

## ABSTRACT

The five nations of Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, and Finland make up Scandinavia which lies in the northernmost regions of Europe. In the international sphere, they are put under this umbrella term of Scandinavia as they are neighboring countries who share many similarities. The one common thing they share is that all these nations follow the Scandinavian welfare model also known as the Nordic welfare model.

Following the chaos of the post-war years, these nations felt the need to come up with a solution to the low standard of living of their citizens. This led to the establishment of the welfare model which was based on the social and economic well being of the citizens with the government providing universal healthcare, education, childcare, and good retirement benefits. The government promised to look after the well being of the individual based on the tenets of equality. This model has been hailed as a success throughout Europe and the rest of the world as Scandinavian countries continue to top the world happiness chart. They have been celebrated as the most peaceful and affluent nations in the world.

Parallel to the image of the success of the Scandinavian welfare model is the global phenomenon of Scandinavian crime fiction which is a term given to crime novels written by authors hailing from these nations. Following the success of Larsson's Millennium trilogy, recent years has seen the international market flooded with crime novels from Scandinavia which deal with the darkest and most disturbing themes. These books have also been adapted into film versions reaching a wider audience. The BBC series based on Wallander has transferred Scandinavian crime fiction to the small screen as well. These TV series have been well received highlighted in the fan base for crime series like The Killing and The Bridge which has been adapted to suit the taste of the larger international audience.

Besides the huge success of these novels in the popular front, these novels have gained attention due to their literary merit and critical acclaim. The sheer number of Scandinavian crime writers who are gaining international acclaim is astounding when compared to the population of these nations. Hence, the question arises as to why are these happiest nations in the world producing some much of crime novels which deal with themes of death and unhappiness?

This thesis hinges on this question and is an attempt to answer it. This study puts selected works of Henning Mankell, Karin Fossum, Arnaldur Indridason, Jussi Alder Olsen and Matti Joensuu under a critical light. In contrast to the image projected by their respective governments, the crime writers from the five nations of Scandinavia exhibit a distinct departure from the world of idyllic happiness to present a world where chaos is a norm.

This study traces the historical and cultural influences on this subgenre to reveal the features which give it a distinct Scandinavian flavor. The objective of my study is to study the genre of Scandinavian crime fiction by way of textual analysis and in-depth study of various characters. In doing so, Scandinavian crime fiction discloses various uneasy truths about this real-life utopia where society is experiencing a change.

By doing so, it sheds light into this contrasting image to unearth the reasons for the popularity of Scandinavian crime fiction and its intrinsic literary merit. It investigates the imaginary world of Scandinavian crime fiction to chart out the features which make it unique in the larger world of crime fiction.

The five authors taken up for study present a fictional world which is facing problems of the real world. Hence, it reveals a response to various crises where the individual and society at large is attempting to negotiate various threats which have engulfed the rest of the world. This thesis explores themes like xenophobia and crime against women to present a counter-narrative giving voice to stories that have remained untold. In doing so this study foregrounds the use of the site of murder as a site for critique.