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## Chapter 5

### *Law of the Land*: Shades of Nordic Noir in an Arctic Western

Kaisa Hiltunen

*Armoton maa* (*Law of the Land*, 2017), a Finnish-Norwegian coproduction and the debut feature of the Finnish director and writer Jussi Hiltunen, is set on the western border in the North of Finland and concerns the painful relationship between a retiring police officer and his two sons, who do not know that they are brothers. The criminal son's return from prison angers the community and a manhunt is organized. The spectacular northern landscapes, shot in winter, and the downbeat mood, are the most distinctive features of what is obviously a contemporary western. Without mentioning specific films, Hiltunen admits to the influence of the genre, seeing an almost natural connection between the story's location and the western stemming from the remote arctic landscape, where it takes a long time for the police to arrive and which therefore remains outside the scope of law (Kahila 2017, Virranniemi 2017). The film's violent and masculine ethos is another element connecting it with the western. Nevertheless, to read the film only as a western would be reductive.

*Law of the Land* is a complex case of genre hybridity in which elements of Nordic noir are undeniable, but difficult to separate from other influences. Nordic noir, especially in the form of television series, has recently travelled to the Northern parts of the Nordic countries and gone through some transformations. Because of its "dark aesthetics," the melancholy mood, and the criminal activity it focuses on, *Law of the Land* can be seen to adapt Nordic noir. At the same time, it lacks elements, such as the police investigation, thought to be typical of Nordic noir. The

film's promotional material use the words "arctic drama" and "western" to describe it, and according to the producers, "The film features characteristics of both modern drama and traditional Western."<sup>1</sup> On its web site, the Finnish Film Foundation describes *Law of the Land* as "[a] modern borderline western taking place on both sides of the northern Finnish-Swedish border." Many Finnish film critics (Lehtonen 2017, Rosenqvist 2017, Savolainen 2017, Valotie 2017) have recognized the influence of the western. In one review, "Law of the Land is a Laplandish western" (Lehtonen 2017), and Sam Pekinpah and contemporary American crime film are recognized as influences (Rissanen 2017). A couple of reviewers also mention Nordic noir (Alho 2017, Lehti 2017). The Norwegian film database Filmfront describes the film as a *Nordic noir-western*, a term that points to the common origin of the crime film and the western (Arvas & Ruohonen 2016, 58) and to the flexibility of genres in general (see Altman 1999, Neale 1999).

Because the northern location is such an essential part of *Law of the Land*, a third category is needed to analyze it in the context of Finnish Lapland films, an eclectic group of approximately forty films set in Lapland. Apart from the location, what connects these films is their tendency to portray Lapland as Finland's "internal other."<sup>2</sup> In recent years, the emphasis has been on genre films (Hiltunen 2019). This article asks how *Law of the Land* as a contemporary western adapts elements from Nordic noir and modifies the Lapland film.

*Law of the Land* exemplifies the adaptability of Nordic noir, a film style that some critics argue is past its peak. Kim Toft Hansen and Anne Marit Waade observe that the term Nordic noir is often used as an external marker to promote works that have very little in common and to brand films that have not even been produced in the Nordic countries and that have very little in common with crime fiction (Toft Hansen and Waade 2017, 5–7; see also Steenberg 2017, 62–

63). Moreover, because *Law of the Land* balances between genres and styles, audiences are likely to read it in many different ways.

Because *Law of the Land* adapts styles and genres, not a specific work, I am using the concept of adaptation broadly. Definitions that emphasize intentional decision on the part of the artist (Cutchins 2017, 80) or claim that an adaptation has “an overt and defining relationship to prior texts” (Hutcheon 2013, 3) are too narrow for the purposes of this analysis. Nico Dicecco (2017, 611–615) proposes that adaptation be viewed as a process with an experiencing individual at its center. Such a performative approach means recognizing the important role of the viewer in identifying “markers of adaptation” and in deciding which features of the work will be scrutinized. As Dicecco observes, different audiences prioritize different aspects (form, theme, marketing material, setting, etc.) of adaptations and this leads to the production of “materially different adaptations.” Viewed in this way, the film is not a pre-given entity but produced in particular embodied situations, and interpretations of films are always biased. Where the viewer directs her attention and which aspects of the film she deems significant is in many ways affected by her current situation, in this case by the interests of a researcher, whose roots are in northern Finland and who has a special interest in Lapland films. Therefore, I begin by analyzing *Law of the Land* in the context of Lapland films. I then ask how this “arctic western” adapts elements of Nordic noir and how it exemplifies the dispersion or mutation of Nordic noir.

