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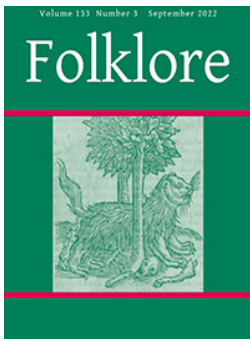
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‘Something’s Not Right in Silverhöld’: Nordic Supernatural and Environmental and Species Justice in *Jordskott*

Heidi Kosonen  & Pauline Greenhill 

Abstract

In the Swedish/Finnish/British/Norwegian television series *Jordskott* (2015–17) child victims’ mysterious disappearances signal that ‘something’s not right’ in Silverhöld, a Swedish town. Three detectives uncover a conflict between the locals who depend on a local industry and preternatural human-like but non-human forest creatures familiar from Nordic tradition and fairylore. Both humans and semi/non-humans are ambivalent, but what sets the latter apart is their implication in caring for nature, protecting it, and punishing those who harm it. We analyse this series’ instantiation of a folkloristic popular green criminology, based in the idea that popular discourses’ representations of crimes and harms may offer serious interventions into issues of environmental, ecological, and species justice. Our ecocritical analysis suggests that tradition offers material for reflection, but also for sociocultural intervention, as it is circulated to address the dependencies and hierarchical configurations between humans and other life-forms, and the many consequences of ecological and individual harm.

‘Something’s not right’¹

An ink blot spreads on papyrus like rot and damages contracts, photographs of lush mysterious nature, medical drawings of human–nature mutations, and newspaper clippings of missing children and industry felling of old-growth forests. In an x-ray image, tree roots inch out and take hold of human lungs. They spread from aged sepia-coloured family photographs. These images, reiterated in the title sequence of Nordic noir television series *Jordskott* (2015–17), created by Henrik Björn, highlight the central themes of the ecocritical and arguably posthumanist (see Mäntymäki 2018) Swedish/Finnish/British/Norwegian production. In this article, we examine *Jordskott* as demonstrating how retellings of tradition and folklore can usefully sound on significant issues of environmental, ecological, and species justice.

In the first season, Stockholm police SWAT team negotiator Eva Thörnblad (Moa Gammel) returns to her hometown, Silverhöjd (Silverhill), to deal with her dead father's estate. It is seven years since her daughter Josefine (Stina Sundlöf present/Amie Vestholm past) disappeared during their lakeside picnic. Investigating another vanished child, Anton Leander (Hobbe Häggblom), with national detective Göran Wass (Göran Ragnerstam) and local detective Tom Aronsson (Richard Forsgren), Eva learns that her father's business, Thörnblad Mineral & Cellulosa, is implicated. Centre-periphery oppositions distance the two men from one another—Göran, the detective from Stockholm, and Tom, the local cop. Eva instantiates both positions—originally from Silverhöjd, now working in Stockholm. Further, she is not only police but also victim, given her daughter's disappearance. Together the three representatives of the law uncover a conflict causing strife and violence between the locals who depend on Thörnblad Mineral & Cellulosa, on the one hand, and preternatural—beyond normalized expectation—human-like water, mountain, and forest beings and the humans who support them, on the other. As a liminal figure, Eva is well positioned to uncover the truth and resolve the contradictions manifesting in the clash between the supernatural—completely outside the conventional laws of Western science—beings trying to protect nature and the humans' murderous encroachments.

In the series, human children are the victims whose quintessential blameless vulnerability signals, as one character puts it, that 'something's not right in Silverhöjd' when villagers' activities involving Thörnblad Mineral & Cellulosa are set under scrutiny. In this sense, as Kim Toft Hansen, Steven Peacock, and Sue Turnbull discuss, the familiar popular media trope of a little girl's disappearance 'marks a departure from mysterious "man-made" acts of crime, venturing into a growing sense of a supernatural basis ... involving an elaborate relationship between supernatural horror tropes and an ecocritical response to man's intervention of nature' (Hansen, Peacock, and Turnbull 2018, 15). This move is in line with several other Nordic noir series. As Anne Marit Waade argues, thanks to its public service commitment, Nordic crime fiction 'is characterized by a particular double plotline: besides the crime narrative, there is also a political and critical "plot" dealing with challenging societal conditions' (Waade 2020, 47). In *Jordskott* this double plotline links to critical issues in Swedish forestry, forming the backbone of the country's economy, and those of other Nordic states. Swedish/Nordic forestry has in recent decades received increased criticism from local branches of the environmental organization Greenpeace along with civil activist movements seeking to protect the biodiversity, inherent value, and effective carbon sink of Nordic forests from local businesses.²

We here analyse *Jordskott's* instantiation of a popular green criminology, the perspectives based in the idea that popular discourses' representations of *crimes* (acts formally codified as against the law) and *harms* (acts causing individual, social, and ecological damage but not necessarily classified in the legal system) offer serious interventions into issues of sociocultural, environmental, ecological, and species justice. This field of study intersects with popular criminology on the one hand, and

green criminology on the other. Popular criminology, a branch of cultural criminology's interest in intersections between cultures and crimes, seeks in particular to develop coherent frameworks for examining 'the connections and interplay between academic discourses about crime—such as those found in academic books, scholarly journal articles, and criminological theory—and discourses about crime found in popular culture—literature, film, television, the Internet, and in general public attitudes' (Kohm 2017). Green criminology explores environmental, ecological, and species crimes, harms, and justice (e.g. South and Brisman 2013), and popular green criminology their cultural and mediated aspects. We take folkloristic green criminological (Kohm and Greenhill 2013) and ecological and ecocritical perspectives (see, e.g., Abram 2019; Benavides 2013; Letcher 2001; Maitland 2012; Thesz 2019; Thompson 2019, 3–73).³

'Heal the earth's wounds': Supernatural Folklore Elements in Nordic Noir

In the series, the ecocritical stance on Nordic forestry, greedily seeking to profit under the rhetoric of sustainability, is conjoined with a magical realist story teeming with non-human characters familiar from Nordic⁴ folklore and mythology. The characters in question are cross-Nordic nature sprites we identify as *rå*, Swedish forest-, earth-, and water-dwelling creatures ruling over 'a certain part of the natural world' (Blecher and Blecher 1993, xxi; see also Granberg 1935; Liungman 1961; Rooth 1961; Simpson 1988, 197–242; Wikman 1961, 11). The plot reiterates a relationship Jacqueline Simpson recognizes from cross-cultural fairylore: 'Some legends imply that when fairies and humans are at odds, it is because the humans have acted badly and spoilt a previously good relationship' (Simpson 1988, 168). The connection between *rå* and ecological balance is part of Nordic tradition (e.g. Kuusela 2020; Harva 2020; Skjelbred 1991), called on by the series creators. And further, Hansen identifies 'an eco-critical propensity within contemporary crime narratives, which comes mostly to the fore when crime is combined with fantastic tropes from either sci-fi or horror' (Hansen 2020, 289). This connection becomes clear in a plethora of other noir series.⁵

Nordic noir, like other genre designations simultaneously descriptive and prescriptive (Frow 2015), perhaps most tellingly offers a marketing tool to sell various series from across Europe (and North American and Australian remakes and reboots) to a global audience. Keith J. Hayward and Steve Hall offer a useful capsule description:

Nordic noir is a popular crime genre associated with a region (Scandinavia), a narrative style (unpretentious/socially critical) and a particular aesthetic look (dark/foreboding). Renowned for its psychologically complex characterization and gloomy *mise-en-scène*, and spanning best-selling crime fiction, film, and globally successful television drama, Nordic noir has mushroomed from regional niche market to international phenomenon in little more than a decade. (Hayward and Hall 2021, 1; see also Hill and Turnbull 2017)

As is common in television serial programming, a seasonal arc leads to a resolution.

