Uses of Vulnerability: Two Eras of Social Commitment in Swedish TV Drama?

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Nordic noir begins in misery. Dark moods and dramatic tensions are no unexpected points of departure for films made in criminal genres, but the combination of gloominess with acts of excessive violence in contemporary Scandinavian crime fiction is generally regarded as characteristic of the genre (Bergman 2014; Hansen and Waade 2017; Peacock 2014). Several examples can illustrate this tendency. Each one of the four seasons of the Swedish/Danish series *Bron/Broen* (*The Bridge* 2011–2018) not only starts with extraordinary cases of murder, they also all begin in despair. With the grey fog of Öresund and the black Nordic winter night as key components of the setting, the visual design of the series matches the darkness of the stories told. Similar aesthetic and narrative strategies can be found in other films and series of the genre. Swedish *Arne Dahl: En midsommarnattsdröm* (2011–2015), Danish *Forbrydelsen* (*The Killing* 2007–2012) or the adaptations of Stieg Larssons *Millenium* trilogy (2009) are all well-known examples.

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The reception of *The Bridge* has been examined by TV scholar Annette Hill (2018) who, in a study based on interviews with viewers, concludes that the series engage audiences emotionally. The main character, police officer Saga Norén (Sofia Helin), seems to be the focus of the emotional engagement. Norén, a kind of an anti-hero with a non-disclosed diagnosis somewhere on the Asperger's spectrum, is repeatedly put in situations where she is exposed to either social or physical threats (Hill 2018, p. 280). This exposure of the protagonist is regarded as a main facet of the engagement in what one of the informants in Hill's study calls 'a story of vulnerability' (p. 282).

The Swedish TV film *Berndt & Anita* from 1969 ends in misery, as well. Even if the film starts as an everyday love story—even though realistic and free of romantic illusions—the young suburban housewife Anita ends up isolated with a small child in the brand new apartment with her husband Berndt. In the final scene, the camera catches her on the way to the balcony while the baby is crying loudly and incessantly behind the closed door to the bedroom. Through the eyes of Anita, we see several images of identical five-floor dwellings. A non-diegetic male voice-over asks in an official neutral tone, like that of a journalist, 'Is it Berndt's fault?' Anita answers 'I don't know'. The voice-over returns: 'Is it your fault?' Again, Anita replies that she doesn't know, while walking into the bedroom where the baby is still crying. She bends down over the baby's bed. The last shot of the film is a long close-up of Anita's neck, while the crying from the baby suddenly stops. A common interpretation by Swedish journalists of this open ending was that it was supposed to indicate that the character Anita intentionally suffocated her baby (Sjögren 1969).

Berndt & Anita is, in many ways, an emblematic case of Swedish TV drama of its time. It is an early work of writer Bengt Bratt who, for a period lasting for more than four decades, wrote significant TV plays and series such as *Friställd* [*Laid Off*] (1969), *Hem till byn* [*Home to the Village*] (1971–2006) and *Gyllene år* [*Golden Years*] (1975). Further, *Berndt & Anita* is a social drama made in a semi-documentary style, relying on aesthetic values of authenticity. As with many other Swedish TV productions of its time, the film was heavily debated in the press after it premiered on 17 December 1969, causing intense discussions on the situation of housewives and young mothers (Vinterhed 1969).

Social commitment and an aesthetics of realism have long since been facets commonly associated with Swedish TV fiction. 'Scandi crime' or

‘Nordic noir’ are the key examples, with the genre often described as mirroring a welfare state in decay (Brodén 2008; Hansen and Waade 2017). If the Scandinavian welfare state is in crisis in the twenty-first century, the example of *Berndt & Anita* from 1969 could be regarded as surprising, since it was produced at a time when the Swedish model supposedly was at its peak. The fact that there were numerous other TV productions with similar trends to that of *Berndt & Anita* produced around 1970 makes the case even more intriguing.

While serial murders or organized crime are recurrent symptoms of social despair in the televisual fiction of the 2010s, the crime in *Berndt & Anita* from 1969 is of another kind. The unplanned desperate action of a tired lonely woman is, by definition, an unpremeditated crime, and stands in sharp contrast to the highly conceived criminal actions taking place in series such as *The Bridge*. The unanswered questions of guilt at the end of Bengt Bratt’s film provide us with a possible vantage point to a study of changing patterns in the representation of social problems in Swedish TV drama. My intention is not to give an answer to the question but, rather, to examine the explicit or implicit answers given in this film, as well as in other productions. The explicit manner in which the question of guilt is posed at the end of *Berndt & Anita* is rare, but the willingness to use narrative to present societal problems is a common trait in Swedish TV drama.

