stories of a crime* [sic] (1965–1975). This title does not refer to a particular act of crime, but rather the murder of the Swedish social welfare system" (ibid.: 82–83).

In the first instalment of the *Wallander* novels, *Faceless Killers* (2002; Swedish original *Mördare utan ansikte*, 1991), trying to solve a racist murder, Kurt Wallander asks: "What's behind this whole thing? Neo-Nazis? Racists with connections all over Europe? Why would someone commit a crime like this anyway? Jump out into the road and shoot a complete stranger? Just because he happened to be black?" To this, Wallander's close and experienced colleague Rydberg replies: "No way of knowing," […] But it's something we're going to have to learn to live with" (2002: 219). In *Täckmanteln* (2006; dir. Anders Engström), in turn, the ninth film of the *Wallander* series, after finding out that the criminals are using human trafficking as a front to their drug smuggling operation, an elderly nun asks Kurt Wallander: "How low can people sink?" Wallander replies glumly: "That we will never find out." Such an attitude is no longer mere melancholy but implies a conviction that "the normative legacy" has been lost, and it seems that things can now only get worse. As I argue in *Article I*, such a despondent outlook on future prospects also has its counterpart in audiovisual Nordic noir, which I name *audiovisual pessimism*. It entails combining the audiovisual components characteristic of Nordic noir and the "welfare melancholy" in such a way, that it expresses disbelief in the possibilities of changing the direction of Nordic society.

2.3.3 (Self-)Borealism

The Nordic region has been a place of myths and mystery for millennia, not least due to being so difficult to access. Looking at the region on a map, one quickly notices that water dominates, and that water is often freezingly cold or frozen. It is noteworthy that even in as late as the nineteenth century, Finland was still often considered an "island" because of this physical isolation (see Lee 2018). The Roman conquests never reached the North, and the Catholic church managed to spread its

influence there relatively late. The Nordic region remained, in many ways, separate for a long time from the southern world and its places of power. The medieval Scandinavians developed their own *oecumene*, view of the known world (see Jackson 2019), and even their own "*mare nostrum*", the Baltic Sea, "the epicentre of life in the eastern quarter of [that] world" (ibid.: 63). As an echo from that era (and as if as a confirmation that the world is still seen from a different angle), the Baltic Sea is still called "the Eastern Sea" in the North – regardless of the direction it is viewed from.[19]

According to Peter Davidson, "[t]wo opposing ideas of north repeat (and contradict each other) from European antiquity to the time of the nineteenth-century Arctic explorers: that the north is a place of darkness and dearth, the set of evil. Or, conversely, that it is a place of austere felicity where virtuous peoples live behind the north wind and are happy" (2005: 21). Moreover, Davidson notes that "there have always been as many norths as there have been standpoints from which to look northwards" (ibid.). In other words, "the North" has been a place of and for stories about mysterious and foreign places and people throughout history and up until fairly recently. Still, the stories have continued to the present day, or rather an attitude towards the North as a mythical and mysterious place, subjected from the outside to a *Borealist* gaze. A derivative of Orientalism, Borealism denotes the exoticising of the North and its cultures by the South. Like Orientalism, Borealism also implies an imbalance in power relations between the viewer and the viewed. Kristinn Schram writes:

> In my definition Borealism is the signification, practice and performance of the ontological and epistemological distinction in power between North and South. Whether it should be discussed in post-colonial terms may be debated but without a doubt it is applicable in describing the discrepancies and cross-communication between centres and margins of power. (2011b: 99)

Admittedly, given the differences between the colonial histories of the North and the East, it would seem overreaching to draw too substantial parallels between Borealism and Orientalism.[20] Nonetheless, what Schram describes is a real phenome-

[19] The Baltic Sea is called *Itämeri* in Finnish, *Nuortamearra* in Sámi, *Östersjön* in Swedish, *Østersøen* in Danish, and *Austersjøen/Østersjøen* in Norwegian. In Icelandic and Faroese, the Baltic Sea is called, quite logically, *Eystrasalt*, "the (more) easterly" sea (or "salt"). For more on the etymology of *Eystrasalt*, see Zilmer (2006: 244).

[20] It is important to separate from this discussion the Borealist gaze that the Sámi, the indigenous people of the Nordic region, have been subjected to from the South but also within the Nordic region itself. Undoubtedly, this exoticisation of the "emblematic" Sámi needs to be addressed as a colonialist discourse (see Olsen 2003).

non. In the North, the exoticising Borealist gaze is a reality that many must take into account and try to come to terms with. Tore Størvold, for example, accounts how Icelandic musicians need to figure out strategies in regard to the Borealist narratives: "some try their best to oppose them by crafting alternative, cosmopolitan ideas of Nordicness, while others play into the discourse of borealism in strategic ways with varying intentions and varying degrees of sincerity" (2018: 377). In this light, this self-exoticising, or self-Borealism, appears as a way of coping with the long-lasting imbalanced power relations between the North and the South. As with the Icelandic bands, of which some accept it with "a varying degree of sincerity", so, too, can Nordic noir be seen as a way of owning the Borealist narratives, to a degree, as a means of controlling the power they have – telling the stories yourself instead of letting others tell them of you. Moreover, the seizing of that power also allows for the capitalisation on the Borealist gaze.

Nordic noir is, to a substantial degree, involved in region promotion and tourism. The success of *Wallander* as films and novels, for example, has also effectively rubbed off to Skåne, the location of the series, which has become a popular destination for media tourists who want to "walk in the footsteps of [the fictional characters], act in the same way, eat the same food and gaze the same landscapes" (Waade 2016: 45). This interest in the mediated location has led to "location placement" as a marketing strategy. It can benefit the film or television series, as well as the actual geographical place by adding visual appeal to the production while promoting the location as a possible tourist destination (ibid.: 44; see also Waade 2011; Waade & Jensen 2013). A good example of this is the Icelandic hit series *Trapped* (*Ófærð*, Iceland 2015–), which, according to Størvold, "construct[s] an image of Iceland in line with current national aspirations and geopolitical trajectories that emphasize it as an 'Arctic state,' to the benefit of the tourism industry" (2019: 103). In such aspirations, also the exoticising Borealist narratives can be seen as an asset. Størvold notes that, "[f]or better or worse, Iceland is caught up in global imaginary of the mysterious North. […] While there is a long history of Iceland being portrayed as wild, unspoiled, and authentic, it is only in recent decades that the tourism industry has systematically capitalized on these myths, turning images of this exotic nature into a marketable brand" (ibid.: 105).

Jonathan Bellman accounts that when the symphonies of Mily Balakirev (1837–1910) were performed abroad, the music intended as "Russian music for Russians" became "boundlessly exotic and suggestive of Ancient Mother Russia" in the minds of an American audience (Bellman 1998: xi). Although Nordic noir is not intended as exclusively "Nordic television for Nordic people", a similar dynamic can be ob-

served there as well. In Nordic noir, as Seppälä observes based on online comments, "[f]or international audiences, […] Nordic regional elements function as exotic Nordicana" (2020: 267–268). Thus, although Gunhild Agger purports that "[i]n Nordic [film and television] productions, identity and emotion related to location aim to ensure an understanding at a domestic as well as transnational level" (2016: 137), the two understandings are evidently not the same nor very likely even close to similar. Moreover, Bellman points out that exoticising "carries within it an implicit comparison and judgment; that is, the idea that 'they are different from us' cannot help becoming 'they are happier, sadder, more serious, more pleasure-loving, purer, more corrupt'" (1998: xii); exoticising cannot but lead to essentialising and othering. Therefore, as Nordic noir films and series tap into the "trademark" features of the North to attract both domestic and non-Nordic audiences, they cannot fully avoid – even if they wanted to – essentialising and othering the Nordic region and its people.[21] Thus, they can also end up reaffirming the notions of "the Nordic race" and "Nordic character" (to recall the statement by Daniel Kilham Dodge) – notions that also imply the distinction between "us" and "them" – even though the desired effect and the more apparent goals might be completely opposite.

Obviously, the reaffirmation of essentialist and mythologising ideas is not seen by all in the Nordic region as necessarily problematic. In the Nordic metal music scene, for example, as Aila Mustamo points out, "Nordicness has been linked to authenticity of the music and exclusory ethnic identity. Nordic countries have been represented as a mythical space for masculine freedom rather than a specific spatial or historical phenomenon (2020: 70; see also Kallioniemi & Kärki 2009: 66–69). But it can also be observed in state-level politics. According to Størvold, Iceland, for example, has not shunned "'national character' discourses" (2019: 106). But on the whole, as discussed, such reaffirmation can boost the "Nordic brand" and the industries that seek to benefit from it, and undoubtedly, the Nordic film and television industry is also one of them. However, in the context of Nordic noir, it can also be seen as notably contradictory to the overall humanist message, which tends to highlight and dismantle discriminatory practices rather than uphold them.

As a final note to the complex question of Nordicness in Nordic noir, an aspect that has thus far been implied but not explicitly articulated: none of the "Nordic characteristics" discussed above are "Nordic" automatically, not even the light and the

[21] As an example of likely intentional othering, Schramm gives the scene in *Jar City* (*Mýrin*, Iceland 2006; dir. Baltasar Kormákur), a crime film based on a novel by Arnaldur Indriðason, in which the protagonist is seen eating *svið*, an Icelandic traditional dish that consists of a boiled sheep's head, cut in half. Schramm argues that "one would be justified in suspecting that its sole purpose was to catch the othering eye of foreign audiences" (2011a: 313).

darkness; the same sun shines also in Canada and Siberia. Nordicness is a social construct, albeit it has been under construction for a long time – which is why some of it may seem to exist "naturally". Without a doubt, experiences of nature, for example, have moulded artistic expressions in the North (as discussed above and in *Article I*), but what makes some of them "Nordic" are the shared experiences that lead to the identification of something as "Nordic". As Fjeldsøe and Groth describe:

> Nordicness is not something that is just there, waiting to be found. Rather, it is something people do: a cultural practice. As a result, it is what many people choose to identify with, and through this act of identification – through listening, singing, playing, composing, thinking, talking, writing (about) it – "Nordicness" becomes and remains real. If people stop doing it, it will disappear. (2019: 3)

Here, it is necessary to reiterate Stougaard-Nielsen's statement that "Nordic noir […] 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" (2020: 93). But would not that then mean that *only* the exoticising Borealist views from outside have weight in the matter? And would not this then be true also with other Nordic cultural products as well? Have Nordic design and architecture become "Nordic" only after they have been "borealised"? Evidently not, as what has been discussed above clearly indicates. Despite the attempts, formal federal, military and monetary unions between the Nordic countries failed, and so culture became (or remained, depending on the viewpoint) "the main domain of cooperation" between the countries (Fjeldsøe & Groth 2019: 8). Because of these long-lasting close cultural ties, "the North" is an "ideological construct based on the idea of a common Nordic identity and culture" in many respects comparable to a nation (ibid.: 9), an "imagined community" to use the term by Benedict Anderson (2006 [1983]). And cultural products – Nordic noir included – are, among other things, a means of imagining that community, undoubtedly also through the various interactions with – or reactions to – the Borealist gaze.

3 Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

In this section, I present the theoretical and methodological structure of this study. As these two aspects – theoretical and methodological – are, in a work such as this, highly interlinked and thus not easily discussed separately, I attempt a different kind of composition here. I arrange the two into two separate "layers" that pertain to two different levels of analysis – albeit the line between them is not always distinct. The first (discussed in Section 3.1.) is that of form and function; in other words, audio-visual design, with an emphasis on how sounds are structured and how they operate in relation to each other and the audiovisual whole. This "surface level", as it were, informs the second layer of "deeper" analysis that is concerned with the meanings and repercussions that arise from the audiovisual structure (discussed in Section 3.2.). The various theoretical, methodological, and philosophical approaches and orientations that comprise the second analytical layer are very much interrelated, each informing and involving each of the others to some extent. They form a framework that is not rigid and strictly demarcated but flexible, capable of adjusting to the needs of each of the original articles of this thesis. In other words, although the articles deal with diverse issues, looking at Nordic noir from distinctly different angles, they all build on a fundamentally similar approach, where the different aspects of the second analytical layer – although not all necessarily expressly mentioned in the articles – inform the inquiry in varying degrees.

3.1 Dimensions of the soundtrack

3.1.1 The soundtrack and its constituents

In everyday language, the term "soundtrack" is typically used to refer to the music of a movie or a television series, or even a collection of (some of) the music, sold separately as an album. But, in fact, the *soundtrack* (or *sound track*) consists of all the sounds used – including music. These cinematic sounds can be roughly divided

into two categories,[22] *diegetic* and *nondiegetic*, based on where their perceived sound source is in relation to the *diegesis*, the storyworld of the film. Diegetic sounds are those that the characters within the diegesis can, or would be able to, hear or sounds that the audience can infer to belong to the diegesis due to their sonic characteristics. Nondiegetic sounds, in turn, come from outside the diegesis and are only audible to the audience. Of course, cinematic sounds come in many shapes and forms, but they are conventionally divided into three distinct categories: voice (most often dialogue), music, and other sounds, which also have their own subcategories, addressed here briefly.

