

## CHAPTER IV

### RETHINKING THE CHARACTER OF THE CRIMINAL

Sometimes, we can even be taken inside the monster's head, so that they are revealed as something less than mythic, their human brittleness exposed.

—Ian Rankin

Late Twentieth-century crime writing has shown increasing interest in exposing minds of damaged individuals who are often a victim of the state-backed myths of success. Novels from the criminal's perspective have always been a part of the literary tradition as seen in the narratives of Newgate which was a forerunner of crime fiction. While these novels were influenced by gothic sensationalism the appropriation of the voice of the transgressor in Scandinavian crime fiction has a specific purpose. Influence of the Noir and thriller tradition which shifted the narrative focus from the investigative process to psychological makeup of characters can be felt on Scandinavian crime fiction which presents an array of deeply disturbed characters. The undercurrent of socio-political critique present in the Scandinavian crime novel finds a strong voice in the presentation of the antagonist. When promises of limitless opportunities are not kept in a utopian land the detectives turn to introspection and melancholy while unlikely people turn to a life of criminality. The myths of these killers who are monsters are shattered as the humanity beneath the surface finds a voice. While the previous chapter discussed how the Scandinavian detective challenged the generic expectations of how a detective should be, this chapter is a study of such antagonist figures that abound in Scandinavian crime fiction whose lives and actions raise the question of law and justice and

reflects how society at large functions. This chapter is also a continuation of the previous chapter as both the detective and the criminal are moving towards some revelation in Scandinavian crime fiction.

Aficionados of crime fiction are of the opinion that the enduring appeal of crime fiction is the quest for justice, the unravelling of clues and the final revealing of the criminal. Crime is an anomaly which disturbs the peace and relative calm of the countryside. The detective hence takes up the role of the hero restoring society to its former glory by catching the criminal and bringing him to justice. So for a good crime fiction to fulfil its role there are certain requirements—the presence of a central protagonist and an equally interesting antagonist along with the all-important crime. While a lot of studies have been dedicated to the exploration of the figure of the detective, the figure of the antagonist is often dismissed as a means to an end. Once the crime occurs which is usually murder, the detective takes centre stage in his pursuit of the criminal who is reduced to a cardboard figure. Even Dr. Moriarty, the arch nemesis of Sherlock Holmes is presented as a one-dimensional character who is evil for the sake of being evil. This reflects the general trend of the presentation of the criminal as a character lacking depth. The author usually does not give any background to the character of the criminal as the focus is on the crime and the ongoing investigation. Yet the criminal is an integral part of crime fiction since it cannot exist without one. The history of crime fiction reveals many famous antagonists who have captured the imagination of the readers. One such famous antagonist is Dr. Moriarty who is presented as being intelligent enough to rival Sherlock Holmes. Throughout the series, Dr. Moriarty is taunting Holmes with scattered clues and death. He murders people for the thrill and taunts Holmes for a challenge. While the cat and mouse game that these two

characters play is an interesting page turner no effort is made to explain the behaviour of the antagonist and this has been a general trend in this sub-genre. While these criminals are memorable they are not drawn as a human.

The sub-genre of the police-procedural which is a chosen medium for Scandinavian crime writers also presents the figure of the criminal in a certain light. The authority figure of the detective who is part of the police force in a procedural gives him added power and responsibilities to reinstate clarity when disturbances threaten the ordered society. The world of crime fiction is presented in colours of black and white where the detective is the white knight. In contrast to this, the criminal is reduced to an image of monstrosity. This choice of the word 'monster' is significant as "killers [who have] committed serious felonies against other persons [...] are referred to as monsters which is indicative for their perception and that of their crimes through others" (Tabbert 2). This construction of a monster figure is mostly flat and one-dimensional as their identity is constructed around the single entity of their criminal tendencies. This reiterates the common thought that criminal offenders are guided and overpowered by their monstrous desires. According to one school of thought—" an offender cannot be separated from his/her crimes. On the contrary, a person develops into a criminal because of his or her criminal disposition (for example, in the genes, brain size or structure). The circumstances of that person's upbringing only play a subordinate role" (Tabbert 2). Hence, this label of monster ensures his expulsion from the circle of law-abiding citizens which in turns leads to an internalisation of this label. This internalisation is reflected in repeated convictions and offenses and the only correctional tool is control and power over them. This refusal to see the criminal beyond the figure of a monster and his criminal tendencies is predominant in a number of crime

fiction. But this reductionist view of criminals being predisposed to evil is problematic in many ways.

