

SPECIAL FORUM

Uncovering a Cover: Marketing Swedish Crime Fiction in a Transnational Context

LOUISE NILSSON

Key to the appeal of Scandinavian crime literature is the stoic nature of its detectives and their peculiarly close relationship with death. One conjures up a brooding Bergmanesque figure contemplating the long dark winter. [. . .] Another narrative component just as vital is the often bleak Scandinavian landscape which serves to mirror the thoughts of the characters.

——Jeremy Megraw and Billy Rose, “A Cold Night’s Death:
The Allure of Scandinavian Crime Fiction”¹

The above quote from the New York Public Library’s website serves as a *mise-en-place* for introducing Scandinavian crime fiction by presenting the idea of the exotic, mysterious North. A headline on the website associates the phrase “A Cold Night’s Death” with the genre often called Nordic noir. A selection of Swedish book covers is on display, featuring hands dripping with blood, snow-covered fields spotted with red, and dark, gloomy forests. A close-up of an ax on one cover implies that there is a gruesome murder weapon. At a glance it is apparent that Scandinavian crime fiction is set in a winter landscape of death that nevertheless has a seductive allure.

The presentation on the New York Public Library’s website has a strong symbolic value, conveying the idea that this is crime fiction worthy of notice. The text opens with a suggestion to its readers: “Maybe you’ve got the Nordic noir bug from reading Stieg Larsson’s Millennium series,” continuing, “[w]e’ve all seen those

ubiquitous neon paperbacks on the subway.”² The description of everyday life on a New York subway provides a view of how a work of Swedish crime fiction circulates through the city, identified by its jacket design.

During the last two decades Swedish crime fiction has become a multi-million dollar industry. In bookstores or online, specific sections can be found for the crime fiction subgenres Nordic Noir and Scandinavian Crime Fiction—or Scandinoir. Nordic noir includes the Scandinavian countries Denmark, Norway and Sweden, as well as Iceland and Finland, though the term ‘Scandinavian’ is often applied loosely to all the Nordic countries. On the international book market, Swedish crime fiction is regarded as highly successful and publishers at book fairs clamor for Swedish works.³

Nordic noir became a bestseller phenomenon thanks to Stieg Larsson’s overwhelmingly successful Millennium trilogy about Lisbeth Salander and Mikael Blomkvist. The trilogy has been translated into 37 languages and 60 million copies have been sold worldwide. The Swedish movie adaptations have also stimulated remakes: the first novel became a Hollywood blockbuster under its English title *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.⁴ The success has also generated scholarly interest, with a rapid expansion of academic studies focusing on Scandinavian crime fiction in general as well as the particular example of Stieg Larsson.⁵

The Swedish crime novel success story is closely interwoven with the promotional strategies of an international book market and multimedia conglomerates. Contemporary literary production is embedded in a globalized media landscape’s web of images and digital representations. The bestseller is surrounded by sophisticated marketing strategies, carefully designed to attract attention and become alluring on a transnational book market. The American film industry with its global reach plays a key role.⁶ The bestseller is an opportunity for a film company to set a project in motion that could generate a blockbuster. The movie adaptation, in turn, opens up a host of new opportunities to associate the book with a new set of activities and images. By boosting sales of the novel it may pave the way for international success for a writer. In such a scenario, the book cover becomes the face of the book as well as the iteration connecting it to the movie.

This article aims to investigate how a domestic literature, Swedish crime fiction, is marketed in a transnational context and intersects with other media translations such as movie adaptations. I argue that the book cover—as a physical jacket design or a digital image—plays a key role and that the transnational spread of a book is propelled when the cover alludes to other media. Images such as book or DVD covers, promotional photos, or still photos from movie adaptations are all important ways of packaging the story. How is Swedish crime fiction embedded in a visual story, created by marketing strategies, through its jacket designs and promotional images? How do these strategies circulate on a transnational market and in relation to other media such as film adaptations?

The core of my analysis will be Stieg Larsson’s Millennium trilogy, with special attention paid to the book covers—the surface that represents the books in a

transnational context—and how these integrate in a mediascape and merge with other cultural expressions. The main focus will be on English-language translations, with a special emphasis on the American context.

