CHAPTER II

SOCIO POLITICAL REALISM IN SCANDINAVAIN CRIME FICTION

Norway [is] at the top of the ranking. Denmark is now in 2nd place, while Iceland remain in 3rd[...] Finland remains in 5th position [...] and Sweden 10th

—World Happiness Report, March 20th, 2017

As Scandinavian nations continue to get top rank in surveys charting happiness of its citizen, the rest of the world has hailed it as a modern day utopia. The global happiness index states that happiness is a reflection of social progress. It is also a symbol of the remarkable optimism of each and every citizen of these Scandinavian nations. According to the *World Happiness Report* the key variables in this index are—"GDP per capita, healthy years of life expectancy, social support (as measured by having someone to count on in times of trouble), trust (as measured by perceived absence of corruption in government and business) perceived freedom to make life decisions, and generosity (as measured by recent donations)" (3). This emphasizes the image of Scandinavian nations as a safe haven in an age where nations are threatened with political and social crisis.

As Europe and the rest of the world were reeling from the effects of the World War, there was a need for stability both political and economic. This was the idea governing the projection of the welfare model in the post-war era in Scandinavian nations. The idea behind welfare state has been described by Francis Sejersted as:

> "In the 1930s, the social democratic parties of Sweden and Norway came to power and formed governments in their respective countries. This marked the beginning of a stable period of social democratic hegemony. [...]The result is what we might call the social democratic order—also called the Scandinavian model[...] the Scandinavian model is marked—to cite just a few of its characteristic traits—by comprehensiveness of social security systems, institutionalized universal social rights, a high level of public support, and a high level of equality, which grew out of a combination of public commitment to the principle of universalism and equality of income distribution, which, in turn, is partly attributable to the strength of trade unions" (cited in Peacock 2014: 29).

The welfare society made a rapid progression along with widespread optimism and was quickly adopted by the Scandinavian nations. Sweden became the poster child of this successful Scandinavian model which adopted the middle path between capitalism and communism. The rapidly expanding middle class looked forward to state-funded social benefits along with shorter working hours and more leisure time. Ingrained in this model was the belief that planning and scientific approach would produce a progressive society. The state hence had a central and powerful role to play in providing individual security. While the welfare model was based on the idea of equality and shared beliefs it increasingly became dependent on a consumer society. Institutes like the Research Institute for the Home in Sweden was–"tasked with rationalizing housework chores [...] who found evidence of their upward social mobility in commodities they came to possess" (Stougaard-Nielsen 2017: 19). Thus, the state-backed welfare program left a mark in all corners of life.

This post-war rapid urbanization in response to the crisis of breakdown caused by the World Wars had wider cultural consequences and social upheavals. However, the 1960s was a turbulent time for all nations including nations who were following the state welfare model for rapid growth. The political, economic and social disturbances that impacted the rest of the world impacted the Scandinavian nations too. These turbulent years parallels with the growth of the Scandinavian crime fiction which grew as a response to –"the broader sociocultural upheavals prompted by the progressive welfare state, the years of rapid modernization and economic growth, the wider consequences of the affluent consumer society and its crisis from the early 1970s" (Stougaard-Nielsen 2017: 20).

By the mid-1960s, the problems of the welfare system became apparent. The massive Swedish 'Million Homes Programmes' which aimed at creating urban spaces based on equality and modernity garnered widespread criticism. Based on social planning and scientific approach these communities which were initially a symbol for unprecedented ambition soon became a symbol of failure as it became apparent that these housing developments were segregated and alienated leading to isolation of the inhabitants. Initially projected as spaces for urban development with easy access to all public services, these centres became concrete masses backed by consumer culture leading to alienation. Likewise, projects of similar nature like the Finger Plan in Denmark and the Great Master Plan in Norway led to the individual falling under the pressures of consumerism.

In these times of uncertainty Scandinavian crime fiction burst into the scene to engage with the question of the crisis of a toppling welfare state. In opposition to the rose-tinted view of these

nations, Scandinavian crime fiction effectively deals with the social and political crisis of these nations providing a counter-narrative to the state projected image. The central crime becomes a site for critique where the Scandinavian crime novel engages with questions of social and moral conflicts. Anne Holt in an interview comments "a good crime novel has the capacity to present an accurate glimpse of society, as the crime fiction genre relates to and anatomises society's darkest sides. I believe that literature in general and crime fiction, in particular, can help animate a picture more acutely than the other arts" (Forshaw 2012: 115). Thus, the crime novel became an apt vehicle to address the crisis of the contemporary society devoted to merciless inquiry into the contradictions of these nations hailed as modern day utopia. They act as an alternate history documenting the dysfunctions of the state and challenging the complexities of reality.