For film and television, the human voice is recorded either on set (*location sound*, also called *production sound*) or afterwards in a recording studio as part of the so-called post-production.[23] The latter includes *automated dialogue replacement* (ADR), where the dialogue is re-recorded and synchronised with the actors' mouth movements, and the nondiegetic *voice-over*, most commonly the voice of the narrator. In addition to speech, other meaningful human-made sounds – breathing, sighs, cries, laughter, and so on – also belong to this category. Michel Chion points out that films are typically *vococentric*, meaning that other sounds are subordinate to human voice, as it "sets up a hierarchy of perception", where "the ear is inevitably carried toward it, picking it out, and structuring the perception of the whole around it. The ear attempts to analyze the sound in order to extract meaning from it […] and always tries to *localize* and if possible *identify* the voice" (1999: 5). This idea of the importance of human voice in film and television is also reflected in the sound designers' oft-used adage "dialogue is King" (see, for example, Skubisz n.d.).

[22] In this study, I use the term "cinematic" as a shorthand to avoid unnecessary and cumbersome references to film music/sound and television music/sound. Although film and television as narrative media have their differences (not discussed any further here), the operational principles of music and sound design are largely the same. For this reason, Tomlinson Holman, for example, does not discriminate between the two in *Sound for Film and Television*, but instead discusses sounds in narrative "filmmaking", by which Holman means "the general range of activities required to make a film, video, or television program" (2010: xi). Moreover, I understand "television" here broadly to include the various streaming service providers and technologies through which "television series" are accessed in today's media environment. Taking such issues into consideration, Mera et al. (2017) speak of "screen music and sound", which I also find useful, but as they also incorporate video games in their discussion and I do not, I chose to use another term.

[23] As denoting those stages of film-making that come after the principal photography, "post-production", although a commonly used term, is misleading, as it implies that films are mainly produced – that is made – when they are filmed, underestimating the importance of editing, sound design, and music composition as key factors in film-making.

Cinematic music can be either *original music*, meaning that it is composed specifically for the purposes of a particular production, or *preexisting music* – in other words, already available. Both can be used either as *score*, nondiegetic music used for dramatic purposes, or as diegetic *source music*, with its perceived source within the diegesis. In the latter case, the source of the music is often shown, so that it becomes clear where the music is coming from, but very often, the quality of the sound or the situation in the scene is enough to imply that the source of the music is in the diegetic space. Also, if the music – or, indeed, any sound – starts and ends exactly with scene changes, that also indicates that it is diegetic. In colloquial language, what is usually meant by "film music" or "film score" is nondiegetic original music, also called *original score*, but it is also relatively common that the score is a *compilation score*, meaning that it is compiled of various preexisting pieces of music. Very often, however, the score is a combination of both.

Other cinematic sounds can be placed in three subcategories: ambience, Foleys, and effects. *Ambient sounds* ("*atmos*"), continuous diegetic sounds usually in the background of a scene, are those that most likely go unnoticed by the audience as we do not listen to them consciously. They are nonetheless very important in the cinematic experience, as they are central in providing a spatial experience (discussed further below). Holman calls them "the connective tissue of film soundtracks" (2010: 148), as constancy in sound ambience is a key factor in the illusion of the diegetic time/space continuum: continuous sound ties disparate images together as if they are of the same space and time. On the other hand, noticeable changes in ambient sounds indicate a change in time and/or space. *Foleys*, named after Jack Foley (1891–1967), a Hollywood sound effects specialist, are diegetic sound effects synchronised with the actions of the characters. Typically, these are sounds of footsteps and other bodily movements, as well as sounds of the objects the characters come in contact with. These sounds are produced and recorded in a purpose-built studio (Foley stage), where the Foley artist performs the sounds by using various artefacts and surfaces as instruments. Finally, basically all other sounds on the soundtrack that are not voices, music, ambience, or Foleys belong to the category of *sound effects*. However, they too are further divided into *spot effects* (also called *hard effects*, as opposed to the "soft" ambient sounds) and *special (sound) effects*. Spot effects are particular, short-lived diegetic sounds synchronised with or in relation to visible events, or indicating nonvisible events – cars passing, gun shots, and so on. Special effects are sounds that are designed for special purposes, diegetic sounds of otherworldly creatures, for example, or nondiegetic metaphorical sounds.

3.1.2 Blurred boundaries

The basic building blocks of the soundtrack discussed above are, in fact, not blocks at all, rigid and well-defined but, as they are in constant interaction with each other, more like fluids that blend in many ways. Neither are the different categories always distinct. The boundary between diegetic and nondiegetic is already hazy, to say the least. A fairly ambiguous example can be found in the film *Three Colours: Blue* (*Trois couleurs: Bleu*, 1993; dir. Krzysztof Kieślowski), where we often hear music, which, based on its sonic characteristics, initially seems clearly nondiegetic but is music that the main character, Julie (Juliette Binoche), hears in her head. This makes it diegetic, only *internal* in this case. Contrary to *external diegetic sounds*, which can be heard by all the characters in the diegetic space, internal diegetic sounds (also called *metadiegetic*; see, for example, Gorbman 1987: 22–23) are sounds of inner experiences of the characters.[24] In *Atonement* (2007, dir. Joe Wright), in turn, in a scene where soldiers at Dunkirk are waiting to be rescued, we hear a solemn orchestral nondiegetic score. As the camera approaches a group of soldiers singing the hymn "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind", the score gradually aligns itself with the singing and then becomes its accompaniment, and thus, the diegetic singing and the nondiegetic score meet each other halfway, as it were. Then, as the camera leaves the group of singers, reverberation is added to the singing. This change in sound quality finally merges the singing with the nondiegetic score. Such instances where sounds fall into this "fantastical gap", as Robynn Stilwell describes the grey area between diegetic and nondiegetic (Stilwell 2007),[25] are relatively common in cinematic expression.

As is apparent from above, cinematic music and sound design are conventionally separated into two conceptually and practically distinct categories. The longevity of this convention may partly be explained by a perceived ontological difference between the two. Caryl Flinn observes that "[s]ound effects are usually motivated by diegetic activity, and dialogue is bound to a rational, ordered linguistic system. The two hardly disrupt the representational ambitions of the classical cinema", whereas nondiegetic music "appears to stray furthest from the 'ideology of the visible'" (1992: 6). In other words, images, dialogue, and diegetic sound effects tend to be

[24] Chion further divides these into *objective-internal* ("physiological sounds of breathing, moans or heartbeats") and *subjective-internal* sounds ("mental voices, memories and so on") (1994: 76).

[25] The term was coined by Stilwell together with James Buhler (Stilwell 2007: 186–187). This is also one way to achieve what Rick Altman calls *audio dissolve*, "superimpos[ing] sounds in order to pass from one sound track to another" (1987: 63). In this case, the music can also be understood as "supradiegetic", to use another term by Altman, a combination of diegetic singing and nondiegetic musical accompaniment (ibid.: 69–70), a situation characteristic to film musicals.

construed as parts of the same, rationally understood "visible" world, whereas music is not. Undoubtedly, however, there are also more pragmatic reasons that have influenced the matter. Music and sound design did not enter cinema hand-in-hand but took different routes, which led to the development of their own sets of conventions and workflows. Moreover, unlike film sound, music was already an autonomous art form with its own set of established creative processes regarding composition, orchestration, recording, and so on. However, in the wake of the "digital turn" of sound technology, which, since its beginnings in the 1980s, has significantly influenced music and sound production (see, for example, Brusila et al. 2022), there has been a gradual but clearly discernible change in the attitudes maintaining the rigid conceptual and practical separation of cinematic music and sound design. While such changes in production cultures come about through "complex webs of music, technology, society, and history, all of which presuppose each other" (Taylor 2001: 5), and are not explained by technological developments alone (a discussion not ventured any deeper into here), the introduction of new technology undoubtedly lies at the heart of this change.

Nowadays, music composition is primarily done on so-called digital audio workstations (DAW), which offer ample opportunities for recording, mixing, and sound editing, and where a wide variety of various virtual instruments and sound production tools provide a practically endless supply of synthetic musical sounds (see, for example, Hugill 2012: 144–145). Today, virtual instruments are also quite capable of mimicking the sound of acoustic instruments. They have brought large orchestral sound also to productions that previously could not afford – or did not want to invest in – large orchestral scores, and in productions where the final score is done with a live orchestra, virtual instruments can be used to produce well-developed demo material and mockup scores to be used in film editing (see, for example, Bennett 2009: 1–2). Moreover, cinematic music was long dominated by Western orchestral sound with its instrument combinations and orchestration conventions and to which Western musical notation system brought its limitations. Perhaps it still does to some extent, but a mainstream cinematic score, for example, is now predominantly a combination of virtual instruments, real live recording sessions and sound processing. Dubbed *hyperorchestration* (a portmanteau of *hyperreal* and *orchestra*) by Sergi Casanelles (2016: 58), it has expanded the composers' palette far beyond the limits of traditional acoustic timbres and orchestrational conventions. For example, as John Richardson notes, Hollywood film composer Danny Elfman is "just one of many composers who employs digitally sampled orchestral sounds as liberally as he does actual orchestras" (2011: 289).

Computerised sound production and editing becoming a staple of the music composition workflow has converged the creative processes of cinematic music and sound in a technical sense, but the expansion of timbral possibilities in music com-

position has also narrowed the gap between musical artistic expression and that of sound design. This has also opened up new perspectives for the interaction of music and other sounds. New musical textures have appeared next to the conventional – still often symphonic, classical-romantically inclined – tonalities, as it is easier for composers to utilise in their work sounds that have traditionally been perceived as non-musical – or rather, expand the understanding of what constitutes as musical sound. This is not a new idea, as Luigi Russolo wrote in already his 1913 futurist manifesto of a coming musical revolution, where the sounds of the industrialised world would replace the "restricted" acoustic instruments of the past (Russolo 1986); in the 1940s and 1950s, the avant-garde composers of *musique concréte* and *elektronische Musik*, in France and Germany respectively, attempted this in practice. However, only after the turn of the millennium, there has been an emergent paradigm shift in film and television that has taken this approach to mainstream popular culture. Arguably, one of the most prominent examples is the soundtrack of *Chernobyl* (2019), the popular television series on the Chernobyl nuclear disaster that took place in 1986.[26] Its original score by the Icelandic composer and cellist Hildur Guðnadóttir was made using sounds recorded in the Ignalina nuclear powerplant in Lithuania, resulting in a soundtrack where music and sound design are often practically indistinguishable and that, as Tore Størvold and John Richardson (2021) demonstrate, effectively connotes the omnipresent invisible enemy, nuclear radiation, and its impact on human life and the environment.

This disintegration of the traditional "false boundaries" (Greene 2016: 30) of the cinematic soundtrack has conversely been seen in audiovisual studies as a turn towards soundtrack integration, and the concept of *integrated soundtrack* has been introduced to denote these more complex approaches. Liz Greene and Danijela Kulezic-Wilson, two scholars working on this line of inquiry, propound that

> The use of *musique concrète* in sound design, the integration of speech and/or sound effects into film scores as well as musically conceived soundscapes – to mention only some examples of innovative techniques – demand new approaches to the study of the soundtrack which are prepared to consider the in-

[26] It is worth noting that there was also the BBC Radiophonic Workshop – founded in 1958, a British equivalent to IRCAM (France) and "the Darmstadt school" (Germany) – that did indeed produce the early soundtracks for the immensely popular *Doctor Who* television series, which combined Tristram Cary's experimental music with Brian Hodgson's "special sound" sound effects (see, for example, Donnelly 2007).

> creasingly intertwined elements of silence, noise, speech, sound effects and music as an integrated whole. (2016: 2)[27]

A similar – but somewhat more cautious – approach can be found in *Voicing the Cinema: Film Music and the Integrated Soundtrack*, where the integrated soundtrack is understood as "a soundtrack where the various components have a sense of being planned or composed and where sound design and music are blended into a kind of conceptual unity" (Buhler & Lewis 2020: 1). Of the original articles of this thesis, the integrated soundtrack approach is especially relevant to *Article II*, which discusses various ways in which the blurring of traditional boundaries of the soundtrack adds ambiguity and a sense of liminality to the series *The Bridge*.

3.1.3 Audiovisuality

According to film sound scholar Michel Chion, sounds bring "added value" to films. On the whole, this is true, but not in the way one might assume on its face value. As Chion explains, it means "the expressive and informative value with which a sound enriches a given image so as to create the definite impression […] that this information or expression 'naturally' comes from what is seen and is already contained in the image itself" (1994: 5). This, in turn, can lead to "the (eminently incorrect) impression that sound is unnecessary, that sound merely duplicates a meaning which in reality it brings about, either all on its own or by discrepancies between it and the image" (ibid.). In other words, the connection between sound and image can seem so natural that we may not consider it even necessary, although it is in fact only that connection that creates the phenomenon we perceive. The cinematic experience is an audiovisual combination in which sounds make us see differently and images make us hear differently – *added value* is therefore a two-way street. Moreover, Chion also uses the term *synchresis* (portmanteau of *synchronism* and *synthesis*) to denote the "the spontaneous and irresistible weld produced between a particular auditory phenomenon and visual phenomenon when they occur at the same time" (Chion 1994: 63). Even sounds and images that seem completely at odds form "monstrous yet inevitable and irresistible agglomerations in our perception" (ibid.). This is undoubtedly so, and synchresis has become a widely accepted concept in audiovisual studies.