As a source, the book cover is greatly neglected, especially with regard to how it fits into a transnational media landscape where its image is used to advertise the book and its author, in some cases standing in for the entire book and representing it in bookstores as well as online. It is reproduced in magazines (printed as well digital), in ads as well as interviews or reviews; it circulates on blogs and websites devoted to the genre and on the homepages of the writers themselves. The cover has to be eye-catching and tell, at the very first glance, what kind of book it is, and it must convince the one perusing it that the book is worth buying. The book title, the author's name—if well known—and images on the front cover are the main components of a jacket design. The title frames the story and is chosen for its attraction value. It has to be catchy and appealing, while the image attracts the spectator and gives a hint about the story between the covers.⁷

A crucial theoretical underpinning is to regard the book cover as a medium, and as such an expression that interacts with other media. The book cover mediates images, inviting the spectator to look as well as to become a consumer. Various media expressions come together in marketing strategies, which flow, as does literature, across borders, mediating messages in different cultural spaces. In the following section I understand “media” as a culture's communication technologies. Different media expressions (for example images, websites, books, and films) play a key role in cultural communication, which ultimately affects our way of looking at, understanding, and interpreting the surrounding world.⁸

In addition, I understand the term “marketing,” following Claire Squires's definition in *Marketing Literature*, as a representation that goes beyond the actual selling of a book. The marketing of literature, she argues, should be seen as a form of representation itself in which different market forces come together. For example, publishing houses, the entertainment industry, and the print media all create stories around the books. It should be understood that all forms of representation connected to a book can be included in the advertising process and are closely tied together. Approached as a representation, the marketing strategies reveal how advertising produces as well as reproduces culturally embedded values, ideas, consumer ideals or meanings, and is ultimately inseparable from culture.⁹

In the following article, by focusing on book covers, I will discuss the circulation of Stieg Larsson in the United States, with a brief comparison to European editions. These covers will be contextualized and analyzed in relation to the American movie adaptation of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. The article concludes with a discussion of the visual framework surrounding Larsson's trilogy.

Translating Covers, Circulating Images

She had a wasp tattoo about two centimeters long on her neck, a tattooed loop around the bicep of her left arm and another around her left ankle. On those occasions when she had been wearing a tank top, Armansky also saw that she had a dragon tattoo on her left shoulder blade.

——Stieg Larsson, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*¹⁰

“[A] dragon tattoo on her left shoulder blade.” The quote from the English translation of the first book in the Millennium trilogy describes the now famous tattoos of Larsson’s heroine Lisbeth Salander, seen through the male gaze of her boss Armansky. From this sentence a book title emerged that became iconic for the bestseller, and for Salander: *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

Comparing the design of the cover and its title in various foreign editions of a book gives us a transnational marketing map, revealing how the same work is represented in different national contexts outside the domestic market. This opens a door to investigating the negotiation between the content of a literary work and the context where it is presented and framed as attractive and worth buying. This process may contradict the intent of the author if, for instance, a crime novel that articulates a social critique or an ideological agenda is reshaped as a product in different book markets when exported worldwide.

In Sweden the first Millennium book appeared in 2005 with the title *Män som hatar kvinnor*, which literally translates to “Men Who Hate Women.” In English-language editions this title was changed to the more lurid *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. In contrast, the English title of the second novel, *The Girl Who Played With Fire*, follows the Swedish *Flickan som lekte med elden* word for word. A literal rendering of *Luftslottet som sprängdes* (“The Air Castle That Was Blown Up”) would have been awkward; instead the English title of the third novel once again highlights Lisbeth Salander with *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet’s Nest*. Internationally, titles of the third volume generally incorporate variations on the motifs of explosion and air, which I will discuss below.¹¹

Larsson, an outspoken feminist, refused—despite pleas from his publishing company, Norstedts Förlag—to change the title of the first novel, since Larsson felt it reflected the book’s content by drawing attention to the abuse of women. When the book was launched abroad after his death, the English title, translated into various languages, came to dominate world-wide. Because publishing companies generally decide what the title should be, it was possible to ignore Larsson’s wishes. The change of title stimulated online discussions by readers on the site stieglarsson.com, where some fans found the original title inappropriate, while others preferred it.¹²

The Swedish title was chosen from an ideological standpoint as a feminist statement and can be understood more as a political act than a marketing strategy. This stance positions Larsson among those authors who use crime fiction for social critique. The title suggests an exposure of the misogyny within Swedish society. Throughout the novel, Larsson quotes statistics about violence and abuse by men against women in Sweden. The Swedish title also indicates that the book concerns men who *hate* women, and consequently the villain must be a man. The most common motives for a crime like murder tend to be hatred, greed, or dark secrets. Larsson's original title conveys to the reader that women are the targets because the murderer has a deep-seated hatred toward them as a category.

The English-language title, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, has entirely different associations. Because this was also the title of the American remake of the Swedish film adaptation, it had an international impact. English is a second language for millions of people; its literature and movies circulate worldwide. The choice made when translating the book title thus erased the domestic frame and instead connected both novel and film to a wider American popular culture.