In the hands of writers like Per Wahloo, crime fiction became—" a ‘scalpel' with which to forensically examine the welfare state, which [...] had become an ideological corpse" (Stougaard-Nielsen 2017: 23). Scandinavian crime fiction owes much to the American hardboiled tradition. Their American counterpart—the hardboiled writers wrote from the 1920s until the 1950s at a time when society was undergoing a profound transformation. Still suffering from the effects of two World Wars, America faced severe economic depression at a time when faith in God and humanity seemed naive. The rise of capitalism posed a threat to individual liberalism and hardboiled crime fiction—

> “mirrored particular strains of New Deal thinking, and the frustrations they inevitably encountered in their pursuit of a utopian, democratic culture dramatized the conflicts and contradictions that would dog New Deal liberalism as it evolved from the 1930s

> through the 1950s and beyond. A pop genre, a cultural complaint, and a political myth, hard-boiled crime fiction thus became a symbolic theatre where the dilemmas of New Deal liberalism could be staged" (McCann 2000: 5).

Both Hardboiled and Scandinavian crime fiction is born out of an era of crisis where consumerism takes over individuality. Originated as a response to capitalistic shaping of national identity, these subgenres rework the crime novel to act as a mouthpiece of the age yet there are fundamental differences in approach. While the American hardboiled tradition grappled with social fracture brought about by capitalistic culture there is a longing for the 'American dream' to make the nation great again and consolidate a new national identity. Erik Ussere in *America is elsewhere: The Noir Tradition in the Age of Consumer* states that nostalgia is not real and is an—"antithesis of society, artifice, imitation, modernity, conformity or alienation" (6) which is captured in the title of the book itself which reiterates that 'America' is 'elsewhere'. Scandinavian crime fiction, on the other hand, exposes this utopian state revealing it as an illusion where capitalistic consumerism is marketed as social welfare. The new landscape of urban spaces with state-funded amenities and efficient working conditions is not a place of perfection rather it is a place with no focus on individual freedom which is revealed as a cause for individual crisis and existential anxiety.

While the crime novel was a perfect vehicle for social exploration it is apparent that the puzzle form of the traditional school of crime writing which presented problems of logic and detection to the readers will no longer hold true for the Scandinavian crime series. The celebrated puzzle form of the Golden age of British detection fails to address the needs of a socially critical crime

novel. It is obvious that there is a need for a new kind of form and plot which will provide for the needs of the ambivalent narratives. The plot of this series is no longer focused on the problems in logic and detection but focuses on the dark underbelly of crime presenting a dystopic vision of life and subverting the idea of the welfare state.

Like their American hardboiled counterpart, the idea of subversion leads the Scandinavian crime series to refract and reinvent the police procedural. The police procedural is a subgenre of crime fiction which attempts to convincingly depict the activities of a police force as they investigate crimes and this sub-genre is successfully used by Scandinavian crime writers. Police procedurals are distinguished from other crime novels by the focus on the police force and the investigative work highlighted by the word procedural—"this focus on procedure is an exponent of realism, a realism that also characterizes the 'themes, characters, action, and setting of these novels" (Bergman 2011: 34). Police procedural generally focus on a diverse team who work together to maintain law and order. The focus on the mundane day to day activities of the police force like report filing and press conferences gives added realism to these novels. This also rejects the idealisation of the police work and heroism associated with the protector figure paving the way for debates on social issues. This realism is linked with the legacy of socially conscious literature.

By shifting focus from the murder to the characters especially the detective who is part of the police force an interesting shift occurs. In Scandinavian crime fiction, they act as sites where battles with bureaucracy and conformity occur. The crime writers write about the problems rife within the police force as prejudice, greed, and abuse of power are a smear on the authorities as well as the rest of the society. In many of the novels, the police department acts as a

deterrent in the crime-solving process. We often find that the detective frequently has to use methods that are not authorized by the police department to solve a crime. By making the detective a part of the police force the Scandinavian crime writer's critique of the society becomes more effective as he is able to shed some light into the shortcomings of the administration. Therefore, there is an anti-establishment strand that runs through the Scandinavian crime series.

The police procedural form has found is best practitioners in the hands of the Scandinavian crime writers. All five series discussed here are police procedural which is an apt vehicle for socio-political realism. Scandinavian crime fiction uses this realism to trace the transformation of the welfare state which—"since the 1990s can be situated in dialogue with the economization of society brought about by Europeanisation, globalization, and neo-liberal policy" (Nestigen 2011: 174). This is reflected in the presentation of a diverse group of people in the police team which heighten this social realism. Department Q series has the character of Assad, a man with a mysterious past and a Middle East background. He is an assistant assigned to the cold case division of the police force. His ethnic background is emphasized throughout the series whose strong coffee and different food habits cause sickness to the chief detective. Though he is a citizen of the country he is never appropriated to the police force due to his immigrant status. His assignment in the cold case division becomes a case of double marginalisation as the cold case division is already looked upon as a nonexistent unit of the police force. This invisible status is also emphasized by the location of his office which lies at the basement next to the underground pipes. Female detectives also feature in these crime series like Detective Olinberg in the Reykjavik murder mysteries. Her character will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter on female characters.