The welfare state may have been a societal project based on social safety, but films such as *Berndt and Anita* depict life in Sweden of the late 1960s as an existence characterized by displeasure and despair. If vulnerability—in this case, the powerless position of a married woman such as Anita; in other cases, the uncertain positions of factory workers or small farmers—is to be seen as explicit in these depictions of the shortcomings of central functions in the welfare state, there is also an implicit thematic cluster of more subtle signs of insecurity than material, economic or legal ones. These signs can be identified visually, when we see a long close-up of Anita’s hand drifting aimless on the surface of the concrete wall outside her balcony, as though to emphasize her helplessness. It can also be identified in narrative traits such as the recurrent interrogating non-diegetic voice-over. *Berndt and Anita* is one of many stories from its time that seems to pose vulnerability as a collective state of being, where Anita’s tragedy is the tragedy of a society, as much as the story of an exposed individual. The welfare state and its inhabitants are thus both exponents of vulnerability. Individuals are represented as vulnerable beings in a vulnerable society.

PAST AND PRESENT

There are various intertwined historical perspectives behind the aims of this article. One of them is found on a textual level and concerns the audiovisual representation of societal needs in Sweden in the heyday of the welfare state. Another perspective relates to the institutional contexts where these representations were produced, perceived and talked about. The Swedish welfare state may have reached its peak during the 1960s and 1970s, but TV drama was yet in its beginnings and the discursive activity surrounding the productions in public life can be assumed as formative.

This article is written within an ongoing research project on Swedish TV drama during the period 1967–1975. Even if the main focus is consequently directed towards this period, there are also reasons to widen the historical perspectives, since the representation of welfare matters in Swedish audiovisual fiction is interesting from other historical strands than the actual projection of social themes during the glory days of *folkhemmet*, a concept introduced by the Social Democratic party in the late 1920s that has for decades been synonymous with the Swedish welfare project. The very memory of these years constitutes one such perspective. Since the early 2000s, there have been numerous Swedish films and TV dramas set in the years around 1970.¹ This audiovisual memory-making consists of nostalgic as well as dystopic strategies in the picturing of the past. The lost welfare state is sometimes portrayed as an innocent idyll, but is at other times also characterized by paranoia, despair, or sheer boredom. This intense wave of representations of the near Swedish past during recent decades is paralleled by an even more intense wave of representations of contemporary Swedish society, often connecting it to popular genres such as crime, or fantasy. In particular, the crime genre in Sweden (and Scandinavia) of the 2000s has generally been presumed to mirror a welfare state in decay (Hansen and Waade 2017, pp. 13, 82, 284). Given this widespread notion of contemporary Nordic noir or Scandicrime as a genre of social commitment, a comparison with the tradition of social commitment in Swedish TV drama seems relevant. The televisual critique of the Swedish welfare state is, however, just as apparent in documentary as it is in fiction. Factual TV genres have, during recent decades, been a main national venue for public critical investigations of social institutions, abuse of power, or other societal questions. Headlines such as *Uppdrag granskning* [Mission: Investigate] or *Dokument inifrån* [Domestic documents] hide series of more or less

prestigious TV journalism, documentaries and debates on subjects such as schools, health care, police work or social welfare.

Thus, with the assumption of the 1960s and 1970s as the golden age of the Swedish welfare state in mind, this chapter compares two eras of Swedish TV from the perspective of vulnerability. On the one hand, I will give a few examples from various genres in the 2000s and 2010s (crime, drama, documentary) and, on the other, from social drama from the period 1967–1975.

THE INSUFFICIENT WELFARE

‘Despite the intense reform work undertaken during recent years, poverty and social needs are found in the midst of the welfare state. We do not know enough about these problems’ (Persson 1967, p. 7, my translation). In the preface of the book *Den ofärdiga välfärden* [*The Insufficient Welfare*] (Inghe and Inghe 1967), Yngve Persson, Chair of the Board of Social Information (Rådet för social information) in Sweden underlined the need for knowledge of the social problems in the otherwise successful Swedish welfare system. The book contained a study made by two sociologists—Gunnar Inghe and Maj-Britt Inghe—who, chapter by chapter, discussed different areas of contemporary Swedish society. Health care, social assistance, general health insurance, access to comfortable dwellings and the regulation of working life were all important components in the general policy of welfare. Gunnar and Maj-Britt Inghe revealed severe shortcomings in all these areas. They focused particularly on the outcasts of the welfare state, as well as on how class structures remained largely unchanged at a time when social and economic egalitarian ambitions had dominated public political discourse in Swedish society for at least a decade.