A well-known example of this image is the character of Hannibal Lector in Thomas Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs*. Hannibal Lector is presented as an aberration to the human race. He is a deviant figure who is an outsider and hence has to be purged out of society in order to reinstate peace and justice. This reduction of the criminal to a monster figure has some important effects. Firstly, the murderous instinct gets isolated from any form of accepted normality. Hence, society along with its various institutions is exonerated from any responsibility as these murderous citizens are considered to be deviant figures. The criminal instincts are removed "from all social, political or economic causes" (Scaggs 2005: 99). This presentation of the criminal as a deviant figure reinforces the idea of the antagonist as the 'other' in the universe of black and white characters. The 'other' in this division is inhuman and hence a monster. The criminal is born evil and is stripped of any humanity. Hannibal Lector's cannibalistic tendencies are used to emphasize this animalistic image where the criminal is no longer human. Scaggs elaborates this point—"the device of reducing the killer to something purely evil or animalistic restores an ideal status quo and is corresponding validation of social order that is specifically not responsible for social aberration" (100).

Although this device is common in most police procedural the Scandinavian variety subverts this dominant ideology by reworking the generic expectations of how a criminal should be. The characters in Scandinavian crime fiction are used to interrogate the dominant stereotypes of the detective as well as the criminal and challenge the stereotypical roles that are played by them.

The one-dimensional portrait of the criminal is dismissed in favour of the presentation of a full-bodied figure of the criminal who successfully lingers in the minds of the readers. Scandinavian crime fiction delves into the dark hinterlands of the psychology of the characters be it the detective or the criminal. It refuses to accept the vision of the universes where good and evil are reduced to being mere binaries. Since the focus on the characters is so central to this sub-genre of crime writing, these novels become an exploration of the psychology of the detective as well as the killer. The boundaries of right and wrong get blurred as the lines between the victim and victimiser disappear.

In order to emphasize this, the motivation of crime in Scandinavian crime fiction is usually sociological and this has led to a proliferation of deviant behavior in this sub-genre. These killers are presented as having deep and disturbing psychological problems that have led them to take up a life of crime and murder. Evil persons that do evil things simply because they are evil or greedy persons who rob and kill just because they are greedy — all too common in crime literature— are rare in Scandinavian crime fiction. More than British and American writers, Scandinavian novelists seem prepared to enter the hinterlands of opaque motivation and clouded psychology leaving the readers to draw their own conclusions. It is prepared to reflect the ambivalence that characterizes the world where we live in where clear answers are no longer readily available.

The Scandinavian nations are considered to be the safest places on earth with a negligible crime rate. The egalitarian society is one which all other nations aspire to. It is a belief that an individual need not take up a life of crime when all his needs are met. A question is thus raised can a place like this produce criminals? The general consensus would be negative. Yet a look into the Scandinavian crime fiction reveals a number of killers on the loose. While this may not

be a realistic picture it does highlight the breakdown of the rosy picture projected by the respective governments but more importantly raises the question—what really makes an individual turn to a life of crime?

In an attempt to answer this question, the Scandinavian crime writers take a headlong plunge into the dark recess of the human mind. The antagonist is given his due importance in the narrative as the author creates a multi-faceted character in him too. The criminal is given a background as the readers learn about their childhood, family, personal as well as professional details. This creates an ambivalence in the reaction of readers to the criminal as they often end up evoking feelings of sympathy as the lines between the victim and the victimiser are blurred—“all the crimes are clearly delineated for the reader, but the off-kilter psychology of the troubled characters place a queasy spin on everything we encounter” (Forshaw 2012: 110 ).

This focus on the antagonist in Scandinavian crime fiction results in the narrative being presented from the point of view of the criminal too. Crime fiction is usually written from the point of view of the detective who discovers clues for the readers to follow. But there are a number of writers who write from the point of view of the criminal which has been termed ‘split level’ narratives by Martin Priestman (cited in Horsley 2005: 2). There are certain differences in these two perspectives—the perspective of the law enforcer usually leads to the reinstating of law and order towards the end. The process of detection too leads to a logical conclusion with the help of the ‘little grey cells’ like in mysteries of Hercule Poirot. Though this sense of closure and neat endings is difficult to find in an age of moral complexity the readers are allowed a momentary escape from reality.

In contrast, the point of view of the criminal is more chaotic and irrational mostly leading to an end with a number of unanswered questions. These stories are no longer a momentary relief for a reader and instead leave the reader disturbed and unsettled in a space which has no reason. One classic example of this form of writing is Edgar Allen Poe's 'The Telltale heart' which narrates the story from the eyes of the killer. In this story, Poe masterfully presents the baffled mind of the murderer who kills for no logical reason.

Henning Mankell merges these two points of view. He presents the detective as well as the antagonist as his narrator giving equal importance to both these characters. Some of the works where Mankell has revealed the workings of the mind of the criminal are *One Step Behind* and *The Fifth Woman*. The former novel narrates the story of an ordinary man who works at a post office. He is an unassuming man who underneath the garb of ordinariness hides the mind of a cold blooded killer. Mankell delves into the character revealing his inner thoughts and motivations which make him a human character in spite of his brutality.