While the police procedural has tried to include people from various backgrounds in the investigative team, there is a dominant character in these novels as characterised by the focus on the single detective as seen the character of Wallander, Erlendur, Moark, Harjunpaa, and Sejer. This central character plays an important role in the narrative posing as an opposing force to the dominant socio-political order dramatizing the ongoing crisis in the novel. In one reading of the police procedural, the police team can be seen as a metonymy for the state. The police force is also a representative of the interests of the state as keepers of law and order. The central protagonist in the crime series discussed here is a symbol of the state by virtue of their profession but they also represent the average citizen. This dual representation of the detective adds the responsibility of investigation of the state and its failures. Hence, the character of the detective who is at the helm of affairs on an ongoing investigation is also treated as an outsider.

By presenting the detective as an outsider the Scandinavian crime writers present individual characters battling against indifferent bureaucracy. Complaints about lack of resources and misappropriation of funds seem all too familiar in Scandinavian crime fiction. Department Q is a new unit formed to act as an eyewash for siphoning of government funds in Jussi Alder-Olsen's series—" while Wallander's attitude towards the national police force is characterised by negative feeling and fear of 'them' taking over his investigations" (Bergman 2014: 38). But the most realistic portrait of the police force is presented by Finnish author Matti Joensuu in his Harjunpaa series. Matti Joensuu who was an arson and explosives expert of the Helsinki police force provides an insider's perspective on the working of the police force in his police procedurals—"contemporary society-oriented crime novel in Finland can be epitomized in Matti Yrjana Joensuu and his […] novels featuring Detective Sergeant Timo Harjunpaa." (Bergman 2014: 160). Joensuu played a pivotal role in the development of the police procedural

in Finland. Writing as an experienced police officer, Joensuu successfully narrates the day to day life of police officers. He sheds a critical light on the agents of the state which garnered criticism from his fellow officers for exposing the abuse of power in the police force which is contrasted with his morally conscious central detective.

This focus on socio-political realism in Scandinavian crime fiction also leads to a reengagement with the history of these nation analyzing the past vis a vis global culture and economy—"powerful individuals and institutions have sought to construct a homogeneous and idealized image of the culture and behavior of the past" (Meyhoff 2011: 62). This reconstruction of the past and rewriting of history is of primary importance in Jussi Adler Olsen's Department Q series which narrates the trails of a cold case unit which opens and investigates cases long buried in the past. Department Q's project of rewriting and reinterpreting a historical time is successfully shown in the through reconstruction of a particular moment in history which often intersects with contemporary times. Past is never laid buried in these series exposing a complex picture of the engagement of the past with the present. Unlike the projected image this version of past hinges on the exposure of various crises of abuse and betrayal. It is symbolic therefore that the location of the cold case unit is in the basement hidden from view, caught in the task of digging out skeletons from beneath the surface. Likewise, Arnaldur Indridason also revisits the past in order to negotiate the present which often poses a challenge due to cultural fragmentation. As opposed to the idealised and homogenous version of history and culture Scandinavian crime novels presents a darker interpretation based on 'imaginative exaggerations and extrapolations of historical events' (Meyhoff 2011: 63).

One historical event which had a huge impact on the crime novel was the murder of the Swedish Prime Minister. Certainly, this murder offered proof that the region had been jolted

painfully into the same world in which the rest of us live thereby shattering the cherished image of an idyllic world—

> "After the murder of Palme, everything changed. However, we still don't understand how it has come to this. In disbelief, we echo Brack in Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* who says "People don't do such things!" Scandinavians strive to create a free and open society and are rightly proud of it. Violence is shocking because it suggests that our model cannot protect us" (Forshaw 2012: 102).

This assassination led to a radical rethinking of the policies that had been the foundation of the welfare state. This shift in the national sensibility has been summarised by Andrew Brown in 'Fishing in Utopia: Sweden and the Future That Disappeared'—

> "Until he was shot, the country had seemed to be focused on the light-grey modern centre which his cortege wound round on its way to the city hall to the graveyard: a clean region of government buildings, libraries, railway stations, department stores, employment exchanges, insurance companies, hotel and security offices, each very like the other. Now it was apparent that a terrible, disruptive power lurked outside these ordered precincts and held them at its mercy. No one knew whether the killer had come from within Sweden or from outside" (cited in Peacock 2014: 35-36).

While the death of the prime minister led to disillusionment and paranoia, the murder had an indirect effect on the other Scandinavian nations of Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Denmark as well inaugurating an age of crisis and ambivalence. This uncertainty and lack of closure infected the society finding an apt voice in the crime fiction of this region. Steven Peacock writes that—"all these associations hover over [Scandinavian crime fiction] and imbue its

narratives with another layer of dread. In offering gruesome scenarios akin to those of Palme's murder, the crime fictions [...] tap into the anxieties of the collective consciousness" (38).

Hence, murder as the choice of the central crime plays an important role of social critique in a crime novel. This choice of crime is deliberate as W.H. Auden has mentioned in his essay 'The Guilty Vicarage'- "Murder is unique in that it abolishes the party it injures, so that society has to take the place of the victim and on his behalf demand restitution or grant forgiveness; it is the one crime in which society has a direct interest". The murder is also a violent intrusion in an idyllic surrounding which is made up of peaceful community mostly in a rural landscape.