### **Seriously Western**

Lapland films are a diverse mixture and do not constitute a proper genre, yet they circulate representations in which Lapland is portrayed as different from the rest of Finland. Since the 1920s, Lapland has been a source of exoticism and otherness for Finnish filmmakers, most of

whom come from the South. This outsider's perspective has produced mystical, wild, and comic adventures and depictions of Laplanders as primitive and excessive in behavior (Hiltunen 2019, Lehtola 2000).

Since the premieres of two popular films, the comic adventures *Rare Exports* (Helander, 2010) and *Napapiirin sankarit (Lapland Odyssey)* (Karukoski 2010), several genre films have been set in Lapland. *Kättilö (The Midwife)* (Jokinen, 2015) combines romance and war genres in its story about the Lapland War (Hiltunen & Sääskilahti 2017). In the international co-production *The Big Game* (Helander, 2014) a local boy saves the president of the United States after a plane crash. These and many other films, such as the two sequels to the *Lapland Odyssey* (Airaksinen 2015, Lymi 2017), have made use of Lapland exoticism.

Lapland seems to have inspired filmmakers to try genres such as the western and science fiction that have been rarities in the Finnish film industry. Lapland played the role of the Wild West in the self-ironic *Villi Pohjola (The Wild North)* (Tarkas, 1955–1963) trilogy. Hannu Salmi (1994, 149–150) and Jorma Lehtola (2000, 165–168) have noted that the indigenous people who appeared in *Villin pohjolan salattu laakso (The Secret Valley of the Wild North, 1963)*, living in a utopia of their own, looked like a mixture of the Sami<sup>3</sup> and American Indians. *Aila – Pohjolan tytär (Arctic Fury, 1951)* adapts the western in a more discreet manner. The affair between a reindeer herder's daughter and a corrupted non-local hunter ends violently in the fells where the quarrelsome lovers shoot each other dead. The scene is reminiscent of King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946). *Lapin kullan kimallus (Gold Fever in Lapland)* (Lindman, 1999), a film about gold panning, and *Mosku – Lajinsa viimeinen (Mosku – The Last of His Kind)* (Suominen, 2003), the life-story of the notorious reindeer proprietor, deal with territorial issues and conflicts between hunters.

The story of *Law of the Land* can be summarized as follows: The protagonist Lasse Kunttonen (Ville Virtanen), a police officer with a violent past nearing retirement, has two sons, Jaakko (Antti Holma) and Erkki (Mikko Neuvonen), with different women. Jaakko, who has been in prison for killing his stepfather, has returned to the village with his gang. Looking for Lasse, he encounters Erkki, and mortally wounds Erkki's stepfather. Lasse's old acquaintances set after Jaakko, hunting him for the bounty the villagers have promised to pay. Trying to prevent Erkki from joining the hunters, Lasse finally tells him that Jaakko is his brother. In the end, Lasse dies of the bounty hunter's bullet and saves Jaakko.

*Law of the Land* takes its western-ness seriously. It adapts the generic elements in an earnest and bold manner with no trace of parody or irony. As film critic Juha Rosenqvist (2017) points out, the film is dead serious from the beginning to the end. However, instead of attempting to relocate the American West just as it stands to Finnish Lapland, the filmmakers have freely adapted the themes and symbolism of the western, which is a diverse genre in itself (Altman 1999, 52–57, Neale 1999, 125–141), to the northern conditions. In *Law of the Land* snowy landscapes have replaced deserts and prairies. Snowmobiles and pick-ups have replaced horses. Instead of cattle ranches, the arctic landscape is the home for husky farms, reindeer herding and wolf poaching. The standard iconography of the western can also be found: the guns (and the readiness to use them), the style of dress (checkered shirts, fur vests, the occasional Stetson), the characters' appearance (ungroomed beards and hair). Yet despite an abundance of familiar western elements, the film clearly exceeds the genre in being one of the few Lapland films with a strong focus on crime.

Unlike most of the filmmakers who have worked in Lapland, the self-taught Jussi Hiltunen is in familiar territory. Born in Lapland, he decided not to go to a film school in

Helsinki (Laitala 2017), and continues to live and work there. The local knowledge and insider's gaze he possesses lends the story local flavor. *Law of the Land* does not exoticize Lapland in the same manner as many earlier films have done. For example, the Sámi appear only in one scene and they do not wear the traditional outfit gákti that they wear in many Lapland films. Nor does the film create contrasts between the North and the South. The characters are not overly eccentric and although their actions are extreme, this is not because they live in Lapland. Rather, their conduct, like many elements of the film as a whole, conforms to international genre conventions. Thus, the father-son theme travels effortlessly within the western cultural context.

