

Jo Nesbø: The Master of Nordic Noir [C1]

Cavalcando l'ondata di popolarità dei romanzi polizieschi scandinavi, l'autore norvegese ha pubblicato il tredicesimo romanzo della serie sul detective Harry Hole. Il maestro del noir nordico narra una storia di violenza, di parassiti e parla della relazione fra lo scrittore e i personaggi che crea per stare al passo con i suoi fedeli lettori, che stanno diventando sempre più sofisticati.



Harry Hole, Oslo's greatest detective, is back. The fictional anti-hero created by Norwegian author Jo Nesbø appears once again in *Killing Moon*, the 13th [instalment](#) of the best-selling series of crime novels. The first Harry Hole book was published in 1997 and, since then, over fifty-five million copies have been sold worldwide, translated into fifty languages. Harry Hole is a complex character: a [rule breaker](#) with a strong sense of justice, who exasperates his superiors and inspires loyalty from his team. [Throughout](#) the series, he [struggles](#) with alcoholism, authority and his complicated relationship with single mother Rakel.

KILLING MOON

Killing Moon picks up Harry's story in Los Angeles. He is not in a good place. Everyone he has ever loved has left him and he has been sacked from the police force. Murder is never far away, however, and Hole is soon involved in tracking down a serial killer. At a recent press conference, Nesbø explained the character's arc over the series. **Jo Nesbø**** (Norwegian accent): **We meet Harry, who is on a suicide mission. He has gone to Los Angeles to drink himself to death. That is his plan. But gradually, Harry realises that there are things in life to live for and he does have a purpose. So, to create that journey, you have to do it step by step and you have to make it believable. So that is always the challenge for a writer: writing a novel, where you have the main character being changed in a way during the story. And I think that goes for most stories. They are about changing perspective on life. There's an outer conflict — in the traditional crime novel that's a murder that needs to be solved, in order to steer society from chaos back into order — but there are [is] also the same struggle inside the character.

SMARTER READERS

With a long-standing series about a beloved character, Nesbø has a loyal following of fans. Crime fiction in general is more popular than ever and that makes it difficult to keep the audience engaged. A big part of a crime writer's challenge is related to the increasing sophistication of the reading public. **Jo Nesbø: **It's interesting that our generation of readers have probably consumed ten times more stories than our parents and especially than our grandparents. I mean, my grandparents, they had books, but they would probably read three books a year and [had] no movies and they would listen to their friends telling the same old stories while, nowadays during the week, we have probably maybe read a book, seen at least two movies, three episodes of a TV series and so on. And that makes it difficult to find a way to surprise our readers, because they know the story so well, and they know the three-act structure. They know every trick in the book. It's like making dinner for chefs. So I think that, yeah, you have to raise the bar. People are getting not smarter in general, but smarter as readers, I think.

PARASITE AND HOST

Killing Moon certainly raises that bar, with the relationship between a parasite and its [host](#) as a [running theme](#). Featuring a number of aggressive creatures — including a [sea louse](#) that eats a fish's tongue to replace it with itself — the novel explores this symbiotic relationship in a typically violent setting, though Nesbø says that this novel is less violent than usual. **Jo Nesbø: **I've been criticised for being violent in my novels and that criticism is certainly [fair](#) in many ways. The reason why there's less violence doesn't have to be because of the criticism, that I'm afraid of criticism, because I think that is an interesting discussion: [to what extent](#) should violence be part of the crime novel? But I think as long as violence [drives the story forward](#), as long as it has a [purpose](#), it's needed in the story.

UNDRESSING

The parasite theme applies to himself and his character, too. Inevitably, he explains, writers put a lot of themselves into their novels, and Killing Moon is no exception. **Jo Nesbø: **Well I do think that literature and writing in general is the writer writing about himself or herself, even when the writer is not [aware](#) of that. When you tell a story, even at the dinner table, there is an element of introspective [storytelling](#), that you are using your own sense of drama, own sense of morality, in that story. You do show yourself both to your readers, listeners and yourself. Even though I [don't set out](#) to write about myself, I don't write for the [purpose](#) of therapy, but there is that element of [undressing](#) for an audience, in a way, [undressing](#) your thinking and your morality, but even your sense of humour and your taste in popular culture. All those things are in there. I think it would be [fair](#) to say that, [whether I'm the parasite or](#) Harry's the parasite, we're [linked](#) together in a way, yes.