What needs to be addressed, however, is that this theoretisation is not wholly unproblematic due to Chion's insistence that the "irresistible" and "inevitable" is

[27] Before her untimely death in 2021, Danijela Kulezic-Wilson published also a monograph on the subject, *Sound Design Is the New Score: Theory, Aesthetics, and Erotics of the Integrated Soundtrack* (2020).

also part of what Chion calls "the audiovisual contract". Chion maintains that visual and auditory perceptions are, by nature, separate, but as we are watching a film, we agree, in a "symbolic pact" (1994: 222), to accept that the two disparate phenomena are one and let the "two perceptions mutually influence each other […], lending each other their respective properties by contamination and projection" (ibid.: 9). Yet, we experience films with the very same apparatus we use to experience the rest of the world. In the human brain – more precisely, in the *superior colliculus* in the midbrain, on the dorsal side of the brainstem – visual, auditory, and tactile neurons react to the respective stimuli from the outside world. But there are also *multisensory* neurons, specialised in combining these stimuli in a process called *multisensory integration*; spatially and/or temporally congruent visual and auditory stimuli, in this case, become integrated as one *audiovisual* stimulus (see, for example, Holmes & Spence 2005; Stein & Stanford 2008). This integration precedes perception, which means that "the irresistible weld" does indeed take place, but – as we do not have a say in the matter – not according to a culturally determined "contract".

Possibly the best-known definition of diegesis, at least to the scholars in audiovisual studies, is from Claudia Gorbman's ground-breaking work *Unheard Melodies*: "the narratively implied spatiotemporal world of the actions and characters" (1987: 21). As much of the information we receive from the cinematic situation we do not gather consciously, it is debatable whether "narrative implication" is indeed how the storyworld comes to being, but if "imply" is taken to mean "to communicate indirectly", this is undoubtedly true. And what was clear to Gorbman is also taken as evident in this work: the storyworld is communicated to us through the interaction of sounds and images – through audiovisual means. But why this issue needs to be brought up here is that, seemingly, the fact that sounds are crucial in this regard has not been fully accepted or recognised in film studies. As an example, *A Dictionary of Film Studies* (Kuhn & Westwell 2012), a relatively recent publication, contains three different entries – "Diegesis" (116–117), "Filmic space (cinematic space, film space)" (299), and "Offscreen space" (165), that present oddly contradicting views (diegetic space and "filmic space" are considered different things; "filmic space" only contains what is "within the film frame"; "offscreen space" also exists and is part of the film scene but apparently not of "filmic space" – to name a few), but most importantly to the issue at hand, none of them mention sound as relevant in the matter, although, as discussed above, sounds are essential in the experience of cinematic space-time continuum.

Indeed, a common practice is to categorise diegetic sounds as *off-screen* or *on-screen* according to whether or not the sound source is located within the frame. According to this logic, an off-screen sound comes from an off-screen source. But to be exact, as Christian Metz succinctly remarks: "We tend to forget that a sound in itself is never 'off'; either it is audible or it doesn't exist" (1985: 157). A concept

that more accurately describes the dynamic between the image and the sound from an unseen source is *acousmatic*, introduced to audiovisual studies – again – by Michel Chion. It was originally used by Pierre Schaeffer, the French composer of *musique concrète*, to describe "sounds one hears without seeing their original cause" (Schaeffer cited in Chion 1994: 71). In Chion's usage, it means more or less the same, but Chion also explains what such sounds potentially do in the audiovisual context, not only how they are situated in relation to the visuals: "A sound or voice that remains acousmatic creates a mystery of the nature of its source, its properties and its powers" (ibid.: 72). A looming acousmatic sound, a voice of a character, for instance, can become an *acousmêtre*, an "acousmatic being" which, "being in the screen and not, wandering the screen without entering it, brings disequilibrium and tension" (1999: 24). And when the source is eventually shown, the sound becomes *deacousmatised* and loses the mystery it carried with it (Chion 1994: 72).

A good example of this can be found in the beginning of *Barton Fink* (1991; dir. Joel and Ethan Coen). Barton Fink (John Turturro), sitting in a seedy hotel room, is trying to write a film screenplay. Next door, someone is incessantly laughing (and possibly also crying) loudly, interrupting Fink. He calls the reception to complain. Right after the call, he hears the phone ring in the other room. The laughing stops, a man answers the phone: the call is from the reception. When the man hears about the complaint and where it came from, we hear him hang up, leave the room, walk down the corridor, stop at Fink's door, and knock. As this happens, we see things from Fink's point of view, as if trying to see the sound source: first the wall, behind which the sound is supposedly coming from, and then panning with the sound as the man leaves his room. Fink opens the door, and the man (John Goodman) is revealed. He asks Fink about the complaint, but holding a hand on his temple as if with a headache, he no longer seems as intimidating as he was before we saw him. As this scene well exemplifies, the sound itself is not "off" and unlike the off-screen/on-screen dichotomy, acousmatic/deacousmatic better addresses the dynamics that sounds bring to the audiovisual situation and highlights the relevance of the unseen – but nevertheless present – in the medium that is often considered primarily visual.

3.1.4 Functions of cinematic music and sound

In the previous decades, there have been several different views, or propositions, of what the functions of film music are. They represent different theoretical (or pragmatic) approaches but tend not to be contradictory but complimentary. None of them are alone sufficient to give a comprehensive idea of what cinematic music is and what it does, but as they all shed light on the matter in some way, together, they can give a fuller picture. For example, Annabel J. Cohen (1999) looks at the subject from the perspective of cognitive psychology, providing insight on how music works in

our perception and understanding of a film;[28] Richard Davis, a teacher of film music composition at the Berklee College of Music, discusses the "physical", "psychological", and "technical" functions of film music from a more pragmatic, film composer's viewpoint (1999: 141–145); Hansjörg Pauli's similar tripartite division of film music from 1976 distinguishes between "paraphrasing", "polarisation", and "counterpoint" (see Bullerjahn & Güldenring 1994: 100), and despite the (deserved) criticism that it is too simplistic (Heldt 2016: 106) and that it presupposes and privileges the visuals as the primary source of meaning (Kärjä 2005: 149; Välimäki 2008: 44–45), it still informs the different types of interplay between music and the visuals. That said, some categorisations serve better as a basis and tool for film music analysis than others. In my work, I have found particularly useful the model by the Finnish film musicologist Anu Juva, which divides film music functions into four categories: *experiential function*, *content function*, *structural function*, and *external function* (2008: 41–53; 258–259). Their short description is as follows:

> *Experiential function*: music draws the audience into the narrative world of the film; provides entertainment and aesthetic pleasure; elevates events from particularity to universality;[29] discloses and communicates the filmmakers' point of view on or attitude towards the depicted events.
>
> *Content function*: music provides narrative information, that is, it conveys emotions or state of mind of the characters and the atmosphere of a scene; symbolises a certain component of the narrative; specifies features of a character, place, or period; foreshadows coming events; complements information provided also by the visuals; articulates space.[30]
>
> *Structural function*: music helps to establish a narrative rhythm and control the experience of time; creates coherence and clarifies the form and structure of the film; binds together consecutive takes and scenes; emphasises major narrative nodes and antinodes in the plot.

In any given situation, film music practically always has more than one of these three functions, but one can usually be construed as more prevalent than others. The fourth

[28] Cohen lists nine different functions of film music: masking (through frequency, coherence, and provision of information), provision of continuity, direction of attention, mood induction, communication of meaning, music as a cue for memory, arousal and focal attention, and aesthetic pleasure.

[29] Claudia Gorbman describes this effect succinctly by noting that "[t]he appropriate music will elevate the story of a man to the story of a Man" (1987: 21).

[30] I call this "narrative function" in *Article II*.

category, *external function*, refers to film music's functions outside the cinematic situation: music may connect a film to a particular genre; it can target certain audiences and appeal to particular critical positions; it can generate expectations towards a film.

Other observations from film music and sound scholars can provide valuable insight on the functions of cinematic music, although not necessarily explicitly named as such. Chion, for example, distinguishes between music that cares and music that does not – roughly speaking. On the one hand, as Chion describes, "music can directly express its participation in the feeling of the scene, by taking on the scene's rhythm, tone, and phrasing; obviously such music participates in cultural codes for things like sadness, happiness, and movement"; this Chion calls "*empathetic music*, from the word empathy, the ability to feel the feelings of others" (1994: 8). On the other hand, "music can also exhibit conspicuous indifference to the situation, by progressing in a steady, undaunted, and ineluctable manner: the scene takes place against this very backdrop of "indifference"; this Chion names, in turn, *anempathetic music* (ibid.). But, paradoxically, the effect anempathetic music has is "not of freezing emotion but rather of intensifying it" by placing the scene against a "cosmic background" (ibid.). It expresses that despite what is happening (or has happened), the world does not care, it continues as it was, and this effect can be quite tragic.

Anahid Kassabian, in turn, has proposed that film music affords two different ways for the audience to assume subject positions, *assimilating identification* and *affiliating identification*. The first forces a single subject position upon the audience that "does not challenge dominant ideologies", whereas the second "permit[s] resistances and allow[s] multiple and mobile identifications" (2001: 138–139). Here, Kassabian makes two valuable observations. The first is that of direction: "assimilating identifications narrow or tighten possibilities, while affiliating identifications open outward" (2001: 142). Secondly, it emphasises audience engagement as a key factor. However, according to Kassabian, these categories arise from an essential difference between original music and preexisting music: assimilating identification takes place primarily through original scoring, whereas affiliating identification requires preexisting music – music that the audience members have memories and experiences of, which they then bring with them to the identification process (2001: 2–3). This does not hold true, as is also established in *Article II*: opening outwards through affiliating identification is a central feature of the *The Bridge* (and a factor in *The Killing*), but the series has almost no preexisting music. The problem with Kassabian's model is that it "hinges on the music" and does not take into account the elaborate interplay of the music and the visuals (Anderson 2016: 35), let alone other sounds. Moreover, although Kassabian undoubtedly uncovers some basic prin-

ciples of how film music functions, in reality, the mechanisms are far more complex. In John Richardson's words:

> audiovisual sounds resonate in the theater of the mind, where they invite complex identifications that bring into play the lived experiences and complex cultural and personal identities of individual members of the audience. Sound in audiovisual contexts, therefore, occupies a space of subjective response that because of the permeability of the mind allows it to move along a continuum from the dramatically plausible to the equally real but emotionally conditioned realm of subjective fantasy. (2011: 55)

Looking at the descriptions and discussions on the functions of cinematic sounds found in relevant literature (see, for example, Beauchamp 2013: 15–32; Bordwell, Thompson & Smith 2020: 263–302; Gorbman 1987; Wyatt & Amies 2013: 4), they have their similarities. But they also contain notable differences in wording and emphasis, and forming a clear picture of the matter based on them may be difficult. Yet, there exists a mutual understanding among professional sound designers on what cinematic sounds do and what their purpose is. The trade is usually learned through practice and a mentor-student relationship, which may partly explain the lack of theoretical literature with concordant formulations of the functions of cinematic sounds. However, together with Janne Jankeri, a professional film sound designer with more than twenty-five years of experience from countless film and television productions, I have attempted to compile a comprehensive list that unites information found in different written descriptions with practice-based knowledge. Some of the functions are self-explanatory, but to some, I have added a short description for clarification. In our understanding, cinematic sound:

1) *Guides audience's attention (to a point of interest, towards a detail)*
2) *Establishes point-of-audition (POA)*

   This is roughly comparable to point-of-view (POV). Chion (1994: 90) divides POA to spatial ("from where do I hear, from what point in the space represented on the screen or on the soundtrack?") and subjective ("which character, at a given moment of the story, is [apparently] hearing what I hear?").

3) *Creates 3-dimensionality (defining distances [near/far] and directions; so-called "sound perspective")*
4) *Characterises diegetic space (location, milieu, size, materiality, etc.)*

Different locations and surroundings sound different due to what they contain and their dimensions, but also the materials they are made of.

5) *Characterises persons, objects, events, and situations*

Sounds can be used to emphasise the character traits of a person. Also, we cannot touch objects in films, but we can gain a sense of their materiality through sounds. Sounds can also reveal the nature or ethos of a transient event or a given situation.

6) *Indicates time period (time of day, season, era)*
7) *Provides continuity (between subsequent shots/scenes (sound advance/ sound bridge)*
8) *Creates connections (links) between disparate ideas, characters, places, images, and emotions (for example, through sound flashbacks and flashforwards)*

Flashbacks and flashforwards take sounds of one scene and place them somewhere else in the film. Technically speaking, also sound advances and sound bridges create flashforwards and flashbacks respectively, as they take sound from its original context and place it in another, the following or the previous scene, but this is not what the terms usually refer to.[31]

9) *Creates metaphors*

Ambiguous sounds can become metaphoric as they seem to refer to something else than what they are attached with in the audiovisual situation. As they demand interpretation, they "open up a perceptual vacuum into which the mind of the audience must inevitably rush", as Walter Murch observes (cited in Chion 1994: xx).

10) *Sets rhythm and pace (even/uneven, accelerating/decelerating rhythm/pace)*
11) *Influences the perceived duration of a shot/scene*
12) *Shapes and structures narrative dynamics (tension/release, startle/soothe, loud/quiet, etc.)*

31 Bordwell et al. also use the term "nonsimultaneous sound" (2020: 296).

The functions listed above are not placed in any order of presupposed importance or relevance. Also, as with the functions of cinematic music, a sound belonging to one of the categories can well be carrying out other functions as well, and very likely is. This is also far from the only similarity between music and other sounds, as evidently, even on a cursory glance, the functions of music and other sounds can be seen to converge and even overlap in many ways. This also speaks to the notion that the conventional demarcations of the cinematic soundtrack are, at least in today's environment, if not necessarily "false", dispensable. Not only because, as Danijela Kulezic-Wilson aptly notes, "sound effects can be designed with so much attention to their rhythmic and musical properties that they themselves become music" (2008: 130), but because sound design and music often sit in each other's chairs.