The way *Law of the Land* combines local and global is also a characteristic of Nordic noir and according to researchers a key to its success. Stougaard-Nielsen (2016) argues that Nordic noir seeks to combine international genre conventions with “local social realities and traditions” and that its appeal is based on “its blend of recognizable generic forms and its somewhat exotic local anchoring.” A similar point is made by Hill and Turnbull (2017, 1): “. . . Nordic noir is a global brand that attracts transnational audiences, and at the same time, it is a genre that offers a specific style of storytelling that has the look and feel of a regional, moody, and compelling crime narrative.” How *Law of the Land* combines local and global and how it adapts elements of Nordic noir will be discussed next.

### **Masculine Western Meets Moody Nordic Noir**

The cruel manhunt depicted in *Law of the Land* is set on the border of Finland and Sweden, which has been named the most peaceful border of the world by the residents of the town of Tornio. Nevertheless, the story was inspired by real-life events. In developing the script, the director heard of an incident, which occurred in Pello. On the border of Finland and Sweden, the

municipality of Pello has lost its own police station. One day, robbers broke in the home of Pello's former police officer and he had to deal with them on his own, because it took so long for the police to arrive (Hakkarainen 2017, Virranniemi 2017). The viewer learns early on that after the closing of the police station the arrival of the police would take much longer. Television news reports: "gradually citizens have learned not to call the police, because they are unlikely to come." This situation enables the escalation of illegal activity in the community. After Lasse's retirement, the only police officer to appear in the story is his Swedish colleague (Pernilla August). People in this "merciless country" (as the film's original title reads) are used to solving their conflicts outside the law. After having feebly tried to prevent the bounty hunters from going after Jaakko, the Swedish colleague tells Lasse that he has to handle the situation by himself.

Taking law into one's own hands is not only a convention of the western but it can also be interpreted as social criticism, although film critics do not mention it. Social commentary and criticism have been considered essential characteristics of Nordic noir (Hansen & Waade 2017, 82; 166) and contemporary Nordic crime narratives more generally (Nestingen 2008, 14). The closing down of the police station can be seen as criticizing the shutdown of the welfare state, but this is as far as the film goes in social criticism. The incidence does give the story some local color, which Toft Hansen and Waade (2017, 63) see as important for Nordic noir: "Nordic crime drama treats places and locations in a very particular way, and several recurrent locations clearly indicate close relationships between plot and place. Consequently, style should be regarded as the televisual or cinematic window to portrayals of local color in film or television drama."

However, the relationship between the plot and the place is not straightforward in *Law of the Land*. The viewer who knows western Lapland recognizes the inauthenticity of the setting. The landscape cannot be from a small northern Finnish border town, where the story is supposed to



take place. In reality, the film was shot in northern Norway (Kaura 2017), which often happens because of budgetary reasons and more impressive landscape, as some other Finnish filmmakers have commented (Kinnunen 2010).

The narrative structure of *Law of the Land* roughly follows that of the western. After the establishing shot, in a version of the classical saloon scene, Jaakko and his associates enter a local bar, where the proprietor and other customers eye them with suspicion. Later, the searches, chases and violent confrontations take place outdoors, in the mostly open landscape. The final lethal gunfight between Lasse and the bounty hunters bears some resemblance to the final shoot-out of the Western with the difference here that both the adversary and the hero die (Fig. 5.1).



Fig. 5.1 The father and the son on a manhunt in arctic surroundings in *Law of the Land* (Jussi Hiltunen 2017)

The pace of the narrative is calm, even stagnant at times, but tension starts to build up from the first image. There is very little explaining, too little as some critics have complained (Rosenqvist 2017), and the characters are psychologically thin (see Monticone 2014, 340). The fascinating complexity of Nordic noir, which is all about finding explanations and motivations (Waade & Jensen 2013, 196), is missing from *Law of the Land*, where the plot is straightforward in comparison.<sup>4</sup> Film critic Jouni Vikman (2017) comments: “Those who expect modern nordic [sic] noir may be disappointed, because despite some moments of action the crime plot is secondary to the personal relationships.”<sup>5</sup> However, the scarcity of explanations creates sense of mystery and requires the viewer to pay close attention to the narrative.