In contrast, several European publishing houses assigned titles that were more in keeping with the author's choice. The French, Italian, and Spanish titles are quite close to the Swedish, for example the French *Les hommes qui n'aimaient pas les femmes* ("Men Who Dislike Women"). The German translations deviated from this pattern by using metaphors that instead associate to an individual's inner changes and psychology. In Germany the novels appeared as *Verblendung*, *Verdammnis* and *Vergebung*.¹³ The German word *Verblendung* means—in a metaphorical sense—the process of being blinded. *Verdammnis* ("Damnation") has obvious religious associations relating to punishment and hell. *Vergebund* ("Forgiveness") can be connected to states of mind or body, to redemption, absolution or release. Together the titles suggest that the series traces a process whereby the main character—we assume—moves from blindness and damnation to a catharsis that makes forgiveness possible.

The common denominator for the French, Italian, and Spanish cover images is feminized women—often exposed in states of nudity or a framing that conveys a hint of madness or victimization. In general violence and nudity are recurring themes. The cover to *Los hombres que no amaban a las mujeres* ("The Men Who Did Not Love Women") portrays a woman dressed in what appears to be a silky, strapless cocktail dress. Her eyes and lips are heavily made up; she is barefoot, sitting in a room with hands and arms tied together, and appears to look directly at the spectator. This image has an association with the plot of the Millennium trilogy, in which Salander is the victim of a ruthless bureaucratic system, locked in at mental health clinics and abused by men in positions of power. The Spanish cover gives little indication of Salander's androgyny, instead providing an image of traditional femininity: nail polish, red dress, and heels.

These European covers exemplify the negotiation between a book's content and its context, demonstrating how an author's ideological intent for the work can be transformed by the visual framing of marketing. Covers of English-language translations reveal another set of similarities and differences in comparison to these covers.

The American Path

The cultural adjustment of Larsson's novels for the American market has stripped the covers of violence and nudity. While the European editions are dominated by an aesthetic that invites a voyeuristic gaze (and at the same time suggest the idea of a dangerous girl who plays with fire and gasoline), the American covers create a mysterious frame by featuring abstract images and by using various colors thematically. The cover of the first novel is yellow, with a drawing of a dragon that blends into the background. The sequel is bright orange—associating to fire—and the flames appear to be female hair, while the third book is silver-colored and sprinkled with drawings of hornets across the cover—another Lisbeth tattoo and a reference to the English title.

Replacing “Men Who Hate Women” in favor of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* makes it less clear that the villain is male; instead focus is on the female character, and in a very ambiguous way. Most importantly, ‘girl’ has been substituted for ‘women.’ A woman is an adult, whereas ‘girl’ signifies an individual who is not quite grown up, or even a child. To someone unfamiliar with the book, the word may connote innocence or naiveté, but the girl the title alludes to is Lisbeth Salander, the bearer of the dragon tattoo, who does not in any way fit this description. In this sense, all the English-language titles are misleading.

Changed titles and different book covers exemplify how a novel moves from a national context into a transnational book market and how it becomes embedded in a frame that provides a hint of the story itself. On covers of translations of Larsson's novels, the heroine is the center of attention, but she is represented differently than with the original release. When we take marketing strategies seriously and look deeper into the framing of literature on the book market, we discover a constant negotiation between content and cultural context. To sell the book it has to be adjusted to the specific regional market. But those markets can be in turn be affected by the economics of dominating cultural industries, such as the American movie industry with its power to produce remakes that are then launched internationally.

The English translations erase the very important statement that the author demanded of his book's title: *Men Who Hate Women*. There is an explicit tension in the publishing houses' choices about how to present the content of the book and at the same time frame it for the book market. Larsson's political agenda becomes blurred when the book enters a transnational space with its spectrum of regional markets' expectations and demands.

The American entertainment business is often criticized for generalizing and stripping foreign products of content when remakes are made or, as in this case, when foreign books are marketed and adjusted to the American cultural context. This is not a fruitful approach for a deeper understanding of the process of transnational exchanges of world literature and stories that becomes movie adaptations, or remakes. When a domestic work of literature circulates in a transnational context and becomes integrated in a multimedia environment, a process of constant negotiation and interpretation takes place. There is something lost in this process of translation, and here marketing strategies—for example the chosen title to frame the story—has vital impact on how a book is received.

