

Chapter 5

A cosmopolitan tribe of viewers

Crime, women, and akogare in Japan

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Abstract

This chapter explores the meaningfulness and engagement of Japanese audiences with Danish television drama from the perspectives and sentiments of both broadcasters (“those who buy”) and regular viewers (“those who watch”). The chapter includes a discussion of the conceptual framework that argues for an equal focus on the mundane practices of “everyday cosmopolitanism”, as well as explaining the Japanese notion of *akogare* that refers to a desire for things which are tantalisingly out of reach. The chapter shows how the practices of television companies and the demands of a “cosmopolitan tribe of discerning viewers” are interwoven; it unfolds the figure of the cosmopolitan housewife; and it discusses the different forms of cosmopolitan engagement that viewers express. The chapter also describes the intercultural and linguistic challenges of conducting audience research in Japan.

Keywords: Danish TV drama, Nordic Noir, everyday cosmopolitanism, Japan, global television

Introduction

I heard that Tamaki had watched Danish television drama series, and we were scheduled to meet for a longer conversation about this at a train station in Tokyo. I had earlier sent her some preliminary questions and themes as requested. Tamaki had been introduced to me by a new acquaintance, who had also been introduced through another acquaintance. The day before the meeting, I received an email from Tamaki where she cancelled our rendezvous with the following message:

I think it's difficult for a stranger to come and meet me at the station. I'm afraid that you'll get lost and I won't be able to give you appropriate directions. We will end up in taking a lot of time and getting tired. (May 2016)

Tamaki had attached notes to her email. She described herself as a single, middle-aged, part-time teacher with a university degree and wrote that she could not afford to travel

abroad. She thought that imported television drama series were mainly watched by “stay-at-home-wives” for “pleasure”. In response to a question about whether it was important for Japanese viewers to be able to see foreign drama, Tamaki wrote “Yes, we can look at the world from different perspectives”.

Although the imports of television drama series from Nordic countries in Japan is significantly minor in comparison to imports from Anglophone regions, an acquisition manager at the pay channel WOWOW explained that these series were nevertheless “meaningful” for the comparatively few viewers who watched them. This contribution is an exploration into the nature of this meaningfulness, and takes its point of departure from Tamaki’s response of looking “at the world from different perspectives” as an example of “everyday cosmopolitanism” in practice. By using statements gathered from a wide spectrum of audiences, the chapter provides a bricolage account of the motivations for and achievements of engaging with Danish television drama for people living in Japan. It also accounts for the intercultural and linguistic challenges of accessing these perspectives and sentiments for scientific purposes.

Four internationally acclaimed Danish television drama series were shown on Japanese pay television channels between January 2012 and May 2016. The crime drama *Den Som Dræber* [*Those Who Kill*] (TV2, 2011)¹ was shown on WOWOW in 2012. In the same year, the pay channel Super! Drama scheduled the first season of *Forbrydelsen* [*The Killing*] (DR1, 2007–2012), which was followed by two further seasons from 2013–2014. Super! Drama continued showing three seasons and reruns of *Bron/Broen* [*The Bridge*] (SVT1/DR1, 2011–2018), and three seasons and reruns of the political drama *Borgen* (DR1, 2010–2013), from 2013–2016. The series were advertised and marketed through paper pamphlets available in shops in addition to channel websites.

The ambitions of the study on global audiences of Danish productions were prompted by a sudden increase in the export of high quality, non-English television drama series produced in smaller television markets (Creeber, 2015; Jensen & Waade, 2013). To understand this global dimension, the study had to include markets that were traditionally distant – and thus surprising destinations for the acquisition and viewing of Danish television drama series – such as Japan. Japan has a long and successful history in the production and transnational export of television drama in East and Southeast Asia. This has influenced “Japan’s conception of being ‘in but above’ or ‘similar but superior’ to Asia” (Iwabuchi, 2002: 199). Furthermore, the production and worldwide distribution of popular Japanese culture – songs, jazz, enka, karaoke, manga, anime, video games, films, and “idols” (Craig, 2015) – as well as cultural products based on cuteness-related aesthetics or *kawaii* (Pellitteri, 2018) makes Japan a significant global influencer and exporter of cultural commodities. Nonetheless, the imports of popular culture expressions and commodities, including television content (especially from the US and Korea), is just as intense and has likewise drawn much scholarly attention (e.g., Ang, 2007; Fraser, 2015; Galbraith & Karlin, 2012).