3.2 Analytical framework

3.2.1 Cultural musicology and critical theory

Although this study sits firmly within the field of audiovisual studies, I have, throughout the course of this work, considered it as having essentially a musicological core, from which it opens outwards in expanding circles, or spheres. The first two were already discussed above: music and/as cinematic sound; sound in/as audiovisual expression. But moving further outwards – or inwards, if one wishes to picture penetrable layers instead of spheres – leads to larger questions pertaining to audiovisual works as cultural expressions and their place in and relation to the society. Thus, as I see it, this study grows out of a musicological research orientation that "combine[s] aesthetic insight into music with a fuller understanding of its cultural, social, historical, and political dimensions" (Kramer 2003: 6), generally called *cultural musicology* today. This interdisciplinary approach to music research, called in the past also "critical musicology" and "new musicology" in the Anglo-American world,[32] arose in the late twentieth century as a response to the conventional musicology that had, as Joseph Kerman wrote, "come to mean the study of the history of

[32] As a side note, the line between "critical" and "new" musicology is somewhat hazy. They are sometimes considered synonymous. The first was used mainly by British scholars and the second in the United States. But the difference is not purely geographical, as "new musicology" was not, at least initially, as keen to include popular music in its field of research (see, for example, Scott 2003: 5; Maus 2011: par. 7). Also, Lawrence Kramer seems to include both under the rubric of "new musicology" but considers "cultural musicology" a much more appropriate term (2003: 6), whereas Pirkko Moisala sees cultural musicology as covering both "new" and "critical" musicology, as well as the strand of ethnomusicology concerned with especially Western music (2008), thus suggesting that the two indeed have their notable differences.

Western music in the high-art tradition" (1985: 11). Moreover, this approach to music research was interested "in the musical works themselves – as individual structures and as objects of delight" (Arthur Mendel cited in Kerman 1985: 32). As it dismissed all forms of popular music (naturally, including film and television music) from its field of inquiry, and approached music as isolated from sociocultural contexts, many considered it out of date. Derek B. Scott recounts: "thus, what became necessary was a concern with social and cultural processes informed by arguments that musical practices, values, and meanings related to particular historical, political, and cultural contexts" (2003: 4). This concern is central to each of the original articles of this dissertation and the dissertation as a whole.

This "relative belatedness of music scholars' cultural turn" came with the introduction of *critical theory* into music scholarship (Engelhardt 2010: par. 4; see also Kramer 2003: 6). Critical social theory, critical theory in short, has its roots in a group of German Marxist scholars that began its work in the Institute of Social Research in the University of Frankfurt during the 1920s (hence known as "the Frankfurt School"), most notably Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer. Concerned with "unveiling ideological mystifications in social relations" (Raymond & Brown 1994: 7), critical theory was initially engaged in the interpretation of Marxist theory, but it has many variations today, applying several other theoretical frameworks (or interpretative methods) with similar concerns, such as feminist theory and post-colonial theory. Moreover, critical theory has spread out from social sciences to several other fields, including humanities, where it has been taken up also by film – and film soundtrack – studies. James Buhler writes:

> The […] interpretive methods of critical theory […] are linked by a commitment to locating and interpreting an ideological substrate of film. The premise of critical theories of art is not only that aesthetic illusion, the surface of the artwork, is a necessary appearance as traditional aesthetics has it, but also that this illusion is bound up with ideology at a fundamental rather than contingent or superficial level. (Buhler 2019: 188)

In this thesis, I am not inclined towards any particular interpretative framework, nor to specifically engage in "hermeneutics of suspicion" – that is, to read Nordic noir "not so much for what it wants to say, but for what it attempts to conceal", as Buhler (2019: 189) succinctly packs the famous concept by Paul Ricœur. Instead, I apply an overall critical theoretical approach as an undercurrent in my attempt to locate the points of connection between Nordic noir and other cultural phenomena and the surrounding society, as well as a form of metacritique to discuss the overt or covert culture- and ideology-critical discourses discernible in Nordic noir. The only clear exception to this is *Article III* in which Orientalism, a concept central to post-

colonial theory, is applied with the intention of uncovering the implicit layers of meaning in *The Killing*.

Perhaps the most important aspect – and certainly not unrelated to any critical theoretical approach – that cultural musicology brings to this study is the understanding that music provides a form of logic ("musico-logica", as Birgit Abels calls it), a means to "[make] sense of the world with your ears" and a "[mode] of knowing" (Abels 2016: 11). Likewise, social theorist Jacques Attali has observed that music is "a way of perceiving the world. A tool for understanding" (cited in Abels 2016: 11). Such conceptualisation of music comes very close to what anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Steven Feld has named *acoustemology* (a portmanteau of "acoustics" and "epistemology"). As Feld explains, it "theorize[s] sound as a way of knowing. In doing so it inquires into *what is knowable, and how it becomes known, through sounding and listening* (Feld 2015: 12; italics added). Although acoustemology is not (yet) a frequently encountered concept in relation to cinematic soundtracks (for an example of a rare exception, see MacDonald 2013), I find that the questions related to the inquiry into cinematic sounds – musical or otherwise – are very much the same. They pertain to how the diegetic world is made known to us through sounds, how sounds influence the way we understand (become to know) the events taking place within that world, and what type of deeper insight there is to extract from those sounds related to our experiences as individuals and in the society.

3.2.2 Phenomenology and hermeneutics

Feld – who initially devised acoustemology as a means of studying the Kaluli people of the Bosavi rain forest in Papua New Guinea and the relevance of sounds for their experiences of their environment and the expressions thereof – points out that such experiences "can always be grounded in an acoustic dimension" (1996: 97), thus stepping away from the traditional privileging of sight – "the master sense of the modern era" (Jay 1988: 3) – as *the* source of knowledge and "truth" about the world. Therefore, as acoustemology focuses on human experience of place and space-time, it is – despite its name – at least as much related to *phenomenology* as it is with epistemology. As a philosophical orientation, phenomenology was founded by Edmund Husserl and then developed by such figures as Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricœur, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Despite the differences between these philosophers in their focus, scope, and views, they were all concerned with human consciousness and the subjective experience of the world, or put differently, the world as a lived experience (see, for example, Davidsen 2013). Outside philosophy, phenomenology became a widely applied research method foregrounding the subjective experience of the studied phenomena, especially in the fields of qualitative research (see, for example, Patton 2002: 104). Likewise, as I tend to draw

in my analyses on the experiential qualities of the audiovisual situations, my approach is, on the whole, phenomenological – but also acoustemological, as I tend to privilege sounds' role in the experience.

Central to the phenomenological method is interpretation, as it is "essential to an understanding of experience and the experience includes the interpretation" (Patton 2002: 106). The interpretation of texts – "text" understood broadly as any form of cultural discourse – is the area of *hermeneutics*, "the study of human cultural activity as texts with a view towards interpretation to find intended or expressed meanings" (Laverty 2003: 24). It is also important to take into account not only *what* things mean but also *how* they mean. In regard to music, it has been debated in the past whether or not music actually *means* anything. For example, Igor Stravinsky declared that "[i]f, as is nearly always the case, music appears to express something, this is only an illusion and not a reality. It is simply an additional attribute which, by tacit and inveterate agreement, we have lent it, thrust upon it, as a label, a convention" (cited in Scott 2003: 3). In other words, according to Stravinsky, music does not mean, it just seems to do so. Yet, this is contrary to the present understanding of how meanings arise in and through music. As Lawrence Kramer points out, "[meaning], whether in music, image or text, is a product of action rather than structure" (2003: 8), it arises through the interpretation of the combinations of text and context, and the situations, or "points", where these two meet, Kramer calls "hermeneutic windows" (ibid.: 8–9). Arguably, cinematic situations are flooded with such windows, as music in relation to the story and the visuals keeps providing them. Moreover, as Kramer writes:

> The relationship between music and meaning is far different what is commonly supposed. All meaning is uncertain once one moves beyond its most explicit and literal grounds, but this is not a movement away from meaning but towards it. Meaning expands and enriches more the more it departs from its point of origin. Music's seemingly non-referential character brings this paradox to the fore, but the paradox is not musical *per se*; it is hermeneutic. (2003: 10)

Interestingly, film sound designer and editor Walter Murch makes a very similar observation about the use of *metaphoric sounds*, sounds that do not seem to quite fit the image or situation they are synchronised or associated with: "Every successful metaphor […] is seen initially and briefly as a mistake, but then suddenly as a deeper truth about a thing named and our relationship to it. And the greater the metaphoric distance, or gap, between image and accompanying sound, the greater the value added – within certain limits" (cited in Chion 1994: xx). Such sounds "open up a perceptual vacuum into which the mind of the audience must inevitably rush" (ibid.). In other words, the mind seeks to fill the gap – a hermeneutic window, in Kramer's

terms – with meaning through interpretation. (One can well argue that such sounds that are thus sufficiently distanced from their referentiality start behaving or become more music-like. I discuss *musicalised* metaphoric sounds in *Article II*).

Consider, for example, the title sequence of *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (2011; dir. Tomas Alfredson) with the slow, jazzy score composed by Alberto Iglesias. The main character, MI6 agent George Smiley (Gary Oldman) and his superior, called only Control (John Hurt), leave their office together and, out on the street, they both go their own way. The montage sequence continues: Smiley waking up in his bed, going through his morning routines, going for a swim, visiting an optician. As he is walking on a bridge, there is suddenly a relatively loud reverberated crack, reminiscent of a snare drum rimshot (at 0:11:06), not that much different from the ones the drummer plays in the score, just a bit sharper and treated differently in the mix. It is obviously not diegetic, but Smiley still turns his head and looks away, as if reacting to a sound coming from somewhere in the distance. Immediately after, we cut to a shot of a hospital bed and Control lying there, eyes closed, his arm hanging from the side of the bed, and a broken plate on the floor beside him – it is later revealed that he died. The shot lasts only for a couple of seconds, and then we return to follow Smiley on his walk. The broken plate and the sound appear in two different scenes, but the latter could be a *sound advance*, sound from the following scene heard in advance. But if so, how would Smiley hear it? Also, the percussive beat does not really sound like a plate breaking. However, the two phenomena – the sound and the plate – occur temporally close enough to each other for there to form a "hermeneutic window", a combination of text and context. It becomes possible to interpret the sound – that is not of the plate braking – as the sound of the broken plate, the signifier of Control's death, but also to interpret that Control dies as Smiley is walking, although there is nothing, apart from that one – metaphoric – sound, to indicate it.

3.2.3 Close reading and framing

A central research method in every article of this thesis is *close reading*, closely related to hermeneutics, or rather a practice of applying a hermeneutic and phenomenological approach. I base my conception of close reading in a large extent on the work of John Richardson, who has written extensively on the subject. According to Richardson, close reading denotes "elucidat[ing] the aesthetic experiences and attendant cultural meanings of the objects, events, or performances that are its principal focus" (2016c: 112). Although this seems clear-cut, as "one of the most ubiquitous yet also one of the most widely misunderstood and misrepresented approaches to research on the arts" (ibid.: 111), the concept requires some unpacking. Firstly, "reading" implies a text, any product of culture – object, event, or performance – that can be "read", that is, *interpreted*. However, as discussed above in regard to music,

cultural artefacts do not exist autonomously but in historical, social, and ideological – in short, cultural – contexts. Thus, in close reading, it is not only the cultural artefacts themselves that are interpreted but "the myriad ways in which [...] [they] are entangled within complex cultural configurations" (ibid.: 114). Moreover, as mentioned in the previous section, interpretation and experience are included in each other, and so close reading incorporates the experiences of the reading subject as a factor. In this regard, although it can be considered a form of cultural analysis (ibid.: 118–119), close reading is not analysis in the strictest sense of the word. However, as Richardson notes, "[a]nalyses almost always contain elements of reading or interpretation, and readings contain elements of analysis. In some cases, it will be hard, even irrelevant, to distinguish which one of the two is dominant" (ibid.: 117). Perhaps the most obvious benefit from close reading is that taking into account the researcher's experiences allows access to the culturally conditioned meanings that arise from those experiences, thus affording deeper insight from the object of inquiry than analysis – or analyses – alone would. Moreover, incorporating the researcher as a mediating agent also acknowledges and highlights the contingency of the emergent meanings, instead of regarding them as somehow inherent to the cultural artefacts they arise from (Richardson 2016b: 162).

Secondly, vital in close reading is the written, detailed phenomenological *description* of the encounter the researcher has with the object of inquiry (as an example, the short description above of a scene in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* and my experience of it). For this reason, as also Richardson admits (2016b:161), "reading" is not the best word to describe the work that entails. Detailed written description is necessary, however, as close reading is concerned with "layers of experience that evade linguistic categorisation" (ibid.). In other words, there is no – nor can there be any – fixed method or terminology – discipline-specific or otherwise – that would be sufficient for conveying the experiential aspects of encountered phenomena, and the only way to do this is to use rich language to describe the phenomenon and the experiences one has of it. Of course, description is not a feature essential only to close reading but to qualitative research in general, where "description forms the bedrock of all qualitative reporting" (Patton 2002: 438). Especially the so-called "thick description", developed by anthropologist Clifford Geertz (see Geertz 1973: 3–30), comes very close to close reading in this regard.