The English title, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, chosen by the American publishing industry, and then re-used by the film industry for the American remake, induces associations of a different sort. It is most important to remember that this title was chosen as a strategy to launch the trilogy in a transnational context and to catch the attention of potential readers worldwide. It is adjusted to an international book market's demands and visions.¹⁴

A set of common front covers, originally developed in the UK by Quercus Publishing House but also released in Sweden, portrays a woman with her back towards the spectator. It shows a woman, looking away, caught in a submissive pose. Sometimes she wears clothes, and sometimes she appears to be naked, with the shoulders exposed to reveal a tattoo. In one cover the tattoo is gone and it only depicts a woman from behind in black clothing—with exposed neck and shoulders. On the opening novel's front cover she is laying face down and there is a dragon tattoo sprawling on her shoulder blade. This image is the very opposite of a feminist message. It represents the woman as passive. She is not returning the gaze. Instead, she is looking away, the head is in a submissive pose and the spectators are invited to participate in a male, empowered, domineering gaze.

The concept of a *male gaze* was launched by film scholar Laura Mulvey who showed in her research the visual techniques for the objectification of women in film. There is a tension to be found between context and content. As a marketing strategy the woman on the book cover represents Lisbeth Salander. In this context we can indeed argue that a male gaze is established, objectifying Salander.¹⁵

In regard to the content of the books this argument can be challenged by the research of film scholar Carol Clover. In *Men, Women, and Chainsaws*, Clover shows how women, in the slasher and horror movie genres, carry the role of heroine and she rejects Mulvey's understanding of women in horror movies as oppressed and objectified by a voyeuristic male gaze. Here Clover launched the concept of "the final girl," the girl who fights the monsters, who takes vengeance and survives. The final girl is the heroine. She is the woman who in the end beats the evil doers and monsters and survives. She is the last woman standing. Final Girls can be seen in movies such as *I Spit on Your Grave*, *Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Kill Bill*, or *Hellraiser*. Lisbeth Salander should be understood as a final girl, but in the marketing of the stories there is a tendency to

embrace her in a softened and feminized frame—even if the dangerous tattoo is exposed. Salander, in regard to the book covers discussed here, becomes represented as less rough and square than she actually is in the stories. In the translation the first book of the trilogy is packaged differently from the domestic original edition.¹⁶

The choice to launch the trilogy without images and create abstract book covers eliminated the male voyeuristic gaze—in Laura Mulvey’s sense of the term. This gaze is invited through the flow of front cover images on the European editions. The other choice, the use of Larsson’s description of Salander’s tattoo as a marketing strategy for the books also fuels her definition as a final girl. In the marketing of Larsson’s trilogy the political and feminist messages—posed by the author—have been toned down in the marketing. The books have been embedded in a more feminine discourse, yet exposing Salander as the core of the stories and a final girl. The book covers represent stories that not only belong to a specific genre but are a part of western popular culture and its cinematic landscape.

The unconventional Swedish crime fiction writer Stieg Larsson created a story that trickles down on an intertextual level to a genre of B-listed movies defined as *rape and revenge movies*. This genre had its breakthrough in the 1970s with *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978). The possible influence of such films on Larsson’s original rape and revenge story suggests that trans-media exchanges can work in both directions.¹⁷

Another aspect to consider when analyzing the transnational circulation of literature and its movie adaptations is the tension between the American film industry’s openness to influences from foreign markets and its often firm grip with regard to reworking and marketing products for the American audience. American cinema is often criticized for its commercial and mainstream approach and for producing stereotypical representations of, for instance, gender roles or ethnic groups. The Larsson case exemplifies how a national literature and national cinema circulates and is reinterpreted in a new cultural and national context. Here American cinema has the hegemonic position as a powerful, blockbuster-producing industry. For example, besides adapting Scandinavian crime fiction, Hollywood has taken on the so-called J-horror phenomenon—horror movies from Japan—and turned these in to a globally distributed genre.¹⁸

These cross-cultural exchanges create a mediascape of promotional images and media expressions such as fan blogs, articles in magazines and newspapers, advertising, movie posters, and DVD covers, in addition to book covers. When a book is adapted for the screen a new set of marketing strategies is set in motion in which these media become important allies. The transnational circulation of Swedish crime fiction is intimately connected with American cinema and an idea of the North.

