

## **Everything Goes Back to the Beginning: television adaptation & remaking**

### **Nordic noir**

Abstract:

As television drama undergoes a renaissance across Europe and the US, this article focuses on remakes of ‘Nordic noir’ crime serials. The genre has its origins in contemporary literary fiction, and became a cinema *cause célèbre* with the Swedish adaptations of Stieg Larsson’s *Millennium* novels, and the controversial US remake of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

While adaptation scholars have long discredited comparative approaches based on the source/target text binary organised along value-judgement lines, in terms of television remakes, the opposite is fast becoming the case; comparisons between different versions of the same narrative becomes playful and almost vital aspect of contemporary adaptation. While some theorists have argued that remakes often attempt to efface previous versions, in television, the opposite can be true.

In examining the remakes of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *Forbrydelsen* (*The Killing*), *Broen/Bron* (*The Bridge & The Tunnel*) and *Broadchurch* (*Gracepoint*), this article proposes that a new type of ‘synchronous’ or ‘active’ adaptation invites some audiences to engage in a far more playful exchange of textual moments, augmented and overseen by social media, and that television remakes are now reflecting this.

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In recent years, television drama has undergone something of a renaissance. The advent of ‘quality’ subscription channels such as HBO, and new digital delivery systems such as Netflix, have ushered in a new networked era of ‘everything at once’. For McCabe and Akass ‘[c]hanges in broadcast delivery, new systems of production and distribution, economic restructuring based on brand quality and market differentiation, and the rise to prominence Home Box Office (HBO), whose tagline “It’s Not TV, It’s HBO” characterises its quality marker, defines the post-1996, post-network era’ (2014: 5). While film adaptations of novels are a representation of literary culture at any particular moment, in the networked era, adaptations stand as a representation of visual culture. These new platforms have become hungry for content, and the television drama has become a prestige offering. Major series such as *Game of Thrones* (2011 – present) have become the most illegally downloaded media in history. Both Netflix and Amazon Prime have come close to replicating a legal version of this ‘box-set culture’ by providing every episode of a major television drama simultaneously. As a corollary, the technology of television has been ‘remediated’ (Bolter & Grusin 2000); the flat widescreen of today’s LED and LCD screens allows for a more cinematic experience, but one which still provides a long-running episodic series format. Television is no longer constructed for the ‘glance’ (Ellis 1992).

At the same time, television has been augmented by and aggregated onto an array of online digital platforms. Some of these deliver (illegally and legally) televisual texts, and others offer spaces where television texts can be discussed, analysed and *compared* by audiences. All of this offers up a rich field of inquiry for the adaptation scholar. For Cardwell, ‘If a programme is regarded as being quality television,

viewers may feel more compelled to give it a chance, to remain more open to seeing its attributes for themselves. That is critical evaluations may be more subjective based on our own experiences, our feelings of like or dislike' (2014: 21). The term 'reboot' has been employed a great deal to describe television texts which have an earlier version existing in the same medium; for example *Battlestar Galactica* (2004 – 2009) is not a straightforward remake, but it tells a similar story (albeit a philosophically richer one) in the same story-world, with the same characters as the original 1970s series (see Berger 2009). Similarly, *Fargo* (2014 – present) tells different stories, with different characters, but all set in the same diegetic story-world created by the original 1996 film. These texts are neither heterocosmic or fettered to their sources in any self-serving sense.

The Nordic noir genre has also offered-up a rich platter of contemporary politico-crime stories for English language broadcasters. For Turnbull, '[t]he transnational trade in crime drama has never been more vigorous' (2014: 3), while Piper observes that, '[t]elevision is always repetitious in its forms and it is through reiteration as well as surprise that a detective 'voice' might catch attention, work through anxieties, challenge social orthodoxies and – with surprising frequency – articulate profound dissatisfaction with the world around us' (2015: 3).

Historically, many remakes in the English-language have tried to efface their source material completely (Mazdon 2000); *Homeland* (2011 – present) has only the tenuous of links to its source, the Israeli series, *Hatufim* (2010 – present). However, remakes of Scandinavian derived texts seem more comfortable existing in communion with other versions of themselves, and this in turn could reflect the ways in which

audiences now come to them. Writers such as Cardwell (2002, 2012 & 2014) have done much to develop the area of television adaptations, however the focus has often been on the adaptation of prestige literary novels into popular television series. Cardwell attacks the conservatism and medium-specific nature of much of contemporary television adaptation, but now successful television series (especially those not created in the English-language) are remade almost instantaneously. Further, this move from asynchronicity ('prestige' novel to television series) to synchronicity (English-language television remake) suggests a more 'active' mode of adaptation - where other versions (or source materials), are either still in the recent conscious memory of the audience, or these types of texts can quickly be summoned into circulation again by audiences. My aim in this article is to understand what makes these types of crime programming attractive for adaptors; how are they distinctive? I further aim to examine how these texts all exist (and 'live') with each other; what does a new era of synchronicity hold for adaptation studies? As we shall see, the remakes of Scandinavian crime serials can foster an interest in the original work, but not as I later argue, in a way which necessarily mobilises fidelity discourses.

