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Affective Estrangement and Ecological Destruction in TV Crime Series *Fortitude*

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Introduction

The steadily growing international popularity of Nordic Noir over the past decades has generated an explosion of TV crime series of the type, either localised versions of Nordic originals or stories applying the Nordic mode. Simultaneously, so-called speculative fiction is booming and is now one of the most popular TV genres (see Telotte). Sociocritical concerns are central in both, but while contemporary crime fiction mostly studies societal problems through realistic narratives, speculative fiction invests in imagining alternative worlds and futures in commenting on contemporary phenomena.

Fortitude (2015-2017), a British-produced speculative TV crime series discussed in this chapter, draws on the bleak materiality of Nordic Noir and the uncanniness of speculative fiction in featuring a hybrid cautionary narrative in which generic mobility allows for new expressions of societal and ecological critique through affective depictions of violence. The series expresses this critique via a discussion that visualises violence from perspectives that render mobile conceptions of knowledge, ethics, reality and, eventually, genre. Although the initial setting, with its multiethnic, -national and -lingual group of people and an outsider detective stranded on a secluded arctic island reminds us of the classical crime story (see Horsley 37), the bleakness, graphic violence, and psychologically ambivalent police and other detectives pull the series towards contemporary Nordic Noir (see Forshaw; Arvas and Nestingen 2). At the same time, the series reaches beyond the conventions of the Nordic Noir tradition through its introduction of the speculative such as science fiction dystopia and uncanny horror.

In the first season of *Fortitude*, the small community surviving on the fictional eponymous island outside the coast of Norway is confronted with a series of disasters which prove to be related to ecology: people are being murdered in an extremely brutal way by having their rib cages torn open, and the cause is eventually traced back to global warming and melting permafrost. Infected by the parasite larvae of poisonous wasps released from under the ice, both humans and nonhuman animals turn violent beyond their species-typical behaviour. In this way, the series introduces questions of biological and ecological niche,

species, “naturalness” and the interdependency of all life forms when an ecological disaster threatens.

Whereas the first season draws upon violent imagery and speculative elements familiar from, for example, science fiction and horror to discuss species boundaries, in the second season, violence and uncanny elements that emerge as contradictory, estranging and fearsome in their instability (Freud 74-76), are used to negotiate the ethics of science and justification of violence. The boundary between humans and nonhuman animals is elaborated through victims of wasp poisoning and the objects of ritual killings. Questions of ecological balance, species, and environmental disaster are pursued further through the introduction of blood-red aurora borealis, meat-eating reindeer, a threatening trickster demon and murder which all point towards a pending ecocatastrophe. Viewers are invited into a cycle of fear and abomination, recognition and unintelligibility.

Introducing features of speculative fiction to a story tradition strongly based on realism, *Fortitude* creates a hybrid narrative that incorporates the affective and sociocritical potentials of both contemporary Nordic Noir and speculative fiction. By mobilising the boundaries between these generic features, the series also mobilises viewer affect. The affective landscape created by the hybridity is multiform and unfortold, characterised by fear, revulsion and ambiguous pleasure. The way in which this multiformity generates emotional responses can, following Sara Ahmed (*Encounters; Politics*), be termed an affective economy within which new social objects and meanings are produced. These objects and meanings represent the space for socioecological criticism in the series.

The aim of our chapter is to examine the affective expressions of graphic violence and their associations with ecological destruction in the framework of generic mobility through two emerging discourses: firstly, a negotiation between the human and the nonhuman/animal, and secondly, a discussion about the ethics of violence. We argue that the amalgamation of disturbing graphic violence and ecological destruction serves as an entrance into social and ecological critique with a strong cautionary element.

The Rise of Ecological TV Crime Dramas

Over the past few years, the sociocritical gaze of the Nordic Noir type of TV crime series such as *Fortitude* has increasingly targeted ecological issues. For example, Swedish-Danish *Bron/Broen (The Bridge)*, (2011-2018) in its second season and Finnish *Tellus* (2014) address questions of ecoterrorism; Swedish-French *Midnattssol/Jour Polaire (Midnight Sun)*, (2016)

and Swedish *Jordskott* (2015-2017) highlight difference and displacement in relation to normative humanity; Finnish *Pintaa syvemmältä* (*Deeper than a Scratch*, 2015) and *Karppi* (2018) as well as Danish *Bedraeg* (*Follow the Money*, 2016) discuss power, greed and economic gain in the energy business.