*The Fifth Woman* tells the story of a serial killer who is avenging the victims of abuse by men. The readers are introduced to the character of the killer in the first chapter itself where we learn that her mother has been killed in a shooting incident in Africa. In order to avoid an international incident, her death has been buried under the layers of bureaucracy. This incident as the readers learn forms the trigger for the character of Anders who thereafter hunts and kills her victims. Inspector Wallander who is assigned to the case does not believe in a person being evil for the sake of being evil. He makes an effort to learn the reason for such behaviour in search of answers that he fervently searches for. Mankell by presenting the story from the point of view of Anders gives a glimpse of the methodical mind of the killer. This not only makes for

a gripping narrative but also helps in a clearer understanding of the character who has chosen a path of violence.

By delving into the character of the killer Mankell tells a side of the story which is often never considered leaving it to the readers to be the judge of Anders. Anders is a former employee of a hospital where battered women are brought in for treatment. She comes in contact with a number of victims of domestic violence and she initially tries to help them by forming a support group. The empathy she feels for these victims is based on a childhood trauma when Anders is a witness to the abuse of her mother by her stepfather. The image of her mother's blood is forever etched in her mind yet she knows that justice is never received by these women. Hence, the final death of her mother sends her on a mission to serve her own form of justice to men who have mistreated women to the extent of killing them—"she had realised that she was a priestess, dedicated to the scared task of proclaiming that justice was holy [and] she directed her prayers to the child she had been, before everything fell apart.[...] before the sinister men had towered up before her eyes like writhing menacing snakes" (63). The calmness which surrounds her as she kills these men gives eeriness to the narrative. While the timetable she draws which includes murder presents her as a disturbed isolated individual.

Mankell's presentation of this disturbed individual raises a host of questions about a society that is supposedly a utopia to live in. The surface of the society does project this happy picture but the darkness lurking underneath reveals a side of the story that is often left untold. The stories of innumerable silent victims find a voice only when Anders takes up a life of criminality. These victims expose how law and justice have not been able to provide protection to these women reflecting a failure on the part of the state. By presenting the criminal's side of the story the readers not only get to delve into the dark recesses of criminal psychology but also get

a chance to judge the successes and the failures of the welfare state. The presentation of the thoughts of the Anders is an attempt to answer the question raised by in the novel—"all this violence," she said. "where does it come from?" there aren't many people who are truly evil" Wallander replied. "At least I think they're few and far between. On the other hand, there are evil circumstances, which trigger all this violence. It's those circumstances that we have to tackle"(448). The author does share his opinion with Wallander believing that it is the circumstances that lead to aberrant behaviour and the antagonist's side of the story provides credibility to this thought. Hence, this presentation of the characters are grey rather than being divided into black and white draws a more human picture of the reality we are living in while subverting the norm of presenting the antagonist as a one-dimensional villain whose life is centred around being evil for the sake of being evil. The path to the final act of murder and the motives led to a more sympathetic portrait of the antagonist as seen in the character of Anders.

The Norwegian queen of crime, Karin Fossum is a master of psychological portraits. Like Henning Mankell, her narration shifts from the detective's point of view to the criminal's point of view seamlessly. Her stories give voice to damaged people who are treated as social misfits. She approaches her characters in a calm manner presenting them inside out where their deepest secrets are brought out in the light. She peels off each layer of her antagonists to reveal the trigger point which has led them down the path of evil. She subverts the notion of being evil for the sake of evil and holds the social institution of family accountable for many of her antagonist's criminal tendencies. Her victimizers are often victims themselves of circumstances beyond their control and their lives become proof of the failure of the social and political system. For Fossum understanding, the motives of the crime is as important as solving the

crime. She leads her readers into the desperation of the human soul elucidating circumstances and motivations behind gruesome crimes.

Her evocative writing draws an in-depth character study and she is one of the few writers who has managed to draw a sympathetic portrait of a pedophile in *The Water's Edge*. The antagonist is an unkempt old man walking with a limp or circling schools in his rundown white car. His survival is dependent on social benefits as he no longer holds a job. His life is full of broken relationships which can no longer be mended. His wife has left him and his two daughters are estranged. But the most damaging person in his life is ironically his mother whose abuse of her son has lifelong psychological effects. The torment that the son undergoes is highlighted in the death scene of the mother who dies of cancer. Fossum presents a loving scene of the son holding the hand of his mother in her final moments only to reveal—"for months she was confined to bed in terrible pain. He had sat patiently by her bedside waiting because he did not want to miss the moment when she died[...]. He was unaffected by watching her, he felt neither joy nor relief, merely fascination" (*The Water's Edge* 117). This contrast between action and thoughts further emphasizes the toxic relationship of the mother and her son. Fossum focuses on this again and again throughout the narrative—"I was a nervous child, he thought. My mother made sure of that. She was always ready with a threat, a telling-off, a cutting remark. I grew up in a sea of reproaches" (*The Water's Edge* 84). This dissection of daily life reflects the pain and desperation of everyday living for a man who is deemed a monster by society.