Glen Creeber (2015) notes that much Nordic noir focuses on supportive communities, redemption, and hope that good can be more powerful than evil. Yet as

Annette Hill and Susan Turnbull note, 'evil will inevitably return in the next season, if a series is re-commissioned. As is the case in long-running crime series, there are only temporary resolutions to social problems, or crimes, encountered because the problems that the drama confronts are usually intractable, and the show must go on' (Hill and Turnbull 2017). The same is true of *Jordskott*.

Jordskott's themes follow the way 'a trend in the development of Nordic noir hinges on mythological or supernatural layers combined with elements from thrillers, science fiction, or horror genres, often connected to an ecocritical, peripheral perspective ... Supernatural layers have to do primarily with folktales, popular beliefs, and ghost or horror stories' (Agger 2020, 19).⁶ Accordingly, television critics have described the show as 'a police procedural, a supernatural drama, a family drama and an environmental drama all rolled into one' (Hirons 2015) and a 'fairytale-noir monster mash-up ... an eco-friendly journey into a heart of darkness'.⁷

The mysterious, haunting lullaby sung by the Thörnblad family offers clues to the series' ecocritical and posthumanist plot. It evokes not only the human pact with nature and its guardians, 'written in blood', but also the forest and mines which are the primary loci for the first season's events. Many elements the song invokes are explained in the diegesis—the fictional time, location, characters, and happenings that comprise the film's world—in supernatural terms. In particular, the eponymous *jordskott*, literally 'earth sprout' (Mäntymäki 2018, 92) or 'earth shot',⁸ turns out to be a parasite that inhabits people and requires a special potion to maintain it so that it does not consume its host's body. Yet like the *rå*, it connects to the rich Nordic folklore that has been neglected in Jørgen Bruhn's ecocritical, Helen Mäntymäki's posthumanist, and Irina Souch's eco-gothic analyses of *Jordskott*. Elements familiar from Nordic folklore and mythology beneficially participate in these ecocritical and posthumanist aims. In particular, *Jordskott*'s animistic visions of nature (see Abram 2019, 33–35) challenge conventional polarized popular estimations of environmental and species justice (presuming that nature is good and defenceless, and opposed to humans who are evil and not part of nature). They offer a vision that challenges nature's passivized position as 'instrumentalized matter' that Jane Bennett argues 'feed[s] human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption' (Bennett 2010, ix). In keeping with Nordic and other traditions as discussed by Christopher Abram, *Jordskott*'s worldview refuses an easy distinction between nature and culture (Abram 2019, 30–33). Like the Icelandic sagas Abram considers, it offers 'a place for the supernatural [and] troubles the boundaries of ... realism' (Abram 2019, 35), in particular by invoking immanent (and imminent) catastrophe.

'There are forces in nature that can be dangerous if they are wronged': The Nordic Rå and Crimes against the Environment

Central to *Jordskott*'s popular green criminology are hybrid creatures with extraordinary capabilities, including the detective Göran, who belongs to a secret society, Josefine, who returns profoundly changed, and Eva, who is saved from a fatal

bullet wound by the parasite *jordskott*. The semi/non-human creatures also include Esmeralda (Happy Jankell), a vulnerable teen with supernatural powers, whom the show identifies as a fairy-like *huldra* or *skogsrå/skogsfru*, a beautiful and seductive wood sprite said to resemble humans in the front, but not on the back (see Blecher and Blecher 1993, xxi; Granberg 1935, 79; Kuusela 2020; Lindow 1978, 36–37).

Only Esmeralda's particular type of forest-dwelling *skogsrå*, similar to cross-cultural elves (Keightley 1880, 78–93), is explicitly specified in the series. But the diegesis also employs other 'supernatural wardens or guardian spirits' pertinent to pre-Christian Nordic mythologies; beings whose 'duties were to protect the forest [or other natural habitats] from harm and look after it' as Tommy Kuusela (2020, 165) specifies. We also recognize *näck/näcken*, the spirit found in lakes and rivers (Klintberg 2010, 111–29; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1991, 252–59; Lindow 1978, 38–39; Simpson 1988, 203–204), traditionally taking human shape but in *Jordskott* also manifesting in fish form as either two distinct beings or one shapeshifting creature, and *vittra*, inhabiting earth or mountains as well (Klintberg 2010, 199–213; Kuusela 2020, 169), sometimes categorized as trolls (Lindow 2014, 50). Like Esmeralda, many of *Jordskott*'s tailed *rå* (Blecher and Blecher 1993, xxi; Granberg 1935) hide in the midst of humans, blending in and passing by cutting off those appendages, and manifesting the age-old Nordic fear of changelings between 'the hidden folk' and humans (Harva 2020; Klintberg 2010, 192–93; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1991, 208–11). But not all relations between them are hostile; Ylva (Vanja Blomkvist), a wise woman (see Simpson 1988, 123–26) who lives at the edge of the forest, nurtures both water- and hill-folk as her foster children.

We follow international scholars past (e.g. Keightley 1880) and present (e.g. Ashliman 2006),⁹ who include under the cross-cultural rubric of fairies a range of supernatural beings usually dwelling in locations with minimal human settlement but in proximity to humans (see Ashliman 2006, 16–18; Sugg 2018, 39–45). Both humans and semi/non-humans in the series are morally ambivalent. But what sets the latter apart is their implication in caring for nature, protecting it, and punishing those who damage it (Kuusela 2020), similarly to historical Nordic beliefs of 'hidden folk' inhabiting and personifying various natural elements (Granberg 1935; Harva 2020) as well as more recent eco-pagan concepts (Letcher 2001). We link them with fairies internationally because like other such creatures, they are similar to humans in activities like gathering food and having children, and yet different in language, motivations, and territory (see, e.g., Rieti 1991, 212–16). And, as John Lindow discusses with respect to trolls, we link them to the 'nearly universal human need for supernatural beings to represent what we humans are not' and to their moral function of correcting 'errant human behavior' (Lindow 2014, 103 and 62).

