

NORDIC/SCANDI NOIR

Sub-genre of crime drama

Originates in literature, but extended to film and especially TV

From and set in
Nordic or Scandi-
navian countries

Norway, Sweden,
Denmark, Finland,
Iceland etc.

Influenced by film noir

Film noir often deals
with...

Violence or murder

A sense of dread

Moral complexity or
ambiguity

Revolves around crime – usually murder or
theft

Narrative structure:

Story told through
voiceover narration

Often structured
around a flashback

Plots can be very
complex

Characters:

Male protagonist

Often a detective

Tough and cynical

Dry wit / sarcasm

Heavy drinking and
smoking

In some way weak or not in control

Victim of circumstances beyond his control

Visual Style:

Film noir uses low-
key lighting

This creates striking
shadows

NORDIC/SCANDI NOIR (cont)

(**Chiaroscuro**) There is a high
level of contrast between light and
shadow

**Iconog
raphy:**

Venetian blinds

Set in cities, often at night and in
the rain

Trench coats and hats

THE BRIDGE INTRO

named after the Øresund Bridge

Connects Copenhagen (Denmark) and
Malmö (Sweden) by road and rail

Main character Saga is Swedish and a
homicide detective in Malmö

She works with Danish police in
Copenhagen

Cultural differences between the two
countries are a running theme in the show

THE BRIDGE - NARRATIVE

**Important
narrative
arcs of set
episode****

Helle Anker's murder

Mysterious introduction to
Henrik Sabroe, leading up to
the revelation that he will be
Saga's new partner

THE BRIDGE - NARRATIVE (cont)

Lise – first her child being
bullied, then the revelation
that she is an anti-trans
vlogger

Rikkard – cleaner at Lise's
flat; steals her necklace,
keeps scary pets!

Aleks – released from prison,
paranoid. Goes looking for
buried money

Saga's family problems

**Binary
opposites
examples
in TB**

Past v Present

Light v Dark

INTRODUCTION TO HENRIK

In later episodes it is revealed that Henrik's
wife and children went missing years earlier

*The family we see on screen are in Henrik's
imagination**

SHOT 1

Long shot

Lots of empty space

Suggests loneliness, lack of
company

An empty house

Asymmetrical – there seems
to be the perfect space for
another person there



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THE BRIDGE - NARRATIVE (cont)

SHOTS the camera's view doesn't match the wife's eyeline

BUNCH 2

Audiences might not consciously notice

But there is a sense that something is not quite right in this exchange

SHOT 3

His children barely acknowledge him – they look at each other

He doesn't really talk to them - almost to himself

Blocking – a large worktop separates Henrik and the children

This literally puts distance between them

BED SCENE WITH HENRIK AND WIFE

Tight, close shot

Intimate setting (couple in bed together)

THE BRIDGE - NARRATIVE (cont)

The dialogue seems at odds with the scenario *Why would he tell his wife about another woman whilst they lie in bed together?*

When Henrik wakes up, his wife is gone

Her side of the bed is perfectly made - as if she was never there

Emil, the art gallery assistant Killer of Henrik's family

There is perhaps a pleasure for the audience in waiting for reveals like this

The narrative ultimately rewards your patience

Flexi Narrative

Complex, challenging narrative

Multiple characters

Level of importance and connection to the narrative is unclear to the audience

Multiple plot situations involving complicated scenarios.

Plot twists

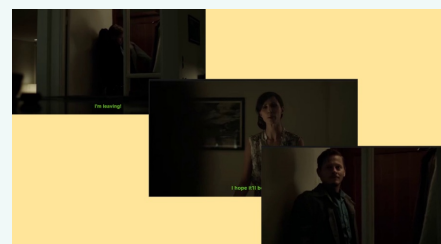
Narrative enigmas throughout

Unresolved narratives.

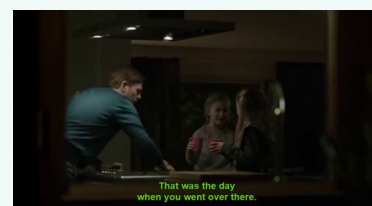
SHOT 1



SHOT BUNCH 2



SHOT 3



TODOROV NARRATIVE ARC

1. Equilibrium
2. Disruption of Equilibrium
3. Recognition of the disruption
4. An attempt to repair the damage
5. New Equilibrium

repeat

THE BRIDGE AUDIENCE

David Gauntlett the idea that the media provide us with 'tools' or resources that we use to construct our identities



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THE BRIDGE AUDIENCE (cont)

Henry Jenkins

convergence in media industries

he also talks about fandom

- fans are active participants in the construction and circulation of textual meanings

- fans construct their social and cultural identities through borrowing and inflecting mass culture images

- fans are part of a participatory culture that has a vital social dimension

who is the audience of The Bridge?

- fans of nordic noir

- intell-ecutals - willing to invest in complex narrative

- willing to watch subtitled TV shows

- perhaps seeking fulfilment

- culturally aware and curious

- seeking or maintaining status

Set episode of The Bridge had just over 1.8m viewers when broadcast on BBC4

- considered high for a foreign-language drama

In Scandinavia the show has a larger audiences share

Genre and audience

- The idea of Nordic noir as a distinct genre only works in an international context

- The idea of Nordicness is a **British construct**

These shows would be seen as products of their own distinct nations

THE BRIDGE AUDIENCE (cont)

British crime drama is similarly attractive to Scandinavians!

WHY?