Fossum in no way justifies what he does because his lack of control over his urges finally leads to the death of an innocent child. But she tries to delve into his thoughts and motives. His need to be with small children is described as a need to be in control and to be in the company of

people who would not judge him. After a lifetime of mental abuse, this episode becomes a way of gaining some semblance of power. His anguish after the death of his victim is well documented by the writer as he knows that he will soon be caught—

"Wasn't he merely being human? He sensed how heat surged through his body, and then he collapsed once more, because deep down he knew better, of course, he did. They would show him no mercy, they would reel off their accusations, drag him through the mud like he was something inferior. Distraught, he tried to keep control of his thoughts, because it felt safer, but they overpowered him and he bowed his heads in shame" (*The Water's Edge* 183).

Her humane portrayal of a social misfit is reflected in the description of a convicted sex offender named Philip Akeson. He is presented as—'mild and agreeable, open and generous by nature' (*The Water's Edge* 64), happy in the company of the two police detectives, Sejer and Skarre. Philip's trial in the courtroom is described in the following words—"he never tried to justify himself or trivialise the assaults, he co-operated fully with the judicial system and confessed to everything. He wanted help[...] his plea was long and heartfelt, his tone genuinely remorseful and on a few occasions he had displayed an infectious sense of humour" (*The Water's Edge* 64). This description is truly a subversion of the commonly held view of what a 'monster' figure should be like. The writer does not include any description which makes him animal-like. His plea for help and remorse makes him humane as well. He is no longer a cardboard figure drawn only to serve as a contrast to the lead detective. Likewise, when another child is found missing with a paedophile on the loose, the hunt for the criminal is intensified. While the reader is expecting a hardened criminal who preys on innocent children, Fossum yet again presents a different side to the story. It is brought to the reader's attention that the crime

was committed by the young boy's friends who locks him in an abandoned earth cellar. Here, Edwin dies an excruciating death all alone in the darkness. The motives of the children are playful but the result is serious.

Similarly, we meet Johnny Beskow in *The Caller* who had—'a distinct talent for mischief and now he was putting it to use.'(28). What begins as a prank by a neglected boy takes a sinister turn and sets in motion events which lead to devastating results for a peaceful community. His first prank is covering a baby in a pram with blood much to the shock and despair of the parents who rush the baby to the emergency room. His later pranks turn out to be equally horrifying—placing a fake obituary for a seventy-year-old woman in the newspaper and ordering a funeral hearse for a dying man. All these episodes have lasting repercussions on the citizens of Bjerkas and as the pranks escalate hell breaks loose. As mentioned earlier, Karin Fossum is not only concerned with the finding of the criminal and bringing justice to the victims. Her concern is also the exploration of the motivations of the victimiser and delving into criminal psychology. Hence, the readers are given a glimpse into the heart and mind of Johnny Beskow.

Abandoned by a father whose name he never finds out, Johnny lives with his alcoholic mother. Living at the mercy of a mother who lies in a drunken stupor most of the time, Johnny longs for attention and acknowledgement and he finds this by committing creative yet sinister pranks. His thought process reveals a mind full of bitterness, especially against his mother. He spends a good amount of time thinking of gruesome punishments for his mother—"I will shock you from your stupor. And you will get up from the sofa screaming, covering your face with your hands. I can boil the kettle, and throw water in your face. Or, he thought, hot fat" (*The Caller* 30). The sense of elation Johnny feels at the success of his every prank is highlighted by the fact that he visits and watches his victims moments after his prank. He imagines himself to be a wolverine-

an animal who is a sharp hunter. Later, he is referred to as—The Beast of Bjerkas. He feels the need to destroy the false sense of security that people have. His abuse and neglect manifests itself in making people suffer—‘why should I be fair when nobody else is fair?’ (*The Caller* 283).

Antithetical to this aberrant behaviour is his relationship with his grandfather Henry who is the only person in the narrative who shows some concern for Johnny. He regularly visits him and the care he bestows on his grandfather reflects a touching emotional bond and the few conversations they share are the only episodes of normalcy in Johnny’s life. It is apt perhaps that he names his pet guinea pig ‘Bleeding Heart’ as he turns out to be a misunderstood mistreated kid who eventually becomes a victim of vigilante justice.

Fossum's stories have a strong social conscience and are replete with some of the most troubled creations in crime fiction. Her ability to draw her criminals with compassion and empathy is second to none. Though in no way defensive of the criminal and justifying their brutal crimes, she does provide an insight into the criminal mind and enlightens her readers in ways not thought possible in crime fiction. In keeping with her primary theme of social criticism, her criminals are a result of a failure of society and its various institutions, especially family. Her stories leave the readers with a haunting sense of despair and raise a number of uncomfortable questions with no hope for an answer. By way of explanation Inspector Sejer concludes by saying—‘as long as adults make mistakes and as long as parents' abuse, they will create new abusers’ (*The Water’s Edge* 226), a thought perhaps echoed by Fossum too.