Fortitude differs from conventional crime dramas and ecological thrillers because of the weight it places on the question “What if?” (see Attebery 4) through its inclusion of speculative elements into the realistic framework of the crime narrative. In speculative fiction, including such TV series as *The 100* (2014-), *The Expanse* (2015-), and *Terra Nova* (2011), the ecology theme has already for some time played a vital role in discussing socioethical questions through narratives of alternative worlds and apocalyptic visions. In the storyworld of *Fortitude*, the ecological processes of melting glacier and thawing permafrost are reality and can release unforeseen threats such as the focal point of the narrative, the parasite wasps. Global warming is a fact, but *what happens if* a potentially fatal parasite that has been stored in the permafrost for 30,000 years is released and begins to act out its natural life cycle in human and animal populations, causing them to resort to unnatural behaviour? Through the realistic and the speculative, the affective and sociocritical aspects are bound together.

Kerstin Bergman identifies generic hybridity as one of the standard features of contemporary crime novels which draw both on different subgenres of crime fiction itself as well as other popular genres (136), and Barry Forshaw argues that Nordic Noir actually invests in hybridity more than other crime genres (4). This is equally true of TV crime series: in addition to the environmental themes, the above series recycle, for example, features of autobiography, documentary, thriller, romance and fantasy.

Moreover, Nordic crime TV series display an emerging trend of combining crime with speculative elements. Norwegian *Okkupert* (*Occupied*, 2015-2017) takes a step towards speculativeness through its integration of characteristics of the crime thriller and futuristic dystopia; in the series, Russia occupies Norway for refusing to continue producing and selling oil. The aforementioned *Jordskott* also discusses human relations with nonhuman “forest people,” and Norwegian *Beforeigners* (2019-) combines its crime narrative with time travel.

In *Fortitude*, ecology and violence merge into a speculative crime narrative that makes use of characteristics of science fiction and uncanny horror; this narrative is critical of human attempts to master and mold nature. Instead of quoting the traditional anthropocentric and dualistic view of nature as a malleable and passive resource for humans to accommodate

(see Braidotti, *Posthuman* 13-16; Plumwood 72-73), the series presents nature as a powerful and potentially dangerous subject. *Fortitude* warns of the exploitation of nature and ecological time bombs through generic blurring and the depiction of affectively engaging violence, suggesting that the prolonged abuse of nature will turn back to bite us in the end.¹

Sticky Images: Affect, Violence and Genre in *Fortitude*

Fortitude introduces the potential horrors of global warming to the audience through a combination of graphic violence, mystery, scientific exploration and uncanny elements which provoke affective sensations transcending the “pleasurable thrills” of traditional crime stories. Crime fiction and speculative fiction play with affects in different ways because of different generic starting points. The aspiration towards realism and the promise of a resolution steer the affective experience of viewers of crime fiction towards a soothing denouement, despite the presence of graphic violence or tormenting psychological plots. In contrast, speculative genres embody more narrative variety regarding plot, structure and style, but, most importantly, instead of insisting on mimesis, they essentially render mobile what is real and what can be imagined. *Fortitude*’s overall setting of the secluded community of scientists where strange things start to happen plays with the generic conventions of both classical crime stories and science fiction. While scientific exploration is often used to tackle the uncanny elements in the narrative, a speculative approach to science and forensic procedures is also central in *Fortitude*. In fact, features of science fiction and crime are often combined in crime procedural narratives dealing with uncanny crimes, one example being *The X-Files* (Telotte 19).