Scandinavian detective stories have one family resemblance to the cosy English mysteries that Auden was addicted to: they are set in famously peaceful and affluent countries. In the case of the Scandinavian series the murders mostly takes place in small towns and sometimes in a rural landscape. For example, in the Wallander series, the seemingly idyllic nature of the landscape is first broken by a violent murder. The choice of Ystad as a location for his story is important to the overall narrative because it also functions as a tool to emphasize the deteriorating state of human lives in the society.

Ystad is described as a town located in southern Sweden. First of all, the fact that it is a sparsely populated place with a laidback lifestyle gives an initial picture of a safe haven. Ironically, Mankell shows how foolish it is for people to believe that a person can be completely safe at any given time. The reach of crime is far and long and not even the remotest of places can escape it. The choice of Scandinavian nations as a location for the narrative is deliberate since it is considered to be one of the most 'equal' nations, economically—a place where there is no need to turn to a life of crime to fulfil any human needs. Yet as seen in the Wallander series

these are the nations where some of the most horrifying crimes take place. This is Mankell's grim commentary on land where he was born and a commentary on the global scenario. At a time when sociologists claim that crime is born out of a state of poverty and unemployment, Mankell raises a question as to whether a crime is an individual's responsibility or whether it is a social responsibility—Can a society which claims to have gotten rid of inequality and poverty still be plagued by crime?

A staunch socialist as reflected in his first non-crime novel *The Rock Blaster* which shed light on the predicament of the Swedish miners, writer Henning Mankell has repeatedly investigated the role of the welfare state. Jeanne E Glesener believes that "in the age of multiculturalism [crime fiction has] become a platform where multicultural issues and realities are being explored" (Bergman 2014: 52). Notably, Mankell's Wallander series has become a platform for raising the issues of national identities at the time of globalisation and explores the impact of the 'other' on the national psyche. The idea of the 'other' is reflected in the xenophobia and foreignness which is a core theme in Wallander novels.

While migration and immigration is a global phenomenon, the years after the 1990s saw a broad scale economic migration as an impact of the rising influence of the European Union in Scandinavian nations and "as with any migration, the retention of cultural identity becomes of paramount importance" (Peacock 2014: 73) giving rise to widespread racism. This impact of the ethnic other is effectively reflected by Brown who writes-

> "[security] has disappeared and the whole country was on the edge of panic. There had been race riots in some of the smaller towns where employment had stopped. A psychopathic sniper shot eleven dark-skinned men at random [...]. When he was finally

> caught he turned out to be a foreigner by origin, half-German and half-Swiss, who had been teased as a foreigner growing up in a Stockholm suburb"(Cited in Peacock 2014: 74).

Thus, Mankell turned to crime fiction to highlight the rise of racism and xenophobia. As mentioned earlier he picked the name Wallander randomly from a telephone directory and published *Faceless Killers* in 1991 as a comment on xenophobia in Sweden which in turn spearheaded an unprecedented boom in Scandinavian crime fiction. His crime novels featuring Inspector Wallander can be regarded as a true successor of Sjöwall and Wahlöö's Martin Beck series. Driven by the similar aim of reaching to a large audience Mankell's crime novels have a social and political ambition shared by many of his contemporaries. Mankell believed that he was writing "in an old tradition that goes back to ancients Greeks. You hold a mirror to crime to see what's happening in society...I always want to talk about certain things in society" (cited in Brunsdale 2015: 475). Together the Wallander series presents an unvarnished portrait of the Swedish society which "is not a good advertisement for the success of the welfare state" (Forshaw 2012: 21).

Exploring the growing sense of xenophobia in the region, Mankell published his first crime novel ironically titled *Faceless Killers* in 1991 which became an immediate success. In this first novel of the Wallander series, Inspector Wallander responds to what he expects is a routine call out. When he reaches the isolated farmhouse he discovers a bloodbath. An old man has been tortured and beaten to death; his wife lies barely alive beside his shattered body, victims of a violence beyond reason. The woman supplies Wallander with his only clue: the perpetrators may have been foreign. Soon we see an unleashing of racial hatred—"crosses had been burned

at night in the courtyard, rocks had been thrown through windows, buildings had been spray painted with slogans" (62).

The scene of the crime is meant to shock the readers because here is a crime that is taking place in a remote area and the victims are just ordinary people who are murdered in their home-a place considered to be safe protected space. The seemingly senseless nature of the crime underlies the fact that this can happen to anyone. However, after the initial shock the scene seems oddly familiar because, in the age of globalization and media intruding personal spaces, we are daily exposed to crimes happening all over the world. As mentioned before, the murder acts as a catalyst to get things going in a crime novel and in the case of *Faceless Killers*, the murder exposes the truth about the welfare state of Sweden. The story focuses on Sweden's liberal attitude regarding immigration and explores themes of racism and national identity. As the title suggests *Faceless Killers* explores this xenophobia while criticising the decay of the welfare state which propagates only a false sense of security. A witness who has just seen the horrific murder of his neighbours' comments "Nothing ever happens here […] time stands still in this village" (*Faceless Killers* 3). This complacent attitude and a sense of false security that this individual displays is a reflection of the larger society that is diseased with psychosis.