Feelings of exclusion seem to characterize most of the characters. In the film’s promotional leaflet, Hiltunen says that the ethos according to which everyone has to make it on their own is a typical mentality in the remote villages of Lapland. However, such sullen characters are not a northern Finnish specialty, but also a feature typical of the western and Nordic noir. Lasse’s words in the beginning of the film express this mentality. Against the rugged landscape views, his fatalistic voiceover, a narrative device typical of classical film noir, articulates:

My own father was a man who did not talk much. The only thing he found time to teach me was that everyone here is on his own. That came naturally here. I was not able to teach my sons even that. They had to make do without. I did many bad things that should not be talked about aloud. The only thing I regret is that I did not know how to be with my sons. (Translation Kaisa Hiltunen)

The fatalistic tone pervades the rest of the film and connects it with the pessimism of noir.

Paula Arvas and Voitto Ruohonen draw attention to the common history of the western and the crime narratives, pointing out that Jack London's adventure novels and cowboy figures influenced the figure of the private detective in the early American crime fiction. The urban detective was hired in a similar manner as a cowboy and he too worked alone, rather than under anyone's supervision. Although the detective developed into a more talkative character, both were outsiders (Arvas and Ruohonen 2016, 58). Lasse is such a quiet outsider who finds it difficult to form close relationships, and Erkki too is becoming detached from his wife and son. Thus they are reproached for neglecting their families just as the characters of Nordic noir are reproached. The latter devote themselves to work, whereas the absence of Lasse and Erkki is portrayed as almost natural. They are used to going their own ways, hunting for several days. As they begin to question their way of life, the film suggests the dangers of such traditional masculinity.

According to Paul Monticone, when film noir was combined with western in the late 1940s, the genre's narrative shifted to male melodrama and more attention was paid to the hero's psychology (2014, 338; 345–346). Something similar happens between contemporary western and Nordic noir here. *Law of the Land* does not probe the characters' psychology very deeply, but is all about male relationships. It is about the guilt Lasse feels and the bitterness of the sons. In this violent male melodrama, guns talk more than people do. The morally ambiguous character of Lasse tries to atone for his past deeds and his sons are trying to kill each other. The film leaves women as onlookers, who are encountered mostly in domestic settings. Kuntonen's ex-wife (Outi Mäenpää) has cancer and Erkki's wife (Malin Buska) takes care of a hotel, in which no customers are seen. They are always either worried of what the men are up to or

threatened by the bad people. Even Kuntonen's female colleague on the Swedish side of the border is powerless against the man hunters. Such traditional gender roles are more familiar in the western than in Nordic noir, where women have taken active, leading roles. *Law of the Land* also resembles those several Lapland films in which Lapland is represented as an arena of male adventures and where women are less significant, as for example *Gold Fever in Lapland*, *Mosku*, *Rare Exports*, *Lapland Odyssey 1* and *Big Game*.

Broken families are just as much a core of the western as of Nordic noir. Matthew Carter and Marek Paryz (2018, 3) point out that family matters are often at the heart of the western, but researchers have not paid much attention to this issue. According to Hill and Turnbull (2017, 15), people who work in the film industry stress the importance of family matters for crime narratives, seeing a mixture of family melodrama and crime genres in Nordic noir. The killing within the family links *Law of the Land* to the Norwegian *Frikjent* (*The Acquitted*, 2015–2016). The Swedish *Män som hatar kvinnor* (*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, 2009), the British *Y Gwyll/Hinterland* (2013–2016), and the Swedish/Danish *Bron/Broen* (*The Bridge*, 2011–2018), which also deal with a secrecy related to the family past. Lasse's inner world remains closed to the viewer, but his pain is visualized through his apathetic behavior – his reticence and slow movements. He holds secrets like Aksel Borgen, Lisbeth Salander or Saga Norén, but with the difference that his secrets remain secrets (Fig. 5.2).



Fig. 5.2. The male protagonists try to sort out family issues with guns in *Law of the Land* (Jussi Hiltunen 2017)

Like film noir, Nordic noir is a style associated with a variety of genres rather than a genre of its own (see Neale 1999, 164). What is most clearly Nordic noir about *Law of the Land* is its style: the dim lighting, the muted colors, the melancholy soundtrack (which includes the two songs *Afton sång* and *Huina Haina*), the introverted and serious characters and high and secretive camera angles. Waade and Jensen (2013) talk about such qualities as production values that are specific to Nordic noir. The restricted color palette, which favors different shades of white, grey, and steely blues and browns, contributes perhaps the most clearly to the film's melancholy mood that characterizes Nordic noir on the levels of plot, imagery and characters (Waade & Jensen 2017, 380).