To explore the meaningfulness and engagement of Japanese audiences with television content imported from non-Anglophone and non-Asian countries, I consider the

perspectives of both broadcasters (“those who buy”), and the sentiments of regular viewers (“those who watch”). The notion of cosmopolitanism is used as a “sensitizing concept”. Blumer (1954: 7) defines a sensitising concept as giving the user “a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look”. I focus especially on what Kendall et al. (2009) describe as practices of everyday cosmopolitanism. This everyday practice is not necessarily “a matter of cocktails or market ebbs and flows” (Calhoun, 2008: 107) traditionally associated with a “stylistic” or “commercial cosmopolitanism” (Athique, 2016: 15). Instead, the notion of everyday cosmopolitanism also attends to the *modest and mundane* ways of practising cosmopolitanism that reside with its more stylistic or commercial forms. I also use the notion of *akogare* – a Japanese word derived from *aku* [place, being] and *gare/kare* [leave], which roughly translates as “desire” (Nonaka, 2018) – to make sense of how Danish television drama series gave pleasure and provided ways of looking at the world for Tamaki and many other viewers.

Data gathering

The empirical material was generated between 2015 and 2016 and covers a wide range of diverse resources including interactions, written correspondence, and conversations on skype and in restaurants. I interacted with distribution and acquisition managers at commercial television stations and analysts at NHK, the Japanese public broadcasting corporation. Further material emerged from interactions with scriptwriters, documentary producers, journalists, media researchers, subtitling and dubbing translators, branding and media representatives from the Danish Embassy, in addition to one focus group interview with three women and eight individual interviews. These encounters took place in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Kobe, and Ikoma as well as at the MIPCOM television marketplace in Cannes. Although I was given access to Super! Drama’s viewer profile, no precise details of audience ratings were made available. However, a year later, I received an extract of comments made about *The Killing*, *Borgen*, and *The Bridge* taken from Super! Drama’s online platform, where viewers are encouraged to write about their inquiries, impressions, or opinions. This extract gave access to 194 online comments written from November 2011–June 2016, of which 86 comments were made by men and 108 by women. Other information included the person’s age and employment.

Gathering cues and clues was similar to the manner in which crimes are solved in *The Killing* or *The Bridge*, and much of my time was spent pursuing dead ends. Starting with an initial internet search on websites and social media platforms to investigate if, when, and where Danish television drama had been shown – aided by a Japanese exchange student – we found evidence of their broadcasts on the Super! Drama website. All initial email contact with the channel – translated into Japanese – was met with

silence. The exchange student was, however, able to find viewers through *Ameba*, a Japanese blogging and social network platform. We used this opportunity to randomly contact bloggers and conducted three skype interviews in Japanese before my arrival in Tokyo. I was only able to visit WOWOW's offices through a personal recommendation made by an analyst at NHK. Interactions at academic seminars at Keio and Nagoya University gave further access to other media professionals and, surprisingly, to acquisition personnel at Super! Drama.

The technique of on-the-spot networking was the only option in the absence of any prior relationships to Japanese television companies or media professionals. The situation was compounded by the absence of hype-creating paratexts (Gray, 2010) in mainstream Japanese media (unlike in the UK, Australia, or Germany). Furthermore, the challenges of gaining access to information in a Japanese context where “the ideal interview is with a friend of a friend” and where extensive periods of time are necessary to “transform initial, cautious acceptance into lifelong friendly connections” (McLaughlin, 2010: 2) have resulted in a potpourri of data that nonetheless provide a starting point for analysing Japanese audiences of Danish television drama.