Den ofärdiga välfärden was heavily debated during the spring of 1967.² The book raised questions on how well the welfare systems really worked, and why there has been no awareness the problems inherent in welfare institutions. There were also doubts raised as to whether these problems were really as hidden and undetected as many considered them to be. The book quickly became a bestseller and its arguments permeated public opinion.³

With the general awareness of contemporary changes in the Scandinavian welfare systems of today, it is easy to neglect the constancy with which critical and unsympathetic views of the workings of the welfare state

paralleled the prosperous development of social reforms. Not surprisingly, such critiques were often of conservative or liberal origin. In such cases, arguments were formulated against equality reforms that appeared to be too far-reaching, or against systems of benefits and subsidies that supposedly made the workers and the Swedish industry less efficient (*Dagens Nyheter* 1965, 16 December; *Svenska Dagbladet* 1966, 24 May). But critiques of the welfare state were also articulated from the Left; focusing on the insufficiency of benefits and subsidies, misuse of power in public administration, or too generous compromises with capitalistic interests. *Den ofärdiga välfärden* is but one example of the latter. It was also an example of how paperback books came to be an important arena for intense Swedish public debate on social matters during the 1960s and 1970s (Hyvönen 2015). But debates on dysfunctions in the welfare state were spread across all existing forms of media. With the heightened status of the profession of journalism, consolidated when journalism was included in Swedish higher education in 1967, the importance of news genres in printed press, radio and TV as means of social critique increased (Gardeström 2016). The investigating reporter came to be a hero in the realm of critical societal commentary, as now was also the documentary filmmaker. The factuality of what film theorist Bill Nichols (1991) has called ‘the discourses of sobriety’ went hand-in-hand with social commitment and a rising awareness of the subjectivity that was implied in the political cause with which the filmmaker interfered in the world.

Correspondingly, such dark pictures of the welfare state were also apparent in different genres of literature and in fiction over a wide range of media platforms. In Swedish poetry, there was already long-established opposition to the reign of rational reason in the welfare state. Poets such as Gunnar Ekelöf, or the writers engaged in the periodical *Metarmofos* in the 1950s, are good examples (Tenngart 2010). Critical attitudes to the rationality of Swedish society—or ongoing poverty and equality—are found in numerous Swedish novels from the 1940s and onwards (Nilsson 2003; Ingvarsson 2003; Liljestränd 2009).⁴ In film fiction, the popular genre of delinquent youth revealed and reflected on—or exploited—social problems, as did social melodramas on topics such as abortion, divorce, or prostitution (Bengtsson 1998; Björklund 2013). These trends were also apparent with acclaimed auteurs such as the Left-oriented Erik ‘Hampe’ Faustman, or even Ingmar Bergman (Vesterlund 1999).

In this chapter, I investigate how such critical strands on the welfare state also came to be—and have further been—visualized in Swedish

televisual fiction. In Swedish television, however, until the late 1960s, the drama department had mainly been focusing on classics or, to some extent, acclaimed contemporary international modernism (Dyfverman 2004). This was an aesthetic strategy that would change drastically from 1967 onwards. Two different historical contexts are highlighted through a number of cases of films and serial drama from Swedish television. The first context is that of the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Following immediately after the release of the book by Inghe and Inghe (1967), this is a period during which the production of Swedish TV drama went through radical change. The socially committed TV theatre played a central part in this aesthetic and institutional makeover of Swedish TV fiction. The second context is contemporary, where genres such as crime fiction, documentary and historical drama exemplify how the welfare state still can serve as both a thematic motif and as a frame of interpretation, two qualities that do not always coincide.

A NEW STRATEGY—A DRAMA OF VULNERABILITY

With overt influences from recent developments of semi-documentary narration in international—in the main, European—TV drama, Swedish public service TV (*Sveriges Radio*) radically changed the drama production policies in the late 1960s. In August 1967, the head of the drama department at *Sveriges Radio*, Henrik Dyfverman, officially declared the direction of the new policy: the repertoire of the forthcoming 1967/1968 season would be ‘considerably Swedish’ and ‘oriented towards society’ (Holm 1967). Several of the twenty new plays written for Swedish TV were, according to Dyfverman, made with the aim of causing widespread public debate. Topics such as problems in schools, the rapid depopulation of the countryside, or the misuse of power from the national security police were all examples of problem areas expected to raise serious discussion.

This was a common trend at the time in several European countries; for example, in Finland (Koivunen 2014). The ambition was to produce TV fiction relating to social commitment in the wake of the contemporary wave of realistic and radical TV drama. The main inspiration was British, with the BBC institution *The Wednesday Play* (1964–1970) and directors such as Ken Loach as major influences. The strategy was, on the one hand, explicitly introduced as an ambition to affect national public opinion and increase awareness of social matters. On the other hand, it

is not far-fetched to propose that the strategy also served to gain prestige for the drama department, as a way to demonstrate an awareness of contemporary aesthetical and political tendencies in filmmaking for TV.