Adaptation studies are now recognising, and taking account of, the ways in which multiple versions of the same story can exist and intersect with each other (Phu 2010). Geraghty has argued that a 'comparison between different screen adaptations of the same source is a valuable approach' (2008: 5), while writers such as Gray (2010) appreciate that texts are becoming unfettered to their historically medium specific silos. Others point out that literary culture itself has been 'relocated' (Collins 2010: 117), while Moore argues for the need to 'rethink adaptation in technological

terms' (2010: 180). This article then is one such attempt to sketch out an alternative approach to thinking about English-language remakes of television series.

### **The Beginning.**

The Nordic noir genre of crime fiction – sometimes referred to as ‘Scandi-lit’ - has now become established as a stable utterance of contemporary television production. The genre has been typified by set-piece settings in Scandinavian cityscapes, abandoned lakeside shacks, and crumbling industrial estates. These stylings are usually combined with plots which examine institutional corruption, all marshalled by a cast of slightly dysfunctional protagonists. For Peacock, ‘[T] here is a particular and particularly “bleak” aspect to Nordic noir, a certain strand of Scandinavian sensibility that the crime drama can tap into more than any other genre’ (2014: 3). While Nestingen and Arvas acknowledge the difficulties in defining a literary genre which spans five countries, all with differing political systems which were forged in the aftermath of the Second World War, for them ‘Scandinavian crime fiction has become famous for its melancholy detectives who are silent, depressed, diligent, thirsty and so on’ (2011: 9).

Henning Mankell's *Wallander* novels – adapted for both Swedish (2005 – 2010) and UK (2008 - present) television - are often cited as the beginnings of the genre's global popularisation, with Jo Nesbø a near cinematic contemporary. But Peter Hoeg's 1992 novel, *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow*, is perhaps a more likely starting point; it was itself adapted for cinema as *Smilla's Sense of Snow* (August, 1997), and features a central female protagonist with an unusual gift, which sets her apart from

forming meaningful relationships. Ostensibly about the search for a missing child, the novel deals with Danish politics and conspiracy theories, before reaching its ambivalent *dénouement* on a deserted island in Greenland.

The genre's first 'blockbuster' came some years later, and that work also featured a female protagonist lacking in social skills, but possessed of unusually precise analytical gifts. The Swedish human rights journalist, Stieg Larsson, had originally planned a ten-part series of *Millennium* crime novels all featuring his enigmatic misanthropic computer-hacker, Lisbeth Salander, and her friend (and sometime lover) crusading journalist Mikael Blomkvist (loosely based on Larsson himself).

The manuscripts for the first three volumes – and an incomplete fourth volume – were submitted to a Swedish publisher in 2004, however Larsson died before they were published. The three complete volumes were posthumously published as *The Millennium Trilogy* in quick succession between 2005-2007, and were an almost instant phenomenon worldwide. The first in the series was the best-selling novel in Europe, in 2008 (Nestingen & Arvas). By May 2010, the novels had sold 27 million copies; by December 2011, 65 million copies had been sold – helped in part by the successful adaptations.

In the first novel, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, a rich businessman, Henrik Vanger, hires Mikael Blomkvist to investigate the disappearance of his great-niece, Harriet, who vanished during a village parade many years before in 1966. Vanger believes that Harriet was murdered by another member of his family. Blomkvist is aided in this search by a computer hacker, Lisbeth Salander, who herself is being

blackmailed by her legal guardian. The subsequent novels continue the story of the two protagonist's strange relationship and in particular Lisbeth's murky family past.

The Swedish film adaptations began production in 2006, and the first film, *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* (Oplev, 2009), was quickly followed by *The Girl Who Played with Fire* (Alfredson, 2009) in September, and finally *The Girl Who Kicked a Hornet's Nest* (Alfredson, 2009) was released in the November and featured the Swedish actors Michael Nyqvist as Blomkvist and Noomi Rapace as Salander.