Seemingly everyone is very middle-class

British eccentricity

Traditional settings – British countryside, village pub etc

Quaint

Roland Barthes might call the above 'myths' of Britishness

Connotations of Britain that are repeated so often that they act like denotations

Incomplete / oversimplified images of the complexities of British life

Perceptions of 'Nordic-ness'

- cold but beautiful

- stylish

- affordable

- food

- hygge

- socially and politically progressive

POSTMODERNISM - Baudrillard

media create hyper realities based on a continuous process of mediation

THE BRIDGE AUDIENCE (cont)

what is encoded as 'real' (and what we decode through media products) is not 'real' but instead a 'simulacrum' which offers us a hyperreality that we accept as real because we are so consistently exposed to it.

media images have come to seem more "real" than the reality they supposedly represent.

Is The Bridge postmodern?

Relies on audience understanding of crime drama, specifically Nordic noir, to decode it

The diegetic "world" of "The Bridge" is a hyper-reality – it is Sweden/Denmark represented from a mediated perspective, linked to stereotypical national traits and cultural values. Consider how this is constructed

Based on our cultural perception of an institution (the police force) that is itself a constructed 'simulacrum' rather than experienced first hand

Shares similarities of style with other "Nordic noir"

There are other intertextual references

The image of Scandinavia we get from Nordic noir is a simulacra

Simulated images which no longer refer to anything real



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THE BRIDGE AUDIENCE (cont)

Attractive to middle class British viewers

But offers no “real insights into the complex and changing Danish or Nordic social realities” (Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen)

THE BRIDGE - REPRESENTATION

Does Saga follow typical Feminine representations?

1. Domestic NO

- Saga seems to live at work

- eats at work

- changes at work

- stays when others go back to their family

2. Sexualised NO

Saga's clothes connote toughness

Military-style trenchcoat – might remind us of the film noir detective archetype

Big leather boots

Neutral colours – kakhi, grey

She wears no make up

Scar on her face – stereotypically masculine, connotations of violence

Matter-of-fact attitude to her body

3. Nurturer NO

Saga's lack of emotional awareness prevents her from being nurturing

... so how is Saga represented?

Saga has dominant narrative positioning

Episode opens on her driving over the bridge

THE BRIDGE - REPRESENTATION (cont)

We frequently follow her – tracking shots, close-ups

BUT we do see things that she doesn't

Saga is very direct

Clipped, abrupt style of speech

Wastes no words!

Acts and thinks quickly

Saga's unemotional approach makes her clear-thinking and intuitive

Her rationality makes her good at her job

Even if others find her hard to work with

Saga is a very quirky, rounded, flawed character

Defies easy stereotypes

Van Zoonen defies 3 types of feminism

*1. This position is closest to Van Zoonen's own perspective
Liberal feminist

Reductive stereotypes about the “supposedly natural” role of women account for women's position in society

Media “teach” people about gender roles

Media representations of women reflect patriarchal values

Women should seek equality and be more powerful in society

Media can contribute to this change by challenging established gender roles

2. Radical feminist

All men oppress all women

Mass media is dominated by men, so can only benefit patriarchal society

Media encourages men to oppress women

And encourages women to accept their oppression

THE BRIDGE - REPRESENTATION (cont)

Radical feminism rejects established media

Women should communicate through their own, non-hierarchical means

3. Socialist feminist

How class and capitalism shape women's position in society

Capitalism relies on women's unpaid work in the home and with the family

Women should take up paid work, but the workplace should adapt to accommodate women's needs

Media as ideological instruments – interested in how feminism is constructed in media

Women should produce separate, feminist media

But established media should be flexible to women's needs

Applying feminism to the Bridge

Liberal feminist

Saga defies stereotypical representation

She is a woman in a position of authority

The Bridge reflects progress in women's position in society

And promotes further change by challenging established gender roles

Radical feminist

might reject The Bridge as a product of patriarchal mainstream media

However the Helle Anker storyline is relevant:

- Anker's non-traditional family has no patriarchal figure

- But is portrayed as loving, supportive and healthy – Saga's “nuclear” family is a mess



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Applying feminism to the Bridge (cont)

- Anker's death could be seen as a violent reaction of patriarchal society against those who live alternative lives

Socialist feminist

- the text challenges established gender stereotypes

- Media often uses women's bodies to appeal to audiences

- The Bridge it is not 'sold' on the sexualisation of women – Saga is not objectified

REPRESENTATION OF MEN

1. Gentle, patient – a father figure to Saga
HANS

In a loving relationship with Lillian, who is also a chief of police

Meaning they are both associated with the world of work – neither of them associated with domesticity

2. Henrik is set up as a potential villain
HENRIK

Once you have seen the whole series, your perception of what we see in this episode changes

He is a sensitive, emotionally vulnerable character

Van Zoonen also says...

The meaning of gender varies according to cultural and historical context

The creation of Saga's character reflects the interest in society in the changing ideas and viewpoints regarding gender

Applying feminism to the Bridge (cont)

Judith Butler Theory

We are assigned our gender and that we conform to societal expectations of what it is to be a man or a women.

We act out or perform our gender like actors.

Performativity is the idea that gender is the performance

Gender is a series of performed rituals – beyond the performance, there are no 'natural' characteristics attached to gender

Applying this to the Bridge...

This way of thinking about gender is highlighted within the narrative

Helle Anker's activism and gender neutral preschool

Lise's criticism of Anker's views in her video

The episode presents this as a debate

The episode presents this as a debates

Notably Anker and her wife are sympathetic; Lise not so much

The fact that Saga is associated with traditionally masculine traits can relate to Butler

We could interpret this as an affirmation that gender is performed, not natural



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