The preternatural beings represented in *Jordskott* cross national borders in Nordic countries, whose oral traditions have influenced one another across languages and dialects. In beliefs related to the *rå* of forests, lakes, rivers, earth, and mountains, Kuusela (2020) links the traditions of *skogsrå* from Sweden and Finland; Reimund Kvideland and Henning K. Sehmsdorf (1991) connect Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Faroe Islands, and Swedish-speaking Finland; whereas Uno Harva (2020) recognizes

similarities between the aforementioned and Finnish-speaking Finland, Russia, Estonia, and Germany. Work on supernatural creatures in the Nordic countries usefully contextualizes the beings appearing in *Jordskott*. For example, Ann Helene Bolstad Skjelbred's discussion of Norwegian fairies effectively describes *Jordskott*'s instantiation of *rå*. She notes that they are 'mediators between the powers of nature and humans', and explains the worldview in which they appear in Nordic pre-agrarian and agrarian societies: 'Fairylore is based on the principal conception that nature's total resources are limited and that men are entitled to just their share of these resources ... In many cases the resources of nature were understood to belong to other supranormal agents ... Humanity, therefore, had to relate to these permanent and omnipresent [beings]' (Skjelbred 1991, 215).

Like Skjelbred, Harva (2020) recognizes these beliefs as related to Nordic agrarian humans' dependence on nature. Deities and sprites were honoured, feared, and sometimes worshipped as holding the land, its resources, and the wild animals (see also Liungman 1961) in their power. As Harva's account of the oral traditions of the Finnish peoples suggests, they invoked these *rå*-like creatures to secure good harvests, ensure the sustenance of well-water, or bless the use of land for building a home. The outbreak of an inexplicable disease, such as a rash or fever, signalled the illicit use of natural resources or another type of hurt against the hidden folk, and they were the ones to conciliate (Harva 2020). And when hurt, they could lure away human children and cattle (Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1991, 207–22), as Kuusela explains the Nordic traditions of 'people getting lost or "spirited away" in the forest' (Kuusela 2020, 160). Illustrating the many forms the hidden folk could take, he indicates: 'Sometimes the trapped person encountered an old woman, a black man, a man with green trousers, a young girl, a woman with long hair of green moss, an animal, or another supernatural creature' (Kuusela 2020, 165; see also Wikman 1961).

An inherently sound ecological perspective—the idea that resources are not boundless and that humans must conserve and share them with each other and with other beings—is the narrative motor for *Jordskott*. As long as the humans keep their part of the bargain, it suggests, co-existence is possible. Part of the problem is that humans have forgotten or ignored the ancient agreement between themselves and 'the forest' and treat nature as if it was theirs to exploit. In particular, the series implicitly blames the post-1970s modernizing Swedish society with its free-market capitalist industry relying on wood and minerals—the source of both international export and local jobs. And indeed, the disappearance of Josefine and Anton, the innocent children, results from crimes by two Thörnblad CEOs: Johan Thörnblad (Lars-Erik Berenett) and after his death Gustaf Boren (Peter Andersson). In the following key scene, Johan is revealed as having perpetrated genocide against the *rå* because they stand in the way of his greedy seeking to exploit not only the forest but also the silver in the mountain. His callous disregard for the animals and indeed all creatures who live in the forest, lakes, and rivers, and underground is visually emphasized by the copious taxidermy in his house and office.

Eva learns the truth about the complex situation and her father's culpability in discussion with Ylva (season one, episode seven). As the latter begins to speak, a drone

or helicopter shot shows the green forested mountains extending to the horizon, followed by close-up shots from ground level of the rich forest floor and trees:

Ylva: The Silverhöjd forest contains many secrets. There lives a people who are almost like us. 350 years ago Adolf Fredrik Thörnblad signed an agreement with them. Peace was ensured with his promise to keep the North Woods untouched.¹⁰

As Ylva and Eva talk, the imagery of the lush forest is followed by old manuscript illustrations of the preternatural, yet human-like (but smaller in size) creatures. These beings' clothing locates the agreement in the seventeenth century, but also displays differences of rank between the humans and the forest creatures, the former dressed in courtly style and the latter as peasantry. In a flashback, Eva remembers police officer (nowadays considered a village fool) Olof Gran's (Hans Mosesson's) words:

Olof: Your father had made an enemy of the forest.

Returning to the present, with the two women talking, Ylva continues:

Ylva: But your father Johan wanted to restore the Thörnblad name to greatness. He became obsessed with the rumors of all the riches. I tried to warn him, but he refused to listen to a crazy old lady.

Eva: So he started clearing the North Woods?

Ylva: He did something much worse.

A flashback scene cuts to the forest looking brown and the sky yellow, in the 1970s modernizing Swedish industry. A plane flies over Ylva, spraying a yellow fog that envelops the forest.

Ylva: 1978, Thörnblad Cellulosa used a lethal toxin on the North Woods. I was expecting the worst. But nothing could prepare me for what I saw. The toxin killed all living things. Vegetation, animals ... and those underground.

Eva: How many died?

Ylva: There is only one of them left.

While they speak, in another flashback Ylva looks through the fence at the Thörnblad Cellulosa premises while figures in hazmat suits throw white-wrapped human-like bodies on a huge fire. Then she moves through the yellow miasma in the forest, a scarf over her mouth, until she stops to pick up a brown wrapped bundle containing an unseen crying baby.

Ylva: Through a miracle I found him before someone else did. They scoured the forest to get rid of all the evidence. The agreement had been left in the bundle [with the baby] for someone to find. So I took care of it, and I took care of him ... I brought him up like any other boy. I named him Muns. It means 'life' in their tongue ...

As Ylva talks, the camera shows men in protective gear and breathing apparatus searching, while Ylva hides with the baby, in the toxin-sprayed forest. In the present, Ylva explains how Eva should correct her father's crimes, so that Josefine and other kidnapped children may be returned:

Eva: After what my father did, why didn't he just kill him?

Ylva: He's not out for revenge. Justice to Muns would mean reinstating the agreement your father broke.

Viewers do not actually see the interactions between the hostages and kidnapper Muns, apparently a mountain or mine rå.¹¹ This mysterious character never fully appears on screen—the camera shows glimpses of his head as a baby, innocent like the missing children. Otherwise only the results of his actions manifest, along with several shots from his point of view. Kosonen imagines him earth-dwelling and smaller than humans but human-like. Unsurprisingly, considering the author's background, this reflects Nordic understanding, where these type of rå (*maahiset* in Finnish) closely resemble humans in outlook and manners. They live underground as similar (heteronormative) family units 'leading their lives, having fun, singing and playing, birthing children, celebrating weddings, visiting each other, and sometimes also making visits to human houses and areas' (Harva 2020, 263–98; see also Lindow 1978, 35).¹² Yet, whatever Muns's form, he, like other rå, can be considered 'a shapeshifter who can distort human vision' (Kuusela 2020, 170; see also Granberg 1935).