In 2010, the three films were shown in an extended version as a six-part TV series in Sweden and Denmark – signalling a close broadcasting alliance between the two North European countries. In that same year, the American filmmaker David Fincher announced he would be directing his own version of the trilogy. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2010) was the English-language remake, this time starring Daniel Craig as Blomkvist and Rooney Mara as Salander. As Peacock notes, '[t]he relationship between the Swedish and American films becomes particularly complex and fascinating, when we consider that the director of the 2009 Swedish film...is on record as stating his intention to draw heavily on the style of none other than American filmmaker David Fincher (2014: 9). While the film was not the commercial success envisaged by the producers it nonetheless extended the novel's visual reach; Fincher was at pains to call his film another adaptation of the novel, rather than a remake of the Swedish film.

Here, a range of adaptations, from different creators, based on the similar source material – at a time when that source material is a literary sensation – were all

available *simultaneously* for readers and audiences. This made comparative strategies inevitable, but not necessarily bound to myopic fidelity positions; audiences took to online discussion forums to express their opinions on the interconnectivity of these texts; for some, the presence of the Fincher version ignited a conversation about all of the *Millennium* texts.

The fansites considered here were selected for having the most conversations (‘threads’) about the texts, and their remakes, under consideration here. As Hewson, et al, note ‘[o]bservation of text-based sources, using unobtrusive, non-participant approaches...can proceed by assessing online discussion group *archives* [original italics]...Traditional corpora derived from offline sources are unlikely to offer the breadth, diversity and scope of online traces of human conversational interactions’ (2016: 53). The sites which form this small sample then, were selected these types of diverse interactions, and while by no means offering a comprehensive data-set, they do give a good sense of how these texts are received the most ‘active’ fans of the source material.

Stieglarsson.com was created in 2007, and has had over 4 million users. On one forum [accessed 5<sup>th</sup> November 2015], contributors seemed to be upset that Fincher did not to go on and film the next two instalments. This was the cue for fans to direct commentators to the Swedish films; comments such as: ‘[I’m] waiting patiently for the next 2 when are we going to see them?’, were followed-up by: ‘I agree. I still want to see the other 2 Hollywood ones, but I really liked the Swedish ones better’. So here, comparative approaches are clearly being employed by elements of the audience, but in ways which avoid following the source/text dyad: ‘I have watched

both the American and Swedish versions and loved both. Mara and Rapace are each excellent in their portrayals of Salander. The approach taken by each director is different [sic] but close to the books'. The *Millennium* novels feature heavily in the discussions about the films: 'I am British and also thought the Swedish version did a better job of creating the visual story of the book. It captured the mood, whilst it also managed to project a more faithful version of the characters'. This comment and other similar contributions also demonstrate perhaps, that declaring through which national lens the text is being viewed is important.

On Amazon, the Fincher remake of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* is listed with the Swedish versions under the 'Frequently Bought Together' banner [accessed 8<sup>th</sup> November 2015]. Reviews are broadly positive – the film gets a 4/5 average – with one reviewer pleading: 'If you have seen the Swedish interpretation of the book, please do not disregard this'. As expected, with an 'active' adaptation almost all of the reviews refer to the earlier films, and the novels. One comment even brings the audio version of the book into the discussion (narrated by Simon Vance). While, comparative approaches to the *Millennium* texts hold sway, notions of fidelity are for most, a non-issue: 'Brilliant but if you've read the book, you'll find they've changed a few things'; 'I think I enjoyed this version a little more than the original version, itself very worthwhile of course' and some reviewers offer advice on chronology: 'Love this film. Love the Swedish version also. Read the book first'.

Adaptation theorists have asserted that successful multiple versions of texts are somewhat dependent on some prior knowledge of the source material (Hutcheon 2006 & Sanders 2005). So, there is evidence here that comparative responses are far

from being value driven enterprises, which for some (Corrigan 2012) have interesting things to say about the relationship between different media.

### **Making a Killing**

In 2007 a Danish television debuted, which fast became a cultural phenomenon. Like the *Millennium* stories, which had gone before, *Forbrydelsen* (*The Killing*) followed the police investigation of one single murder investigation, virtually day-by-day - each one-hour episode effectively covering a 24-hour period. The central character was crafted as equally enigmatic as Lisbeth Salander: Detective Inspector Sarah Lund (played by Sofie Gråbøl). *Forbrydelsen* begins as she is looking forward to her last day with the Copenhagen police department - Lund is due to move to Sweden with her fiancé and transfer to the Swedish police force - however this is disrupted when a 19-year-old woman, Nanna Birk Larsen, disappears only to be found raped and brutally murdered.