Starting with Mankell's first crime novel in 1991, Scandinavian crime novelists are trying to explore how policies regarding immigration are failing in these nations which had worsened even before the Syrian refugee crisis of 2015. The issue of Muslim immigrants in Sweden is also a controversial subject as the country has taken in a lot of Iraqi immigrants. Riots and serious clashes have occurred between immigrants since the 1990's emphasizing the fact that "signs of friction and trouble [are]...not hard to find beneath the veneer of Scandinavian order,

decency, and prosperity" (Brunsdale 2015: 383). This sheds light on the fact that the Swedish elites are still not accepting the gravity of the situation which finds an echo in journalist Margeret Wente words—"as Swedes redistribute more and more of their wealth to people whose habits are culturally alien, and who are permanently dependent on the state, the immigration consensus is bound to crack" (cited in Brunsdale 2015: 385).

Shane McCorristine argues that this theme of xenophobia is not just a result of immigration but also due to a collapse of national identity which is reflected in the preoccupation of the 'other' in the Wallander series—"Mankell's novels offer a veritable taxonomy of threats' to the notions of a secure Swedish identity: sometimes the evil to be combated originates outside the community, sometimes it comes from within, but it is always linked to spectres of the other[...]the Other occupies dominant place in virtually every novel of the Wallander series."(cited in Peacock 2014: 75). In *The Dogs of Riga*, Latvia takes centre stage as Mankell explores the encounter with the other through Wallander's relationship with Baiba Liepa. While investigating a post-cold war conspiracy, Wallander falls in love with the widow of the murdered Latvian major which propels him to question the 'artificial frontiers of Swedish mentality' (McCorristine 2011: 80). Likewise, the question of the other is reflected in the African presence in many of the novels like *The White Lioness, The Fifth Woman, Firewall,* etc. Thus, Mankell creates a site where questions of nationalism, identity formation and the 'ethic other' are raised.

Eventually, this question of identity finds a disturbing reflection in Mankell's *The Troubled Man* where Wallander bids his farewell to the readers. The readers realise to their shock that Wallander has developed Alzheimer's disease. Kirsten Bergman argues that this disease reflects

the fact that—"Wallander's generation, the generation born in the 1940s which for so long has occupied all the positions of power and influence in Swedish society, is now aging and retiring, something that coincides with the new society's need for new and different sorts of people" (64). This last novel also paves the way for Linda where Wallanders' daughter and grandchild become representatives of a new generation that is far less confined. Thus, marking a turning point and making a call for a change and shift of views. Mankell also sends a strong message through his series which is a chronicle of a changing society where ironically Wallander himself becomes the 'other'.

The workings of various social institutions are all put under the microscope as family and community are dissected by crime writers—"[The] long-held belief in the importance of the national community over smaller social institutions makes access behind the curtain in the halls of power, to uncover the more sinister agendas at the top of the social strata, and into the enclosed worlds professional collectives even more thrilling" (Peacock 2014: 67). The sense of collective community which is so important to the feeling of national solidarity is crumbling slowly. This thought finds an echo in Mankell's *One Step Behind* where a group of young people gathered to celebrate Midsummer is murdered in broad daylight. Midsummer is a celebration of equality in the society which is the pride of Scandinavian nations. Thus, this slaughter subverts this idea of the utopian ideal. It has been suggested by critics that this also projects "how the insular world of traditional Sweden is threatened by external influence" (Peocock 2014: 72).

The police procedural also forms an apt vehicle to address the impact of social change on the police force. Mankell, for instance, exposes the negative side of the police force suggesting that the public is now sceptical of its ability. Mankell addresses this in *The Pyramid*—

> "Wallander shook his head as he read through Svedbergs' report. It was unbelievable that none of the neighbours had seen anything. Is this fear starting to spread in Sweden? He wondered. The fear of assisting the police with the most elementary observations. If this is the case then the situation is far worse than I wanted to believe" (272).

Like many of the writers of the police procedural, Mankell chooses to write about the unlawful practises of the supposed law enforcers. The moral question of greed and corrupt practises are raised. Often the inspector has to fight his way through bureaucracy, self-serving superiors and corruption in order to solve a crime.

While the welfare state projects a utopian ideal, the family remains at the heart of the structure and in literature, it is "presented as both corporeally and psychologically specific, and as representative of nationhood" (Peocock 2014: 91). Families represent the microcosm of the state in a Scandinavian crime novel. The cracks that have begun to appear in the family structure become obvious in the Wallander series which reflect the cracks in the larger macrocosm. The lack of any family of the detective is described in *Faceless Killers*— "Wallander thought of his own wife, who had left him and wondered where to begin" (12). His awkward and wary relationship with his daughter Linda best exemplified in *Before the Frost* which is supposed to describe Linda's preparation to join the police force. Meditating on the filial relationship—" Linda Caroline Wallander wondered if there were any traits that she and

her father had in common which yet remained to be discovered, even though she was almost 30 years old and ought to know" (Peacock 2014: 97). Both his strained relationship with his daughter and his relationship with his father reflect the split that is threatening to tear the nation apart.