Where British examples, such as the pivotal film *Cathy Come Home* (1966), often dealt with poverty, instead, Swedish social drama focused on how the efficiency and bureaucracy of the rapidly changing welfare state—and of the capitalist society—led to alienation and despair. Depictions of dysfunctions related to societal institutions and legislations such as schools, hospitals, agricultural politics and abortion dominated, whereas representations of sheer material poverty were rare. A preliminary observation is that the problems of the Swedish welfare state in these films and series were considered as being primarily irrelevant, caused by conditions in the capitalistic and technocratic system held up by the welfare politics. In the films directed by the prolific filmmaker Ken Loach, a key figure in the British wave of social TV drama, there was a recurrent focus on the working class (Cooke 2003). In Swedish social drama, the settings were just as often portraying a middle-class environment. The protagonists could just as well be artists, teachers, psychologists, or architects as sailors, farmers, or industrial workers. Furthermore, the material conditions (or life style) in the different social groups seem to have differed surprisingly little, at least according to the iconography and *mise-en-scène* of the TV films.

This chapter gives examples of how vulnerability was constructed and depicted in the visual and narrative representations of social problems in a welfare state such as that of Sweden, where the social standard seems to have been fairly equal, at least compared to the conditions in contemporary British society from where aesthetic and thematic inspiration came. Another aim is to investigate how TV drama was conceptualized at a time when the boundaries between the (more or less) institutionalized narrative modes of theatre and film were as yet unclear in the still new medium of television. The Swedish example of socially committed drama is an isolated national case, but so are most contemporary examples during this period when national public service broadcasting dominated European television. What makes the Swedish example interesting is the frequency at which the films were produced and broadcast. A single TV channel had an average programming time of five or six hours per day, so one or two domestically produced theatre productions each week comprised a vast part of Swedish TV content (Schyller 1996; Edin 2000). Even more striking is the impact of the radical TV theatre on the media. Particularly

after the introduction of a second channel (TV2) in December 1969, domestic TV drama received considerable attention in the press. Almost each new serial or film generated intense debate. Primarily, it was subject matter—the societal institution criticized in the drama in question—that was discussed, but sometimes aesthetic questions also provided the focus of attention (Vesterlund 1999). Debates were not only spontaneous, but also arranged by the media. A typical set-up was that, having been aired, a TV play was followed by a studio debate, often screened live, in which experts and concerned citizens participated. In the daily press, this was usually followed by articles from experts and opinions from the man in the street. Sometimes journalists organized panels of farmers, nurses, teachers, pupils or athletes—whichever group was affected by the social problem with which the film or series in question had dealt—to discuss their opinions: these panels were supposed to consider how well the fiction had presented their reality.

PICTURES OF HEALTH CARE IN THE WELFARE STATE

There are many possible vantage points from which to analyse these programmes. An examination of the interplay between the vulnerability of institutions/society and the vulnerability of individuals/citizens is one approach, actualized by the focus on dysfunctional institutions and misuse of power. Numerous other thematic angles are possible. The representation of *place* and *space* is one such motif (Hedling et al. 2010); another is the *body*, which is a recurrent site for the visualizations of vulnerability. A regular motif in Swedish TV fiction from the late 1960s and onwards is the representation of illness and health care.

In *Body Trauma TV: The New Hospital Drama*, Jason Jacobs (2003) describes three developmental stages in the televisual hospital drama: the paternal, the era of conflict, and the apocalyptic. Jacobs explains the three stages as successive ways to approach questions on health care and medical science, but also (and perhaps as much) to approach questions on life and death, and also to deal with a societal context. Where the paternal pattern contains the traditional serials with the doctor as a (more or less) unquestioned hero, the subsequent pattern in the era of conflict—beginning in the late 1970s—describes different ways to question paternal authorities (Jacobs' example is the American war comedy M.A.S.H., 1972–1983) to reach more modern, equal, or even efficient medical care. In the apocalyptic stage—established in the very late twentieth century—the modern

discourse is no longer a given value. Organizational as well as scientific matters are put under question. Doctors and other members of the professional collective at hospitals, and at other institutions connected to health care, are portrayed as haunted with stress or anxiety. Health care as well as medical science is thus contextualized, and the questioning stance is related to conditions in the surrounding society.