'Many of them look like us, but they're not like us. They're animals, monsters': Justice and Responsibility from a Human Exceptionalist Perspective

As Skjelbred describes creatures like Muns, in Nordic folklore they were considered as less forgiving than he—more concerned with retribution than justice: 'They acted as good helpers only when people took care to treat them properly. Otherwise, they sought revenge by causing harm mainly to processes of production and reproduction ... Even without a reason for revenge, the fairies constituted a threat' (Skjelbred 1991, 215). Kvideland and Sehmsdorf list several folk beliefs where the 'invisible folk' came to humans' help or built successful relationships with them, but also recount that 'respect and caution were called for' (Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1991, 11).

In *Jordskott*, however, the rå not only defend themselves and others against direct attack, but in addition they kidnap and hold child hostages seeking to prevent further devastation. They act as ecowarriors against the humans threatening their shared world. As the key scene described earlier indicates, once the balance of power in Silverhöjd is destroyed, the guardians fight back. Olof, who has been trying to warn the residents about the danger, tells Eva: 'This is nature's revenge ... The balance must be restored ... Nature is trying to tell us something ... If you don't listen, there'll be a disaster.' A subplot featuring a group of environmental activists recognizes this threat to 'our forest, our water, our future', as one of their leaflets reads. This menace is actualized with the spoiling of Silverhöjd's water, an action not caused by Muns but by Thörnblad Mineral & Cellulosa, which Ylva fixes by joining forces with the rå. She nurtures a fish-like, shapeshifting sprite who when released into nature purifies the water reserves spoilt by the industry chemicals.

The rås' and their human/half-human accomplices' quest to protect and restore the shared environment, with pure water and air, is not reflected in the perception of the representatives of Thörnblad Mineral & Cellulosa, who hate and fear them. Gustaf, interim head of the company, hires bounty hunter Harry Storm (Ville Virtanen) whose view reflects the ongoing dehumanization of living beings under the hierarchical configuration of both nature and humanity, ruled

by a white, masculine, conventionally abled, heterosexual human standard (e.g. J. Butler 2004, 1–4; Karkulehto et al. 2019, 3). Confronted by Gustaf, Harry defends his murderous tactics, while tracing the kidnapper, of killing all non/part-humans coming his way: ‘They’re neither innocent, nor human ... Whoever took Anton is not human ... Silverhöjd is teeming with vermin. Many of them look like us, but they’re not like us. They’re animals, monsters.’ Harry shows Gustaf a box containing an amputated tail. ‘They cut them off in order to blend in. They’re everywhere, hiding in our midst. It could be anyone, and we wouldn’t know a thing ... They have taken Anton. I will find him, even if it means I have to kill every single one of them.’ And this is exactly what Harry tries to do: financed by Thörnblad, he is on a killing spree against every ‘monster’ hiding in Silverhöjd, while the Thörnblad executives justify their actions and incite their employees by suggesting there’s a threat to the single-industry town.

These processes of denying humanity and liveability (Butler 2004; 2006; Haraway 2008, 69–82; see also Gustafsson and Haapoja 2020) to an ideal humanity’s others have been recognized by numerous scholars dealing with branches of knowledge such as posthumanism or monster theory (e.g. Braidotti 2002; Haraway 2016; Karkulehto et al. 2019). They are also familiar from contemporary populist rhetoric, targeted at alleged public enemies such as the racialized others to White Nordic masculinities (as discussed in Norocel et al. 2020). As Sanna Karkulehto and colleagues remind us, ‘the domain of nonhumanity is carved in the negative space of humanity’ (Karkulehto et al. 2019, 1). Besides imagining a clear-cut gap between humanity and its others, including nature and non-human animals, this oppositional binary accommodates only a narrow representation of humanity within its ideal prototype. Recognizing the intertwining between the dehumanization of humans excluded from the ideal and the thoughtless exploitation of nature and non-human animals, ‘the cultural meanings given to nonhuman animals often reflect and coincide with the attitudes and assumptions held toward repressed or marginalized groups, whereby the treatment of animals and nonhumans is connected to the treatment of the humans who are, in varying contexts, viewed as lesser, weaker, subordinate, or substandard’ (Karkulehto et al. 2019, 3; see also Wolfe 2003, 6–8).

In these chains, all othered demographics can be treated as ‘rats, cockroaches, brutes, pests or bacteria, threatening the purity of [the] human’ (Gustafsson and Haapoja 2020, 3), as ‘vermin ... animals ... monsters’, in Harry’s description of rå in *Jordskott*. And reiterating Thörnblad Mineral & Cellulosa’s genocidal and exploitative approach to the surrounding nature, inhabited not only by humans but also by non-human animals and the human-like hidden folk, ‘humans are not only regarded as the conceptual antithesis of the nonhuman, but, in a very concrete way, nonhumanity is what humanity denies, excludes, and destroys’ (Karkulehto et al. 2019, 3). Through Harry’s character, the environmental and species savvy approach of *Jordskott*, reflecting the ecological activism gaining popularity in Sweden and other Nordic countries since the 1960s–70s (Jamison and Ring 2000), connects to White Nordic populism with its very limited ideal

for humanity, seeking to defend a supremacist and unsustainable structure against inevitable change (Norocel et al. 2020). Harry, sporting a neo-Nazi haircut and clothing, advertises his nationalist agenda on his webpage that he uses to warn and inform the general public about the non-human ‘monsters’. Cementing this agenda, the page is marked by a logo with a sword against the blue and white cross of the Finnish flag.

These monstrous reconfigurations presented in *Jordskott* are also questioned in the series. At the most banal level, Harry’s hateful rhetoric is rendered problematic by his own otherness. Despite the cross-Nordic production’s action being solidly based in Sweden, Harry is played by distinguished Finnish actor Ville Virtanen. His character is introduced to the series speaking in Finnish and he maintains a Finnish accent in his Swedish dialogue throughout the series. In his most intimate moments with his dog or in getting flashbacks of traumatic memories, Harry always resorts to his native language as a sign he, like the hidden folk he hunts, does not belong to Silverhöjd, or even to Sweden. As in pre-agrarian Nordic mythologies, which view the *rå* as the hidden folk preceding humans and/or embodying nature (e.g. Harva 2020; Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1991, 29–37), the *rå* have a stronger claim to the land than any Thörnblad CEO or the foreign bounty hunter Gustaf hires to get rid of them.

The company’s hateful distinctions between humans and non-humans are also rendered questionable in the close relationship between Harry and his dog, Cuba, whom the bounty hunter loves like a family member and whose death drives him mad with sorrow. Harry expresses his hatred towards non-humanity in his association of the hidden folk with ‘vermin, animals, monsters’. Yet as a companion animal and hunting dog, a non-human family member (Haraway 2016) kept in close proximity to the human world (Leach 1979), Cuba blurs many of the boundaries Harry uses to justify killing *rå*. What in Harry’s case appears as a failure to recognize the fundamental incompatibility between his human supremacist worldview and his love of his companion animal is countered in Ylva’s mothering of Muns, a mountain *rå*, and in the care she shows towards the lake *rå*. In her discussion with Eva, Ylva describes raising Muns from baby to adult, and she lovingly feeds the lake *rå* in her bathtub over several scenes.