Along with her colleague, Detective Inspector Jan Meyer (Søren Dyrberg), Lund remains behind with her old department to lead the investigation. It soon becomes clear that the Danish detectives are on the trail of a very intelligent and dangerous criminal. Over a span of 20-days, suspect-upon-suspect is sought out against a backdrop of political intrigue and violence. The series was highly praised in Denmark for its realistic and often mundane depiction of a murder investigation, and in particular the unflinching depiction of how the murder of a teenager affected every member of her family, often in markedly different ways; “[w]hat women should fear

most, this narrative suggests, is not an unknown serial killer, but someone close to them' (Turnbull, 2014: 179).

Due in part to the popularity of the *Millennium* books and adaptations perhaps, and the successful *Wallander* TV adaptations, the BBC in the UK bought the rights to the series and screened it in full between January – March, 2011 on BBC4 – a channel which usually achieves a modest audience share; the first season averaged a 0.5 million audience share (BARB). Despite this, many national newspaper articles dissected characters and story. The series won major awards, including a BAFTA, and was nominated for an Emmy.

In the US, the Fox network bought the rights and remade the series at the same time it was airing in the UK. It aired on the AMC network and had an average series audience of 2 million (Goldberg). In the UK, a rival 'publisher broadcaster' to the BBC, Channel 4, aired the US remake in April 2011 - just one month after the original Danish version had finished its run on BBC4 – reaching audiences of 2 million (Laughin). To extend this synchronicity further, the BBC repeated *Forbrydelsen* in the November, directly after the American remake of the first series had aired. In theory at least, UK terrestrial television audiences could have watched an episode of *Forbrydelsen/The Killing*, of one version or another, every week for virtually the whole of 2011. AMC also repeated its exhibition of their remake, to a growing audience base.

Unlike the Swedish and American adaptations of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* – which had marked stylistic differences between them - the US remake of

*Forbrydelsen* was fairly faithful to the plot and tone of the original Danish TV series, despite being set in a different city, Seattle (although the series was actually filmed in Vancouver). The name of the central character was changed from Sarah Lund to Sarah Linden, and the name of the murdered teenager from Nanna Birk Larsen to Rosie Larson. These anglicisation's aside, *The Killing* also expanded the narrative, so that the first season covered the first-half of *Forbrydelsen*'s initial run.

Just as with the *Millennium Trilogy*, both the Danish version and its American remake were very popular; audiences seemed to enjoy watching both versions and comparing them. On the *Digital Spy* forum [accessed 8<sup>th</sup> November 2015] the thread discussing the series' first post was: 'I don't mind subtitles, don't care about the original vs. remake issue, don't care about any US vs international debate - I just want to watch the best version! So which version should I watch?' Comparative approaches abound, with contributors ordering and reordering the schemata of the two series: 'I like both fine and I don't think a person can go wrong choosing either, but I rate the American version slightly higher'; 'The Danish original is superb TV and 10 out of 10 compared with around 7 out of 10 for the US version. It was interesting to compare the similarities and differences but the US version, whilst no dud, does not better the original'. As the discussion develops, other related texts are drawn in, such as the Danish political drama, *Borgen* (2010 – 2013) as well as the *Millennium* novels and films.

In 2012 the second series of the *The Killing* aired, this time on Amazon Prime for UK audiences, completing the story covered in the first season of *Forbrydelsen*. The US network Fox stated that the series' creators now had the confidence – and audience –

to develop future plots in different directions to the original Danish version, which would now be used as a ‘blueprint’. In that same year, the third and final series of *Forbrydelsen* was also broadcast.

### **To the Bridge (and back again).**

While *The Killing* closely followed its Danish relation, the various versions of the Danish-Swedish co-production, *Broen/Bron* (2011 – present) were crafted to act as what Wagner (1975) might class as ‘commentaries’ on their progeny text. This alters significantly the relationship the texts have with each other, which is markedly different from the *Millennium* and *Forbrydelsen* texts. Added to this are some industrial conditions, which can determine how one version acts upon another as a type of ‘Boolean’ logic-gate; opening and closing access to related texts and material. As the synchronous television remake matures as a mode of production, texts can act as commentaries on each other, further extending the ‘active’ potential of such connectivity.