Simply put, *Fortitude* uses science-fictional elements in creating “speculativeness”—or “estrangement.” Darko Suvin coined the now well-known term *cognitive estrangement* when theorising science fiction. For Suvin, *estrangement* refers to the elements of difference in science fiction that alienate the readers or viewers from their empirical reality, whereas *cognition* refers to the aspects of recognition that prompt the audiences to understand the narrative’s alien landscape (e.g. 7-8). In this sense, what is essential for science fiction is described as intellectual estrangement from the reader’s/viewer’s lived reality which allows for imagining, for example, various ecological crises. We nevertheless argue that because of the audiovisual scenes of violence and the speculative imagery of nonhuman others and ecocatastrophe, the estrangement presented in *Fortitude* could be approached as *affective estrangement* that estranges and engages viewers on levels other than the cognitive. Scholars

such as Brian Attebery have emphasised the tendency of science fiction to invite “sensations of strangeness” or “a sense of wonder” through depictions of science (4-5). Sherryl Vint further argues that audiovisual science fiction, especially serial television, engages us not only by cognitive estrangement but also by an affective sense of wonder caused by visual spectacles. She locates the pleasure of the genre in the oscillation between these two. Moreover, Vint posits that the overwhelming “mixed feeling of awe and terror” evoked by audiovisual spectacles can inspire engagement with societal concerns, such as ecological issues.² It could be argued that sensations of strangeness are central for all speculative fiction. By the “affective estrangement” evoked by *Fortitude* we refer not only to speculative fiction’s capacity for both (cognitive) estrangement and sense of wonder, but also to the “emotional pull” of violent imagery in crime fiction, which is appealing precisely because the fictional framework distances the violence from our everyday reality (cf. Prince 28-29).

The affects evoked by *Fortitude* are nevertheless not only produced through generic means, but the affective images and discourses also relate to the affective economy outside of fiction (see also Koistinen and Mäntymäki). For Ahmed, affects/emotions are products of sociocultural processes, where certain emotions are assigned to certain objects (*Politics* 7-8). She calls objects with affective value “sticky” because of their strong capacity to attract emotions (*Politics* 4, 11-12). When theorising the circulation of emotion and affect in society, Ahmed does not draw a clear line between these concepts; instead, she emphasises the interrelatedness of bodily sensations and emotions in producing social reality (*Encounters* 39; *Politics* 4-6). How emotions circulate and “stick” to certain objects is a cultural process.

In what follows, we will first discuss the affective economy of the ecological crisis in *Fortitude* and how, in this economy, boundaries between the human and nonhuman become the focal point through which the crisis is negotiated. In this negotiation, non-normative acts expressed through violence play a central role in promoting the affective. We draw on Katariina Kyrölä’s idea of the construction of viewer affect not as something that the images on the screen produce, but as a process in which the images invite viewers to engage in affective relationships comprising the viewer, the images and the context that frames the viewer experience (1-6). Secondly, we focus on how violence and affect work in concert in discussing the justification of violence, and how generic hybridity contributes to affective estrangement in the context of ecology. The setting and starting points in *Fortitude* may be that of a conventional crime narrative but with a strong element of estrangement that contributes to its affective tone.

Negotiation between the Human and the Nonhuman: Human Beings and Other Predators

In the first season of *Fortitude*, violence is introduced at the very beginning of the first episode through images of a man being ripped into pieces by a polar bear. This opening scene launches the ecological theme as negotiated through the volatile relationship between predator and prey—or, more broadly, between human and nonhuman—through a violent encounter inviting strong viewer affects. The narrative then jumps to three months later, presenting the milieu of a small, cold and quiet arctic city with its residents busy with everyday activities, including a group of scientists devoted to research. However, the audience is soon again introduced to graphic violence, when the cruelly violated body of Professor Stoddart is found. The parallel between humans and the big predator, the polar bear, becomes evident when Stoddart's body is savaged as if by a predatory animal. It is first speculated that Stoddart had been killed by a bear, and only later it is found out that the “predator” had been a human being. When the murderer and the cause of the extreme violence are revealed, the parallel between humans and polar bears becomes explicit: the two mammals are both victims of each other and the tiny messengers of climate change, the wasps that make no distinction between humans and polar bears. Later in the series, one of the scientists explicitly classifies humans and polar bears under “apex predators” (episode 9).