Wallander's observations of the reaction of families to death also reflect this split as seen in the broken family ties in *One Step Behind*. One disturbing example of a family torn apart by violence is the family of Stefan in one of Mankell's finest crime novel *Firewall*. A fourteen-year-old Stefan had committed a series of heinous crimes including the murder of his father, finally culminating in his suicide. The narrator observes that—

> "Stefan had hardly said a word during the past few years [...].but the boy who came smashing down [...] had worn a full-blown warrior war paint. That disturbing mask of paint and blood held little clue as to who the young person locked inside had been, but it spoke volumes about the violent and largely indifferent society in which he had been formed" (10).

This image of an indifferent society is a direct subversion of the image of a utopian egalitarian society that is projected by the Scandinavian nations where the governments' priority is the welfare of its citizens which in turn is based on communal harmony. It also exposes the inability of the welfare state to deal with deviant behaviour which is born out its inability to look after the personal well being of its citizens.

With *The Troubled Man*, Mankell bid adieu to Inspector Wallander but he continued to explore social and political issues in his non-Wallander novels as well. For example, *The Man from Beijing* narrates a story spanning a hundred years raising important questions on colonialism while questioning the moral hypocrisy of the west. His later novel *Daniel* follows the story of a lone survivor of a tribe in the Kalahari Desert which has been wiped out by the Europeans. The central theme of this narrative is again the destructive effects of colonialism but as the same time—"this is a powerfully involving, uncompromising novel about the loss of childhood and innocence" (Forshaw 2012: 27). His work with the HIV infected children in Africa and his involvement in the attempted break of the Gaza strip blockade reflects his deep social and political commitment. But it cannot be denied that it is his Wallander series set in a provincial town that has global and universal human resonance—"Wallander realised that he was not alone in his feelings of uncertainty and confusion at the new society that was emerging. We live as if we were in mourning for a lost paradise, he thought. As if we longed for the car thieves and safe-crackers of the old days...but those days have irretrievably vanished, and nor is it certain that they were as idyllic as we remember them" (*Faceless Killers* 246), a thought perhaps echoed by the readers too.

The optimism which is the hallmark of Sweden is shared by Norway which continuously tops the global happiness index. Initially regarded as a poor relation to the rest of Scandinavia the discovery of oil changed its economy—"the discovery of North Sea Oil in the 1970s altered this status, and Norway now has the highest per capita income […] and in general, performs well on most macroeconomic indicators. Several of these factors have, to some degree filtered into the country's crime fiction" (Forshaw 2012: 98). While news reports frequently claim that

Norwegians are the happiest people on earth, the country has a troubled history. Early 1900s marked its separation from Sweden (Treaty of Kiel-1814) which led to the traumatic years of the Nazi occupation. The Nazi occupation toppled the belief that a peace-loving neutral community would remain unaffected and unveiled an age of restriction in all spheres including individual freedom.

Crime fiction blossomed as an aftermath which revelled in the reassuring triumph of good over evil but also reflected Norwegian naivety. Contemporary crime writers distance itself from this Norwegian naivety and often look back to find this era of Nazi occupation to be rich in providing important themes for rewriting national history. Postwar crime fiction became sites for dissecting the pro and anti-nazi sentiment in a nation that was reeling from its effects. The post-war era also saw heavy industrialization which was devoted to the creation of the welfare states in an effort to remove traces of the traumatic past. Hence, crime fiction in Norway was also born out of an age of trauma and crisis centered around—"the individual's response, usually painful, to his her homeland's societal and political pressures, many of them springing from the occupation and its aftermath; and the Norwegian welfare's role in causing or exacerbating many of those pressures" (Brunsdale 2015: 261). The case of extremism of Anders Breivik reflects the growth of right-wing thoughts as well as the anti-immigration thoughts. Anne Holt comments that the "social changes in Norway, even with its current low crime rate, is experiencing growing racism, discrimination against new immigrants, rising anti- Semitism, and homophobia" (Brunsdale 2015: 272-273).

This idea of threats and crisis finds a thematic thrust in the works of Karin Fossum which act as a realistic portrait of the nation's socio-political condition. Initially, a poet Karin Fossum gained international acclaim after she wrote a police procedural series featuring the shy Inspector Konrad Sejer and his young assistant Jacob Skarre. She has since been given the title of Norwegian ‘Queen of Crime' and is also the winner of the Glass Key award, an honour she shares with Henning Mankell. Like Mankell, Fossum had a close experience with crime. In an interview for The Independent, she says—"I have experienced a murderer among my friends [...] many, many years ago. At close range, I have seen the impact of it. I knew the victim, I went to the funeral, I have been to the house, to the specific room where the killing took place, and I was stunned by it. It's such a blow." The impact of being at such close quarters with crime has been reflected in her work with delves into the psychology of the characters exploring the deep ramifications of the central crime and its ripples.