*Broen/Bron*, is unusual, not because it is a co-production between two different broadcasting nations, but because it depends on the differences between Danish and Swedish society, and therefore competing production models; ‘while media products are usually produced within a national system of media production and regulation, they are sold and localised in other global regions and nations within an economic structure that is increasingly characterised by supra-national, global cross-ownership and interrelations’ (Eichner & Waade). *Broen/Bron* stands then, as a commentary on the contemporary television drama production model. However its subsequent

remakes would be employed as ‘gates’ to close off access to each other, restricting such interrelations, purely for commercial protectionist reasons - recognising perhaps that comparative positions were increasingly visible in critical and fan spheres.

The first series was broadcast in 2011, and in 2012 was aired in the UK, titled *The Bridge*, where it averaged a 1 million share of the audience on BBC4 for the first series, rising to 1.5 million for some episodes for the third series. The central conceit is that a dead body, made from two different corpses, is found at the exact midway point of the Øresund Bridge; the titular structure spanning Sweden and Denmark. Subsequently, two different national police departments are forced to collaborate in solving the case. On the Danish (*Broen*) side, we have the affable Martin Rohde (Kim Bodnia) and leading the Swedish (*Bron*) team is Saga Norén (Sofia Helin); someone who is described as ‘odd’ even by her own colleagues. It is never explicitly acknowledged that Norén is highly functioning autistic, but it is clear that she possesses the same attention to detail and the forensic analytical skills of an Lisbeth Salander, combined with Sarah Lund’s inability to form meaningful close personal relationships and a similar destructive obsession with her police work. So much so in fact, that Saga Norén could be read as a composite character; a palimpsest of several female Nordic Noir protagonists, going back two decades to *Miss Smilla’s Feeling For Snow*. What Turnbull calls these ‘daughters of Jane Tennison’ (2014: 179) can for Nestingen and Arvas, ‘...be understood in the context of the broad egalitarianism of the Scandinavian states’ (2011: 5).

*Broen/Bron* was marketed and promoted in the UK as the ‘new *Killing*’ and quickly became as talked about and discussed as that series was. Again, audiences, critics and

commentators became fascinated with the character of Saga Norén, and her often blunt and abrupt dealings with colleagues and victims of serious crimes. The character of Martin Rohde effectively stood in for the audience, as he often had to make allowances for, and sometime apologies on behalf of, his partner's behaviour. Similar to *Forbrydelsen*, *Broen/Bron* dealt with corruption and conspiracy theories, and a central character became a key pivot around which the whole plot turned, as in the *Millennium* texts.

*Broen/Bron* was quickly remade, this time as a French/English co-production. But *The Tunnel* (2013 – present) is not a re-staging of the same story, in a different national and cultural context, as the US version of *The Killing* had in many ways been. This time the body/body-parts were discovered at the mid-way point of the Channel Tunnel. While *The Tunnel* did appropriate the *mise-en-scène* of *Broen/Bron* to an extent - with overhead shots of ferry terminals and ports at night; the bleak Scandinavian cityscapes dovetailing efficiently with Français recession-hit industrial decay – and the plot is initially similar, the series does seem more deliberately constructed for an audience who will enact comparative responses: the British journalist Danny Hillier (Tom Bateman) is much more unscrupulous than his Danish counterpart (at a time when the Fourth Estate in the UK was under a great deal of legal and ethical scrutiny). The cultural differences between the affable British police officer, Karl Roebuck (Stephen Dillane) and his French counterpart, Elise Wassermann (Clémence Poésy) are more stark: Roebuck does not speak French, and the series plays with French/UK relations in a way *Broen/Bron* could not: in the first episode Roebuck makes a reference to Joan of Arc. Wassermann here is described as 'weird' by her colleagues, rather than 'odd', and again her obvious autism is never

directly addressed. Humour is mined far more effectively in *The Tunnel*; jokes are made at the expense of Wasserman's inferior Porsche sports car, compared to the ways in which male characters covet Norén's superior 'classic' version - actor Sofia Helin complained about driving the car in the many interviews she gave leading up to the second series.

The comic potential offered by subverting elements of the *Broen/Bron*, is further explored in *The Tunnel's* mirroring of the interaction between its two central characters: like Martin Rohde, Roebuck is suffering from a vasectomy procedure and is the father of 5 children, with 3 different mothers. However, his French counterpart thinks of nothing of telling him that the operation was probably a good idea – perhaps signalling that elements of the watching audience already has prior knowledge of where the Rohde/Roebuck story is going. Rohde finds out after his vasectomy his wife is expecting twins, whereas as Roebuck's children have already been born. *The Tunnel* also never passes up the opportunity to mine the physical aftermath of the operation for comedic effect.