Stoddart's death is followed by a string of murders, and the mystery of these deaths unfolds through various intertwined narrative threads. The parallel between human and nonhuman animal is further developed in the second season, when a polar bear infected by wasp poison trespasses human territory. By crossing the boundary between bear and human territory, it becomes a fearful object, sticky with affect. In the human world, fearful animal objects are killed, and when the bear is shot, the series once again aligns human violence with animal violence. The ecology theme is thus introduced to viewers by mobilising affective images of violence together with affects evoked by culturally circulated discourses related to nature, science and the boundaries between the human and nonhuman. The polar bear plays an important role in constituting the affective on different levels: it represents the violence of nature that also becomes representative of violence in humans; moreover, the bear emerges as a symbol and victim of climate change and the destruction of the Arctic. Thus, the image of the bear is sticky with affects, concepts and ideas familiar from the media coverage on issues related to climate change.

In addition, extreme violence by a human being is affectively charged, but, unlike the “natural” violence of the bear, human violence is automatically labelled abnormal and uncanny; it is “inhuman savagery,” as one of the characters notes (episode 6). In the series, violent individuals are frequently referred to as animals, and a person taken over by “animalistic” violence is regarded as a fearsome and monstrous other; the very word “monster” is painted on the wall of the first murderer’s house, suggesting radical difference in relation to the norm of humanity (see Braidotti, *Nomadic* e.g. 242). *Fortitude* thus questions the distinction between humans and other animals through the human who turns predator in simulating the parasite wasps through murder. Being part of the affective economy of the ecocatastrophe centred on the wasps, the murderer is invested with affective stickiness drawing on the questioning of human violence as opposed to nonhuman violence. One way that *Fortitude* negotiates the ecological theme in the first season is therefore the complex and constructed hierarchy between humans and nature: how nature is potentially dangerous and how humans pose a danger not only to nature, but, as humans cannot be removed from nature, also to themselves. Indeed, the parasitic wasps are unleashed because of human greed when two men find a body of a mammoth uncovered from the permafrost, and—in the hopes of selling the carcass—store it in a warehouse near a residential area. Thus, *Fortitude* offers climate change and human actions that have led to it as the first reason for the unleashing of the parasites. The series therefore also questions the division between nature and culture, presenting the melting permafrost as a “naturalcultural” (see e.g. Haraway, *Species* 15-16) phenomenon, shaped by both “nature” and “culture.”

By rendering mobile the fundamental anthropocentric assumption of humanity as the privileged species through violence and generic mobility, *Fortitude* reminds the viewer of the potential of the *What if?* question. Through the emergence of the parasitic wasps, the series utilises features of speculative fiction, evoking not only the affective thrills of the crime mystery, but also a strong sense of affective estrangement. The parasite wasp capable of transforming humans into animalistic nonhumans is a sticky object that attracts viewer affects in relation to the cultural ideas of purity, contamination and species boundaries. The wasp represents nature as dangerous, uncontrollable and nonhuman. However, since its emergence is essentially caused by human activity, *Fortitude* again highlights the destructive potential of human agency. The violent deaths further illustrate generic mobility as they make use of not only uncanny horror and speculative fiction but body horror as well: the body torn by the polar bear and the other maimed bodies posit the human body as an affective spectacle of violence as typical in body genres, namely body horror (see Clover 189; Williams 4).

Crossing the boundaries of what is culturally accepted and naturally ordained highlights the question of how the distinction between human and animal or human and nature, respectively, is constructed. In the series, the blurring of human and nonhuman animal is concretely indicated through the zombie-kind of behaviour of the wasp-infected people in order to mark their uncanniness as both human beings and predators. Zombies, in their uncanniness, are both dead and alive (see Bennett and Royle 39), weird creatures between culture and the unknowable, which in *Fortitude* points towards the deep mystery of life and human efforts to control its different forms. The zombie is thus an ironic critique of anthropocentrism and a dramatic metaphor of the Anthropocene³: it rises as an apocalyptic reminder of an ecological-historical-cultural period during which an environmental change caused by humans begins to appear evident as a fact equally threatening to all life forms. Simultaneously, these zombies attach the wasps to very real concerns outside of fiction, as the melting permafrost has already raised concerns of new viruses that might be released from under the ice.