Jussi Alder Olsen also presents his characters with a lot of depth, be it the figure of the detective and his team or the criminals they are unmasking. Since his Department Q series deals

with the cold cases, cases which have remained buried and forgotten, the journey into the past makes for a fascinating read. The revelations that come out are often presented as parallel narratives with the present day sometimes even intertwining with the current cases of the police force. Though the lead detective Carl Morck remains the central focus in most of the Department Q series, Olsen creates some memorable antagonists like Nete Rosen in *Guilt*, a woman misunderstood and damaged by the society. Abused and forcefully sterilised she opts for vigilante justice in her quest for vengeance. Her abusive background and her broken self is so vividly portrayed by the writer that when she decides to stop playing the victim, the readers are rooting for her to succeed in killing her tormenters. Similarly, *The Scarred Woman* presents the character of Anne-Line Svendsen, a Danish case worker who is fed up of young capable women taking advantage of the Danish welfare system. When diagnosed with cancer she realises she has to take matters into her own hands and researches hit and run cases to set her plan in motion. While the stagnancy of her professional and personal life is put into sharp focus, the author also gives a background of the women who are beneficiaries of the welfare system. This reveals the shortcomings of government policies and the system that disburses welfare benefits. It exposes how this system can be manipulated by people.

Olsen creates one such unforgettable antagonist in *Redemption*. A case which is set into motion with the discovery of an old message in a bottle turns out to be a plea for help written in blood many years ago. Forwarded to the cold case unit of Department Q the entire team must unite to stop a cold-blooded serial killer. Unlike his previous Department Q books, *Redemption* which is the third book of the series presents a villain who is memorable for various reasons. While his crime is horrifying the writer also gives a background of information which makes him a multi-dimensional character. Perhaps Adler-Olsen's sickest villain till date, the killer is an interesting

character who leads a double-life so much so that he has multiple identities and his true name is never mentioned in the book. Olsen presents a meticulously calculating man who kidnaps children from families who belong to orthodox religious sects. He usually begins by gaining entry to the sect and earning the trust of the families involved. After befriending the parents he kidnaps two children from the family promising their release after a ransom of a million kronor. He has a perfect location to hide the children in what looks like a decrepit boathouse. After the ransom money is paid which is thrown out from a moving train at a specific location, the killer releases one child but kills the other to ensure the silence of the family in the future. Since most of these families belong to deeply religious sects who keep away from other people and are skeptical of the police force they make for easy targets for the killer who does a military-style background check for each of his target families complete with personal notes.

In contrast to this version of the killer is his presentation as a husband and a father. He claims to have fallen in love with Mia, his wife at first sight. Mia believes that her husband works in a secret operation for the government which explains his long absences from home when he is on one of his kidnapping missions. His concern for his son Benjamin is also antithetical to his profile as a killer. After being successful in one of his meticulous plans he looks forward to being home. But the coldness in his character cannot be warmed up even in a domestic homely scene. His wife clearly feels estranged due to his long absences and during one of these disappearances, she enters his personal space which reveals boxes full of disturbing information. The many masks that the killer has been wearing slowly begin to slip off as uneasy truths are brought into the forefront.

The writer slowly presents the readers with bits and pieces of information about the killer from which we are able to draw a picture of his background and his motivations for his crimes. His

father is a pastor in one of the orthodox religious Christian sects which he so often targets. Growing up in a strict household faith becomes a burden for him—" he looked up at the crucifix [...] it was heavier than it looked. He remembered. Its weight had been brought down against him" (*Redemption* 178). Early on he sees the disparity between his father's public persona and the one he presented to his family. His father's hypocrisy is revealed in the many episodes of domestic violence where he is careful not to disfigure his wife's face. Mia finds a scrapbook in the room she has never dared to enter in which an old photograph of the killer's father is uncovered—" he was an unsmiling man with eyes that exuded self-importance and authority. The eyes of his wife were different. They were empty. In these scrapbooks, she could see why. The father dictated everything [there was a] nasty undercurrent of nationalist sentiment, malevolent opinion, intolerance, deep-rooted conservatism and chauvinism" (*Redemption* 188). Though Mia acknowledges that these words describe the father she sees a distinct impact on the son whose daily life is affected by these thoughts.

Raised by an orthodox and conservative father, the killer's childhood is made up of restrictions where even laughter is seen as a sin—" he himself dreamed of a world full of people who could laugh" (*Redemption* 219). He lives a life without a single word of praise and is labeled as a delinquent. His mother does nothing to shield him from any of the pain he undergoes and even the death of his father does not give him any escape. His stepfather who is chosen by the religious congregation is equally bad and is a staunch believer of corporal punishment. His pitiful life takes a turn for the worse when a fight with his father leads to his sister Eva's blindness which further estranges him from any filial bond. His two stepsisters also drown themselves leaving a lonely solitary soul behind. After years of mental and physical abuse, he finally takes his first step towards the life of crime when he kills his parents by feeding them

sleeping pills. Olsen gives a view of his mental state and the various thoughts he has as he tries to outgrow the religious ties which threaten to suffocate him. His bewilderment at things taken for granted by everyone else draws a picture of suppression and depravity. His astonishment at the discovery of pleasure that laughter brings is captured thus—“and he laughed too, and the cramp in his belly and all that was delightful and unsuppressed and unexpected overwhelmed him, and no one slapped his neck or took the slightest notice of him because of it” (*Redemption* 224).