Thirdly, fundamental to cultural studies, and thus also to close reading, is *critical reflection*. Richardson explains the term "critical" in this regard by equating it with "a level of socially engaged reflection that removes discussions from uncritical engagement and places them in a more connected and expansive register" (2016c: 126). Through critical reflection, close reading has a connection to philosophy (ibid.), but it also aligns close reading with critical theory and its said aim to "[unveil] ideological mystifications in social relations". Consequently, with all these central features

considered, close reading is not merely attentive reading of texts, especially literal texts – although the term might suggest that at face value. One reason why the term has been so misunderstood, however, is that it has indeed also been used in this sense, especially among the so-called "New Critics" from the 1930s onwards, who were exponents of "the isolation of literature as an autonomous mode of discourse with its own special 'mode of existence,' distinct from that of philosophy, politics, and history" (Graff 2007 [1987]: 145). Growing out of that tradition, "close reading" was – and still occasionally is – used in literary studies to mean the focusing on the formal features of a given text – or a part of a text – itself and removing it from a wider cultural context (see, for example, Braun 2022). This is practically the complete opposite of the close reading discussed here.

Partly for the reason of distinguishing this more inclusive understanding of close reading from other usages of the term, but mainly to develop the theory and practice of the method, Richardson has expanded the concept to *ecological close reading* (also *closer* reading) (2016b: 157; 2016c: 112). Although Richardson does not expressly state it, it is clear that "ecological" refers here to the *ecological systems theory* introduced and developed by psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner from the 1970s onwards. According to this theory, the lifelong development of an individual takes place within an environment consisting of different interactive ecological systems. From the one closest to the individual to the furthest, these are: *microsystem* (family, friends, school, etc.), *mesosystem* (interaction of different microsystems), *exosystem* (larger social structures and institutions), *macrosystem* (culture, society), and *chronosystem* (changes over time in the other subsystems) (Bronfenbrenner 1994). These systems form a series of concentric circles, "a set of nested structures, each inside the other like a set of Russian dolls" (ibid.: 39).

Why this is relevant for close reading becomes apparent from Bronfenbrenner's own words. In *The Ecology of Human Development* from 1979, Bronfenbrenner described the then-established models of human development as typically employing "a scientific lens that restricts, darkens, and even blinds the researcher's vision" (Bronfenbrenner 1979: 7). The ecological model, however, allows zooming out to see the bigger picture and zooming in to focus on certain interactions between systems; in other words, to contextualise – in effect, *frame* – the object of inquiry differently to provide complementary and comparative perspectives (see, for example, Eamon 2001). Richardson adopts the same approach to close reading by acknowledging that products of culture are also nested within and influenced by an environment consisting of interdependent ecological systems that correspond with Bronfenbrenner's model (thus, *ecological* close reading) (2016c: 121–122), but also augments it with other concordant conceptions of *framing* from other fields and disciplines, namely those of cultural theorist Mieke Bal (2002) and sociologist Erving Goffman (1974). A central observation from Bal is the importance of acknowledging

the agency of the framer. Comparing the terms "framing" and "context", which have often been used synonymously, Bal writes:

> Context is primarily a noun that refers to something static. It is a 'thing,' a collection of data whose factuality is no longer in doubt once its sources are deemed reliable. […] The need to interpret these data, mostly acknowledged once the need arises, is too easily overlooked. The act of framing, however, produces an event. This verb form, as important as the noun that indicates its product, is primarily an activity. Hence, it is performed by an agent who is responsible, accountable, for his or her acts. (2002: 135)

Accordingly, Richardson points out that, by applying a frame of reference, one is not simply looking at the object of inquiry within that frame but constituting it: "framing […] calls into question naturalised assumptions about 'text' and 'context' insofar as the act of recognising a frame implies expansion beyond that frame of reference to a larger, more reflexive one. A frame recognised as such alters what was initially framed" (2016c: 124–125). Indeed, also an essential feature in the ecological conception of close reading – and corresponding with what Goffman proposed in the seminal work *Frame Analysis* (1974) – is that, as it recognises the broader cultural environment in which the object of study is nested, it can incorporate several frames of reference, allowing different types of framing strategies – with competing or complementing frames of reference – to invoke deeper insight on cultural meanings (Richardson 2016c: 125). With all the above aspects considered, ecological close reading forms, as Richardson formulates it, "a frame-of-reference-conscious […] reading of any phenomenon [that] is always open-ended insofar as it presupposes the existence of other interdependent frames of reference that the reading can expand and contract (alternatively, zoom in and out) to accommodate" (Richardson 2016b: 157–158).

3.2.4 Location studies

Crime dramas are predominantly situated in actual real-world places, and this is true also in Nordic noir. But of course, these places do not function merely as surroundings, containing the drama and everything that entails, but are also themselves carriers of meaning. Moreover, although the meanings of places in films and literature have traditionally been studied in the context of the narrative, places in film and television are not only diegetic or narrative features but also connected to larger cultural, political, and economic factors (Hansen & Waade 2017: 28). Indeed, the meanings attached to a place in a film or a series do not arise from the narration alone but from an interaction of the real-world place, the diegetic representation of that place,

and the imaginations of the place in the minds of audience members (ibid.: 41). Each of the original articles of this thesis deals in some manner or form with how the Nordic region is represented in audiovisual Nordic noir and how these representations relate to the geographical and historical, as well as the imagined Nordic region, thus also adopting an approach central to *location studies*.

In their monograph *Locating Nordic Noir: From Beck to The Bridge* (2017), Kim Toft Hansen and Anne Marit Waade introduce location studies as an interdisciplinary methodological framework for studying the complex issues related to locations in audiovisual media (ibid.: 53–76). Hansen and Waade divide the various aspects location studies investigates into "off-screen" and "on-screen" features. The former contains a wide variety of geographical, cultural, political, and economic factors that influence the choices regarding the filming location.[33] The latter, in turn, pertains to how places are represented and what the functions of those representations are in the narrative work (ibid.: 60). This approach effectively aligns location studies with ecological close reading, which, as mentioned, places the object of inquiry into a larger socio-cultural environment. Likewise, in location studies, there is a reality outside the film or a series that informs the understanding of what is depicted, how, and why. However, as the use of the term "on-screen" to cover all representative aspects already betrays, Hansen and Waade leave sounds out of the equation (see also Hansen & Waade 2019), and the method must be expanded in that regard. I will do so in the following.

Among the key concepts of location studies are *location*, *setting*, and *(cinematic) landscape*, which all relate differently to place. The location is the geographical place where a given film or series is filmed but often, as in crime dramas, where the story is also situated (Hansen & Waade 2017: 27). The setting is the diegetic space depicting the location that "marks the place in which the story takes place" (ibid.: 32).[34] Landscapes, in turn, direct attention away from the story to the location as a geographical real-world place, "causing [members of the audience] to gaze at and contemplate the places in themselves" (ibid.: 33). This model effectively foregrounds the complexities involved in the perception of place in cinematic experience. However, as Hansen and Waade exclude sounds, their model is lacking, which also leads to some erroneous conclusions. According to Hansen and Waade, "[t]he cinematic landscapes on screen activate a landscape gaze, a historically constructed

[33] The "off-screen features" include issues, many of which are less relevant for the study at hand, such as media destination branding, and policy and funding practices (2017: 60). Therefore, I do not engage in location studies in its full extent but apply viewpoints that are relevant for the study at hand.

[34] Here, Hansen and Waade build on Martin Lefebvre, according to whom the setting is "subservient to characters, events and action" and "provides a space for them" (2011: 64).

gaze known from art history" (ibid.: 34). This view likens the cinematic landscape to a painting and is problematic in at least two respects. Firstly, it presupposes that the cinematic landscape is found *only* "on screen", that is, within the frame. Secondly, it situates the audience outside the landscape. Both views are flawed in regard to how places are represented in film and television, and they are not in line with how landscape is understood today – in landscape studies, for example.

As discussed in Section 3.1.4., the functions of cinematic sounds include creating three-dimensionality (defining distances [near/far] and direction) and characterising diegetic space (location, milieu, size, materiality, and so on). Many of these diegetic sounds are acousmatic, meaning their sources are not visible, and often – not always – this means that the sources are outside the frame (the above discussed scene in *Barton Fink* serves a prime example of an ambiguous situation in this regard). These aspects are discussed more thoroughly in Section 3.1.3., and here, it suffices to say that diegetic sounds expand the space – be it exterior or interior, a setting or a landscape – beyond what is seen, often quite far, and therefore, in short, an audiovisual representation of a geographical place is not analogous to a landscape painting. Consider, for example, the film *La Haine* (1995; dir. Mathieu Kassovitz), where often, via sounds, an entire Parisian suburb is present, although we are shown only small portions of the area – a street, a court yard, a parking lot – at a time. Moreover, because sounds travel, they not only extend the diegetic space outside the frame of the screen, they also bring it to the observer, or – perhaps more accurately – transport the observer to the space (they can even position the observer simultaneously in multiple locations in that space; in *Article IV*, I give an example of such a scene in *Wallander*). Therefore, in film and television, as long as diegetic sounds are present, a place – be it a setting or a landscape – is not *viewed* ("gazed") from the outside but experienced from the inside, albeit only a small portion of it is seen at any given time. Arguably, this is well attested by the extreme wide shots (landcapes and settings) frequently seen in *The Bridge*, showing different aspects of the Öresund region. As they usually come without diegetic sounds, they, in fact, do function in the way Hansen and Waade describe (see *Article II*).

For hundreds of years, the term "landscape" was understood as denoting picturesque rural scenery or even a picture of one, "a portion of land which the eye can comprehend at a glance" (Jackson 1984: 3), and in everyday language, the term may still be used in this way. However, for some decades now, this is not how the concept has been understood among scholars. In 1984, John Brinckerhoff Jackson defined landscape as "a composition of man-made or man-modified spaces to serve as infrastructure or background for our collective existence" (ibid.: 8), thus putting the observer into the picture, and in 2000, the European Landscape Convention defined it as "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors" (cited in Antrop 2013: 18). For the study

at hand, the most important part of this second definition is that it uses the word "perception", not "vision", thus making the landscape a multisensory phenomenon. And so, as discussed above, it is also in cinematic context something that is heard, not only seen. This is a central theme in *Article IV*.

It is also important to note that not only diegetic sounds influence the perception of place, but also nondiegetic ones. Of course, the score can influence, in several ways, how that which is seen is interpreted – a matter discussed more thoroughly in Section 3.1.4. and therefore not repeated here. However, music (understood here broadly) itself can have landscape-like properties. It can imitate natural features (birdsong, thunder, wind, etc.), quote folk music of specific cultures or geographic areas, or evoke them through other musical means, instrumentation, for example (see, for example, Revill 2013: 233).[35] Moreover, as music can be considered in terms of figure-ground structures (Santarcangelo & Wanke 2020; Kim et al. 2024), it is, in a sense, already itself comparable to a landscape, but especially when, through the use of particular textures and structures, it purposefully seeks likeness with the environment. Such a musical orientation has long traditions, especially in the Nordic region. Juha Torvinen and Susanna Välimäki describe "barren pedal points, drones, stable chords, clusters or sound masses, and other long-lasting or repetitive gestures, combined with hushed, muted and often dark timbres" as the core features of "the Nordic drone", music that seeks to "induce a sense of nature, environment, space and place" (2019: 173). Such music, discussed in more detail in *Article I*, can be seen as corresponding with the vast expanses of the Nordic landscapes but also with the light and darkness of the Nordic region and its cold climate (ibid.: 177–178).

Although the "landscape gaze" is not accurate to describe how places are typically experienced in film and television, it does not invalidate most of the observations made by Hansen and Waade. Arguably, the condition where the perceived place opens up for contemplation and directs attention away from the storyworld, from the representation to the represented, is a crucial aspect also in Nordic noir, in its socially critical storytelling and its "very spatial criticism" (Hansen & Waade 2017: 82) (see especially *Article I* and *Article II*). Elsewhere, Waade has called for "develop[ing] perspectives across disciplines" on the study of cinematic locations (Waade 2017: 6). Here, I have reiterated the point that sounds are an important factor in the experience of space and place, and I suggest that location studies would greatly benefit from including such perspectives from disciplines and research fields that study sounds in different cultural environments, such as audiovisual studies, cultural

[35] Such *topoi* (singular *topos*, befittingly, means *place*), musical features with more or less established meanings, are also found in Nordic noir (see *Article I* and *Article III*).

musicology, sound and soundscape studies, and more recently, also landscapes studies.

4 Summaries of the Original Publications

4.1 Article I: Killer Music Videos: Nordic Noir Title Sequences and Concentrated "Nordicness"

The first research article of this thesis, "Killer Music Videos: Nordic Noir Title Sequences and Concentrated 'Nordicness'", studies the separate sequences of images and sounds that contain the opening credits, do not belong to the actual narrative flow of the series, and stay the same (or very similar) throughout the season – in short, the *title sequences* of Nordic noir television series. More precisely, it examines how and what kind of music and imagery are combined in these sequences to portray "the North" and "Nordicness", that is, idealised and stereotypical notions and images of the Nordic region. While searching for such sequences, I observed that they did not become a standard feature of Nordic noir series until around 2013. Looking at twenty-seven series in total, from the time frame of 1993 through 2019, I identified nineteen series and from them, thirty-three seasons with their own recurrent stand-alone title sequence. Although this is not an exhaustive set, I deemed it sufficient to represent the whole corpus of Nordic noir television series released before 2020. My research methods were primarily qualitative, a combination of music analysis, audiovisual close reading, and location studies. I also gathered quantitative data from the title sequences, namely the length of the sequence, the amount of shots it contains, average shot length, median shot length, and musical tempo.