The quotes used in the analysis are drawn from my fieldnotes and audio recordings. I have sometimes used professional titles only to secure anonymity and more detailed biographical information when possible. The statements are given verbatim. The interactions took place in different variations of English and Japanese, and an interpreter was present during the interactions when Japanese dominated the conversation. I am certain that the interpretability of conversations would have been richer had it not been for my own incompetence in Japanese. The multilingual situation necessitated a use of “truncated repertoires” and “bits of languages” (Blommaert, 2010) that we had at our disposal to share with one another. The fragmented nature of the types of data, the different locations of interactions, and the intercultural and linguistic challenges of negotiating access significantly restrained and shaped how the perspectives and sentiments of Japanese audiences could be understood, analysed, and represented.

Aspects of cosmopolitanism

Japanese audiences were attracted to the portrayals of different cultural practices and social themes offered by *The Killing*, *The Bridge*, and *Borgen*, as well as to the “sound” of Danish (available in subtitled versions) – as a non-Anglophone sound further textured the authenticity of the images. This attraction stands in contrast to the idea of “cultural discount” that refers to a loss of value in television viewing that occurs when viewers from one cultural context find it difficult to identify with the narrative contents provided by other ones (McFadyen et al., 2000). However, the Japanese context adds to the research suggesting that it is precisely the difference and recognition of the Other in audiovisual productions that provides added value to viewer experience, as well as to the potential for international export (e.g., Athique, 2016).

The versatile concept of “cosmopolitanism” centralises the recognition of difference and the relationship between “Self” and “Other”. It also centralises the mobility that is needed to bring the two into a relationship. Employed by a wide range of scholars embedded in diverse disciplines, cosmopolitanism helps to account for the novel interconnectivities of individuals, institutions, and ideas enabled by the processes of globalisation in addition to explaining their implications. The role of global media interconnectivities in facilitating an “enforced proximity” (Szerszynski & Urry, 2002) is well established. The mechanisms and outcomes of these enforced proximities are further reflected in the writings of media researchers who have forged valuable insights relevant to this contribution. These include the interrelationship between cosmopolitanism, television, and neoliberal market ideologies and consumption patterns (e.g., Miller, 2006) and cosmopolitanism and professional communities of practice in television companies (e.g., Kuipers, 2012).

Calhoun (2008) provides a fine example demonstrating the breadth of meanings of cosmopolitanism. As articulated in the following, these embrace political projects and ethical orientations as well as the stylistic and psychological capacities of individuals to desire, appreciate, value, and capitalise from the value of the Other:

It’s what we praise in those who read novelists from every continent, or in the audiences and performers of world music; it’s the aspiration of advocates for global justice and the claim of managers of multinational businesses. Campaigners on behalf of migrants urge cosmopolitan legal reforms out of both concern for immigrants and belief that openness to people from other cultures enriches their countries. Cosmopolitan is the first category in the advertisements posted by would-be husbands seeking brides (and vice versa) in the Sunday Times of India. (Calhoun, 2008: 107)

The quote above demonstrates the world-spanning breadth of actors, processes, and ideologies that get caught up in each other in our contemporary global context. At one level, cosmopolitanism refers to a normative position, and privileges the disposition to openness, tolerance, and exploration of the cultural other (e.g., Hannerz, 1996). At another level, cosmopolitanism is increasingly associated with the consumption of products, ideas, and practices of the Other that are strongly promoted by neoliberal market ideologies (e.g., Miller, 2006) and the seductive marketing and branding practices of the “transnational promotional class” (Aronczyk, 2013).

Harvey (2009: 114) polemically writes of “adjectival cosmopolitanisms” and draws attention to the multitude of ways scholars have articulated the concept to explain present-day phenomena. Many examples of these are noted in Sobré-Denton and Bardhan’s glossary (2013), such as rooted, traditional, classical, transnational, translocal, post-colonial, methodological, virtual, or post-universal cosmopolitanism. In this contribution, I focus on Kendall et al.’s (2009) definition of everyday cosmopolitanism that embraces a performative approach to “acting, thinking and feeling” cosmopolitan (see Cheah & Robbins, 1998). Everyday cosmopolitanisms are not necessarily “banal or spectral forms [...], but represent the gradual and sometimes discrepant infiltration

and uptake of cosmopolitanism into the practices and outlooks of everyday citizens” (Kendall et al., 2009: 100).