Before the premiere of the mini-series *Jourhavande* [*On Duty*] on 17 March, 1974, the national morning paper *Dagens Nyheter* (1974, 18 March) wrote that the TV drama (of which there were three episodes) would focus on many current problems in hospitals such as euthanasia, alternative medical treatment, or conflicts between professionals. On the day after the first episode was broadcast, the TV critic in the same paper, Rune Johansson (1974), was struck by a drama that illustrated the bureaucratization and rationalizations that now were turning Swedish health care into mistreatment. The writer of the serial—Gustav Sandgren (1926–2016)—was no part of the Left-wing movement that has been seen as the dominant force in the social problem oriented TV drama of the 1970s. He was a journalist and writer of prose fiction (often with historical motifs) frequently touching on religious or existential themes. The director, though—Jackie Söderman—was more involved in the Leftist discourses of the times through numerous productions from the Gothenburg TV theatre, where a great deal of the TV fiction for TV2 was made.

Jourhavande was a bleak and gloomy drama where numerous characters acted out problems of a personal and structural nature. For example, there were doctors with drinking problems brought about by the high pressure and demands of the economic systems that threatened the quality of health care. The serial described a dysfunctional national health care where patients were subject to inhuman conditions, but also a working environment where hierarchical structures and a lack of ethical discussion lead to impoverishment at a psychological level. As a nurse in the second episode comments, referring to an unpopular psychiatrist, when talking to a patient: ‘It might not be her fault, it might rather be the whole system here’ (my translation). This concept of ‘the system’ is of interest since it is an established popular Leftist (structural/paranoic) cliché in the public life of the Swedish 1970s. This connects the series to the introductory case *Berndt & Anita*, where the question of guilt—articulated by the non-diegetic voice-over—is implicitly understood as an impersonal instance. The protagonists have no real responsibility for the tragedy at hand. No answer is given, but it is implied that the sequence of events is

caused by power structures. Whether these powers are to be understood as western capitalism or the technocratic modern welfare state is not clear, but to posit the mutual workings of these two forces as an explanation of contemporary social problems was a common analysis of the time.

The theme of euthanasia is represented through the story of middle-aged male patient Leif, suffering from the late stages of polio, who is in a respirator and unable to move or communicate. The paralyzed body of the polio patient became a departure point for a discussion of the value of a life that did not simply reflect the theme of the series, but also led to a major debate in the newspapers on euthanasia, as well as on the quality of medical treatments of severely neurologically damaged patients. Professionals were asked if *Jourhavande* really provided an accurate picture of the state of Swedish hospitals. In the closing minute of the third episode of *Jourhavande*, someone—we just see a hand—disconnects the respirator cable, making both a striking end to the thematic cluster of the question of life and death, and providing a cliffhanger for the second season of the series. The cliffhanger received the greatest attention in the tabloids, where the question of who pulled out the cable made headline news. The media coverage of *Jourhavande* witnesses the impact of a serial such as this in the Swedish mid-1970s, but it also contributes to the theme of societal guilt. The headline ‘Who Killed Leif in TV?’ in the tabloid *Expressen* (1974, 4 April) is not only a commentary on an unresolved narrative; it also implicitly refers to the wider discussion on matters of life and death in Swedish health care.

Almost without exception, other examples of series dealing with medical matters during these years highlighted the problems in Swedish health care. The most famous example is *Babels hus* [*House of Babel*] from 1981, a mini-series about the last months in the life of Primus Svensson (played by well-known Swedish actor Carl Gustav Lindstedt). He will never recover from his illness and, during his time in the big industrial hospital, he is repeatedly stricken by new bodily disorders until eventually he dies of a pancreas tumour. *Babels hus* is a pivotal example of how the content in TV drama was followed by intense debate (Vesterlund 2017).

Jason Jacobs’ three stages are chronologically reversed in Sweden. Even if *Jourhavande* can be seen as a conflict drama contemporary with Jacobs category, *Babels hus* and the later melodrama/feel-good success *Skärgårdsdoktorn* (1996–2003) both breaks Jacobs’ succession, placing the apocalyptic era before the paternal. Another reverse angle comes in the 2010s with crime fictions such as *Bron* or *Arne Dahl* in which the

viewers witness a health care system that seems to always succeed in its medical tasks. From having been seen as a distressing and frightening location that represented the shortcomings of modernity, the hospital serves nowadays (perhaps, somewhat paradoxically, together with the police service) as one of the safest spaces in society—at least, in the world of Nordic noir.

Two examples can briefly illustrate this point. When, in episode 2 of season II of *Bron* (2013), the two main characters (police officers Saga Norén and Martin Rohde) are suspected of being infected with an unknown contagious disease, they are put in quarantine. Apart from the fact they both, almost immediately, are found not to be infected—thus encountering efficient and well-functioning medical care—the interiors of the hospital cease to appear in the dark shades of grey that characterize the *mise-en-scène* of the episode (and of the series as a whole). The scenes in the hospital are dominated by light colours (mostly white), and shot in a calm style with no strange angles or distinctive movements in the camera work. At the end of the second and last episode of *Arne Dahl: En midsommarnattsdröm* (2015), a hospital again provides the location. Here, the killer has been badly hurt and is interrogated in his hospital bed. The episode is otherwise dominated by sharp contrasts between foreground and background but, in the hospital scene, the space is depicted with a less dramatic *mise-en-scène* and lighting.