Media Allies and Tales of the North

Let me return to the New York Public Library website, which exemplifies a transnational discourse that surrounds the subgenre Nordic noir. Its framing of the

phenomenon echoes in the marketing of Scandinavian crime fiction. As in the article “A Cold Night’s Death,” the website attempts to explain the best-selling novels and define their appeal, highlighting the environment, climate, and landscape of the North. The quote below from *The New York Times* gives another example of how media discourse focuses particularly on the natural landscape and domestic politics: “Scandinavian crime fiction has been popular among serious mystery readers for decades, but even best-selling novelists like Henning Mankell are not yet widely known in the United States. If there is a formula to the genre, it often includes a cold, stark setting and a grizzled detective figure who consumes too much coffee and junk food. The book covers tend to the bleak and icy, with images of frozen lakes, barren forests and perhaps a foreboding bloodstain.”¹⁹ Media spread the word about new authors as well as introducing established ones to potential readers outside the regular orbit of avid fans of the genre. The success of one or two writers creates a domino effect, turning the spotlight onto other comparable ones. This process is set into motion by a very aware, profit-driven book industry, agents, marketers, and publishers who know how to create demands and desires. This intersects with a transnational book market and the lucrative entertainment industry, where the cinema plays a key role. Although a potential audience for Swedish crime fiction already existed, marketing strategies and a changing book market opened up new opportunities for unknown novelists from the Nordic countries. A discourse was created to explain the best-selling authors and create a Nordic crime fiction wave. In this marketing-driven discourse the media became an important ally through reviews of books and films, articles about novels and authors, or follow-up pieces on movie adaptations and the array of people involved, including screenwriters, actors, and directors.

The dominant theme when defining Swedish crime fiction is the idea of the mysterious North and its natural landscape and cold climate. This portrayal is striking in numerous magazines and newspapers. Witty headlines and descriptions of Sweden and its crime fiction novels are embedded in words referring to the climate as well as phrases such as “a cold case to thaw.” There are references to “bleak landscapes” and “Viking spirits”; the natural world where these “depraved” murders occur is “stoic.” These impressions are scattered through stories about authors, especially the late Stieg Larsson. Phrases such as “It all began with a dead body” allude to Larsson’s tragic death and his successful Millennium trilogy that paved the way for many Scandinavian writers, newcomers who are referred to as new “stars of a lethal genre.”²⁰

Other common features are word play in descriptions and the use of contrast to create a dynamic and aesthetic flow in reviews or articles. Common dichotomies are hot and cold, in reference to hot literature from a cold country, or blood drops (once warm) on white, frozen snow. Another frequently used term is “dark,” which calls to mind the contrasting “light.” Besides descriptions of authors as “Kings” and “Queens,” new writers can be framed as “Another Northern Star,” as in the case of Mari Jungstedt in the British paper *The Times*.²¹

This framing of Swedish crime fiction is accompanied by photographs of natural landscapes or images of book covers, many picturing winter scenery and forests. Sometimes articles discuss filming locations and recommend sightseeing for tourists who want to follow the steps of their favorite character and in reality visit the narrative's environments. For example, Stockholm, Ystad, and Fjällbacka have become attractive sites for literary tourism. In cobblestoned Stockholm readers—and movie goers—follow Arne Dahl's fictional elite crime-fighting squad, and of course Stieg Larsson's extraordinary heroine Lisbeth Salander. Henning Mankell's world-famous detective Kurt Wallander resides in Ystad on the southern coast, and on the Swedish west coast lies Fjällbacka, the quiet, sleepy hometown of Camilla Läckberg's heroine Erica Falck.²²

The natural environments in the novels matter, and these descriptions, articulated in different media, have recognized one of the dominant motifs in Swedish crime fiction. Ice, snow, and forests are common ingredients, often determining specifics of the plot and affecting the minds of the characters, even the dead bodies. For example, the opening scene in Henning Mankell's *The Man from Beijing* (*Kinesen*) takes the reader into the snow-covered woods where a hungry wolf sinks his teeth into a frozen corpse—a scene carefully recaptured by the review in the *Los Angeles Times*. Camilla Läckberg's *The Ice Princess* (*Isprinsessan*) opens with dead woman in a water-filled bathtub in a bitterly cold house. The corpse is turning blue and the surface of the water is covered by a thin layer of ice. In Åsa Larsson's *Until Thy Wrath Be Past* (*Till dess din vrede upphör*) an ice-covered lake hides secrets from the past. On the same lake the case is finally solved and the murderers are caught, after a gruesome hunt through the winter forest in northern Sweden.²³

The media discourse about Swedish crime fiction demonstrates how a domestic literature becomes a representation of the exotic Other in a transnational context. These tales about the Swedish North intertwine with a capitalist market, fueling the tourist industry as well as commercially oriented entertainment culture and turning a domestic literary phenomenon into an internationally best-selling subgenre of world literature.

Deeply embedded in literary and visual culture is the multifaceted idea of the North. This culturally forged idea encompasses narratives of fear as well as elements of the supernatural and fantastic, political dimensions, or specific topographies. Shifting ideas come together in a North located both in a specific place and in the imagination. These ideas can be traced through history and across geography, originating in writings of the ancient world and reaching into our contemporary culture. The impressive sales figures of a set of best-selling writers and the packaging of Nordic noir as exotic and mysterious can be tied to this ancient and still flourishing view of a North that is always far away.