In addition, they also suggest that “there should be identifiable ‘carriers’ who play a role in diffusing or sowing the seeds of cosmopolitanism as they go about their normal business of work, travel and association” (2009: 101). Furthermore, they outline the characteristics of three styles of cosmopolitanism. The first is the “sampling” style, characterised by fleeting temporary contact with difference that demonstrates a desire to seek novel experiences or forms of escape from the everyday. The second is the “immersive” style, which is more strategic in nature and where cosmopolitan objects are looked for as a matter of routine cultural practice. The third is the “reflexive” style, where individuals display a commitment to an ethical or political ethos and to living and thinking beyond the local or national.

I now turn to consider how the practices and outlooks of Japanese viewers display the discrepant infiltration and uptake of cosmopolitanism in the context of buying and watching Danish television drama; who and what the identifiable carriers of cosmopolitanism are; and the extent to which the three styles of cosmopolitanism emerge.

Those who buy

The transnational promotional class plays a significant role in the “circulation, mediation, communication, promotion, and calculation” of the cultural dimensions of nations (Aronczyk, 2013: 39). These critical practices resonate with Kuipers’s (2012) description of the activities of the “cosmopolitan tribe of television buyers” whose personal taste and cosmopolitan capital have contributed to introduce Danish television drama to global audiences. In the current media climate of fierce competition and over-abundance of television content, personal recommendations, fragmented rumours, and information on current trends become vital mechanisms to sort, dismiss, or engage with this global overload. In such a context, the workings of the “grapevine proximity” connecting individuals caught in meshes of media industry and personal networks (Jensen & Jacobsen, 2020) enables the cosmopolitan tribe of television buyers to circulate their subjective experiences, opinions, and preferences among each other.

Danish television drama series have been strategically used in the branding strategies for niche channels, such as BBC Four and Sky Atlantic in the UK (see Esser in this anthology). Likewise, *The Killing*, *The Bridge*, and *Borgen* were all shown on the Japanese pay channel Super! Drama, which according to information given in an advertisement (2015), prides itself on “broadcasting a range of favorite TV drama series from all over the world”. A closer look reveals drama series primarily produced in the “US and other countries, such as *The Blacklist*, *Breaking Bad*, *Criminal Minds*, *Grimm*, *The Mentalist*, *Fringe*, *Law and Order*”. The Super! Drama channel falls under the umbrella of Super Network Inc., distributing television content that is “subscribed to by about 8,153,100 households, as of March 2015” (Super! Drama public advertisement, 2015).

The channel is accessible through subscriptions to large cable packages broadcasting non-Japanese content, such as J:Com, or through satellite providers such as SkyPerfect. Viewers are encouraged to write their questions and comments on the channel online platform, as in the following example:

I am sending this message because I wanted to express my gratitude and respect for your decision to broadcast a Japanese version of the long awaited season 2. Thank you so much!! You have proved your spirit and good sense. Super Drama TV in a nutshell. (Male, 40, self-employed, online comment referring to *Borgen*)

The reference to the “nutshell” resonates well with Super! Drama’s alignment of television content with the demands of their key audiences that desire American and British content.

Super! Drama’s viewer profile, which provides subscriber information made available to commercial clients and advertisers as printed material, states that 57.7 per cent of their subscribers are women and 42.3 per cent are men. Further subscriber information includes age (35 years old and above), annual income (over average), education (44.8% have a university degree), and house ownership (68.6%). In addition, Super! Drama viewers are segmented into employment categories in the following way: housewife (35.6%), students (12.9%), those who work outside the home such as office clerks, service workers, executives, freelancers, physical labourers, and retail workers, (39.7%), children (1.3%), and unemployed, retired, or others (11.8%). Hence, the “housewife” comprises the biggest single category and a central audience – I will return to this later. Other striking features of the viewer profile lie in its accompanying illustrations. Women are portrayed either as shoppers (the consumer image) or as standing in a living room carrying two cups of tea on a tray, while a man sits on the sofa with a book (the service image). In another illustration, a man is shown lying in a reclining chair, a drink in one hand, holding a mobile phone in the other; three other prominent objects in the room include an open laptop, a set of golf clubs, and a small dog. The illustrations show lives of comfortable surplus and a convenient ordering of traditional gender roles reminiscent of a past where television watching was associated with the mass media, the feminine, and the ordinary (Newman & Levine, 2012).