Predominantly, the visuals in the title sequences are dimly lit or dark, often with contrasting lights and shadows (*chiaroscuro*), and there are only a few exceptions to this rule. Some are in black-and-white and also others have a colour scheme inclining to monochromaticity, but also the sequences that use more colours seek a purposefully brooding look. This observation is well in line with what has been said about Nordic noir aesthetics in general (see, for example, Creeber 2015: 22; Hochscherf & Philipsen 2017: 7). They are often more frugal with imagery directly linked to the story, such as the main locations and characters, but, again, there is considerable variation in how much and what kind of information the title sequences provide. The title sequences are most often approximately one minute long (57–67 seconds), meaning that they are notably longer than the title sequences of many American television series (see

Bednarek 2014: 133). Similarly, the amount of shots they contain averages around fifteen. Combined with the typical length of the sequence, this translates to a notably slow editing rhythm. Often the median shot length (MSL) is about four seconds or more, and even the calculated average value of all MSLs in the sample set is 3.21 seconds – three times the MSL of the popular American crime drama series *CSI: Miami* (USA, 2002–2012), which is only 1.1 seconds. Again, this finding is in line with the oft-stated impression that Nordic noir is slow (see Seppälä 2020: 259–260). This slow editing rhythm is typically matched by music with a slow tempo and enhanced by editing that employs cross-fades, fade-ins, and fade-outs, leading to the music and the flow of the visuals not being rigidly synchronised. There is large variation in musical styles between title sequences, but there are also recurring features. Perhaps most notably, the music is nearly always in a minor key and applies the natural minor scale (or aeolian mode), but it is also spaciously mixed, and typically contains a tonic drone, often as part of what I call the drone-plus-melody configuration, usually from the strings or a single string instrument with a grainy, resonant sound.

I argue in this article that, through these audiovisual features, Nordic noir series tap into two central – and closely connected – aspects related to the Nordic region: its natural conditions and the traditions of Nordic arts. Although the *chiaroscuro* images seem to exhibit also kinship with *film noir*, they can be seen as pointing to the distinctive contrasts between light and darkness in the Nordic region. Also, the title sequences tend to show expansive images of Nordic landscapes, among the most common of which are water surfaces, seas or lakes, often frozen. This may be explained partly by the fact that the series are often located close to water (Hansen & Waade 2017: 70–71), but as the Nordic countries are geographically and historically united by water, water surfaces can also be construed as pan-Nordic imagery. However, not only the visuals are responsible for evoking generalised ideas of "the North" as a place. The tonic drone, often with a grainy sound, is one of the musical features collectively called the "Nordic drone" by Juha Torvinen and Susanna Välimäki, a combination of various static and repetitive musical textures and "hushed, muted and often dark timbres" (2019: 173), commonly found in Nordic music and used to "induce a sense of nature, environment, space and place" (ibid.).

There are several resonant string instruments with long histories in the Nordic region, used especially to play a drone with a melody, namely the *nyckelharpa*, the *jouhikko*, and the *hardingfele*. Thus, I propose that by applying the tonic drone, especially when combined with a narrow-ranged melody (the drone-plus-melody configuration) and a grainy string sound, Nordic noir series intentionally seek an association with some long traditions in Nordic folk music, not of any specific area in the Nordic region but as a signifier of "Nordicness". Arguably, however, this connection to an older cultural heritage is still discernible, also in less apparent cases with different instrumentation or textures. Moreover, it is evident that by combining in different proportions the features described above, Nordic noir series also associate themselves

with "Nordic melancholy", a tendency in the Nordic arts going back to the latter half of the nineteenth century that combines the natural conditions of the Nordic region with a sense of melancholy (Waade 2017: 382–383). Indeed, the mood in Nordic noir title sequences can be described as melancholic, but it can also be despondent. This, as I argue, fits the socially critical ethos of Nordic noir but also conveys more – or less – than mere melancholy, a lack of belief that things can be changed for the better, which I call in the article *audiovisual pessimism*.

4.2 Article II: Ambiguity and Liminality as Sonic Strategies in *The Bridge*

The second article, "Ambiguity and Liminality as Sonic Strategies in *The Bridge*", examines the audiovisual style of the Swedish/Danish television series *The Bridge* (*Bron*/*Broen* 2011–2018), focusing especially on the soundtrack of the series, which consciously, and in various ways, breaks the conventional boundaries between cinematic sounds. In this article, I argue that this approach to music and sound design is a central constituent in the overall narrative and expressive style of the series. *The Bridge* consists of four seasons and altogether thirty-eight episodes. However, based on the statement by Carl Edström, the sound designer of the series, according to which the style of the sound design was conceived in the early episodes of the first season (Davison & Parker 2016: 322), this article concentrates on the first four episodes.

A transnational and bi-lingual series, *The Bridge* is situated in the so-called Öresund region, a metropolitan area comprising parts of Sweden and Denmark and with the eponymous Öresund Bridge connecting Malmö and Copenhagen, the two major cities of the area. In the first season, a body is found in the middle of the bridge, and the police from both countries have to co-operate to solve the crime. Saga Norén (Sofia Helin), from Malmö, and Martin Rohde (Kim Bodnia), from Copenhagen, are assigned to the case. It is soon revealed that the murders – there are, in fact, two victims, as the lower and upper parts of the body are from different people, a Swedish politician and a Danish prostitute – are just the first in a series of crimes the killer nicknamed "Truth Terrorist" plans to commit to highlight particular wrongs in society. *The Bridge* has been called a prototype of Nordic noir, "the best example of what Nordic noir is" (Seppälä 2020: 258), and it does have the hallmarks: dark and bleak imagery, a "whodunnit" crime plot, dysfunctional protagonists, and an overtly socially critical ethos. However, it also contains an idiosyncratic audiovisual style and a notably ambiguous narrative strategy. Presenting close readings of various scenes from *The Bridge*, as well as the title sequence of the series, I show in this study that the two – the audiovisual style and the narrative strategy – are highly interrelated, and that the soundtrack plays a key role in both and is an essential uniting factor.

Expanding on the idea of "the fantastical gap", the ambiguous situation where cinematic sounds are not clearly diegetic or nondiegetic (Stilwell 2007), I argue in this

article that *The Bridge* applies an approach in which this "gap" is wider and more complex, pertaining not only to the diegetic-nondiegetic axis but various interlocking axes, forming a liminality that, deviating from the conventions and norms of soundtrack construction, is full of expressive potential, thus dubbed "the expressive in-between" in the article. The score of the series is constructed mainly of drones and sound clusters constantly embellished with a myriad of pulsating beats, partials arising from the chord structures, and other more or less musical artefacts. In this sonic environment, it often becomes more difficult to discern whether sounds belong to the diegesis or not and, used consistently, the question also becomes less relevant. Thus, the soundtrack of the series moves between diegetic and nondiegetic but also between music and sound design, constituting what has in recent years come to be called *integrated soundtrack* (see, for example, Kulezic-Wilson 2020). Also, sounds may be manipulated in relation to their verisimilitude, or "truthlikeness", (moved along what I call in the article the verisimilitude–nonverisimilitude axis), effectively turning them into metaphoric sounds (see Sections 3.1.4. and 3.2.2.) which, again, do not unequivocally belong to the diegesis or fall outside it, and these sounds may also blend with the score or even be used in its stead. Such techniques are not used continuously in the series, but they are used consistently, as an integral constituent in the audiovisual style, resulting in a sustained air of liminality – at times, even an oneiric (dreamlike) atmosphere. What further adds to this effect is that, in *The Bridge*, scenes and shots also often come completely without diegetic sounds – even dialogue may be removed.

The Bridge is situated in between Sweden and Denmark, between Scandinavia and Central Europe, it deals with "gaps" between people and in society. Indeed, the series has even been called "one of the most prolific thematizations of in-betweenness in the popular culture of the last decade" (Dobrescu 2019: 7). The major theme of the series is also iterated on symbolical level in several ways – in the body-halves placed on the border of the two countries, in the Öresund bridge itself, and even in the name of the series, to name a few. But the story and themes are also reflected by the ever-present sense of liminality brought by the audiovisual style of the series and – as argued – especially the soundtrack. Moreover, the way sounds are used in *The Bridge* is notably ambiguous in itself, but the soundtrack is also a key factor in – even an enabler of – the narrative strategy of the series that utilises ambiguity and open-endedness to engage the audience in interpretative processes. This is attested also by Carl Edström, according to whom sonic information was intentionally taken out so that the audience would fill in the missing information in their minds (Davison & Parker 2016: 323–324).

I seek to show in this article that through its purposefully ambiguous strategy, by not explicating what is happening and why, *The Bridge* requires its audience to utilise their own personal experiences and therefore turn their attention also to the social reality outside the world of the story. Thus, the series effectively taps into the socially

critical ethos of Nordic noir not only through its narrative content but also through its audiovisual design.

4.3 Article III: The Soundtrack of *The Killing*, its Orientalist Features, and the Implicit Other

The third article, "The Soundtrack of *The Killing*, its Orientalist Features, and the Implicit Other", looks at the specific stylistic features in the soundtrack of the Danish crime drama series *The Killing* (*Forbrydelsen*, 2007–2012), which are notably Orientalist in nature and connect the series to larger societal issues outside the storyworld of the series. Although there are three seasons made in total, I focus in this article on the first season that consists of twenty episodes, each lasting roughly an hour and encompassing about twenty-four hours. During these twenty days, the main protagonist of the series, detective inspector Sarah Lund (Sofie Gråbøl), investigates and solves the rape and subsequent murder of a teenaged girl of native population. Other storylines, entwined with the murder investigation, follow the intrigues of the mayoral election of the city of Copenhagen and how the parents of the murdered girl deal with their loss.

In these twenty episodes, Orientalist topoi that allude to an imaginary Middle East are a recurrent feature in the soundtrack. Primarily foreboding or even sinister in character and providing the series with a sense of mystery, they are an integral part of the dramatic audiovisual design of this crime drama. However, although often pointing towards Arabic and Persian cultures in particular, they also connote Islam and immigration from the so-called Muslim world. The first season of *The Killing* does not have any overarching themes related to issues concerning the Middle East or Islam, nor with immigration or xenophobia in Denmark. Neither are there any stylistic or aesthetic factors in the overall look of the series that would provide some explanation for the systematic use of such Orientalist features in its soundtrack. I propose in this article that the use of Orientalist topoi throughout the first season, without a clear connection to the story or its themes, leads to an implicit presence of an essentially non-Danish and Islamic Other in a way that is not wholly unproblematic.

Orientalist topoi are apt to evoke stereotypical mental images of and call up attitudes towards the "Islamic Middle East" (see, for example, Bellman 1998: xii; Locke 1998: 105–106), and in search for an explanation for the presence of the implicit Other the series summons, these mental images and attitudes come into play. To examine more closely what these attitudes are and how they possibly influence the understanding of the mixed message *The Killing* sends, I place in this article the Orientalist strategy of the series in a wider historico-political context of interpretation and review from an ideology-critical viewpoint, how it connects the series to the social discourse related to Islam and immigration – especially that from the Muslim world – in Denmark.

The first season of *The Killing* was made and released during the so-called Muhammad cartoons crisis that sprung from the publication of certain caricatures in a Danish newspaper in late September 2005, depicting the prophet Muhammad. During this period, the attitudes towards Islamic culture in Denmark were disputed and the discussion on the overall role and place of Islam in Danish society became heated (see, for example, Nielsen 2012: 4). As the audiovisual close reading of *The Killing* shows, the series does not problematise the presence of Middle Eastern immigrants in Denmark, nor does it actively partake in the discussion on the role of Islam in the country. However, as I argue in this article, the incongruous looming presence, created by the soundtrack, in a series in which a Danish girl is raped and murdered, sends a mixed message which requires deciphering. As there is no discernible logical connection between the Orientalist sonic material and the subject matter, the audience is led to draw connections between the narrative and the social reality outside the diegesis of the series as they understand it.

As members of the audience often do not have personal experiences of Islam and/or Middle Eastern cultures, they are dependent on the public discourse to form ideas and opinions (Rasmussen 2012: 154), which, in turn, affects how cultural products such as *The Killing* and its Orientalist soundtrack are experienced and received. As is the case elsewhere in Europe, in recent years, anti-Islamic sentiments have been on the rise in Denmark. However, this shift in attitudes did not begin with the Muhammad cartoons crisis, nor with Denmark's involvement in the "Global War on Terror" that ensued a few years earlier, after the Al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001. Their roots are found further back in the history of the Danish society and the rise of right-wing populism in Danish mainstream politics (Nielsen 2012: 8, 11–12; Rasmussen 2012: 154–155). They can also be attributed to the activities of various *securitising* actors, in whose interest it is to present Islam and immigration as a national security issue, namely the media, politicians, and other opinion leaders, play a pivotal role (Sheikh & Crone 2012: 136).