Toft Hansen and Waade (2017, 7) discuss the imprecision of the term “Nordic noir,” wondering whether it indicates anything more than “that the stories include something ‘dark/black’ in the Nordic region.” Darkness often refers to unsolved things and secrets, which haunt the characters, not only to the darkness of the surroundings. In *Law of the Land* the darkness is both internal and external. The reduced colors, at times almost black and white, make the landscape look harsh and unforgiving. Many of the scenes take place in twilight.

### **Nordic Noir in Northern Peripheries**

As Nordic noir ventures further North, it goes through transformations, one of which is the diversification of the setting. Wilderness and peripheries have become more and more common locations for Nordic noir in the last few years. This may be a sign of either the diffusion or vitality and adaptability of this cinematic style, which never was a fixed genre (Hill and Turnbull 2017, 1). Series like the Norwegian *Monster* (2017) and the Finnish *Ivalo* (*Arctic Circle*, 2018) have taken crime stories to small communities in remote areas.<sup>6</sup> Some of the key works such as *The Bridge* and *The Killing* were confined to urban locations, but very soon, examples of more rural locations emerged.

In *Law of the Land*, the narrative makes the most of its Arctic location, dwelling on the snowy and open mountain landscape, which is often shot from a bird’s-eye view – an angle characteristic of *The Bridge* and *The Acquitted*, for example. In this bare and rugged landscape, there is a sense of minimalism. It is not the minimalism of built environment, as in some Nordic noir series, but a minimalism of the surroundings in their totality (see Toft Hansen & Waade 2017, 67). In the landscape shots, there is a grim beauty without exoticism. The contrast created between the vastness of the wilderness and the smallness of the human is a feature of the

western. In *Law of the Land* the surroundings function also as a projection of the protagonists' inner landscape.<sup>7</sup> Nature has played a prominent role in many Lapland films, but it has rarely been used in such a spectacular manner as in *Law of the Land* (c.f. Rosenqvist 2017).

Many of those Nordic noir films and series that are set in the northern peripheries give nature and weather conditions an all-encompassing presence. Several films, some of them from the “pre-Nordic noir period,” have already visited the North. I will restrict my observations to Nordic productions. One such example is Erik Skjoldbjærg's *Insomnia* (1997), which is set in a Norwegian coastal town during the summer, when the midnight sun drives the police officer to the brink of madness. As Maaret Koskinen mentions, *Insomnia* not only made use of northern exoticism but also “demonized” certain aspects of the rural area. After *Insomnia*, Norwegian crime series and films have continued to make use of the country's spectacular landscapes, which are situated far from urban centers. (Koskinen 2016, 214–215). *Acquitted* makes most of the beautiful fjords. The Swedish *Solstorm* (*Sunstorm*) (Lindblom 2008), based on Åsa Larsson's crime novel, is set in the snow-covered mining town of Kiruna, shrouded in polar night. The French-Swedish television series *Midnight Sun* (2016) situates its brutal, yet visually colorful story also in Kiruna, where the French investigator suffers from the light nights. Lasse is related to the anxious, sleep deprived protagonists of the above-mentioned productions, but unlike many of them, he works within familiar territory. In fact, the film does not include a character that would be comparable to the inspectors or researchers who are sent to far-away places in Nordic noir series such as *Monster* or *Arctic Circle*.

The interaction between Lasse Kunttonen and his Swedish colleague across the national boundary links the film loosely to the border thematic of *The Bridge*. It is not always clear to the viewer on which side of the border the action takes place. The border crossing has been

discussed in connection with the transnational nature of *The Bridge* (Åberg 2015, 98–99). It has also been discussed as a part of the geopolitical content of the series (Saunders 2017). In *Law of the Land*, the national borders of Finland, Sweden and Norway are mentioned in connection with the possible hideout of Jaakko, and border guards are involved in the illegal search. However, the issue of the nation is not thematized and the national differences and specificities, which Åberg (2015, 101) and Stougaard-Nielsen (2017) consider essential for the success of Nordic noir, are not highlighted in this film. The wilderness looks the same on both sides of the border. In comparison to many of these films and series that portray international mobility and border crossings, *Law of the Land* feels hermetic. Everything happens within the sparsely populated, yet extended, community. Jaakko's return creates unrest and affects whole families. Members of the community want to solve the conflict without outside assistance. When the police arrive in the last scene, everything is already over.