In *The Idea of North*, the renaissance historian Peter Davidson outlines the shifting ideas surrounding the North and places perceived as embodying the North or an essence of northness. Everyone, he writes, carries an idea of the North, and the

specific territory and topography are only a part of its mediations. Wherever the location of North is believed to be, the compass always points further north, toward an elsewhere.²⁴ This complex and centuries-old vision of the North has merged with contemporary popular culture, becoming a framework for the representation of Nordic noir in a transnational context. Let me give a few examples of how this mystifying and multifaceted idea of the North emerges from our cultural history.

The North can be an imagined place in literature as well as a specific geographical location. It is imagined from many perspectives, including the local, the regional, and the national, and is shaped by theoretical constructs, literary interpretations, and visual imaginaries. In its most tangible form the North appears as a topography tied to a specific place on the map, but its location can also be relative. For an Italian the North can be Switzerland or the northern parts of Italy. For a Catholic in southern Europe it may be where Protestants live.²⁵

The portrayal of the North as an imaginary location has a long and rich tradition in art and literature, intimately intertwined with ghost stories and the fantastic. One vision is of the obliterating North, often gendered as a Snow Queen or an Ice Witch. For example in Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale *The Snow Queen* (1844), Andersen's portrayal of the Snow Queen's icy kingdom and palace became a paradigmatic narrative, serving as a metaphor for the harsh Nordic winter.²⁶

My point here is to exemplify how Nordic noir and its literary and visual narratives are connected to a historic legacy, deeply embedded in western cultural history. The twenty-first century's framing of and approach to Nordic crime fiction links to a complex, pre-existing narrative of the North and its scenery. This fascination with the North has become a concept for labeling domestic crime fiction that connects it to a specific geography and topography. The same fascination infusing the ideas of the North resonates in the way the genre Nordic noir is framed and perceived. This vision of the North, through media discourse and as a strategic marketing tool, gives Swedish literature a dramatic setting. Let me exemplify this further with a selection of examples from media discussion of the film adaptation of Larsson's first novel in the Millennium trilogy.

In April 2012 the *Los Angeles Times Magazine* framed the success of Swedish crime fiction through David Fincher's remake of the Swedish movie adaptation *Män som hatar kvinnor*. The article, consisting of a promotional photograph, headline, and a flow of book covers that catch the spectator's attention, shows the media discourse of the mysterious North—here defined as Sweden. The article's headline sets the tone, announcing "Mysterious Sweden," and the chosen illustration for the article, shot by the fashion photographer Jean-Baptiste Mondino, portrays a half-naked Rooney Mara as the American Lisbeth Salander. Mara has been placed in a snowy landscape, her hands covering her bare breasts.²⁷ This is one example of many that create a visual and literary narrative that surrounds both the Hollywood blockbuster remake and the best-selling foreign novel. Here a renewed idea of the North is inserted into the mediascape.

The representation of Swedish crime fiction is a fabric woven of transnational media discourses, marketing strategies, and literary echoes of the past. Media expressions such as movie adaptations go a step further, giving these narratives visual form and embedding the narrated stories in a cinematic tradition. This process puts the source text in the limelight for people who perhaps have not read the book and, as in this case, highlights the literary genre as well. Movie adaptations open up for new translations of the literary work and for new strategies in the branding of Swedish crime fiction. After the release of a remake or movie adaptation, a common strategy in the book business is to re-release the novel as a movie tie-in, exposing images from the movie on its cover.

This mediascape embeds the domestic literature—here Swedish crime fiction—and lets it emerge as world literature as its images and discourses circulate on a transnational book market.²⁸ An important aspect is how literature intersects with the film industry that provides a set of new images when the novel is adapted. These images create a global imaginary that not only fuels perceptions of this mediascape's representations of novels or films, but also establishes an idea of the domestic place depicted in the narrative.²⁹ These images are used on DVD or book covers or in promotional photos not only to market the product itself. They also frame the narrative's domestic context as it—also for marketing purposes—borrows imaginaries from, for example, myths and culturally shaped ideas. Here Sweden becomes an imagined place through its literature, in this case through the visual representation of crime fiction, and this circulation is closely tied to American cinema's remakes and global reach.