In effect, the justice Muns seeks relates to this distinction between kin and non-kin, humans and non-humans, that Harry’s relationship to his companion animal both reiterates and challenges, and which motivates his rampage to rid Silverhöjd of the *rå*. Distinct from Ylva’s description of Muns *not* wanting revenge but restoration and reconciliation, Harry’s actions are driven by vengeance. His quest is explained by the tragic murders of his wife and son, apparently committed by the hidden folk. A similar storyline unites Harry to another main villain in the series, Gerda Gunnarsson (Lia Boysen), secretary to both Josef and Gustaf, and single mother to a mentally challenged adult son—who turns out to be Eva’s half-brother—Nicklas (Henrik Knutsson). Nicklas’s dehumanized and othered status in society causes Gerda to blackmail both Gustaf and Eva and to go after Muns’s silver in an attempt to secure for her son a better future after her own imminent death from cancer. These two figures’—Gerda’s and Harry’s—actions occupy the climax of the series’ first season.

Eva, Göran, Ylva, and Tom work to stop them from executing their plans that would harm the entire community, further damage the charged relationship between the humans and Muns, kill the children held hostage in Muns's underground hideaway, and destroy the carrying capacity of Silverhöjd soil already damaged by explosions ordered by Thörnblad Mineral & Cellulosa.

This theme of seeking benefits for one's own kin, without regard for others, also causes Eva to initially kidnap one Thörnblad board member's daughter in exchange for Josefine's recovery from her mysterious illness. Harry's, Gerda's, and Eva's care for only their own progeny, at the expense of others' well-being, is opposed to Muns's, Ylva's, and Göran's attempt to secure a better future 'for all', as the environmental activists' flyer says in justifying the need for healthy forests and clean waters. Harry's and Gerda's (and initially indeed also Eva's) actions are genocidal, and ecologically harmful. They are caused by love and caring, but only for one's own kin—human and non-human—and as such their altruism is actually selfish and short-sighted in the face of the collective damage they cause.

In contrast, Muns's actions, although directed towards blameless children as epitomes of innocence (e.g. Kosonen 2017, Higonnet 1998), stem from solidarity and understanding of the necessity of all life-forms' co-existence. Recognizing the interconnectedness of all life beyond contemporary nuclear families, Timothy Morton speaks of 'an already-existing intimacy with all lifeforms' (Morton 2013, 124) that he recognizes as increasingly forced upon humankind in the prevailing ecological crisis. As he (Morton 2013, 2016), Donna Haraway (2016), Patricia MacCormack (2020), and indeed a wealth of ecocritical and posthumanist scholars argue, the only way for humanity (alongside much life on earth) to prevail is to accept the intermingling of all forms of existence and embrace solidarity and joint responsibility as the basis for all actions. Thus, as Morton indicates: 'What we need is an ethics of the other, an ethics based on the proximity of the stranger ... Thinking needs to begin to set the bar incredibly low for solidarity between humans, and between humans and nonhumans' (Morton 2013, 124 and 157). In this task, Harry, Gerda, and Eva, interested only in the welfare of their blood kin and tight-knit family units, inevitably fail.

'Nothing will ever be the same again. For better ... or for worse': Recognizing Agency and Interconnectedness in Human-Nature Configurations

Muns's child-kidnapping occurs in the context of historical human crimes against nature and non-human animals. Karkulehto et al. enumerate 'Climate change, the sixth global mass extinction, deforestation, pollution, nuclear devastations, agricultural developments, intensive animal farming, extensive land-use, ever-increasing consumption of natural resources, and human population growth' as among human-caused harms that 'have had, and continue to have, serious consequences for the entire Earth system and for all the life forms it sustains' (Karkulehto et al. 2019, 2). Although these phenomena do not take up much of *Jordskott's* dialogue, they are evident in the cinematography. The human-caused

devastation can be witnessed in the juxtapositions between unspoilt nature inhabited by the rå and areas domesticated and destroyed by humans, as explored in the ecological activism occupying screen time through campaigning and flyers. Desolation manifests in the shocking views of balding spots of forest diverging from the ideal Nordic noir 'virgin landscape' (e.g. Waade 2020, 47), in the genocide Ylva witnesses, and in the images of humans lining up to fetch clean water with empty canisters—an unusual and alarming sight for the Nordic countries taking pride in their quality of water.

Reflecting nature's and wildlife's subordinate position in the human exceptionalist vision, cinema and television too often reduce them to 'setting, background, or prop' stripped of all agency (Pick and Narraway 2013, 8). Bennett views this reduction of agency in cinematic and other discourses as a problem: 'The figure of an intrinsically inanimate matter may be one of the impediments to the emergence of more ecological and more materially sustainable modes of production and consumption' (Bennett 2010, ix). Reflecting this notion, *Jordskott's* cinematography challenges nature's status as passivized and domesticated landscape. The first scene, setting up Eva's main motivations and traumas, opens with an image of broken flowers in a vase, conjoined with an abandoned cellphone and Eva's voice negotiating with a man holding his family hostage. In the next scene (and recurring throughout the series), both arriving in and trying to leave Silverhöjd, Eva wears a Japanese-inspired jacket with cherry blossom and crane motifs, reiterating this ornamental function of nature.

These conventional domestic and domesticating imageries are abandoned after Eva returns to Silverhöjd. The focus shifts to uninhabited vibrant forests and to the strange ecosystem occupying Ylva's dimly lit house, crucial locations in the first season. These subvert the conventional binary, where nature as landscape or ornament supports human activities. Commenting on *Jordskott's* recurring bird's-eye shots of the lush forests, Mäntymäki argues that the show 'convey[s] an impression of the wilderness as empty and readily exploitable' (Mäntymäki 2018, 93). Yet in our view, the aforementioned juxtapositions between the mountains and forests and their fully domesticated elements, such as nature prints and taxidermy, play with the conventional topos of passivized nature. And the frequent shots of flora from a ground-level animal perspective, often conjoined with a subtle soundscape with wind howling, water drops falling, and unknown cracks indicating non-human presence, invisible to the human eye, speak of the agency the forest unquestionably possesses, especially through the rå and the parasitic jordskott.

Rås' agency is already evident in the apparently anthropomorphic Muns' actions. But *Jordskott* appoints power to nature also through various less human-like rå and other folkloric elements. The lake rå Ylva cares for is fish-like, whereas the näcken dying of a bullet wound and melting into a pool of white viscous sludge in the pathologist's corpse bag is human-like in form yet obviously not in constitution. *Jordskott* itself resembles a tiny conch, or a beetle curled into a ball, and is distinguished in the soundscape by a chirping or crackling noise. It also mixes and morphs with humans, causing new types of hybrids with vegetation. Taking jordskott may cause a recipient to sprout tiny roots from their fingertips if it has gone

underfed, or transform them more thoroughly. Josefine returns to the earth, and Harry, dying of a bullet wound like Eva, ingests a boxful, morphing into a monstrous human-tree hybrid. While gaining tremendous power, he loses himself altogether. These examples warn against *jordskott*'s potential dangers.