The added humour was welcomed by some *Digital Spy* contributors [accessed 8<sup>th</sup> November 2015]: 'I thought this was fantastic. The humour is spot on, characters diverse and even minor characters are well drawn. The acting is brilliant'. Others preferred *The Tunnel* over the original version, and again, made references to other related texts: 'Gave up on the Original - but I'm enjoying this. The French Detective reminded me of the Girl with the Dragon Tattoo'. The series was generally very well received, in particular by people who were fans of *Broen/Bron*, who seemingly appreciated a story and characters which were familiar, but set in an unfamiliar

context: ‘I liked it as much as *The Bridge*, and thought Clemence Poesy was outstanding’; ‘Saga is the way she is because she is on the spectrum. Elise behaves the way she does because of her childhood traumas and has chosen to be withdrawn. Chosen may be the wrong word. She's adopted a coping mechanism. She hasn't a genetic medical condition that makes her the way she is. Unlike Saga’.

This inversion of the original series continued, as the ‘Truth Terrorist’ of *Broen/Bron* needed darkness to commit act out his elaborate murder, whereas his subterranean doppelganger needs light to illuminate his copycat crime. *The Tunnel* then is a ‘twin’ rather than a ‘clone’. In this way *The Tunnel* may in turns *look* very much like the series it is based on, but is actually very different, and rather than attempt to efface *Broen/Bron* completely, it instead embraces it, and acts as a commentary on it, in a way which anticipates (and predicts) some of the way audiences will receive it. *Broen/Bron* also gives *The Tunnel* more material to re-purpose: the latter is populated with elements of the characters’ backstories, not revealed until quite late-on in season two of *The Bridge* – namely the history of Norén/Wassermann’s twin sister – a call-back to Lisbeth’s Salander’s absent sibling in the *Millennium* novels. The third series of *Broen/Bron*, airing in the UK from November 2015, mines a great deal of this biographic material, suggesting perhaps that *The Tunnel* has shifted to become a significant influence.

Furthering the ‘making present, what’s absent’ device, the British actress Keeley Hawes, plays a character in *The Tunnel* (Suze Harcourt), who is much more developed, and therefore ‘present’ than the same character in *Broen/Bron* (Sonja Lindberg). All of these devices suggest perhaps that an audience’s prior knowledge

of the plot is being put to effective use; if *Broen/Bron* is a ‘single-track’ text, then *The Tunnel* is certainly a ‘twin-track’ remake. *The Tunnel* welcomes *The Bridge*’s audience through assembling a collage of familiar plot devices and character traits, all ripe for tinkering with. This was extended further still by another synchronous remake, completing something of a television multinational triptych.

Parallel to *The Tunnel*’s production and reception, a US version was also created for the FX network. This series, titled *The Bridge* (2013 – present), featured the ‘Bridge of the Americas’ between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, and paired a male Mexican detective, Marco Ruiz (Demián Bichir), with a female American investigator Sonya Cross (Diane Kruger).

In a repose of *Forbrydelsen/The Killing*’s circulation, connected versions of texts, some of which shared similar source material, and some of which were crafted as commentaries on the other versions, were available and accessible throughout 2012 and 2013 – the second series of the Swedish/Danish series was screened just after the first seasons of the UK and US remakes aired. On offer to an increasing time-shifting television audience, across almost 24 months, was the same television drama, effectively told in three different ways but located in six cultural contexts. For Piper this is part of a trend where, ‘[i]ncreasing distribution opportunities have allowed the market for imported programming to grow significantly, perhaps bringing to recognition high-end police detective shows from other countries that may once never have found a home on British terrestrial television’ (2015: 15).

It is worth here now looking toward cinema, where, ‘filmed remakes are actually very complex forms of adaptation, based on a complex interplay of *difference* and *harmony*. They consciously try to be different from earlier versions, while at the same time paying homage to them [original italics]’ (Raw 2010). In some contemporary television drama, the proxemics of ‘everything at once’ heightens the ‘active’ nature of these adaptations; *playing* homage then becomes a strategic adaptation decision.

However, in a (slight) twist, *The Bridge* was not exhibited on UK television, and the UK/French production did not air in the US. Similarly, the DVD of *The Bridge* is not available to UK consumers (Amazon only sell the Region 1 version from its US portal). The production company Shine was involved in both remakes, and did not want to compete with itself. So, while *The Tunnel* and *The Bridge* are both arch commentaries on *Broen/Bron*, they are not in of themselves conjoined; the two remakes thus have an ‘open’ relationship with their source, but a ‘closed’ one with their (non-identical) twin. This, for some UK audiences commenting on the *Digital Spy* forum, was clearly frustrating. The UK and US versions then act as logic gates in their relationship with *Broen/Bron*, both allowing access and inviting comparisons with the original, while denying access to each other. Like *The Tunnel*, *The Bridge* was well received in the US, and both series were re-commissioned for a second series – although both will tell original stories this time. Rated an average of 4.4/5 on Amazon.com [accessed 8<sup>th</sup> November 2015]) a reviewer described the series as ‘An excellent cover version of a favourite song’. Of the 642 (largely positive) reviews, many reference *Broen/Bron*, and urge others to see it, but there are very few references to the UK version; that particular logic gate being set to ‘closed’.