4.4 Article IV: The Silences of Skåne: Sonic Representations of Space and Place in the *Wallander* Novels and Films

The fourth and final article of this thesis, "The Silences of Skåne: Sonic Representations of Space and Place in the *Wallander* Novels and Films", approaches the subject of sound in Nordic noir from a somewhat different perspective: as the Swedish crime film series *Wallander* (2005–2013) is the only one of the three example series studied in this thesis that is based on preexisting works, namely the *Wallander* literature by Henning Mankell, in this article, I take a comparative approach to look for similarities and differences between the two formats. My main interest, however, is to examine how sounds partake in the representation of Skåne (the main location of *Wallander* in

southern Sweden), the formation of spatial experience, and creating a sense of place. The depiction of landscapes and other natural conditions of the Nordic region is generally considered a central feature in Nordic noir, reflecting the psychology of the main character and also the socially critical themes of the narrative. In this regard, *Wallander*, both as literature and in audiovisual form, has often been given as a case in point (see, for example, Reijnders 2009: 172; McCorristine 2011: 81; Peacock 2011: 41; Creeber 2015: 26). However, the role of sound in this regard has thus far not been included in the discussion. In this article, I also re-evaluate how the view of the *Wallander* films as prime examples of Nordic noir is affected when their sonic aspects are also considered. Of the films, I focus on the first season of the series (2005–2006), consisting of thirteen films, each with a duration of approximately ninety minutes, and of the novels, I focus mainly on *Sidetracked* (1999; Swedish original *Villospår*, 1995)

My methodological framework consists of various qualitative approaches, namely ecological close reading combined with aspects from acoustemology and location studies. But to be able to assess the connections between the actual location and its representations, and how the sonic characteristics of the geographical place may have influenced the artistic works, I also travelled to Skåne. There, over a period of five days, I engaged in *soundwalking*, a soundscape studies method devised by acoustic ecologist R. Murray Schafer (1977: 212–213), listening to the sounds of specific locations in the rural areas of Skåne and in Ystad, the main protagonist Kurt Wallander's hometown, including, but not exclusively, locations from the novel *Sidetracked*.[36]

The main observation from *Sidetracked* is that silence, which I consider to be a soundscape and a subjective spatial experience, is exhibited in the novel in various ways. In characterising locations, Henning Mankell shares surprisingly little infor-

[36] It is worth noting that Randolph Jordan has done similar work on connections between an actual place and its audiovisual representation. For example, in the article "Unsettling the Soundtrack: Acoustic Profiling and the Documentation of Community and Place" (2017), Jordan discusses the quasi-documentary film *East Hastings Pharmacy* (Canada 2012; dir. Antoine Bourges) in this regard, combining "unsettled listening" and "acoustic profiling" – a pair of methods that amounts to an approach somewhat similar to ecological close reading of audiovisual texts – with ideas from acoustic ecology. Perhaps most notably, Jordan builds on Schafer's concept of "schizophonia", the separation of sound from its source, which he elsewhere describes as "most likely to be realized in a modern film theatre" (Jordan 2010a: 27), and this separation of mediated sounds and images works as the basis for Jordan's conceptualisation of "audiovisual ecology". Despite the similarities, however, Jordan's use of "ecology" as an analytical term is notably different from how it is understood in this thesis, as it refers to the audiovisual work as a whole, as an ecosystem in itself where sounds and images are the "organisms" that constitute their own environment (ibid.: 25–27; see also Jordan 2010b: 10–17), and not to the sociocultural environment in which the audiovisual work is nested (see discussion in Section 3.2.3.).

mation regarding how places look, but instead often describes the sonic atmosphere, which is typically silence, often accentuated by the presence of a single sound. It is also explained in the novel that silence is very important to Kurt Wallander personally as well as professionally, and he often seeks out solitude and silence. What is also characteristic of the *Wallander* novels is that people are often silent, that is, not speaking, even for long periods of time. This is in line with what has been said about audiovisual Nordic noir (Creeber 2015: 25; Hochscherf & Philipsen 2017: 17). But it is also characteristic of people in the Nordic region (see, for example, Tulviste et al.: 2003; Richardson), which is why it can be considered part of the regional soundscape of the *Wallander* novels. However, quietness is also a distinguishing feature of the geographical place: although Skåne is statistically relatively densely populated, southern Skåne is rural, with few sound sources and vast empty spaces consisting mainly of fields. Thus, I argue that Mankell has taken the characteristic soundscapes of the area and used them as essential narrative and expressive features in the *Wallander* novels.

The films, in turn, take a notably different approach. Contrary to what some scholars have stated (see, for example, Reijnders 2009; Creeber 2015: 26; Saunders 2021: 64), landscape imagery is not a particularly salient feature in the first season of *Wallander*. The main reason for this is that the films are relatively fast-paced and with plenty of dialogue. Although the regional surroundings are depicted, the films do not frequently spend time with contemplative landscape imagery but move fairly quickly from one location to another, and in the scenes, the diegetic space is typically visually restricted. However, acousmatic sounds characteristic of the region are constantly used to expand the diegetic space in exterior and typically also in interior scenes, thus evoking the presence of the regional surroundings despite not being shown. Due to this "realistic" sound design, scenes are also often characteristically quiet, but this quietness is seldom foregrounded so that it would become experientially important, most often the reason being that the quietness is masked by the dialogue or the musical score. But also, the series does not often use subjective point-of-audition sounds that would highlight how the characteristically quiet soundscapes are experienced by the characters – and especially by Kurt Wallander. Moreover, in the narrative, Kurt Wallander is not often shown to seek quiet solitary moments in a way that would lead to the "exaggerated interlinking of landscape and psychology, personhood and place" (McCorristine 2011: 81), similar to that found in the novels, leading also to a less introverted depiction of the character. In this light, although in its first season *Wallander* exhibits socially critical narratives and is certainly dark and melancholy in its own way, due to the chosen style of audiovisual expression and narration, some elements considered as central characteristics of Nordic noir are less pronounced in the *Wallander* films as have been previously discussed in Nordic noir literature.

5 Conclusions

Although the three research articles on *The Bridge*, *The Killing*, and *Wallander* respectively all focus mainly on particular series-specific issues, they also clearly demonstrate major differences in overall audiovisual styles and dramaturgies of music and sound. But before discussing their qualitative aspects, I offer here a few words regarding quantitative information gathered at the early stages of the analytical work. Firstly, there are already significant differences in the amount of music the series have per episode. Whereas *The Killing* has music in approximately two-thirds of the duration of an episode, in *The Bridge*, the same number is roughly fifty per cent. In *Wallander*, despite being produced as a series, each of the episodes (films) has its own story arch and themes, and therefore, there is some variation in the audiovisual style of series. On the whole, however, each episode in *Wallander* still has less music than the other two series, on average only slightly more than one third of the whole duration of the episode. The overall amount of music is, of course, reflected in the music cue lengths. In *The Killing*, music cues average on roughly ninety seconds and in *The Bridge* around sixty seconds. Again, there is more variation in this regard in *Wallander* but, in any case, the average cue length is notably less than in the other two series, especially if the most apparent outliers are not included: in *Wallander*, the music cues tend to gather length during the last 15–20 minutes of the film, when the story is nearing its climax, and they can be several minutes long.

Music cue lengths, in turn, provide some indication of what music is used for in the series. Also, as mentioned in *Article IV*, *Wallander* is relatively dialogue-heavy, which may have led to the decision of not including music in such scenes. A typical technique, that also adds the amount of shorter music cues in the film/episode, is that music comes in nearer to the end of a scene to highlight a particularity in the story that the audience should not miss, and then continues to the next scene, possibly carrying over some transition shots. *The Bridge* also tends to keep music out of dialogue scenes, but there are less of them – especially, as discussed in *Article II*, dialogue may have been completely removed from a scene, placing emphasis on other sounds. Likewise, *The Killing* has less dialogue than *Wallander*, but there, music is also often heard in dialogue scenes, even throughout them, typically low drones from

synth pads or dark chromatic melody lines from double basses. In *The Killing*, music also often starts well ahead of a scene change, likely with a fade-in, indicating that the story is about to move on and creating expectations and suspense, and it also often continues long into the scene it leads to, fading out slowly.

If we follow the definition according to which a musical theme in cinematic music is “any music – melody, melody-fragment, or distinctive harmonic progression – heard more than once during the course of a film” (Gorbman 1987: 26), then, of course, all three series have musical themes. In *The Bridge*, one piano piece is heard several times, for example, and several music cues are built on a slowly alternating chord progression, but these are not used more or less systematically from episode to episode. In *The Killing* and *Wallander*, in turn, the music dramaturgy is built on *leitmotifs*, themes – at least initially – fixed to refer to a specific character, thing, or idea, but also on other recurring thematic material less rigidly assigned. For example, Saga Norén does not have her own musical theme, but Sarah Lund and Kurt Wallander do. *The Killing* and *Wallander* both have their dark and ominous themes heard at crime scenes, whereas *The Bridge* does not. However, as the seasons progress, also in *The Killing* and *Wallander*, some musical themes maybe used less rigidly and lose some of their leitmotific nature. But, as discussed in *Article II*, the narrative strategy of *The Bridge* is based on ambiguity and clearly, the use of leitmotifs would be counterproductive in this sense, and such music dramaturgy is not found in the series to begin with.

The series are also markedly distinct from each other in regard to the whole soundtrack, not only music. It is safe to say that of the three series, *Wallander* is the least expressive – or perhaps creative is the more correct word – in terms of sound design. The series aims for a fairly non-expressive sound design, meaning that it focuses on the verisimilitude of sounds and rarely applies sound design techniques that impart psychological aspects, for example. They do occur, but they are not a stylistic feature of the series, and such are left as the domain of the musical score. The style of the sound design in *The Killing* is more diverse. Similarly to *Wallander*, *The Killing* expands the diegetic space with sounds characteristic to its principal location, the city of Copenhagen, but it also more clearly attaches meaning to the diegetic sounds, perhaps most notably the *adhan*-like cry heard in connection with a shot of the Copenhagen city hall (see *Article III*). But also, nondiegetic sound effects are more frequent in *The Killing*, even if they are not a staple of the series. However, *The Killing* is still conventional in its use of sounds, and much closer in this regard to *Wallander* than *The Bridge*, and the two series do not apply any of the wide array of expressive techniques found in the soundtrack of *The Bridge* discussed in *Article II*. These techniques are too numerous to be recounted here. However, one interesting feature in *The Bridge* worth mentioning in comparison to *The Killing* and *Wallander* is that, whereas the latter two series both frequently expand the diegetic

space with acousmatic sounds, which is a common practice, as *The Bridge* aims for a very different audiovisual aesthetic and expression, tends to do the opposite, removing diegetic sounds rather than adding them.

At the early stages of this study, I expected that I would find significant differences between the audiovisual styles of *The Bridge*, *The Killing*, and *Wallander*. Admittedly, however, to find central representatives of Nordic noir to be indeed so different in regard to their music and sound dramaturgies as discussed above, was somewhat surprising. On the other hand, the differences between the three series do correlate with how much variation there is in the much larger sample set of Nordic noir title sequences. Among the many roles of title sequences is to function as a gateway to the world of the series it is assigned to. Although a title sequence cannot be considered a clear indicator of the audiovisual style of the series proper (*Before We Die* is not shot in black-and-white, although its title sequence is, for example), the fact that Nordic noir title sequences can look and sound very different from each other indicates that audiovisual Nordic noir on the whole is far from being stylistically homogenous. The three series studied here cannot be compared in this regard, as *The Killing* and *Wallander* do not have separate title sequences, but if they did, based on the results of this study, one can surmise that they would show similar divergence in audiovisual style as the many title sequences studied in *Article I*.

Based on the observed variation in the many parametres of music and sound design between *The Bridge*, *The Killing*, *Wallander*, as well as in the title sequences, one has to conclude that audiovisual Nordic noir does not seem to have a particular "sound", although the media (as discussed in Section 1.1.) and some scholars have suggested otherwise – at least if the term is taken to mean something not indeterminate, a certain "mood", for example. This also speaks against the idea of audiovisual Nordic noir being a specific genre, a term sometimes used to describe Nordic noir: genres (horror, action, adventure, and so on) tend to have their recognisable musical and sound design conventions, but this study suggests that Nordic noir does not. That said, there are – although far fewer – aspects that the series discussed here have in common regarding their soundtracks, similarities that may not be that noticeable on the surface level but exist nonetheless, *family resemblances* that, again, correlate with the corresponding similarities recognised between the title sequences in *Article I*.

Perhaps most noticeably, none of the series really uses preexisting music as score – if "Hollow Talk," the song in the title sequence and appearing again at the very end of each episode of *The Bridge* is not taken into account. In fact, overall, there is very little preexisting music in all three series, and what there is, is almost always nondiegetic – the only exception being that, in *Wallander*, where Kurt Wallander sometimes listens to opera or Bach's cello suites at home or in the car, such music occasionally dissolves from diegetic to nondiegetic. Also, the music is predomi-

nantly sombre, melancholy, or ominous, almost always in a minor key or mode, applying chromatic or dissonant textures, often with an emphasis on the lower register. Thus, the music in these series is characteristically not upbeat – in either sense of the word, positive or fast-paced. Naturally, the music also has its livelier moments, in action sequences, for example, but only *The Killing* has a relatively fast tempo in some of its percussion-driven themes, and even then, the music has its "dark ambience" – identified by Tore Størvold as one of the "sonic markers of Nordic noir" (2019: 113). A rare exception is the relatively light-hearted piece of music found in *The Bridge*, which, although in a minor key, consists of various bell-like sounds, as well as softly played pitched and unpitched percussions, and is heard in the rarely encountered less-serious scenes of the series, such as the montage sequence in the second episode in which Saga Norén reads a book at home and then decides to go out and find a sex partner for the night (38:51–40:08).

A single dissertation can only successfully address a limited number of issues and, unavoidably, many matters and viewpoints are left here uncharted, although they are undoubtedly central to a broader understanding of Nordic noir – issues that require the broader scope discussed in Section 2.1. and which the delimiting of research questions in this thesis could not accommodate. I will now briefly discuss two such avenues – highly interrelated ones – which, in other circumstances, could have been followed further but which are now left as matters for future research: firstly, Nordic noir's relation to the media convergences that have been taking place in the recent years and, secondly, Nordic noir's situation in the larger picture of the history of audiovisual crime drama.