The first character to manifest its effects on screen is Josefine. When she mysteriously returns to Silverhöjd at the end of first episode, she is obviously ill—pale, with mottled skin, and unable to talk—so is hospitalized. Her physician explains that she has a parasite that feeds on her blood. Conventional allopathic therapies are unsuccessful, and one night a nurse discovers the girl with her hand in the soil of a potted plant in her room, staring out the window at the moon. When the nurse pulls Josefine's hand, roots run from her fingers into the dirt, and the girl quickly pushes her hand back in. Josefine is literally rhizomic, multiply connected to plants and the forest, as well as actually (in the end) becoming-plant/becoming-forest (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Braidotti 2002). Coming at the close of the opening episode, this scene provides the first evidence that what is happening is not simply a child abduction, but has a supernatural and/or preternatural aspect. It is unclear how Josefine got the parasite—why, and whether or not Muns was involved—but ultimately, because of it, she must return to the forest and become incorporated into it, transforming into a human-shaped network of roots out of which a tree may grow.

The circumstances of her mother Eva's receiving *jordskott*, in contrast, are clear. Dying from a gunshot wound, she gets it from Ylva and Göran at the beginning of episode seven. Noting *Jordskott*'s criticism of classical humanism, Mäntymäki describes Eva's transition: 'The organism, having invaded her body, not only heals her but also sharpens her senses, thereby introducing her to hybridity and forcing her to negotiate her new self as a human being taken over by nature' (Mäntymäki 2018, 92). As Göran tells her, 'nothing will ever be the same again. For better ... or for worse'. Eva must now medicate herself daily with a brew Ylva cooks of a mixture of rå blood and other ingredients, but her senses and thus also her connection to nature are heightened. Unlike Josefine and Eva, forced to ingest *jordskott*, some characters take the parasite willingly, as Göran has, and Tom does in the second season. The pact with *jordskott* is a necessary initiation to an organization that at all costs seeks to protect nature, like the rå, but also to hide all knowledge of these beings from humanity:

Masked figure: Tom Aronsson. You're about to abandon your human life and enter into a new one as a guardian of nature and life.

Tom: Yes.

Masked figure: You hereby pledge yourself to live by our code. No human or moral laws supersede the needs of nature. No sacrifice is too great, no mission more important.

Assembled masked figures: With our lives we protect nature. Nature shall be eternal.

Tom signs a register and adds a drop of his own blood. Then, although warned against doing so by a vision of his daughter, he takes the parasite. Unlike the rå, who appear to mitigate their actions with mercy as much as possible, the group's extreme commitment makes them dangerous even to innocent humans.

Jordskott is introduced in the series as a parasite in medical knowledge-production. Yet this straightforward ontology can also be challenged and connected to Nordic

folklore and the series' traditional creatures.¹³ We recognize a multiform tradition related to a milk-stealing or fortune-bringing entity, a witch's aid in different regions called *bjära*, *mjölkhare*, or *spiritus* (Swedish; or *para* in Finnish) (Harva 2020; Lindow 1978, 50 and 170–72; Klintberg 2010, 289–90).¹⁴ *Jordskott*, maintained by feeding it a mixture containing blood, much resembles the *para* as Harva describes it: 'Such a beetle, bee, larva or another insect-like "money para," i.e., *spiritus* ... had to be fed every morning by its owner's spit or blood' (Harva 2020, chap. 2). As Harva describes these magical aids, their powers brought the humans wealth or helped them reap vengeance. Nordic witches created these shapeshifting entities to steal milk and fortune from others (Klintberg 2010, 289–98; Nildin-Wall and Wall 1993), and especially in Finnish tradition used them as magical aids against those who had hurt them or their pets, usually by causing death or disease (Honko 1959; Klemettinen 2002, 143). In *Jordskott*, all these functions appear lumped together. For Eva, Göran, Tom, and the secret society, their special sensory capabilities and inevitable power come with the demand that the *para* be nourished and cared for, whereas both underfed Josefine and greedy Harry manifest the dangers of *para*, as does its use as a punishment by Muns. In the series, *jordskott* is picked from the forest by witch Ylva, indicating it might be forest-born, of nature like the *rå*.

Irina Souch recognizes the *Jordskott* forest as a 'vengeful agent' positioned against human passivity around the 'pending environmental disaster' (Souch 2020, 118). We would argue instead that the series' popular green criminology advocates prevention over revenge. Unlike humans like Harry, actions by the *rå* are prophylactic like the kidnappings, directly protective like saving Nicklas, or unproblematically helpful like cleaning the water. Even less motivated crimes and harms are inadvertent, and could be blamed on humans' prejudices against *rå*. In the diegesis the ambiguous *jordskott* becomes a threat only when it, like the nature sustaining humanity, goes under-cared-for or undernourished, recalling the already existing intimacy, interconnectedness, and hybridity between humans and nature that Morton (2013, 124) and Mäntymäki (2018, 92) discuss. As Olof says, 'If nature gets hold of you, it will never let go of you.' Once a human has ingested *jordskott*, they must feed it. In return, it grants extraordinary powers of smell and other senses, and of self-healing. Similar themes of nature and its agents becoming dangerous unless cared for are introduced by Esmeralda, a *huldra* living amongst humans and whose appearance in Nordic tradition Kuusela summarizes thus: 'The female forest spirit is frequently, but not always, depicted as a beautiful young woman who lures men away and ensnares them in her dwelling, deep within the forest' (Kuusela 2020, 164–65; see also Granberg 1935; Klintberg 2010, 97).

Esmeralda also demonstrates more *rå* powers, and that *jordskott* is not the only force capable of transforming humans' capabilities. Suspected of killing a boy at a party, she is brought to the police station by Tom. She asserts she has no memory of what took place. When Tom does not believe her, positing that she might have been defending herself from an attempted rape, the lights begin to flicker as Esmeralda screams, eyes turning yellow: 'Will you stop it?! I'd never hurt him.' Tom, who is having difficulty breathing, says her foster fathers had accused her of being violent, and she counters 'Do you know what those pervs tried to do to me? Do you?! And I

did everything I could to get them to stop.’ Tom, further overcome, loosens his tie. ‘You know what it’s like to be so fucking helpless? To not have anyone believe you even though you’re telling the truth?’ Esmeralda’s shouting begins to echo. The electric lights are shorting and emitting sparks. Tom covers his ears. ‘You said you believe me! You said you did! But you’re just like everyone else!’ The screen briefly goes black, and in flashes the camera shows Tom has been stabbed in the neck with a pen. Esmeralda is gone.