The first season further blurs the boundaries between human and nonhuman animals when the human boy Liam, who is discovered to have murdered Stoddart under the influence of the parasite poison, is associated with a pig in the local science centre. Liam suffers from frostbites from walking barefoot in the snow, and the scientists of *Fortitude* decide to test experimental treatments to save his life. When Liam's mother visits her son at the hospital, she instead finds a giant pig hooked on a machine, screeching. The pig, obviously being used as a lab rat, becomes associated with Liam, which creates a sticky connection between these two lab experiments. Later, in the second season, the same association is attached to Elena, an inhabitant of *Fortitude* infected by wasp poison, who is kept in a coma for scientific experiments. Moreover, the fact that Liam is a child adds to the uncanniness and "unnaturalness" of the killing done by him, as the innocence of a child is connected to a horrible, violent act.

The affectiveness evoked by *Fortitude* thus relies not only on the sticky, violent imagery, but also on the affective estrangement invited by its generic mobility. For viewers, the affectivity of the violence presented is also an effect of the cultural associations connected to images and discourses evoked by this very violence. The polar bear, parasite wasps and the pig all articulate affective discourses of humans' and their relations with nature and nonhuman animals.

The End Justifies the Means: Affect and the Justification of Violence

In the second season, ethical questions asked during the first season are expanded and linked with affective economies related to ecology and indigenous populations, the ethics of science and, eventually, gender. When the wasp-infected people with the insect genome turn into zombies, the boundary between the human and nonhuman is negotiated, as often takes place in speculative narratives with zombie characters. Further, the murderer proves to be a representative of the indigenous population of the island who, relying on local shamanistic folklore, murders in order to restore ecological order and finally resorts to an act of ultimate violence against himself in an act of emasculation. At first glance, *Fortitude* would seem to perpetuate stereotypes related to the savagery of indigenous people, juxtaposing them to the island's science-oriented, "civilised" community. Yet, as the second series continues, the violence inherent in the scientific (and anthropocentric) world-view is also highlighted.

The season begins with an analepsis to the 1940s in the Soviet part of the island and the violent consequences of exposure to wasp poison: a zombie-like survivor, unstoppable with bullets, with a bloodstained predator's mouth and blood running from his infected eyes, is caught crushing a baby to death by a local Shaman. The zombie "demon" walks away to the cold and the Shaman buries the baby in the snow (episode 1). In combining a number of popular fiction clichés, this scene both invites affective responses through violence against the vulnerable, newborn baby and evokes anxiety over the prospect of similar kinds of events in the future. When the narrative returns to the present, the audience is presented with violent acts drawing on corresponding characteristics of uncanny horror as both people and nonhuman animals seem to be killed randomly, in cruel and imaginative ways. Later, it is revealed that the murderer is a Shaman of the contemporary generation who does, in fact, choose his victims randomly in constructing a "tupilaq," a collection of body parts from humans and nonhuman animals with the help of which the new incarnation of the demon can be destroyed. The demon is a survivor of wasp poisoning whose reappearance coincides with the reappearance of wasps. While scientific evidence points towards the consequences of the melting permafrost, the Shaman's reading of the crisis draws on the traditional knowledge of the indigenous population of the island that connects the emergence of the evil demon with visible signs in nature.

Moreover, the analepsis that reveals an earlier, classified occurrence of parasite wasps as a result of Soviet mining and military operations, is a reference to the ruthless exploitation of northern areas by superpowers as part of their power politics. Thus, in addition to indications of global warming, the analepsis renders the parasite wasp sticky as part of global