An experience of watching Charlie Chaplin play the tramp and the joys of laughter has a profound impact on him. He realizes that he can be more than just a pitiful young boy—

“ten paces and he was someone else in the world of the mirror. No longer the boy without a friend. No longer the son of the man the people of that small community held in such esteem. No longer the chosen one of the flock who was to carry the weight of the word of God and turn it like a thunder bolt upon the people. He was the little tramp who made everyone laugh, not least himself” (226).

His distancing from his family upbringing to the extent of burying his own name and his assumption of multiple identities can be sourced to this event. His constant humiliation that he faces in the name of religion leads to his deep-seated hatred for all orthodox sects. Among his meticulous list of his intended victims is a study of a number of such sects and it is clear from his attitude that he never finds truth in any one of them. Herein lies his motivation for targeting devout families besides the scope for a convenient escape. When faced with the truth about her husband Mia questions—“what had he been looking for, this man who had striven so hard to finally rid himself of the darkness and dogma of his childhood?” (192)The alternate title of

*Redemption is The Conspiracy of Faith* which is revealing at this point as his kidnapping and killing is associated with faith and yet becomes an act of redemption for the killer. His character and background thus highlight the failure of the state to change malevolent ideas like the ones held by the pastor and his congregation. His study of the mind of the criminal goes hand and hand with his underlying theme of social criticism.

Following the tradition of the Scandinavian crime writers, Arnaldur Indridason combines both the detectives' and the criminals' point of view to present a gripping narrative. His characters are human who are caught in circumstances beyond their control. He is a master of creating characters who are unlikely heroes and likewise unlikely criminals and his stories are a profound commentary on human life and human behavior. Some of his best works are studies delving into human psychology in search of answers to questions like-what drives a man to kill? A question which is raised in *Silence of the Grave*—when human bones are found in an abandoned construction site, professionals are called to unearth the human remains which have remained undisturbed for many decades. They take this job seriously and remove the soil layer by layer to protect any evidence. Parallel to this is the narrative of the lead detective Ernulder who leads the case in search of the identity of the dead person. As the layers are removed slowly, the detective also manages to form a clearer picture of the dead person which reveals that the person may have been alive when he was buried. This confirmation of murder leads to a hunt for the killer and the search for clarity sheds light into a history of violence surrounding the dead victim.

As the story unfolds the line between good and evil gets blurred and the dichotomy between the victim and the victimizer no longer holds true. The readers are driven to believe that only a monster would bury a person alive. A criminal profile is built slowly of a man who derives

pleasure out of peoples suffering reinforcing the stereotypical image of a monster figure devoid of all human emotions. As the ongoing investigation proceeds, a parallel narrative of a family unfolds who used to live near the site of the crime. A long and brutal history of domestic violence is revealed. Grimur is a cold and calculative man who regularly abuses his wife without feeling any remorse. The beatings are violent and the three children remain silent spectators for many years cowering to remain invisible at the face of their fathers' wrath. The writer draws an image of systematic abuse—

“ashamed of her black eyes, split lips and bruises all over her body[...] ashamed of the life she lived, which was surely incomprehensible to other [She] wanted to hide herself in the prison he made for her. Wanted to lock herself inside, throw away the key and hope that no one find it. She had to accept his maltreatment. Somehow it was her destiny, absolute and immutable” (*Silence of the Grave* 51-52).

Years of abuse leaves her isolated with no self- respect and confidence. She continues her life caring little for herself or her appearance. Almost believing that she is the cause for the abuse, she carries on so that her children remain protected. His behavior has been detailed by the writer as the abuse gradually becomes habitual with no hint of guilt and remorse—“as if what he did to her had ceased to be unnatural or a disfiguration of their relationship, and had become something necessary and right” (51). Ironically, Grimur calls his daughter a monster because of her physical deformity without realizing that he is the actual monster in the family. In contrast to this is his image outside the sphere of his family, while at home he terrorizes everyone but out in the town he is a cordial smiling man. His elder son Simon who accompanies him sometimes to the town is bewildered by this duality of behavior—“Simon could not fathom how he could be sycophantic and subservient and bow politely when at home he rules as the

ultimate dispenser of life and death"(110). Grimur fails to realize that his sons were growing up, beginning to raise questions and getting stronger.

As the case proceeds the investigative team decides that the dead body belongs to a female. This leads the readers to conclude that Grimur eventually kills his wife in a beating gone too far since he fits the profile of a murderer. His calculative manipulation of his wife, his disregard for his children and his duality of personality builds a complex character who thrives on control. Yet when the final curtain falls it is revealed that the dead body belongs to Grimur who was stabbed to death by Simon. This builds an alternative profile of a murderer in the narrative—a young boy who grows up watching his mother being mentally and physically abused. His helplessness and frustration simmer slowly beneath the surface undetected by the father. His father is the tyrant and monster of his nightmares. As a twelve-year-old boy, he tries to protect his petrified siblings with the safe knowledge that—"one day he would be able to defend his mother" (88). Simon feels an uneasy change in the household after his father comes back from prison like an explosion waiting to happen—"inexplicably it would be his responsibility to intervene before it was too late. Mikkalina was too weak and Tomas was too small. He alone could help her" (112-113).