## **‘Shut it down!’**

Given the success of English-language versions of Nordic crime television dramas, it was inevitable perhaps, that an original UK drama would attempt to appropriate the model for its own ends. The writer, Chris Chibnall was already a fan of Nordic noir television, and the music of the Icelandic musician Ólafur Arnalds, when he wrote *Broadchurch* (2013 – present). The series mobilised many of Nordic noir’s tropes, and featured one crime (the death of a teenage boy) investigated by a pair of mismatched detectives played by Olivia Coleman and David Tennant. The series was also scored by Arnalds, whose music give *Broadchurch* a definite Nordic feel, complemented by a mise-en-scène which evoked deserted beaches, abandoned parks and the effects of a terrible crime on a small coastal community; the Scandinavian genre’s “...soggy weather, social restraint, overworked detectives, moments of interpersonal explosion and political criticism’ (Nestingen & Arvas, 2011: 14) was re-staged and visited on the (fictional) English south-coast town of Broadchurch.

Each episode offered-up a new suspect and UK television audiences were gripped; over 9 million people watched the first series in the UK (BARB). A second series was commissioned, which was equally as popular, while in the US, the network which had commissioned *The Bridge* (Fox), almost immediately commissioned a remake of *Broadchurch*, hoping for similar success. This time, *Gracepoint* (2014), by sticking so close to the original, sowed the seeds of its own destruction by inviting in comparative approaches, but ones, which inevitably perhaps, came with fidelity value-judgements.

*Gracepoint* is an almost a shot-for-shot remake of *Broadchurch*, at least initially; in the first episode, the slow motion sequences of children playing are copied exactly. The script too, is identical in everyway to *Broadchurch*'s, some syntactic concessions aside; 'Shut it off!' becomes 'Shut it down!' for example in the US remake, and the names of the characters have been Americanised (the Latimer family becomes the Solano family). David Tennant reprised his role as Alec Hardy the investigating officer, here renamed Emmett Carver (a reference to the US's noir heritage perhaps). Tennant also used a (much criticised) US accent, rather than his own Scottish one as he had done in *Broadchurch*. Immediately comparisons were made, this time unfavourably, with the UK version.

On the *Previously TV* forum [accessed 9<sup>th</sup> November 2015] contributors were almost universally negative: 'Broadchurch was superior in every way'; 'I don't understand why they didn't just call this "Groundhog Day" and be done with it. This is a very pale imitation. Broadchurch was so mesmerizing because of the overpowering atmosphere evident in every shot. Gracepoint is merely a stand-in'; 'What's weird to me is so many of the same people produced such a disappointing adaptation. Same story, same writer, many of the same directors, same star. But there it worked and here it largely fails'.

While *Broadchurch* did get a US release (on BBC America), it was more of a 'cult' hit, than a ratings winning show. Even so, some who were not familiar with the story found the series problematic: 'I have never even heard of Broadchurch but I read about Gracepoint in the fall TV preview issue of People and thought, "ok, I will give

this a shot." After 3 episodes in, I had to punt. Mainly because it just moves SO incredibly slow it drives me crazy'.

What *Gracepoint* served to do was start a conversation about *Broadchurch*, as the original series was re-appraised and revisited: 'Next week, I hope they redo the long walk through the town ending up at the Miller's. I loved that scene'; 'I may need to re-watch the last two episodes of *Broadchurch* to see if there is a difference in the details'; 'I just bought the *Broadchurch* DVDs and watched episode one this morning, which only confirmed my belief that it was better. I was moved emotionally so many times'. Some even viewed the two series simultaneously: 'In the end, I took to the novelty of comparing the two as the draw for staying with *Gracepoint* throughout'. *Gracepoint* focused more on the tension within the family of the murdered boy, than *Broadchurch*, but it never got a huge audience, and was eventually cancelled.