power politics based on violence, fear and othering (see also Ahmed, *Politics*) that ruthlessly ignores environmental issues. The analepsis also functions as an introduction to a discussion about the justification of violence in the context of environmental change: the wasp gathers stickiness because of its scientifically exploitable potential and the violence contained in the research process. The question of the ethics of science and justification of violence emerges, for example, through the work of scientist Dr Khatri, who conducts research on the regenerative and genome-changing capacities of the wasp poison and uses mice and human survivors as test objects. This highlights the vulnerable kinship of humans and animals and connects the series to discussions of the ethics of science typically present in science fiction narratives (see e.g. Koistinen; Telotte 20, 100-06). The violence inflicted on mice injected with wasp poison and the painful operations on the human woman, Elena, held in a coma, cut and observed in a plastic cube (episode 4), are associated with the same discourse of power, subordination, greed and economic gain that the series presents as the cause of the environmental crisis. This clinical violence against animals and humans, particularly women, for the benefit of mankind [sic] and multinational pharmaceutical companies echoes a capitalist ethics of gain; it is simultaneously an expression of the parallel between women and nature as objectified others in natural sciences as discussed by Val Plumwood and Rosi Braidotti (*Posthuman*).

We argue that linking disturbing violence, the inflicted bodies and ethics in this very conflicting manner evokes affective estrangement and invites viewers to ponder upon questions related to the ethics of the violence inherent in human–nonhuman relations. Is violence against sentient animal others and human women justifiable if this violence can promote the creation of human beings with great physical strength and superhuman regenerative capacities? How does economic gain relate to its precondition, the pain caused to nonhuman(ised female) others? Worth considering are also the posthumanist arguments about the interrelatedness and inherent value of all life forms (cf. Morton; Braidotti, *Posthuman*) highlighted in these questions.

In the second season of *Fortitude*, speculative features do not only emerge through scientific discourse, as the series explores an alternative interpretation of environmental change and the justification of violence through the murders committed by Shaman Vladek, a representative of the indigenous population of the island. The new, flamboyantly brutal murders, in their fetishisation of the beliefs and customs of the indigenous population, simultaneously link with the graphic violence of contemporary crime narratives. The murderer, Vladek, firmly believes that human and animal sacrifices can stop the new

reincarnation of the “demon” and thereby restore balance in nature. Similar to the human and nonhuman victims in the plastic cubes in Dr Khatri’s laboratory, Vladek’s victims are incorporated in the overall discourse of the ecological crisis through the violence imposed on them.

Regarding estrangement and viewer affect, the murders committed by Vladek invite a great variety of emotions from amusement to horror and nausea. In discussing formula stories, crime fiction scholar John G. Cawelti emphasises the emotional intensity of horror. In *Fortitude*, horror emerges in several guises: a scene with a severed head rolling down a snowy hill turns humorous, reminding viewers of horror comedies that play on estrangement through sensations of pleasurable suspended disbelief (Cawelti 48), while scenes of flamboyant violence can arouse horror through the abject (see Kristeva). However, Vladek’s chase after the demon is mostly embedded in representations of graphic violence that draw on abject shock, nausea and anticipation. When he finally manages to capture the demon, the confrontation culminates in a strange violence-embedded dialogue between the Shaman and the demon who proves to be the controversial Sheriff Dan, a wasp poisoning survivor, guardian of law and order, and a violent murderer. Sheriff Dan’s metamorphosed body is invested with affective stickiness not only because of the obvious connection to climate change through the wasp, but also because his character mobilises affective estrangement with his uncanny amalgamation of the human and nonhuman.

Moreover, Shaman Vladek’s defeat becomes at least as affectively engaging because it combines the questions of environmental destruction and the ethics of violence with the imagery of graphic violence that reminds viewers of body horror films (see Clover). Led to believe by Sheriff Dan that his efforts to restore balance in nature can be successful only if he gives up his maleness, Vladek cuts off his genitals (episode 9). Vladek’s violated body is thus rendered sticky and becomes an arena of conflicting ideologies, power—and also gender. The penis is regarded as the definitive cue for maleness (Bordo 23-24), and no longer having one leads to a dramatic change in social situations (see Turner 106). Because of its strong symbolic value, the loss of penis means giving up authority and power defined as naturalised possessions of men. The actual scene of self-castration is sticky with affect because the violent imagery incorporates the narrative theme of environmental destruction that vigorously echoes loss of power.