When the moment arrives Simon takes the scissors and stabs Grimur. This image of a helpless young boy killing his father to protect his mother subverts the image of a criminal mastermind all too common in crime fiction. The humane quality of the eventual murderer is reinforced by the conversation Simon has with his mother after the murder—

“I’m a murderer,” Simon said. ‘I killed him’

‘not in my eyes, Simon. You can never be a murderer in my eyes. Any more than I am. Maybe it was a fate he brought upon himself. The worst thing that can happen is if you suffer because of what he was like, now that he’s dead [...]

‘But I feel so terrible’ (282).

This reversal of the victim and the victimizer dichotomy is crucial in the exploration of the nature of good versus evil and spurs questions of human beings power to influence their surroundings. By blurring the lines between what is right and what is wrong, Indridason leaves his readers with uneasiness no longer relying on the clarity provided by the fictional world. Similar to his contemporary writers, he presents a vicious circle of the abuser and the abused. It is revealed that Grimur lived in a foster home where he experienced neglect. His foster parents are later taken to court after his friend dies of malnourishment and injuries to his body. His abuse of his family becomes a way of having control in a world where he was nothing. Unfortunately, this circle of abuse does not end here as Tomas is unable to escape the childhood trauma—“Tomas is dead now. He only lived to be 52. Divorced twice.[...] violent. Beat his wife. Beat his children. Drank” (286).

Matti Joensuu’s study of criminal behavior is dark and compelling. His narrative style is slightly different from the rest of the Scandinavian crime writers discussed here. Both *The Priest of Evil* and *To Steal her Love* are dark stories which focus more on the study of the twisted mind of the criminals than the detective. *The Priest of Evil* presents a strange man living in the underground tunnels of Helsinki. He worships a mountain androgynous God Maamoo who sends signs for the priest to sacrifice people in front of his apostle which is the underground train. Initially thought to be suicidal victims an image slowly appears which

suggests that a serial killer is at loose who pushes innocent commuters in front of the train—“killing a person was not difficult, no more difficult than killing a pigeon. All it required was a soft push—at the right time, of course in the right place” (11). Living in an alternate world he mutters strange Latin phrases believing himself to be the chosen one to bring about the ‘big bang’. His equally strange rituals of marking his victims and sacrificing pigeons are described in great detail—“ he had transferred each of their souls into a small white pebble,[...]. Sometimes when the mood took him he would take out one of the pebbles, lay it on the rock and crush it with a larger stone. And lo and behold: somewhere an unexplained accident would occur” (16). He has a hypnotic quality with which he brainwashes young troubled teenagers. Though the priest is a man he often disguises himself as a female when commanded by his strange god. When he fails in killing one of his intended victims he pricks the back of his hand till it resembles mincemeat as a way of repentance. This draws a picture of a strange character who has a diseased mind.

Joensuu gives an insight into the twisted mind of a religious fanatic by using a narrative style similar to the stream of consciousness technique. This reinforces—“Joensuu’s ability to explore the dark interior landscape of his characters notably their persistent self-delusions” (Forshaw 2012: 148). The priest turns out to be Markus Luukas Paavali Heino who used to be a teacher of religious studies with a masters degree in theology. He has been off the radar for twelve years and has spent seven years of his life in the underground tunnel he calls home. There is a suggestion that the priest maybe schizophrenic that has led him to build an alternate reality of his own. Joensuu does not shy away from the task of presenting a diseased mind of a character who lives a solitary life. His extreme religious fanaticism is reinforced by his mental state of mind which pushes him to build a bomb which eventually kills him too. Joensuu does not

provide a lot of background details of his character but his educational degree and his search for spirituality in India are touched upon. A description of the tunnel he lives in also reveals a number of stolen books which all deal in religion. The slow repetitious writing style mimics the convoluted workings of the priest and marks the trajectory of his descent into evil. By presenting a character whose life revolves around religion the author is able to raise questions on morality and spirituality.

*To Steal her Love* revolves around the character of Tweety who looks at the world from his own distorted perspective. He has a bigger head in comparison to his body—"it was as though it belonged to someone else, like the bird in *Tweety and Sylvester* where his nickname came from. It was also because, ever since he was a child, he had wanted to be a bird. His real name was Asko, but he had never liked it" (7). The narrative is presented through the eyes of Tweety who is the criminal at large in the novel. He is an expert lock picker who breaks into the apartment of young women to watch them. He has his own names for the women he stalks at night and has a favorite among them. He looks at everything around him through his own unique perspective and has names for all his important things—"he glanced at his shoes long enough to say their names out loud-the left was Pessi and the right Moses" (4). Joensuu writes this novel with a hint of humor especially in relation to the character of Tweety and his point of view. He is part of a criminal family who is planning a big bank robbery. Though his family makes fun of him he becomes an indispensable part of the bank heist team due to his lock picking skills—"Tweety tried to control his panting as he gasped for breath, he wanted to hear what the lock had to say. And it said 'click', but the 'clack' that should have followed didn't sound, and the warm joy of success flooded into his chest" (11). When a lock gives him trouble he lovingly talks to it coxing it to open for him.