VISUALIZED MEDIA IN THE WELFARE STATE

In the 10-episode series *Friställd* [*Laid Off*] (1969), written by Bengt Bratt and directed by Jackie Söderman, we follow the main protagonist, Robert (Lars Green), following the shutdown of his machine at the factory where he used to work. Robert is an angry young man and, as such, a contrast to his fellow workers, who have less engagement in critical perspectives regarding the power structures of capitalism and government. Robert spends large parts of his days reading and thinking. In one scene, we see him on a couch holding the book *Indoktrineringen i Sverige* [*Indoctrination in Sweden*] written by poet and critic Göran Palm. The same book also figures in the two-episode TV film, *Tretton dagar* [*Thirteen Days*] (1970), written by Lennart F. Johansson and directed by Keve Hjelm. This film is about a working-class family in a medium-sized Swedish city; one of two young brothers, Göran (Göran Stangerz),

wants to break out of what he conceives as a trap. The work at the factory and the bleak everyday routines are nodes in a pointless striving for what would—at best—make it possible for the family to embrace a petit-bourgeois life style. With support from Palm's book, he explains to his mother how indoctrinated they all are, and he also uses this insight to defend his betrayal of his girlfriend, whom he leaves. He does not want to be a part of the system.

Indoktrineringen i Sverige makes brief appearances in other films from the early 1970s, in the cinema as well as on TV, but *Friställd* and *Tretton dagar* are perhaps the most intriguing examples, since they pose two different uses of the book and the concept of indoctrination. On the one hand, it is a tool of emancipation, as is the case in *Friställd*. But the awareness of (supposed) ideological effects of media and culture can also break the community of the working-class milieu and—for better or worse—become an unintended disruptive force in a painful societal change. This happens in *Tretton dagar*, where the outsider Göran is an ambiguous protagonist who seems to use his desire to break out in a way that appears to be more selfish than emancipatory. The film ends with him being beaten up by his older brother who sticks to the family, interestingly played by the same Lars Green that plays Robert in *Friställd*.

Göran Palm's book played an important role in Sweden by the end of the 1960s. Deliberately released directly in inexpensive paperback—it was Palm's intension to reach a wide audience—in 1968, it became a surprising bestseller. In the book, Palm discussed how school, an import from American TV fiction, press and commercial cinema presented anew values of the capitalistic system and thus kept society—and citizens—in a state of false consciousness (Hyvönen 2015). According to Palm, indoctrination was at work in all kinds of communicative arenas. Even in apparently innocent items such as weekly magazines, comic strips or fairy tales, delusions would arise and sneak into the 'Swedish Cinderella-souls' (Palm 1968, p. 180). A crucial institution was the family, according to Palm 'the core cell of indoctrination' (p. 212). Children indoctrinated their parents, but parents also indoctrinated their children. The most vulnerable victim of indoctrination was the housewife, uneducated and inexperienced, and thus an easy pray for misbeliefs and myths spread by the media apparatus.

The term 'indoctrination' became widespread as a key concept in the public debate on media, culture and ideology, and was often used in the press in writings on the new Swedish TV drama. One example is how the short film *Men vi har ju nästan allting* [*But we already have everything*]

(1971), about a woman shopping in a supermarket, is presented as a piece of de-indoctrination (*Dagens Nyheter* 1971, 9 June). Another case is a review of three films by British writer Colin Weiland, all aired in August 1971, where the headline reads ‘Indoctrination and its victims’ (Jahnsson 1971).

The visualisation of indoctrination *in* the actual TV-dramas was dominated by people watching television. There are numerous scenes with families, couples or lonely housewives in front of TV sets. From the sound—the screen is rarely in view—it can be gathered that the protagonists are often watching American fiction, or news. The standard visual solution is a static camera frontal shot of a married couple looking forward (at the camera, and the viewer) with indifferent expressions. There are also lonely women filling their suburban loneliness with daytime TV—actually a non-existent phenomenon in Sweden at the time, except for educational programmes—or easy-listening music on the transistor radio. The most striking example of this theme is the initial example, *Berndt & Anita* (1969), where the isolated mother Anita (Margita Ahlin) goes out of her mind in an everyday inferno where only the cries from her baby and ‘The Girl from Ipanema’ on the radio breaks the silent soundtrack. Examples of media users enjoying the output from TV or radio, or becoming emancipated by the content of mass media are non-existent. Even when a serious discussion programme with a focus on the situation of the disabled is watched by the protagonists—in the film *Eva & Bengt* (1970)—the use of TV leads to despair. After watching the programme, the woman kills her husband, who suffers from severe paralysis following a car accident. It may be a mercy killing, perhaps a way to get out of a hopeless situation. It is an open-ended film.