The term "cinematic" has been used in this thesis mainly as a shorthand for "pertaining to narrative film and television", especially in regard to music and sound practices in the two. I discussed the rationale behind this choice in Section 3.1.1. However, the term has been used in relation to television also in a quite different sense, in reference to the convergence of television and film, as part of the more general media convergence of the twenty-first century – or more precisely, the convergence of television *with* film. As Rashna Wadia Richards puts it: "television's cultural status is made loftier by associating cinema with aesthetic prestige, then aligning television with it" (2021: 8). In other words, taking on aesthetic and narrative features that are considered to be "cinematic" has been central in the rise of so-called "quality television", especially in this millennium. Yvonne Griggs is far from being alone in holding the view that "the term *Nordic Noir* has become synonymous in contemporary times with quality television" (2018: 278). Indeed, as Robert A. Saunders points out, "transnational television studies scholars increasingly recognise Nordic programming as a paragon of high quality television" (2021: 3). However, although scholars often touch upon the subject (see, for example, Redvall 2013: 177–179; Eichner & Mikos 2016: 18; Waade 2017: 387; Saunders 2021: 73), there still

remain significant unanswered questions as to exactly how audiovisual Nordic noir fits in the development of "cinematic television" in the ongoing era of media convergence.

Richards argues that "[s]hows that are labeled cinematic summon moments – sometimes explicitly, at other times inadvertently – from film history. What makes TV cinematic […], is its appropriations of cinema. That is, TV reminds us of cinema because it borrows from its media rival, a practice especially prevalent in contemporary serial dramas" (2021: 2). We can see some Nordic noir series perfectly fitting this definition – of the series studied in this thesis, especially *The Killing* with its obvious inclination towards a *film noir* style (see discussion in Section 2.2.2.). According to Eva Novrup Redvall, based on interviews with the creator of the series, Søren Sveistrup, "an ambition with *The Killing* was to create a cinematic look for the series" (Redvall 2013: 177), but also "a cinematic mode of expression" (ibid.: 179). *The Bridge*, however, seems less keen to seek a conscious affiliation with known film styles. Instead, it undoubtedly showcases "a willingness to explore some of the less common, but arguably bolder and more rewarding options available for filmmakers", something Erlend Lavik sees as one way of understanding "cinematicness" in television (2024: 7). Saunders perhaps means this when he states that "[s]eries such as *Bron|Broen* are as cinematic as any motion picture" (2021: 184).[37]

Moreover, partly in another sense, audiovisual Nordic noir has been "cinematic" from the outset. *Wallander* is a series of stand-alone films mostly released on DVD and broadcast on television, but several of the films also premiered in cinemas. However, this was the case already with the six *Historien om ett brott* films from 1993 and 1994, of which three premiered in movie theatres and three were released on video and subsequently broadcast on television. Likewise, two of the eight episodes of the first season of *Beck* (1997–1998) premiered in the cinemas, as was the case with also the second (2001–2002) and the third season (2006–2007). After continuing for over a quarter of a century, *Beck* is now in its ninth season, with fifty episodes made. Despite being essentially a series for television, it has always held on to its filmic identity, avoiding long-story form. In this sense, such Nordic noir series can justifiably be said to have always resisted the conventional film/television divide.

[37] According to Robert J. Thompson, "Quality TV is best defined by what it is not. It is not 'regular TV'" (1997: 13). Unfortunately, discussions on Nordic noir as "quality television" tend to use "cinematic" in this manner, as a cover-all term for everything and anything "regular" television is not, often presupposing an understanding of the term without a need to further discuss the details of what makes a look, an experience, or technique, for example, particularly cinematic. Partly due to it being "such an ill-defined concept", Lavik has sought to clarify the various possible meanings of "cinematic" in regard to television (see Lavik 2024).

On the other hand, however, as Lavik explains, following such "case-of-the-week design" of standard police procedurals, where in each episode, a particular case is investigated and solved, is exactly what "smacked too much of convenience and convention – of 'ordinary television'" for American cable networks, such as HBO, where producers sought to stand out as creators of quality television (Lavik 2024: 5). With these different aspects considered, it seems clear that further research is needed to better understand Nordic noir's role in the development of "quality television" and its transmedial migrations, especially research that considers the whole audiovisual apparatus in order to understand how exactly "the cinematic" is constructed in various cases.

The flow of influences in and out of Nordic noir has already been discussed from a number of viewpoints by several scholars, not least in the book *Nordic Noir, Adaptation, Appropriation* (Badley et al. 2020). Of these two directions, however, the number of studies on Nordic noir's influence on non-Nordic audiovisual works substantially surpasses that of studies dealing with outside influences on Nordic noir. The information regarding the latter is still scattered in small nuggets across the research literature, most often providing interesting but sporadic and brief observations on possible stylistic influences,[38] although some also contain interviews with creative personnel that also touch upon inspiration drawn from non-Nordic works (see, for example, Redvall 2013: 165–166; Davison & Parker 2016: 323). The former, in turn, has become a central interest in Nordic noir scholarship. As Kim Toft Hansen observes, "several scholars have emphasized the international influence of Nordic noir, especially within original serial drama productions, adaptation strategies, and remake interests" (2020: 276). Nonetheless, there is still much to do in this regard, as all things considered, the work done thus far contains very little on the "nuts and bolts" of these influences, the practical aspects of the actual level of operation. More thoroughgoing qualitative as well as quantitative – needless to say, audiovisual – research would be highly beneficial for the understanding of how Nordic noir is situated in the field of audiovisual crime drama.

To date, the work on Nordic noir's influence in the North American sphere has focused on the remakes produced in the United States, especially the remake of *The Killing* (see, for example, Akass 2015; Gemzøe 2020; Pinedo 2021), and research on how Nordic noir has influenced specific original non-Nordic series has thus far

[38] A fitting example of this is how Hansen and Waade, discussing the "noirish" lighting in *Beck*, briefly argue that "the first season of *Beck* also borrows from the Italian giallo style […]. [T]he dark scenes are marked by often poisonous green colours, sharp blue undertones and low key lighting, though slightly downplayed in comparison with the typical giallo style" (2017: 130). Given that the first season of *Beck* was released already in 1997 and 1998, and that this "poisonous green" later appeared in several other Nordic noir series, this is an important observation that calls for a closer examination.

mainly discussed European productions in this regard (see, for example, Creeber 2015; Agger 2020; Hansen 2020; Kálai & Keszeg 2021).[39] Recently, however, series with notable similarities to Nordic noir have appeared in the United States, such as *The Sinner* (2017–2021) and *True Detective* (2014–) – the latter exhibiting a strong visual resemblance to Nordic noir especially in its fourth season (2024), situated in wintry Alaska and bearing the subtitle "Night Country". This is noteworthy also due to the fact that producing the kind of television crime drama Nordic noir represents has thus far been rare in the United States, apparently – at least partly – due to ideological views guiding production decisions. In a 2005 interview by Lynn Hirschberg, Leslie Moonves, the then CEO of the television channel CBS, stated the following: "I understand why creative people like dark, but American audiences don't like dark. They like story. They do not respond to nervous breakdowns and unhappy episodes that lead nowhere. They like their characters to be a part of the action. They like strength, not weakness, a chance to work out any dilemma. This is a country built on optimism" (Hirschberg 2005). Apparently, however, this was not a view completely out of touch with the American audiences: according to Hirschberg, Moonves was "the person most responsible for taking [CBS] from last place to first in the ratings" (ibid.). Interestingly, Moonves's understanding of "dark" is notably similar to the "cold" of *Kylmä Pohjola*, the Finnish attempt at branding Nordic crime fiction discussed in the introduction of this thesis, in the sense that it does not refer only to the apparent audiovisual aspects but an underlying ethos, pointing out weaknesses and dilemmas not readily solvable. Nonetheless, there have been some such television series to come out of the United States, series that proved highly successful and globally influential, from which it is possible to draw connections of influence to Nordic noir as well – namely *Hill Street Blues* (1981–1987), *Miami Vice* (1984–1989), and *The Wire* (2002–2008).

There exists an interesting connection between *Hill Street Blues* and *Beck*. The American television series was strongly influenced by the *87th Precinct* novels by Ed McBain (Evan Hunter), as were also Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö, the authors of *Martin Beck* novels, who also translated McBain's novels into Swedish (Hansen &Waade 2017: 132). *Miami Vice* (1984–1989), in turn, draws significantly from *film noir* and *neo-noir* – it has also been called "sunshine noir" (see Sanders 2007; Jenner 2017) – and has a strong socially critical ethos. Moreover, it can be considered a precursor of the contemporary aspirations for "quality television". As Jeremy G. Butler notes, it is a series that "rewards the sustained gaze that is normally reserved for the cinema" and "does not look or sound like conventional broadcast television.

[39] A rare example of the contrary is Luis M. Garcia-Mainar's discussion (2020) on various series in connection to Nordic noir, one of them being *The Americans* (USA, 2013–2018).

It seems too 'cinematic' for the small screen" (1996: 289).[40] *The Wire* (2002–2008), a highly acclaimed police procedural crime drama, also preceded the rise of Nordic noir, to which the series bears a notable thematic resemblance. According to Saunders, *The Wire* "functioned as an unapologetic intervention that presented political commentary as serious entertainment" and presented a "realm where crime and politics were inextricably intertwined, which – for many foreign viewers, and particularly those in Europe – came to represent the 'reality' of urban America in the new millennium" (2021: 12–13).

According to Luis M. García-Mainar, "[i]n the field of film and television studies, analyses of the Nordic Noir phenomenon have attempted to determine its exact place in the network of influence that characterizes the audiovisual context today" (García-Mainar 2020: 157). Undoubtedly, this is so, but as discussed, there is still plenty to do in this regard. However, my sincere view is (as I stated already in the introduction of this thesis) that without an approach that acknowledges the interconnectedness of sounds and images as the very core of audiovisuality, the attempt cannot but lead to an imperfect picture. Indeed, as I have previously argued, issues, such as the ones briefly discussed above, are best approached from a genuinely audiovisual perspective, as it allows researchers to dig deeper into the expressive and narrative processes and the meanings that arise thereof, to better understand how audiovisual works are constructed and how they function, and thus better uncover their uniting and distinguishing strategies. To date, Nordic noir scholarship has not applied such methodologies, and one of the rationales behind this study was to attempt to fill this gap. It is clear, however, that whatever this study succeeds in doing, it is hardly sufficient to fill the gap that exists – at most (I hope), it will help to spread awareness that the gap does indeed exist. Nordic noir as a research interest is far from exhausted, but the existing work – the study at hand included – still requires augmenting, and there are many intriguing unanswered questions Nordic noir research can address and directions it can go to in the future (including but by no means limited to those issues mentioned above). But, for the benefit of the field as a whole, I wholeheartedly encourage Nordic noir scholars to assume the genuinely audiovisual approach this thesis has sought to promote.

In this thesis, I have also engaged in critical debate on the nature of audiovisual Nordic noir and, in doing so, have presented my understanding of the matter. At the heart of it is the question: is Nordic noir transferrable to other cultural contexts – in

[40] Another notable point of connection to media convergence in *Miami Vice* is its intentional alignment with music video aesthetics. The series had "MTV Cops" as a working title, hinting at the kind of aesthetic the producers sought for the series, and each episode featured three songs from well-known artists (Sabin et al. 2015: 109). These songs were then typically set in music video-like montage sequences.

other words, is it possible for Nordic noir to come from elsewhere than the Nordic region? The answer depends on how broadly we choose to understand the term. If we consider Nordic noir as a style or one more iteration of the *noir* crime story, only this time originating in the Nordic region, then adaptations and appropriations transferred to some other part of the world would undoubtedly still be Nordic noir. However, if we expect – as is done in this thesis – Nordic noir to deal with issues related to or concerning the Nordic region and/or look at issues from that particular perspective, and to mediate an emic experience or knowledge of the region, its people, and cultural aspects, then the answer must be no.

As a final note: undoubtedly, especially as it has become a globally recognised phenomenon, Nordic noir is also about "selling the North" (see Bensenger et al. 2020: 11–30) and so – to put it bluntly – also a balancing act between what the North wants to say and what "the South" wants to hear, and of negotiating it "with varying intentions and varying degrees of sincerity", as Tore Størvold formulates it (2018: 377). Of course, there is no consensus on what it is that the North wants to say (or be), nor would such consensus ever be desirable. And perhaps that is one of the reasons why "the South" keeps being interested: "the North" and "Nordicness" are persistently enigmatic ideas. To recall the words of Peter Davidson: "[t]wo opposing ideas of north repeat (and contradict each other) from European antiquity to the time of the nineteenth-century Arctic explorers: that the north is a place of darkness and dearth, the set of evil. Or, conversely, that it is a place of austere felicity where virtuous peoples live behind the north wind and are happy" (2005: 21). But the Nordic region has remained a mysterious place of stories to the present day, and the two contradicting main strands of stories recognised by Davidson are both alive and well. What has changed is that these stories are no longer perpetuated only by "the South" but also by the North itself. The story of "felicity" is the story of the Nordic model that leads to the happiest people on the planet, and the stories of "darkness and dearth" are provided, among others, by Nordic noir. But, also, it is hard *not* to see these two stories as two sides of the same one, as Nordic noir undoubtedly is the product of the same society it is critical of. However, it is not a subversive form of counterculture, but one of the major cultural exports of the Nordic region and its gifts to global mainstream popular culture. So, it comes to mind: is not Nordic noir, by publicly scrutinising the faults of its own society, then showing the Nordic region in a rather favourable light?

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