

INTERVIEW WITH JO NESBØ

by Sebastiano Triulzi

Everyone knows people are fascinated by evil, but is this the only reason why crime fiction and crime series on TV are so popular today?

To be honest I have no idea it may be that we just like stories and right now Crime fiction happens to be the preferred vehicle for storytelling. It's all about love and murder anyway.

How true is it that detective stories, in all their infinite variations, hold a magnifying glass up to society and can monitor how healthy or unhealthy it is?

I don't believe that any fiction as such can give us answer is it can only ask some interesting questions then again I do think that fiction can help us see what lies beneath the horizon because it challenges our imagination.

Yet it's also true that crime novels and police thrillers are also an excellent form of escapism and entertainment, to the point that you could say they're almost the opiate of the masses and keep readers dumbed down politically. How can both ideas be true?

I think we use any kind of storytelling to make sense of our lives and our societies so in that respect there is a thin line between to what degree we make order of things to see them clearer or just plainly lie to ourselves.

What characterizes the kind of serial killer you like to build a story around? And how would you describe a serial killer, compared to any ordinary criminal?

To me as a story teller the serial killer is interesting because he will represent an alternative reality a parallel universe. Which is also what the writer try to create.

The element of terror explodes in your stories with no warning. How does suspense work in your novels? What rules does it follow?

I have no rules and I don't analyze too much How I build suspends the most important thing for me is to listen to my gut feeling I try to be a reader as well as a writer.

The hero drives the story, as we all know. But how important to the plot is the hero's sidekick? What characteristics does the sidekick need to have to be effective?

Again probably no rules but I tend to use the sidekick as a mirror for the protagonist the sidekick should emphasize certain aspects of the heroes personality something that he lacks or something that He doesn't like to see in himself.

What do your novels owe, if anything to the hardboiled detective genre and particularly the legacy of Jim Thompson?

A lot I write because I read just like I make music because I listen to music it's sort of a social reflux I think you listen to stories around a table and you feel the urge to contribute with a story yourself.

How important is the cliché of the detective or police chief who is always allergic to the rules, a loner and a loose cannon, from a narrative point of view? And for a society as well-off as that of Norway, based on the principle of civic responsibility, what does this cliché tell us about a lack of trust in the establishment?

I think that the rebel part of the protagonist personality is important to show the reader that there is a wide scope of options for what the protagonist will do next. And also any is driven by conflicts conflict at all levels and between all the characters.

Compared to when you were starting out as a novelist, the influence of TV series on the readers' imagination has grown enormously. How exactly has this trend influenced you as a writer?

It has influenced me because of what I said about writing because I read so you could say I also write because I listen to stories and I watch movies and TV series I'm probably even inspired by lyrics by songwriters like Bob Dylan, Tom Waits and Bruce Springsteen.

To what extent and in what terms do you believe in the possibility of good?

I do believe that humans feel better when their fellow men feel better.