In a later scene, it becomes evident that Tom stabbed himself—Esmeralda’s attack is an attempt to stop his self-harm. Subsequently, Tom discovers he can communicate better with his autistic daughter, and has supernatural visions and warnings. As a result, he joins forces with Göran and Eva in their task to stop Gerda and Harry, and as already indicated, in season two Tom becomes part of the secret organization seeking to protect nature. In these character developments, the *rå* and *jordskott* (as in *para* traditions) are agents or actants (entities affecting and modifying human behaviour and constitution; Latour 2004), trying to awaken caring for nature in humans. The *rås*’ actions, like Muns’s, seek to defend nature from depredation. Alternatively, they may protect themselves or innocent others, like the *näcken* who saves Nicklas from potentially murderous bullies and is fatally wounded by them. Like Esmeralda’s, damaging moves usually stem from an inability to control their powers, due to a lack of understanding because they have been raised without knowing who they are and what they can do.

‘Sounds like a goddamned fairy tale’: A Popular Green Criminological Stealth Agent

These notions related to hybridity and interconnectedness between humans and nature, and the agency *Jordskott*’s folkloric creatures and entities hold both in the plot and the cinematography, negate the common passivization of nature. Ecological processes too often fail to attract agency in human imagination and meaning-making processes (Barad 2003). Hard to pinpoint and ‘intrinsically resistant to representation’ (Bennett 2010, xvi) as so-called ‘hyperobjects’ (Morton 2013, e.g. 1–24), nature challenges humans’ limited capabilities of comprehension because of its massive, temporally slow, and often unperceivable quality. Yet as Bennett describes: ‘The philosophical project of naming where subjectivity begins and ends is too often bound up with fantasies of a human uniqueness in the eyes of God, of escape from materiality, or of mastery of nature; and even where it is not, it remains an aporetic or quixotic endeavor’ (Bennett 2010, ix).

In the context of the prevailing ecological crisis and humans’ harmful exploitation of nature, Bennett underlines the need to highlight the many ways natural entities work as actants—both as ecological processes exterior to humans (Bennett 2010, 94–109) and within human bodies (Bennett 2010, 110–22). So does Karen Barad, whose posthumanist notion of performativity takes into account the various ‘intra-actions and enactments ... which remake the boundaries that delineate the differential constitution of the “human”’ (Barad 2003, 826). Reframing the agency in these conventionally passivized processes displays human dependency on nature

both in the interconnectedness of all life-forms and, indeed, in the already existing hybridity between human and non-human nature. In our view, *Jordskott*'s supernatural diegesis, drawing from Nordic traditions, and its cinematographic representation of the actions of the forest, the rå, and jordskott/para, achieve in demonstrating this agency where many others fail.

Not everyone concurs that *Jordskott* offers a useful intervention for addressing these dependencies and hierarchical configurations between humans and other life-forms, and the many consequences of ecological and individual harm. Accusing it of 'nostalgic representation of a lost nature', Jørgen Bruhn instead contends that *Jordskott*

avoids an ecocritical understanding of modernisation and the non-ecological understanding of nature by adding a mythologizing or supernatural aspect to the plot: the capitalistic forest industry made a terrible, historical mistake, but in present time this catastrophe has turned into a supernatural horror plot and does not invoke any sense of shame or guilt in the characters in the series nor, I assume, in the spectators watching the show. (Bruhn 2018, 71)

Further, Keith Hayward and Steve Hall argue that Nordic noir's 'retreat' to the local and '*descent into fantasy*' (Hayward and Hall 2021, 13; italics in the original) is merely nostalgic, 'gratuitously escapist', and 'offering a sublimated and highly stylized set of metaphors to aid neoliberalism in its fundamental politico-cultural task of obscuring and repressing the real contextual sources of insecurity, thus reproducing "objectless anxiety" expressed as populist suspicion and cynicism' (Hayward and Hall 2021, 16). Hayward and Hall's and Bruhn's presumptions of the axiomatically unserious nature of fantasy are not uncontroversial (see D. Butler 2006; Greenhill 2020). Raymond Williams (1977, 121–27), among others, understands that tradition can be resistant and critical, not only conservative. We disagree with dismissive evaluations of the series and of supernatural Nordic noir. So does Souch, who endorses the series' 'mixture of realist and fantastic genres [that] can be productively employed to point out the unsustainability of industrially over-developed Western lifestyles, and to teach viewers lessons in ecological thinking' (Souch 2020, 111). As Abram warns, such responses must avoid a simplistic assumption that the pagan cultures of the past offer models for an ideal relationship to ecology (Abram 2019, 171–79). But *Jordskott* avoids that trap.

A wide range of reactions to discovering the preternatural manifest in *Jordskott*, although the most obviously heroic characters come down on the side of the forest and the rå. The series does a creditable job of noting, however, that the issues are not simply a case of good versus evil. *Jordskott* and the actions of the rå are ambivalent. *Jordskott* taken appropriately enhances human capabilities. In the hands of characters who appreciate and nourish it, it offers an ability to help more effectively; in the hands of others, it is a dangerous weapon to increase their skills for mayhem before their inevitable destruction. Similarly, nature, and its rå guardians, can swing both ways. They both actively seek ecological and species justice and sprout seeds for more sustainable actions in humans. Only one action, apparently by rå, is unexplained in terms of its motivation—the killing of Harry's wife and son which ignites his murderous hatred of these beings.

Thus, in our popular green criminological perspective, the first season of *Jordskott* not only affirms the value of nature and condemns the mercenary self-regard of

humans in ignoring the needs of others, it provides an example of human depravity, and the warning that nature and tradition may actually be capable—sometimes with human help, often without—of taking care of themselves. Souch endorses the series for its ‘genre hybridity’ that can ‘effectively encourage ecological awareness in viewers’ (Souch 2020, 109). Creator and director Björn in the DVD extras says:

The biggest source of inspiration is my grandmother, actually. She was from ... Gotland. She had a lot of experiences herself in ... nature and strange things happening. So when I was nine years old she took me on long walks in the woods. So that started a tradition. And she told me about the forest and the nature and why we have to respect it and why we should go this way today not that way because we may be disturbing something there ... And of course I knew even then this was fantasy, she didn't scare me but it was very interesting and intriguing.