The initial decision of Super!Drama to buy *The Killing* was based on the acquisition manager’s curiosity and the difficult-to-dismiss murmurs on the grapevine about the media hype that *The Killing* had produced in the UK. After sampling a single episode, she found that it struck a chord of resonance and explained this as:

The female character is impressive and the story is interesting [...] I wanted to introduce this drama for Japanese people. (Interview with Super! Drama, May 2015)

Furthermore, her shrewd business acumen had pre-empted the desires of viewers as indicated by the following online comment from a viewer:

The Killing will begin next week and it seems to have had high ratings in Europe and America, so I am looking considerably forward to it. (Female, 38, employee)

Such comments require swift action from broadcasters if they are to maintain their reputation and satisfy impatient consumer demands in a global media climate characterised by the flooding and saturation of television drama series twinned with the fragile loyalties of customers. The following online comments provide examples of such impatience among viewers:

I request season 2. And make it fast! (Male, 50, employee)

Because of new year there wasn't a transmission at 8pm on Thursday. The previous time there hadn't even been an announcement about that, had there? That's too cruel. Please air a marathon or something, anything, soon. (Female, 47, housewife)

Not only do customers dictate the tempo of broadcasting schedules, but also the language options. Some noted how they negotiated the enjoyment of authenticity that the Danish language achieved with the need to understand the narrative. The demand for different language options beyond English – which a cosmopolitan viewership requires – compelled Super! Drama to invest in costly dubbing and subtitling services. A detailed online comment read:

I like foreign dramas and when I watch American ones I care about the local atmosphere and the performance of the actors, so I always watch with subtitles. This time however is my first Northern European drama. I do not understand English, so midway through I recorded it with the voice-over. I am completely drawn into the refreshing development which made me want to watch the whole series with subtitles after all. Please do a marathon rerun with subtitles of season 1 and 2 and then *The Bridge*. (Female, 39, referring to *The Killing*)

According to the comments above, the association of *The Killing* to “high ratings in Europe and America”, the novelty of a type of female character who was “impressive”, and the novelty that was felt through the sound of Danish, made these drama series attractive to Japanese viewers. Another critical element of attraction lay in suspense and mystery – or crime.

Although the broadcast of Danish television drama series in Japan broadly challenges conventional theories of cultural and language proximities that influence the import and export of television content between different geo-linguistic regions (e.g., Jensen & Jacobsen, 2017), the appearance of *The Killing* and *The Bridge* harmonised well with the notion of genre proximity. Straubhaar exemplifies melodrama as a genre that has the capacity to reach past cultural differences because of its “oral structures, formulas, and archetypes” (2007: 199). Dunleavy described *The Killing* as “an outstanding example of transnational success for a European originated, foreign language drama” combining “procedural crime” with “family melodrama” (2016: 201). This combination intermeshed seamlessly with audiences in Japan who have a penchant for both elements. The acquisitions manager at WOWOW, the channel that broadcast *Those who Kill*, expressed her disregard of the country of origin. Instead, her interest

lay in following and capturing the Nordic Noir trend, and specifically the suspense and mystery forming it:

Our audience [...] they don't choose drama depending on, you know, either American drama series or Nordic drama series – they generally like drama series [...]. Our job is to look for the high quality and very interesting drama series and getting to certain fans [...]. So, our audience pays to watch drama series on our channels, so they expect high quality – that is why we are here, and we collect the high quality content from all over the world [...]. So, we don't make distinctions by countries but by genres, I told you earlier, so the Nordic Noir has built a certain position in Japan, so when it comes to WOWOW [Premier], we always look for the mystery/suspense genres, so... which is Nordic Noir. (Interview with WOWOW, May 2015)

Those who watch

The cosmopolitan tribe of television buyers who scout for high quality content cater to a “cosmopolitan tribe of discerning viewers”. The Japanese woman Tamaki initially wrote that Danish television drama evoked “enjoyment” and “pleasure” – but what did that actually mean? My interactions with “those who watched” suggested that audiences felt pleasure when a point of resonance emerged from a sensation of encountering novelty or in a feeling of escape from the everyday. This resonates well with a “sampling” style of cosmopolitanism, which is characterised by fleeting temporary contact with difference.