SCANDINAVIAN EXPORT

Finally, Speak Up asked him if he could explain the [enduring](#) popularity of Scandinavian crime fiction. **Jo Nesbø: **I do get that question a lot and I try to come across as an intelligent person and give you an intelligent answer to that, but the truth is, I have no idea. It could be of course that during the 70s, there were a couple of Swedish writers that would take the crime novel from the kiosks and into the serious bookstores. It wasn't considered [second-rate](#) literature, it was something that you would [have a go at](#). Even the serious writers would [have a go at](#) the crime novel. And so there was a certain quality to what was produced in the crime literature genre, but there were also just as many bad crime novels in Scandinavia as anywhere else. But there are just so many of them. Hopefully, it's because they have this certain quality. Could be. But, who knows? This will probably change. I don't know when. I'm even surprised that it has lasted this long.

FROM PRO-FOOTBALLER TO PHILANTHROPIST

Born in Oslo, Jo Nesbø's journey to becoming a best-selling, international crime novelist has been far from [straightforward](#). Born in Oslo, Norway, he was set to become a professional football player with Premier League team Molde FK. The ligaments in his [knees](#) were damaged, however, putting an end to his dream. He [joined](#) the military and spent the next three years in the north of the country, studying hard in his [spare time](#). His efforts [paid off](#) and he [enrolled](#) at the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration in Bergen. On graduation, Nesbø's became a [stockbroker](#) and formed a band with a friend. The band, Di Derre, [took off](#) and they [secured](#) a recording contract. Between Nesbø's music and his career, however, it all became too much, so he went to Australia on a six-month break. On the thirty-hour flight, he decided to write a crime novel, [outlining](#) a story and his main character, Harry Hole. The Bat was published in 1997 to great success, leading Nesbø [to quit](#) his job and dedicate himself to writing, travelling the world for inspiration. Since then, he has won multiple awards and expanded into writing for the screen. His novel The Snowman was turned into a movie in 2017, starring Michael Fassbender as

Harry Hole. Having made up stories for his daughter, Nesbø wrote a children's book, [**Doctor Proctor's Fart Powder**](#). It became a popular series which was then televised. All this success made Nesbø want to give something back. He set up a [**charity**](#) the Harry Hole Foundation, which promotes [**literacy**](#) projects. In his fifties, Nesbø discovered [**rock climbing**](#) a passion which he pursues at every opportunity. Now sixty-three, the author shows no signs of slowing down: Harry Hole continues to fight fictional crime, and a film adaptation of one of Nesbø's short stories, London, is in production for release this year, directed by Ben Stiller.

Glossary

- **rule breaker** = trasgressore
- **picks up** = riprendere
- **outlining** = delineare, tracciare
- **storytelling** = narrativa
- **stockbroker** = agente di borsa
- **to quit** = lasciare
- **Throughout** = nel corso di
- **engaged** = assorto
- **and so on** = eccetera
- **host** = ospitante
- **drives the story forward** = portare avanti
- **aware** = consapevole
- **tracking down** = rintracciare, individuare
- **purpose** = scopo
- **don't set out** = disporsi a
- **secured** = ottenere
- **joined** = arruolarsi
- **sacked** = licenziare
- **to steer** = guidare
- **to raise the bar** = alzare l'asticella
- **linked** = connettere, associare
- **enduring** = duratura
- **have a go at** = fare un tentativo
- **straightforward** = immediato, lineare
- **spare time** = tempo libero
- **paid off** = dare frutti
- **struggles** = lottare
- **every trick in the book** = tutti i trucchi del mestiere
- **sea louse** = pidocchio marino
- **undressing** = spogliarsi
- **second-rate** = di seconda categoria
- **took off** = decollare
- **literacy** = alfabetizzazione, istruzione

- **arc** = sviluppo
- **nowadays** = attualmente
- **running theme** = tema ricorrente
- **whether I'm the parasite or** = se...o...
- **knees** = ginocchia
- **Doctor Proctor's Fart Powder** = Il dottor Prottor e la superpolvere per petonauti
- **charity** = organizzazione benefica
- **rock climbing** = scalata
- **instalment** = puntata
- **outer** = esterno
- **long-standing** = duratura
- **smarter** = più brillante, intelligente
- **fair** = giusto
- **to what extent** = fino a che punto
- **enrolled** = iscriversi