His rationalist alibi, of course, is a common one. But tradition and the unexplained need not be so summarily dismissed. In contrast, and in keeping with our evaluation, Mäntymäki identifies correctly the series’ posthumanist and critical positioning. As she indicates, ‘The main conflict in the series is constructed on a complicated skein of interrelations between past/present, culture/nature and human/nature, through which exploitation is historicized and universalized, despite the local setting’ (Mäntymäki 2018, 91). Drawing on Rosi Braidotti, Mäntymäki describes posthumanism’s point of view of ‘subjectivity as not being the prerogative of the anthropos only ..., but instead a materially based ontological process of becoming, beyond hierarchy-bound categorization and involving live and non-alive forms of existence’ (Mäntymäki 2018, 92). She calls *Jordskott* ‘an ecofantastic crime thriller which involves a very contemporary investigation of vanished children and a series of suspicious deaths, combined with a nature-related mystery with fantasy features’ (Mäntymäki 2018, 89). She argues that the series’

critique of classical humanism is enacted through mostly violent encounters between various fantastic nature beings such as fairies, dryads, forest (non-)humans, and humans. These encounters are essentially about power, about conflict of interest and the suppression of what, in classical humanism, is understood as non-human and nature. At the same time, different subjectivities come into relation and form new, hybrid entities through these violent encounters. (Mäntymäki 2018, 90)

Similarly, Souch argues that ‘[t]he link unveiled between natural ecology and cultural mythology allows the series to surpass the limitations of the regionally informed folkloric story and to evolve into an ecological cautionary tale of global significance’ (Souch 2020, 107). Next to her endorsement of the genre hybridity, and the human–nature hybridity that Mäntymäki celebrates, we see also the agency afforded to nature through traditional entities—the many rå and *jordskott*/para—the ‘mythologizing or supernatural elements’ Bruhn scorns, as beneficial. Like Bennett we contend that ‘the image of dead or thoroughly instrumentalized matter feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption. It does so by preventing us from detecting (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling) a fuller range of the nonhuman powers circulating around and within human bodies’ (Bennett 2010, ix). Like Nordic nature sprites, *Jordskott*’s rå ‘indicate a sense that nature [is] alive and full of unpredictable wonders and horrors’ (Blecher and Blecher 1993, xx). Taken as fantasy, *Jordskott* like similar works offers a stealth agent, evoking

the emotions and affirming connections. Our ecocritical folkloristic analysis suggests that tradition, far from being univocal, offers material not only for reflection, but also for sociocultural intervention.

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Notes

¹ All quotation marks in the title and subtitles indicate quotations from the series.

² For a recent campaign, see the 2021 film *More of Everything* (<https://moreofeverything.org/>), produced and published by Protect the Forest, Sweden, in collaboration with Greenpeace Nordic.

³ We here situate folklore and its uses seamlessly within popular culture, against presumptions otherwise. A recent addition to discourse on the relationship between folklore/traditional culture on the one hand, and popular/high culture on the other, reviews the history of academic scholarship in the area, yet maintains the idea of a qualitative distinction between the two (Foster 2016). It fails to recognize the historical and current basis of that dichotomy in evolutionary anthropology and in historical and current racist and colonialist ideas (see, e.g., Aldama, Sandoval, and Garcia 2012; Green 1988; ho‘omanawanui 2018; Naithani 2010; Wills 2018). We note in addition the useful interventions in Lauri Honko’s (2013, 29–54) reflections on the ‘lives’ of folklore (see also Carrassi 2017) and Raymond Williams’s discussions of archaic, residual, and emergent practices (Williams 1977, 115–28), among others, which attend to uses more than forms. Along with work from a variety of areas in the discipline of folkloristics—to give only a few examples, in ballad and folksong (Renwick 1980, 2001); folktale and fairy tale (Bacchilega 1999, 2013); and material culture (Klein 1993; Löfgren 2012)—we prefer to explore specific manifestations, transformations, and interactions.

⁴ Scandinavia refers to the peninsula that includes Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. The term Nordic adds Finland, Åland, Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Iceland. We use Nordic to underscore commonalities between the traditions of these closely knit countries, and in keeping with the cross-cultural (Sweden, Finland, UK, Norway) countries of origin for the series.

⁵ Not only Nordic but also *The Kettering Incident* (2016, Australia), created by Vicki Madden and Vincent Sheehan; *Hotel Beau Séjour* (2016, Belgium), created by Sanne Nuyens, Bert Van Dael, and Nathalie Basteyns; *La forêt* (2017, France), created by Delinda Jacobs; *Dark* (2017–20, Germany), created by Baran bo Odar and Jantje Friese; and more.

⁶ Other Nordic noir series balancing the realistic and the folkloric include, for instance, Arctic noir *Midnatssol* (2016, Sweden/France), created by Måns Mårilind and Björn Stein, making use of Sámi lore; ghost story *Besatt* (2019, Norway), created by Megan Gallagher; and *Katla* (2021, Iceland), created by Baltasar Kormákur and Sigurjón Kjartansson, leaning on Icelandic traditions. In Nordic cinema, supernatural traditions are familiar, for example, from the globally viewed *Trolljegeren* (2010, Norway, André Øvredal), *Rare Exports* (2010, Finland, Jalmari Helander), *Gräns* (2018, Sweden, Ali Abbasi), and *Thale* (2012; Norway, Aleksander Nordaas).

⁷ Donaghy, James. ‘Murder, Mystery, Evil Swedish Forests: Have You Been Watching Jordskott?’ *Guardian*, 14 April 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/tvandradioblog/2015/jul/14/mystery-evil-swedish-forests-have-you-been-watching-jordskott>
Yet given that the genre’s ‘typical setting is the city with its diverse criminal organizations, its mean

streets, and modest households—and their opposites in wealthy suburbs, large penthouse flats, and imposing official buildings’ (Agger 2020, 18), it is telling that in season two, perennially difficult for television series creators, *Jordskott*’s action more conventionally moves to the city.

⁸ Next to the more literal translations, ‘earthquake’ and ‘soil shoot’ appear in *Jordskott*’s English subtitles. *Skott* translates as bullet/gunshot and connects to Scandinavian mythology’s understanding of *trollskotts* (witches’ bullets) (e.g. Harva 2020).

⁹ Keightley (1880, 76–155 and 487–90), for example, discusses together Scandinavian and Finnish elves, dwarfs or trolls, nisses, necks, and mermaids/men.

¹⁰ Quotations in English are from the DVD subtitles.

¹¹ Being fairy-led—becoming lost because of supernatural intervention—is a common experience in locations where these beings are active (see, e.g., Kuusela 2020; Rieti 1991, 92–97); kidnap by fairies is also common (see, e.g., Briggs 1976, 62–67; Sugg 2018, 97–118).

¹² All translations from Finnish to English by Kosonen.

¹³ Another hint of para’s connection to *jordskott* is linguistic. Harva (2020) recognizes ‘*trollskotts*’ (literally ‘witch’s bullets’) as belonging to the same tradition.

¹⁴ Scholars most commonly recognize this entity as taking the form of a cat or a hare (Nildin-Wall and Wall 1993), and sometimes ‘a magic ball lightly rolling along the ground’ (Klemettinen 2002, 142–43). One explanation for these varied forms is the influence of the Roman Catholic Church (see Lindow 1978, 9–11), where beliefs about the milk-stealing creature were related to devil worship (Klemettinen 2002). Kuusela notes how ‘as with folklore in general, many different motifs are attributed to seemingly contradictory supernatural beings’ (Kuusela 2020, 170).

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