Japan is well known for its profusive production, distribution, and viewing of soap operas. Beginning with productions made by Fuji TV in the 1960s, these melodramas focus on love affairs, marital infidelities, and battles between mothers- and daughters-in-law (Gerow, 2002). They centralise *okusama* [the housewife] struggling to protect the values of the home. In this light, the central female figures in the Danish television series shown on Super! Drama provided an “emotional proximity” connecting individuals at the level of perceived universal affect that transcend cultural differences (Jensen & Jacobsen, 2020) with a curiosity enabled by a felt discrepancy in the ideal of womanhood: Detective Sarah Lund in *The Killing*, who constantly negotiated heart-wrenching dilemmas of balancing her profession with motherhood (but privileged her profession); Detective Saga Noren in *The Bridge*, with her “slightly Asperger’s-like mannerism and sensitivity” (Male, 55, self-employed, online comment); and Prime Minister Birgitte Nyborg, who cycled to parliament in *Borgen*. With reference to the latter, a viewer commented online:

The emergence of female participation in the core of society is extremely shallow and Japan is left behind by other advanced countries. I think this drama will offer a chance to advance toward bettering Japan’s antiquated male chauvinism by aiming to build the nation to suit men and women living together as people. (Female, 62, self-employed)

The comments about the presence of strong female protagonists navigating between personal and professional lives, wronged women whose husbands cheated on them, and women who were role models encouraging a restructuring of societal gender relations, were some of the points of resonance expressed by viewers. Other points of resonance emerged from the ways the series portrayed family life:

[Danish series portray] how parents and children have different relationships to each other than they do in Japan... how married couples also have a different interaction with each other – a different relationship [...] how people live together and have children without being married. (Focus group interview)

One viewer took a normative step and denounced the portrayal of female sexuality:

Thanks for broadcasting one after the other entertaining programs such as Criminal Mind, The Bridge, The Mentalist and others. However, among all of those the feeling of disappointment was strong with The Bridge which I expected more of. Are there always insistent sex scenes in just about all Northern European dramas? I was put off by watching the female main characters' sex scenes. Are these insistent sex scenes necessary? (Male, 52, employee, online comment)

The viewer quoted below reflected the narratives of *Borgen* and the current state of politics in Japan, but tied his point of resonance to another image of the “European”:

At the time of these days when Japan is willfully and gradually exterminating intelligence, the decision to air this drama is a witness of respect for good sense. (It was aimed at colliding with the Upper House Election, wasn't it? Resolute decision). Of recent works, theatrical movies included, this was the most worth watching and it made me conscious once again about the scale of European enlightenment. (Male, 39, self-employed, online comment)

These comments show how viewers connected the narratives and images of series portraying distant places and practices to their own vastly divergent frames of local references.

It is tempting to curtail the cosmopolitan lifestyle to a set of practices and values associated with a jet-set privileged class with financial, educational, and linguistic capital that allows corporeal mobility and the consumption of “distinction” (Bourdieu, 1984). And indeed, this can be detected in the following online comment:

Hello. The first time I learned about this program was on a flight going abroad. I initially watched the American remake and I was overwhelmed by its allure. Having been disappointed about the decision to run the American version I was very happy when you ran the original Danish version! Please do run the whole series. Furthermore, I would be happy if you arranged a subtitled version as well. Thank you very much. (Female, 28, employee, referring to *The Killing*)

However, the “going abroad” element did not necessarily provide the general rule for motivating viewership:

I think people have the experience of going abroad and [...] studying the language [...] Housewives, watching very much cable and satellite [...] The working people have not time to watch TV, but housewives [...] have more time. (Interview with Super! Drama, May 2015)

Supporting this observation, a housewife interviewed through skype described her viewing experience in the following way:

Dramas from America are using many colours. Moreover, one story only takes 45 minutes so I can watch it smoothly. However, the Danish one is an hour without commercials, so I have to prepare for it. I have to go to the bathroom before watching it since it has no commercials in that whole hour. Also, if you look away, you cannot follow the storyline anymore. As I don't know the actors/actresses in the drama, I cannot guess who the criminal is. (Female, 50)