The border areas have been compelling locations for recent Nordic noir in Finland too. The actor Ville Virtanen plays the main character also in *Sorjonen (Bordertown, 2016–)*, which has been called the first Finnish Nordic noir series. *Sorjonen* investigates a case that requires him to cross the Russian border. *Arctic Circle* is another recent example where the Russian border is crossed. In the case of Finland and Russia, the border crossing never goes unnoticed, while in *Law of the Land* the border area is open and only loosely controlled. There is a sense of wildness.<sup>8</sup>

## **Conclusions**

*Law of the Land* is an example of how Nordic noir infiltrates other genres in ways that are complex and often impossible to specify. Nordic noir can certainly be found in the dark,



melancholy mood of this contemporary arctic western. But we should keep in mind Toft Hansen and Waade's reflection on whether Nordic noir means anything more than "that the stories include something 'dark/black' in the Nordic region" and the fact that they have questioned the analytical value of the concept of Nordic noir (Hansen & Waade 2017, 5–7). It would be tempting to conclude that *Law of the Land* proves them right. Such a conclusion would be possible, because it is easy to see the influence of Nordic noir all around. It is arguable that in addition to the location, only the film's "dark style" connects it to Nordic noir. The crimes and the family issues that the film deals with are familiar to both Nordic noir and the western, but not specific to them. Moreover, the plot lacks a police investigation and the intricacy characteristic of Nordic noir.

Although it is hard to make distinctions between influences in a hybrid like *Law of the Land*, this does not mean that Nordic noir as a style is dead. On the contrary, *Law of the Land* can be argued to exemplify the vitality of Nordic noir as a style by demonstrating that it can be adapted by other genres, even a contemporary arctic western. Because foreign reviews of *Law of the Land* are almost nonexistent (in IMDB there are only two reviews by critics and one user review), it is impossible to say how foreign audiences and critics would categorize it. Some might see *Law of the Land* as exemplifying the vitality of the western. Theorists of Nordic noir have noted that branding of films and their reception by audiences are not identical. Annette Hill and Susan Turnbull (2017, 8) note, "Nordic noir is as much a creation of the audience, in all its global diversity, as of those who create it." This is true of many other film styles and genres, but it is an especially valid claim for Nordic noir. This idea is compatible with Dicecco's (2017) definition of adaptation and his argument that different audiences consider different aspects of films important. For me, a relevant aspect of *Law of the Land* is the fact that it is another

representation of Lapland. Although Lapland film is an even broader category than the western or Nordic noir, it helps anchor the film to a certain cinematic legacy. But when the slippery nature of the film genres (or styles) considered here and the performative nature of adaptation are put together, it is easy to see that there is no unequivocal answer to the question what *Law of the Land* adapts or is an adaptation of.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The original Finnish text reads: ”Elokuva keskustelee sekä modernin dramaan että perinteisen westernin kanssa.” This and other translations from Finnish are by Kaisa Hiltunen.

<sup>2</sup> David R. Jansson (2003) talks of an internal other in connection with his idea of *internal orientalism*, which is based on Edward Said’s theory of orientalism.

<sup>3</sup> The Sami are an indigenous minority living in the Sápmi, which encompasses parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.

<sup>4</sup> Because of temporal limits, a film cannot provide as much background information as a series.

<sup>5</sup> The original Finnish text reads: ”modernia nordic noiria odottavat voivat toiminnan hetkistä huolimatta pettyä rikostarinajuonteen toissijaisuuteen henkilökohtaisten ihmissuhdekuvioiden rinnalla.”

<sup>6</sup> Earlier Finnish crime films with noir qualities, such as the several *Vares* films (2004–2015) and *Pahan pappi (Priest of Evil)* (Saarela, 2010) have stuck to urban environments (Nordfjörð 2015, 67–69).

<sup>7</sup> One outdoor scene in the film stands out. After Erkki has brought news of the death of his stepfather, there is a cut to a bird’s-eye view of an elk standing on a snow-covered field. Almost immediately, the animal starts to run in slow motion away from the camera, as if frightened by

something. The film continues with a scene in which Lasse is having breakfast with Erkki's family, without connecting the elk scene to the narrative. Could it be a foreboding of the tragic outcome?

<sup>8</sup> Fears related to open borders have been addressed by the contemporary American westerns *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (Jones, 2005) and *No Country for Old Men* (Coen & Coen, 2007) (Fojas 2011). In contrast to these films, in *Law of the Land* the border, or what lies behind it, is not a cause of fear.

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