The pressing crime fiction convention of capturing and punishing the murderer is not realised in a simple way in the second season of *Fortitude*. On the one hand, the murderer is found out and stripped of power. At the same time, the question of his fate and the

justification of his violence remain to stir the audience's minds. How the series treats the violence in the laboratory and Vladek's murderous acts highlights—but does not give definite answers to—the ethical question of whether and to what extent the end justifies the means; the series thus leaves viewers confused. Nor does it unambiguously posit either scientific or indigenous knowledge as more ethical than the other. Because of conflicting aspirations based on different values, cultural discourses highlighted from different perspectives, volatile social relations and generic mobility, the end of the series does not offer a pleasurable closure but, rather, invites affective estrangement. The crime narrative is pulled towards speculativeness and draws strongly on the uncanny in its discussion of the roles of violence in society. *Fortitude* therefore stirs the audiences' emotions beyond the sensations of a conventional, realistic crime story, thereby offering room for other, affectively known alternatives.

Concluding Thoughts

Fortitude plays with contrasts and generic mobility as it moves from clean research laboratories where experimental dissections take place to murder scenes where the fleshy, messy and violent materiality of death becomes concrete. While the murders and forensics ground the series firmly in the tradition of crime fiction, through its speculative science and uncanny violence the series also plays with the speculative as it combines the features of science fiction, uncanny horror and body horror. All this creates a hybrid narrative that evokes viewer affects through different generic conventions and genre expectations. This generic blurring reminds us of the hybridity present in visual and literary genres. At the same time, the series also moves between the boundaries of the human and nonhuman, and, while doing so, questions the violence based on, and the construction of, this very distinction. By representing human violence in terms of a paradox, as something natural and innate in human beings as “apex predators,” while simultaneously deeming it unnatural, animalistic and nonhuman, *Fortitude* promotes affective estrangement. Who is the violent “animal”? The nonhuman or the human animal? Therefore, *Fortitude* seems to beg the fundamental question of violence, the natural and ethics: what is the difference between the violence of a polar bear and that of a human animal?

Affective economies are culture- and time-specific, and the ways in which certain objects become sticky can be seen as indicators of the values, fears and anxieties of the

particular place and period. When discussing the cautionary aspects of early crime stories, John Scaggs (15-16) refers to the disruption of time that is one of the typical markers of Gothic stories: when the past uncannily comes to haunt the present in the form of secrets and ghosts, the intellectual and social tensions of different periods are highlighted. Our interpretation is that through its affective treatment of the *What if?* question, *Fortitude* embeds strong cautionary tendencies in its representation of ecological destruction. The series makes global of the local: when viewers become aware of the effects of thawing permafrost on the small fictional island, they are simultaneously reminded of the effects of climate change in different parts of the “real” world. *Fortitude* specifically invites associations to affective economies outside of fiction by the image of the polar bear and the parasitic wasp. Both the bear and the parasite wasp gather stickiness as the epicentre of fears related to global warming. The wasps also strongly tie in with the speculative *What if?* question which is pursued and developed throughout the series and beyond. This question begins to haunt the viewers, wrapping them in an affective straightjacket of anxiety. It has been argued that affective or emotional engagement with stories may inspire action for combating climate change (see Weik von Mossner). In a time when rationally motivated knowledge about the climate change and other environmental threats can become overwhelming, “speaking” through affective and speculative fiction about the Anthropocene may, indeed, be more efficient in promoting consciousness about the pending dangers threatening the planet Earth.

NOTES

1 In her recent dissertation, Kaisa Kortekallio studies “mutant narratives” in contemporary ecological science fiction. Building on posthuman and cognitive theories, she pays attention to how various hybridities in the narratives contribute to “embodied estrangement” and integrates the stories into the experiential situation of the present ecological crisis.

2 Literary science fiction narratives starting from *Frankenstein* have evoked affective estrangement through a sense of awe and terror and often uncanny horror (for more on affect and science fiction, see also Hellstrand et al.; Koistinen *Human Question*, article four).

3 The Anthropocene is a widely debated concept. Originally connected to human impacts detectable in geology, it is now used in many fields of research when referring to and describing the all-encompassing effects of human activity on the planet Earth (see e.g. Haraway *Staying*).

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