Those who watched had not necessarily studied or travelled abroad. The fact that 26 per cent of the comments sent to Super! Drama came from women who position themselves as “housewife” or “other – retired” requires asking what a cosmopolitan housewife looks like. Certainly, a curiosity or an appreciation of different places, people, and practices emerges as an essential dimension. This is shown in a rather straightforward online comment below:

I'm really grateful that you are always offering interesting and enlightening works [...] I'm especially interested in works that reflect the condition of a country's society. (Male, 23, self-employed)

However, appreciation for the Danish series can come from other interests too. A scriptwriter who had written a number of popular television dramas in Japanese told how the skill of “writing emotion” in Danish television drama had impressed her and was probably an element of novelty for many viewers too. Another interviewee, who had studied in Denmark and called herself a “busy working woman” used the word *akogare* to explain why the housewife watched the series:

In my opinion I just think they use it as information, no. But I think that many Japanese people [referring to housewives], they have a – *akogare* – just a moment, I do not remember the word – yeah, longing. Longing to other cultures, other people. (Female, 38)

The word *akogare* is derived from the Japanese *aku* [place, being] and *gare/kare* [leave] and roughly translates as “desire”. Nonaka (2018) describes *akogare* as a commonly used word among Japanese speakers to refer to a dream job or an idol. She writes that *akogare* feelings seem to emerge “only when the target was indeed *tantalizingly out of reach*” [emphasis original] (Nonaka 2018: 10). References to *akogare* could be detected in an interview with a female viewer:

Last week *The Bridge* just finished, so I remember it freshly. I watched it from the first season and I thought that the female detective looks cool, but her partner is fat, old, and a not handsome man. Why is he so popular among women? In season three, her partner changed to younger, cool man. I like it. Not only his appearance, but also his character attracts me. I feel depressed, so I watch it to escape from reality. Her new partner lost his wife and his two daughters – I hope he doesn't turn out to be a murderer and go out of the drama – I sympathise with his depression. (Female, 48)

The direct reference made to “escape from reality” echoes well with Hastall's (2017) explanation of escapism as a frequently reported motive for audiences to temporarily disengage themselves from troubling thoughts and unpleasant mood states into absorbing and entertaining moments. If viewers were escaping their reality, they were simultaneously coming into contact with the difference of the Other.

Audiences of Danish television drama in many regions of the world express how textual, narrative, and production aesthetics texture the series as authentic portrayals of social life (see Kaptan, Eichner in this anthology). Calloway-Thomas (2010) reminds us how media promotes both depreciatory and elevating images through filmic, televisual, and other modes of framing. Frames make specific images present whilst absenting other images, usually by using the language of bifurcation: rich-poor; young-old; boring-exotic. As extensively discussed in Hansen and Waade (2017), the scenic representations of Northern Europe as a place of mellow, dark colours with landscapes, climate, and people filled with melancholy was frequently commented on during the interviews. For example:

I really like Northern European dramas and when I turn them on and see them I know immediately if it is from Northern Europe because it is very grey. (Female, 34)

The recognised bond between language and authenticity (Coupland, 2003) also made an impact. Not only did the visual frame provide a novel look, contrasting the “Dramas from America [that] are using many colours”, but the sound of Danish played a critical role in promoting the realness viewers experienced in subtitled viewing (see Jacobsen, 2018 for a longer discussion). This is illustrated in the following example from an interview:

I watch it with subtitles because I really want to hear the person – like what they actually say, I want to hear their voice [...] so Danish sounds like this, it works like this, it feels like this. (Female, 34)

The “greyness” of Northern Europe was taken literally, as were the images of strong women and feeble men, good-looking interiors, gender equality, and relaxed and informal attitudes. These aspects of Danish television drama all helped to frame the realness of distant people and places – sometimes kindling *akogare* for places and practices tantalisingly out of reach.