Set in the rural landscape north of Oslo, Karin Fossum claims to write novels not about death but about the killing. Her work, therefore, becomes an exploration of the social and political causes and the devastating effects of the central crime. A look into the Inspector Sejer series reveals that her work is also informed by the important characteristics of Scandinavian crime fiction—

> “In Norway, as everywhere, alcoholism and drug abuse wreck havoc upon family life. Circumstances peculiar to the Norwegian version of the welfare state, however, also materially contribute to societal problems addressed by crime authors particularly the single mother family disasters that Karin Fossum often chillingly presents in her crime fiction” (Brunsdale 2015: 269).

Inspired by the tradition of Sjowall and Wahloo, the mysteries bring to the forefront the social issues of class inequality, misogyny, immigration, and exploitation—"Fossum [has] made use of the police genre [...] mixing it with the psychological thriller [with] focus on child welfare and violence against women" (Bergman 2014: 170). Fossum published her first novel titled *In The Darkness* in 1995 which introduced the recurring theme of her series of how violence lies dormant in seemingly perfect routine lives. But the one novel which is considered to be her masterpiece is *Calling out for you.*

Republished as *The Indian Bride* in 2007, this novel was shortlisted for the CWA Gold Dagger award. The second title highlights an—"awkward social issue: intermarriage between Asians and native Norwegians, in a county less and less at ease with the immigrant population" (Forshaw 2012: 110). The story starts with an unassuming Gunder Jomann's journey to India to find himself a wife. The happy tone of the novel is short-lived as the story narrates the tragic murder of an immigrant newlywed bride Poona. The murder is tragic and unsettling as Fossum takes the readers to the battered body of a woman found in the outskirts of Elvestad. The apparent tranquility of the tiny village is shaken up as Chief Inspector Sejer contemplates on the presence of a lurking evil even within the most innocent souls. People's shock in response to this intermarriage reveals the unspoken animosity towards immigrants.

Thus, the narrative which initially told the tale of an unlikely romance turns into a sociological study of the remote town and its inhabitants. The murder causes the villagers to come face to face with the uncomfortable truth that a killer is lurking among them presenting a stifling

claustrophobic atmosphere. Fossum masterfully delves into the consequences of the crime raising a host of uncomfortable questions especially on the serious issue of immigration which threatens the welfare state according to many of its citizens. The ramifications of the crime are initially felt by the victims loved ones and eventually, the society at large which turns it into a community of mistrust.

While Scandinavian nations have been welcoming towards immigrants, integration of the same has remained problematic. Whereas there is no racial violence and death in Fossum's Norway the problems of assimilation is highlighted. In *When the Devil holds the candle,* two young unemployed boys bully Matteus, Sejer grandson who was adopted from Mogadishu. In response to his name they question—"why didn't they give you a Norwegian name like other children who are adopted? Not that it matters.' He tossed his head. 'I feel a little faint every time I meet black or Chinese children named Petter and Kare" (11). Integration becomes a double-edged sword for the immigrants as holding on to their culture gives them an outsider status while efforts on integration are seen as a threat to the homogenous Norwegian identity.

Fossum also narrates a tragic sequence of events which raises a number of societal issues as Inspector Sejer ponders on things beyond human control. This novel also focuses on Fossum's recurrent theme of the permanent effects of crime on individual and society at large. This mystery, in particular, takes a fatalistic tone as the detective is unable to come to any satisfying resolution. The image of the stable welfare state is struck by eroding societal structures. Unemployment is presented as a huge problem as the younger generations are left with no purpose in life readily resorting to violence. This emphasizes the failure of the family and the

society to act on their behalf. The welfare policies are blamed for the abandonment of traditional families which erupts in violence in the crime novel. *When The Devil Holds the candle*—"expands her trademark technique of pitting Sejers decency and intelligence against mindless violence, in this case, carried out by bored vicious adolescents that society by default allows to prey upon the helpless" (Brunsdale 2015: 301).

Lack of empathy in the younger generation is also reflected in Tomme when questioned about the murdered child in *Black Seconds*—"well I can't, Tomme snapped. "I've got no idea who she is". He wanted his friend to shut up. Hated all this talk of death and destruction. The only thing he cared about was the car. Making it look whole again. Shiny and new, with unmarked paintwork, like it was before" (49). This conversation of Tomme gets added significance in the light of the fact that he wants his car unmarked and shiny like before because he is part of a hit and run accident. His apparent nonchalance exposes a lack of human quality missing in individuals of the younger generation whose lives have been governed by state policies away from traditional family values.