The recurrent motif of alienating mass media of different kinds implies a conception of media as a mighty power. There seems to be few highlighted examples such as these of protagonists using traditional media—TV, press, radio—in newer Swedish TV fiction portraying contemporary life. The communication technology preferred in the crime genre comprises (unsurprisingly) different kinds of social media and devices such as mobile phones or computers. But neither traditional media nor new media are depicted in melodramas with a contemporary setting to invoke the alienated media usage in the way that seems to have been so frequent in the 1960s or 1970s.

When it comes to the nostalgia of the welfare state, on the other hand, the use of TV is a recurrent sign of times past. The memory of experiencing the heyday of *folkhemmet*, is often also the memory of experiencing media. In the family melodrama/feel-good series *Vår tid är nu* [*Our Time is Now*] (2017–2018), the introduction of television is a crucial signifier of Swedish modernity. TV forms communities where people watch and enjoy programmes together, but it is also an arena for the two major protagonists, Nina and Calle, when they appear in a cooking show produced for the new medium. This is also the case in a very down-beat series such as Jonas Gardell's family drama mini-series *De dagar som blommorna blommar* [*The Days the Flowers Bloom*] (2019), where the memories of TV and the collective watching of the world cup slalom (as most Swedes did in the late 1970s) is a marker of time that bears no obvious traces of alienation. Neither does the media use in feel-good mini-series *Systrar 1968* [*Sisters 1968*] (2018) reflect the pessimism of Göran Palm at the time. Set in the same year as the release of *Indoktrineringen i Sverige*, this series shows no pessimism regarding the power of the media. The female protagonist, Karin (Mikaela Knapp), meets surprisingly few obstacles in her efforts as a revelatory journalist, and the various women around her can easily cast aside their delusions when confronted with the writings of feminist pioneer Betty Friedan. Here, media is in no way an alienating evil; rather, it is a tool of emancipation. When the radio is turned on, news from Vietnam is read to engage listeners. No sentimental mainstream music is heard.

There is a striking contrast between the assumptions of indoctrination in the late 1960s and the contemporary fictive representations of the same indoctrination and alienation, on the one hand, and the retrospective nostalgic idyll of media use in the 1960s, on the other. In the 1960s, the supposed vulnerability of media usage was signified in an iconography of alienation, built around TV sets and transistors. In the 2000s, the same analogous media devices signify the innocence of the past.

And when computers occur in Swedish TV films from the early 1970s, they are the most excessive signs of not only contemporary technocracy, but also of an unhuman future to come. In *Babels hus* [*House of Babel*, 1981], a rather late example of the social TV drama series but one of the most successful with audiences as well as with critics, new technology and health care are tied together in iconography and narration (Vesterlund 2017). This is a story of an elderly man who arrives at a huge industrial hospital after suffering from a myocardial infarction. Through the six

episodes of the series he is transported between different units of the hospitals, never to return home. Computers and new medical technology are no obvious blessings to mankind. Rather, the large and efficient hospital is posed as dangerous and inhuman. Recurrent close-ups of computer screens or advanced medical machinery serve as signs of alienation. The only sympathetic character in the hospital is the hospital librarian, who seems to represent human values in an uncanny new time. The books he offers to the patients serve as an appropriate alternative to the TV and radio that is otherwise routinely provided to patients. But he also stands for an old world—perhaps a better world. *Babels hus* is a striking case of how nostalgia was introduced in Swedish social TV drama in the early 1980s. The paradise lost here is that of the 1930s, when the protagonist was a young man.

EPILOGUE

The Scandinavian crime fiction of today is widely recognized as depicting the disruption of the welfare state; Swedish TV drama of the 1960s and 1970s seems to have been just as critical of contemporary society as the Nordic noir genre is generally assumed to be. There are several potential aspects of vulnerability at stake that are interrelated in different ways. The representation of vulnerable individuals is constantly related to representations of a general societal vulnerability. The key institutions of the welfare state, such as public schools or hospitals, were regularly focused on in the 1960s and 1970s. The example of health care, which is discussed as a recurrent motif in the productions from both periods, is of particular interest, since it is given different narrative functions. In the films and series from the earlier period, a hospital is, almost by definition, a dysfunctional symptom of large-scale technocracy. In productions from recent years, health care institutions are, irrespective of size, mostly used as secure zones in a world characterized by insecurity.