The film medium, as part of a global mediascape, plays a key role in distributing a domestic literature on a transnational book market. The idea of the North in relation to crime fiction—as represented in media and used as an aesthetic in the marketing—should be understood as a contemporary perception that connects to the multifaceted cultural history of both the real and the imaginary. This iteration of the North becomes integrated into an equally multifaceted mediascape tracing the rise of this literary subgenre and the surrounding popular culture.

A final illustration of the variations in this transnational circulation may be found by comparing the respective conclusions of the domestic film adaptation and the American remake of Larsson's first novel. In the final frames of the Swedish film, Lisbeth Salander walks away from the camera and disappears into the crowd in a tropical setting. She is dressed in an elegant, feminine outfit, but her bearing conveys self-confidence and empowerment. The spectator also knows that she has just visited the bank and is now—in the guise of Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking—economically independent. In the American remake the ending has been changed. Here Salander appears in a snowy and dark Stockholm. She is riding her motorcycle to Mikael Blomkvist's apartment, but notices that he has female company. As Blomkvist leaves in a car with the woman, Salander withdraws and disappears on her bike into a wintry Stockholm cityscape, alone and perhaps lonely. The remake thus lacks the

empowering ending of the domestic framing of Salander. Instead the Nordic climate takes on the function of conveying Salander's state of mind, one that is fully in keeping with the usual construction of a Nordic mentality in Nordic noir.

Notes

¹ Jeremy Megraw and Billy Rose, "A Cold Night's Death: The Allure of Scandinavian Crime Fiction," New York Public Library, 14 January 2013, accessed 10 May 2014, <http://www.nypl.org/blog/2013/01/14/scandinavian-crime-fiction>.

² Megraw and Rose, "A Cold Night's Death."

³ Swedish crime fiction has a long history of international success. In the 1960s and 1970s, Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö's crime series about detective Martin Beck was widely read. For further information about Swedish crime fiction, see Alexandra Borg, "Milleniumeffekten eller om varför den svenska deckaren blev världslitteratur," in *Svensk litteratur i världen: En antologi*, ed. Johan Svedjedal (Uppsala: Avdelningen för litteratursociologi, Uppsala universitet, 2012), 135–42, 151–52; Alexandra Borg, *Brottsplats: Stockholm*, (Stockholm: Stockholmia förlag, 2012), 43–62, 51. For further reading about Scandinavian crime fiction, see Andrew Nestingen, *Crime and Fantasy in Scandinavia: Fiction, Film, and Social Change* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008); Andrew Nestingen and Paula Arvas, *Scandinavian Crime Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011). For a thorough study of Swedish crime fiction and its movie adaptations, see: Michael Tapper, *Snuten i skymningslandet: Svenska polisberättelser i roman och på film 1965–2010* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2011).

⁴ Kerstin Bergman, *Swedish Crime Fiction: The Making of Nordic Noir* (Milan: Mimesis International, 2014), 124 f.

⁵ For academic interest in crime fiction, see Jon Helgason et. al., *Hype: Bestsellers and Literary Culture* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2014); Erik Hedling et al., *Regional Aesthetics: Locating Swedish Media* (Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2010); David Geherin, *The Dragon Tattoo and Its Long Tail: The New Wave of European Crime Fiction in America* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2012); Donna King and Carrie Lee Smith, *Men Who Hate Women and Women Who Kick Their Asses: Stieg Larsson's Millenium Trilogy in Feminist Perspective* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012); Steven Peacock, ed., *Stieg Larsson's Millenium Trilogy: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Nordic Noir on Page and Screen* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁶ André Schiffrin, *The Business of Books: How International Conglomerates Took Over Publishing and Changed the Way We Read* (London: Verso, 2000); Ann Steiner, "World Literature and the Book Market," in *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, eds. Theo D'haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir (London: Routledge, 2012), 316–24; Claire

Squires, *Marketing Literature: The Making of Contemporary Writing in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁷ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, transl. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 28; Squires, *Marketing Literature*, 75–85. For historical overviews and studies about book covers and marketing, see Phil Baines, *Penguin by Design: A Cover Story 1935–2005* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005); Thomas L. Bonn, *Under Cover: An Illustrated History of American Mass Market Paperbacks* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982); Kristina Lundblad, *Om betydelsen av böckers utseende: Det svenska förlagsbandets framväxt och etablering under perioden 1840–1914 med särskild hänsyn till dekorerade klotband: En studie av bokbandens formgivning, teknik och relation till frågor om modernitet och materiell kultur* (Malmö: Råmus förlag, 2010); Nicole Matthews and Nickianne Moody, *Judging a Book by Its Cover: Fans, Publishers, Designers, and the Marketing of Fiction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

⁸ Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997), 1–3, see also chapter 1; Ulf Hannerz, ed., *Medier och kulturer* (Stockholm: Carlssons bokförlag, 1990), 7; Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Corte Madera: Gingko Press, 2003).