### **Back to the Beginning...**

After the success of the *Millenium* novels and their attendant adaptations, Stieg Larsson's estate commissioned the crime-writer, David Lagercrantz, to compose a new novel in the series. *The Girl in the Spider's Web* was published in September 2015 to largely positive reviews from critics and fans. Commentators commended Lagercrantz for skilfully recreating Larsson's voice. In the following November, a film adaptation was announced by Columbia Pictures, kitting out the adventures of Lisbeth Salander to something close to a fully-fledged franchise. David Fincher, fresh from his Netflix series, *House of Cards* (2013 – present) - itself loosely based on

Michael Dobb's political novels, themselves adaptation for a celebrated BBC TV series in the 1980s – announced plans for a TV series which would feature Salander, with Rooney Mara reprising her interpretation of the character.

Recent adaptation scholarship has cautioned against imposing one model on all adaptations (particularly Geraghty 2008) and this article is not an attempt to do so. However, the new 'everything at once' box-set culture is having an impact on how some adaptations are being received and now created; this is coupled with a digital 'user-sphere' (Berger & McDougall 2015) which offers spaces where audiences can analyse, discuss and critique texts, employing a range of far more playful comparative approaches. As a consequence, some adaptations – in this instance English-language remakes of Nordic noir films and television series – are reflecting this in the way they have been constructed. Some texts are now becoming something close to 'deep media', which Rose describes as, "...stories which are not just entertaining, but immersive, taking you deeper than an hour-long TV drama or a two-hour movie" (2012: 3). Broadcasters know that some audiences will compare different variants of the same story, and seek out earlier and related versions – which explains the production company Shine's use of logic-gating 'off' access to two competing English/French and English/Spanish language remakes of *Broen/Bron* – these gates would eventually swing open as the US *Bridge* is available now to UK audiences, and too is *Gracepoint*, which has even had a terrestrial appearance on ITV Encore.

*The Killing* was successful because it told the same story as its source series, *Forbrydelsen*, but subtly altered the context and narrative for an audience who is

historically resistant to subtitled material (see Kaufman 2014). Subsequently there was something for US audiences unfamiliar with the original, but also for more global audiences who had enjoyed the original Danish production. As all logic-gates were open, US audiences were able to discover *Forbrydelsen*. Contrastingly the two synchronous remakes of *Broen/Bron* were both deliberately crafted to subvert elements of, and comment on, the Swedish/Danish version - *Broen/Bron*'s producer Lars Blomgren even executively produced both UK and US versions, simultaneously. Now in its third season, *Broen/Bron* seems to be now commenting on *The Tunnel*.

So, *The Tunnel* and *The Bridge* were also deliberately set at odds with each other, their logic gates being set to closed, in an attempt to restrict the networked reception of competing texts. In this, they were not entirely successful, but the UK and US versions have been successful, have been re-commissioned and elements of the audiences have clearly enjoyed comparing all available variants of the story, in a conversation which often pulls in other Nordic noir texts and remakes.

In comparison, *Gracepoint* was not a successful remake. The US series has the problem of an English-language version being easily available, and some parts of the US audience were urged to seek it out (and many of them did). The series was critically panned, with many finding the show's close resemblance to *Broadchurch*, to be a major obstacle. Essentially, the fact that *Gracepoint* adhered so closely to *Broadchurch*, sowed the seeds of its own destruction, and suggests that the creators knew the reasons for not remaking *Broadchurch*, in the first place; attempting complete fidelity will always invite in value driven comparisons. When David Fincher remade *The Girl with the Tattoo*, he had the source novels, as well as the

Swedish film series, which meant his influences were more thinly spread. Where the remakes of *Forbrydelsen* and *Broen/Bron* were able to exist in co-presence with each other, *Gracepoint* was not able to survive its proximity and synchronicity with *Broadchurch*.

A networked television culture, augmented by an audience ‘user-sphere’ calls on those of us working in adaptation studies to conceive of a medium non-specific, flattened hierarchy of texts, all connected to each other, in a continuous process of repurposing, re-appropriating, recycling and remaking. In such a model, texts can act as logic-gates on each other. Across this cross-platform media-scape, it is fairly easy to see how a strategy of telling improved and reworked versions of the same stories, virtually simultaneously, would appeal to collaborative authors and creative organisations. An ‘assumed knowledge’ can now be accounted for and aggregated into the ways in which these texts are created, and exhibited. It seems that perhaps a new mode of adaptation has emerged, or at least a strategy in relation to remaking texts for a global time-shifting television audience, and one which represents visual culture. In this networked television era, the exhibition of these texts on film and television, and their close parallel with each other, and other related works, is perfectly aligned with the tastes and instantaneity audiences now demand, and which constitute a new dynamic for adaptations.

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