Conclusion

The four Danish television dramas shown in Japan from 2012–2016 on WOWOW and Super! Drama were certainly appreciated as interesting and high quality. They cannot, however, be associated with Lotz's (2014) notion of "prized content". In the Anglophone and German markets, such content became appreciated and prized through intense media attention supported by hype-creating paratexts (Gray, 2010). Similar to the Brazilian context (see Jacobsen & Meleiro in this anthology), Danish television drama series were a drop in the ocean in comparison to the deluge of American and British television series offered. In accounting for the international popularity and global reach of Danish television drama series, it becomes important to document their limited penetration in regionally powerful markets such as Japan, which has a long history of vibrant domestic television production, powerful transnational distribution networks, and is itself a master in the global export of popular culture expressions. The crime genre played a key role in the decision to broadcast *The Killing* and *The Bridge*; as quintessential examples of Nordic Noir, the series found themselves in the right place at the right time. They resonated well with Japanese viewers' penchant for televisual suspense, mystery, and crime as exemplified in the following online comment:

Just wanted to say that I was waiting for season 2, I feel happy, and I feel scared...
When I watched "The Killing" it was like being seized by something. Captured by some big entity. Because I had the sort of feeling of not being able to escape as when you're having a nightmare. (Female, 41, housewife)

Exploring the meaningfulness of a limited phenomenon need not restrain us from considering the possible achievements for the companies who bought the series or for the viewers who watched them. The travel of Danish television drama is broadly understood as being directed to niche channels and niche audiences (see Esser, Eichner, Heram in this anthology). This is certainly the case for Japan. It can be suggested that although this travel is patrolled by the cosmopolitan tribe of television buyers (Kuipers, 2012), they act in symbiosis with the demands of a cosmopolitan tribe of television viewers. If cosmopolitanism is defined as the encounter and recognition of difference through both corporeal and imagined or mediated mobility, this definition includes the everyday and ordinary practices of engaging with difference through curiosity or concern by "dilettantes as well as connoisseurs" (Hannerz, 1996: 103). The empirical data from the Japanese context gives evidence of some immersive – but primarily traces of an everyday cosmopolitanism (Kendall et al., 2009).

Pay channels such as Super! Drama need to scout for cosmopolitan content, which become cosmopolitan by virtue of sounding and looking different, to satisfy viewer demands for novelty. This type of content becomes especially attractive if it simultaneously resonates with a genre that is locally valued, such as mystery and crime in Japan. It was essential, and a matter of routine business practice, to follow international trends and developments in the global television market to maintain the reputation and brand of

the channel as a broadcaster of “a range of favorite TV drama series from all over the world” (Super! Drama public advertisement, 2015). The demands and power of the cosmopolitan tribe of viewers – which in the Japanese case significantly included the cosmopolitan “housewife” – were evident in the avid comments that demanded reruns, marathons that allowed binge-watching, and costly subtitled or dubbed versions. Thus, the “gradual and sometimes discrepant infiltration and uptake of cosmopolitanism into the practices and outlooks of everyday citizens” (Kendall et al., 2009: 100) thrives and grows from a multidirectional symbiotic relationship between broadcasters and viewers. Both parties are identifiable carriers sowing the seeds of cosmopolitanism as they go about their everyday practices of work and pleasure.

The “sampling” and “immersive” cosmopolitans engage with the cultural Other on their own terms, most frequently as consumers. This relates well to Miller’s (2006) work on television cultures being tightly wrapped with neoliberalist consumption patterns, and to what Athique calls “mediaculturalism” – or “the visual equivalent of an overseas holiday or learning to enjoy foreign foods” (2016: 105). Although cosmopolitanism comprises the mobilisation of bodies *and* imaginations to travel further, mediated encounters rarely lead to a more accurate understanding of distant people, and they do not necessarily provide good reasons to change the Self. As a woman in the focus group interview said of the family relationships shown in Danish television drama: “It is interesting to watch. But it is more for the purposes of understanding differences and not to copy them”. The feeling of being engaged and looking at the world from different perspectives – as Tamaki wrote to me – was primarily temporary and fleeting. Sometimes they were expressed as a form of curiosity, sometimes as awe and wonder, sometimes as disgust, sometimes as *akogare*, sometimes as a moment of escape – but despite these variations, they were always expressions of different forms of engagement with difference.

Note

1. The channel and years of broadcasting for the series in question are referenced at the first mention of a television series.

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