His unique point of view is also reflected in his room which is his private domain. His walls are covered in paintings that expose the wild landscape of his mind. Though the actual painting is never described his brother Reino on seeing them comments that Tweety is sick. There are enough clues for the readers to discern that Tweety is a social misfit who is unable to function in normal human situations. His only choice of company is his rat Toby who understands him without the need for words. The readers are also given hints of his place in a dysfunctional family—

“It was a worn old jute doormat. He thought of it in the rains, when it was wet, waiting for everyone to wipe the mud from their feet on it, and he felt sorry for it. He felt just like that mat. He felt like Asko, and Asko’s world was like a pigeon drawn with a blunt pencil, a pigeon run over by a car, its feathers blown about by the laughing wind” (42).

Raised in a family by his nagging abusive mother whom he calls mother Gold and a father who disappears halfway through his childhood, Tweety longs for some kind of normalcy in his life. He often dreams of Wheatlocks his favorite woman and having a normal human conversation with her. During the bank heist, Tweety compares his life to a locker which he cannot open. Joensuu draws a strangely sympathetic portrait of the man who terrorizes young women by stalking them. He pictures him as a misunderstood young man who longs for some human interaction. Tweety himself has a vague feeling about the misfit he is—“if only his life had been different if he hadn't been born into the Leinonen family if he'd got a place at art school, and if...he didn't know that, but that's how he felt. And it was painful because he faintly understood something but didn't quite understand what he understood” (140). Unlike the evil that lurked in darkness in *The Priest of Evil, To Steal her Love* as the title suggest tells the story of a misunderstood man's quest for love. By presenting the narrative from the point of view of

Tweety, Joensuu shows the humanity in a character who has been labeled criminal by society. Likewise, Joensuu reveals that the killers in *The Stone Murders* are young men belonging to dysfunctional families. Abused as kids by their parents they grow up to play vicious pranks on their victims which results in death. Joensuu shows that both the victims and the victimizer are crushed by the same abusive structure.

It can be concluded that Scandinavian crime fiction is true examples of 'whydunits' rather than the 'whodunits'. They are crime novels which are concerned with the motivations of the criminals and what makes them evil rather than being only concerned with the unmasking of the criminal. This aspect of Scandinavian crime fiction is highlighted in the fact that many novels begin with the exposure of the identity of the criminal like Joensuu's *The Stone Murders* and Fossum's *The Caller*. All the novelists discussed above have reiterated their quest for a revelation of the life of the criminal to shed light into many important issues. Although there are plenty of books dealing with animalistic monster figures, it is the story of ordinary people falling into the jaws of evil which explore truths of circumstances and motivations of crime. This device has a two-fold advantage since the circumstances of the life of the criminal often reveal the failure of the state machinery.

Social realism and criticism which lies at the heart of the Scandinavian crime novel find a mouthpiece to critique the state which has projected the glossy image of these lands being a utopia where all human needs are met. The proliferation of people who take up the life of crime raises the question that all things are not perfect. The political intrigues and financial crash all become causes for desperation in the human mind. By delving into the psyche of the criminal the novelist unearths a hint of humanity in these characters who are labelled delinquents and outcasts by the society. This, in turn, presents them as victims themselves who have turned into

law-breakers. This exposes the vicious circle of crime where the abused often turn into an abuser in a never-ending chain. It raises questions of the moral responsibility of the social institutions like family and religion which has failed to curb such behaviour. In Scandinavian crime fiction, the resolution of the mystery of 'who committed the crime?' takes a backseat as character development takes centre stage which makes for a more emotional and compelling narrative.

Though the presentation of the narrative from the criminal's perspective is not an unprecedented departure from the earlier tradition of crime writing, it is clear that the five authors discussed here have made this technique their own. By delving into the minds of the criminals all five crime writers discussed in this chapter expose the inadequacy of the welfare systems. They shed a critical light into the atmosphere which has contributed to the anxiety and disillusionment with governmental institutions. This discontent with the agencies of the state leads to various kinds of crisis in the novels discussed here which often culminates in murder. The rise of right-wing ideologies, xenophobia, and consumerism have led to a breakdown of structures which traditionally held society together. Together, the five authors discussed in this chapter present the criminal as a metaphor for the aberrations of society. The widespread discontent has led to a slowing consuming paranoia which is presented in the damaged selves of the criminals of Scandinavian crime fiction reflecting the dark side of the utopian myth.