⁹ Squires, *Marketing Literature*, chapter 3. See especially p. 51.

¹⁰ Stieg Larsson, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (London: Maclehorse Press, 2008), 33 f.

¹¹ Stieg Larsson, *Män som hatar kvinnor* (Stockholm: Norstedts förlag, 2005); Stieg Larsson, *Flickan som lekte med elden* (Stockholm: Norstedts förlag, 2006); Stieg Larsson, *Luftslottet som sprängdes* (Stockholm: Norstedts förlag, 2007); Stieg Larsson, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (London: Maclehorse Press, 2008); *The Girl Who Played with Fire* (London: Maclehorse Press, 2009); Stieg Larsson, *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest* (London: Maclehorse Press, 2010).

¹² Eva Gabrielsson, *There Are Things I Want You to Know About Stieg Larsson and Me* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2011), 71–75; Jan-Erik Pettersson, *Stieg Larsson: Journalisten, författaren, idealisten* (Stockholm: Telegram Bokförlag, 2010), 215; Stieg Larsson Official Website, accessed 1 March 2014, <http://www.stieglarsson.com/discussion-boards/book-titles-1584167>.

¹³ Stieg Larsson, *Verblendung* (Munich: Heyne Verlag, 2007); Stieg Larsson, *Verdammnis* (Munich: Heyne Verlag, 2008); Stieg Larsson, *Vergebung* (Munich: Heyne Verlag, 2009).

¹⁴ Lauren Fedor, "Making 'Tattoo' Indelible," *The Wall Street Journal*, accessed online 28 October 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704220704575367202148711296>.

¹⁵ Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 19–25.

¹⁶ Carol Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); cf. Karen A. Ritzenhoff, "Lisbeth Salander as 'Final Girl' in the Swedish 'Girl Who' Films," in King and Lee Smith, *Men Who Hate Women and Women Who Kick Their Asses*, 27–31.

¹⁷ *I Spit on Your Grave* was first released—with a limited distribution—under the title *Day of the Women*. A remake of the 1978 movie was made in 2010. See *Day of the Woman*, Internet Movie Database, accessed 12 January 2016, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0077713/?ref_=nv_sr_1.

¹⁸ Valerie Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 2, 5.

¹⁹ Julie Bosman, "A Scandinavian Hit Sets Publishers Seeking More," *The New York Times* 15 June 2010.

²⁰ This compilation of descriptions of Swedish crime fiction is based on following sources: Christine Spines, "Northern Lights: The Best of the Scandinavian Crime Fiction Invasion," *Word & Film*, 30 August 2011; David Piesner, "Scandinavian Crime Fiction Kills," *Departures* (November–December 2012); Laura Miller, "The Strange Case of the Nordic Detectives: The Growing Appeal of Scandinavian Crime Fiction; Existential Malaise and Bad Coffee," *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 January 2010; John Crace, "Move Over, Ian Rankin," *The Guardian*, 22 January 2009.

²¹ Marcel Berlins, "Another Northern Star," *The Times*, 6 January 2007; Stephen Romei, "Nordic Noir Queen Proves Crime Lit is No Gift," *The Australian*, 22 May 2014; Louise France, "The Queen of Crime," *The Guardian*, 22 November 2009.

²² "The Sound of Silence in Larsson Land," *The Observer*, 13 March 2011; "Sweden beyond the fiction," Visit Sweden, accessed 12 January 2016, <http://www.visitsweden.com/sweden/Featured/Sweden-Beyond/Swedish-Litterature/Sweden-Noir/>.

²³ Camilla Läckberg, *The Ice Princess* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2010), Henning Mankell, *The Man from Beijing* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishing, 2010); Åsa Larsson, *Until Thy Wrath be Past* (London: MacLehose Press, 2010); Jonathan Shapiro, "Book Review, 'The Man from Beijing' by Henning Mankell," *Los Angeles Times*, 20 February 2010.

²⁴ Peter Davidson, *The Idea of North* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), 7–8, 19, 7–20.

²⁵ Davidson, *The Idea of North*, 38.

²⁶ Davidson, *The Idea of North*, 9, 67 f.

²⁷ John-Henri Holmberg, "Mysterious Sweden," *Los Angeles Times Magazine* (April 2012).

²⁸ My understanding of world literature follows David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 2003).

²⁹ My use of global imaginary and mediascape draws on Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference,” in *Literature and Globalization: A Reader*, eds. Liam Connell and Nicky Marsh (London: Routledge, 2011), 28, 30, 31; Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 30–43.