In Nordic noir there is but one societal institution that is consequently highlighted: the police. The genre rarely has any critical stances against the workings of this service. So, where does the social criticism appear? The representation of the Scandinavian landscape has repeatedly been highlighted as a main feature of Nordic noir. When, in *Locating Nordic Noir: From Beck to The Bridge*, Kim Toft Hansen and Anne Margit Waade (2017, p. 86) bring up ‘the references to the melancholic mood in

quite a few recent works on Nordic crime fiction', they can offer a number of examples of scholarly work on the genre. It is not only landscape, but also actual geography that seems to be at the core of Nordic noir. Slavoj Žižek (n.d.) has discussed how the 'specific *locale*' of a story's setting constitutes an important signification of the geographic particularity in the narrations of the twenty-first century. The cosmopolitanism of modernism has given way to the individual experience of globalism, where specific provincial roots in certain geographic places are as substantial as the unspecific anonymous city or landscape. Žižek (n.d.) finds one 'exemplary case of the fate of the detective novel in our era of global capitalism' in the books and films of Henning Mankell, where the small Swedish city of Ystad is the (local) setting of (global) drama.

A crucial function of melancholy in the Scandinavian countries is thus—at least, so it seems in writings on Nordic noir—to highlight the demise of the welfare state. Interestingly, the very same Ystad that Žižek highlights as an open space of despair is the setting of recent feel-good nostalgia film *Systrar 1968* (2018). Here, Ystad is the ultimate peaceful rural town. Although it is haunted by sexism and conservatism, the radical feminist forces from the urban world of Stockholm are able to reveal its dirty business. Here, the locale is the setting of a utopia that was never at hand, not even in the TV drama of 1968.

The Swedish TV drama of the late 1960s and early 1970s was also characterized by an emphasis on the local. Since the 1910s, the production of Swedish fiction film had been heavily dominated by Stockholm. With the expansion of the output of TV drama, Sveriges Radio also decentralized the production to Gothenburg, Malmö and Luleå, which could be a reason for an increasing representation of countryside Sweden in its fiction output. Films and serials were shot on location in towns such as Västerås, Göteborg, Luleå and Malmö. The difference here from the contemporary genres was that the places are almost without exception anonymous. The 'specific *locale*' of the 2000s was thus preceded by *unspecific locales* that avoided particularity in order to highlight the general shortcomings of Swedish modernity. The places were thus not important per se; their value was to serve as authentic examples.

A final point to make is that the TV drama of the 1960s was entangled with a number of other genres in different media. Novels and theatre plays were adapted to TV, film directors switched between the two media and, in the press, TV drama became a recurrent topic for new stories on

the shortcoming of welfare institutions. Especially after the introduction of channel TV2 in December 1969, the domestic TV drama received a privileged place in the press. Almost each new socially oriented series or film caused a serious debate either through questions on the functions of the welfare state, or cases of its shortcomings. TV drama was established as a didactic institution, taking a leading role in the education of the inhabitants of *folkhemmet* as an alternative to the indoctrination that included both high art and commercial culture. Another thematic cluster discussed in this chapter is the representation of media, with media users depicted as vulnerable victims of the effects of the mass media and ideology of the earlier period. A third aspect of vulnerability is thus the vulnerable viewer/media user. This media user was not only depicted in the productions, but was also an ideal recipient of the films and series. One pivotal aim of the new strategy from 1967, and the intense production of social TV drama to come, was to provide an alternative to the commercial media genres. Films such as *Berndt & Anita* or *Friställd* were, of course, not included in the conception of indoctrinating media. The social drama was supposed to be an emancipating instance in the welfare state. In the productions of the 2000s, the function of represented media has changed; representations of media usage are now a somewhat nostalgic token in the depictions of the lost welfare state of the past.

NOTES

1. It is difficult to specify a number of films or TV productions depicting the 1960s and 1970s, but at least 28 feature films (drama and documentaries) produced since 1999 focus on the period. During the same period (1999–2018), at least 21 TV productions—including series, feature films and documentaries—were mainly set in the 1960s, 1970s, or 1980s.
2. Examples are to be found in the major daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* (1967, 4 March; 1967, 31 March; 1967, 14 April; 1967, 20 April), or in *Svenska Dagbladet* (1967, 19 January).
3. *Svenska Dagbladet* (1967, 15 April). The book takes fourth place on the best-selling list of ‘other literature’ (annan litteratur), behind the memoirs of Bertrand Russell and an Agatha Christie mystery story.
4. Examples are to be found in books by such politically, aesthetically and historically diverse writers as Vilhelm Moberg, Ivar-Lo Johansson, or P. C. Jersild.

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