Fossum's novels often involve helpless victims like children. *The Water's Edge* raises questions on how society treats its children. It is a novel which can make the readers queasy as it deals with paedophilia. A married couple discovers the body of a young boy. What follows is a portrayal of a community exposing its secrets and cracks that subvert the image of a perfect idealized community. The gradual disintegration of the married couple's relationship following the grim discovery becomes a symbol of the decay of the state. Fossum dissects "the motivation that draws decent men [...]into police work and Skarre[...] admits to being a little

jealous of criminals because they simply take what they want as a kind of protest against society" (*The* Water's *Edge* 47). The anti-nazi sentiment that unified Norwegians is also easily discernable in *The* Water's *Edge* an issue which has been discussed in Mankell's series too.

Fossum presents a peace-loving community and removes layers after layers to reveal the sordid situation that has flourished beneath the surface nourished by the need to maintain the illusion of tranquility, thereby making readers question individuals and society at large. In the Sejer series, the consequences of a single crime spread like a disease throughout the community. Like Mankell, She has highlighted these issues in her non-Inspector Sejer books too like *The Drowned Boy.* Thus, Fossum in her socially realistic novels uses a moral critique instead of a political critique to expose the social system.

Likewise, Arnaldur Indridason is a celebrated crime writer from Iceland who initially worked as a journalist before writing crime series. He presents the Icelandic society as seen through the eyes of Detective Erlendur—"Arnaldur's books subtly explore the clash between the old and new Iceland: the breakdown of the family, the sense of isolation, the migration from country to the anonymous town" (Forshaw 2012: 134). Thus his works fit neatly next to the works of his Norwegian and Swedish contemporaries. His work addresses the same social problems that have preoccupied other Scandinavian writers. Indridason in an online interview with Crimefictionlover elaborates his view of his country—"I think foreigners have a very innocent view of Iceland. They think there are no crimes and everything is so beautiful and so nice, we're high in the north and were isolated for many, many years. But, as I say, we have all the crimes and corruption and whatever you have in the big cities in Europe and around the world,

only on a very small scale. We are not as pure as maybe people think". Indridason's novels throw in sharp relief the problems of a nation which had boasted of the lowest homicide rate in Scandinavia which was attributed to the country's social welfare system which promoted an egalitarian culture. A reflection of this can be found in an interesting fact that the Icelandic police are unarmed except for the Viking squad and Iceland is the only country in the world with no army.

Arnaldur Indridason who has enjoyed global popularity has captured the essence of Icelandic crime fiction and that of greater Scandinavia in his crime novels featuring the investigative police detective Erlendur Sveinsson and his colleagues. A social critique of the Icelandic community is inherent in all his works and "encompasses criticism of various standard Icelandic notions of nationality" (Jakobsdottir 2011: 52). The idea of nationality is of primary importance in the novels of Arnaldur Indridason. The Icelandic crime novel is a relatively recent sub-genre whose development coincides with the socio-political debate surrounding Icelandic nationality. Initially, part of Norway and later Denmark, Icelandic history is marked by its quest for independence while its occupation by the British and American troops during the world wars has bolstered the need to preserve its national identity. *Jar City*, the novel which introduces him to the international readers reflects the discussion of Icelandic nationality which is central in all his works. A compelling police procedural, the novel highlights the long history of wrongdoings and secret which has led to the fateful moment of murder.—

> "Isn't this your typical Icelandic murder? Asked detective Sigurour Oli who had entered the basement without Erlendur noticing him and was now standing beside the body.
>
> What? Said Erlendur, engrossed in his thoughts.

> ‘squalid and pointless and committed without any attempt to hide it, change the clues or conceal the evidence’
>
> Yes, said Erlendur. ‘a pathetic Icelandic murder’ (22).

This mocking tone brings the deeper serious implication of the murder to the readers on questions of nationality and the threatening immigration.

In Arnaldur's novels, food and the rural landscape becomes an important marker of national identity. The food imagery of old-school Icelandic delicacies like sheep's head is presented as an Icelandic peculiarity as opposed to the globalised culture. The traditional method of curing fish is explained in great detail in the novels which is contrasted with the modernization of food production. Nostalgia pervades the novels as the natural landscape is giving way to capitalistic ventures effectively contrasting the old with the new. This sentiment is an echo of national identity torn between the past and the present. The impact of globalisation is felt in the fragmentation of this identity reflected in the tension between Erlundur who represents the old order who is contrasted with Sigurdur Oli who is a product of American education system representing the American capitalistic connection in the narrative—

> “Icelandic crime fiction is almost always characterised by the dichotomies of the difference between past and present, city and country and the status of Iceland as a peripheral society [...] and throughout his Inspector Erlundur series the reader is familiarised with conflicts originating in difficulties of unifying the traditional with the new and modern in Iceland” (Bergman 2014: 164).

One event which had a huge impact on Iceland as a nation was the financial crash of 2008. Prior to the crash, Iceland had experienced an extreme economic transformation since it was one of the poorest countries in Western Europe where income was mostly generated through fishing. Yet by relying on a—"Scandinavian-type social market economy [that] combines a capitalist structure and free-market principles with an extensive welfare system[...] Iceland had achieved high growth, low unemployment, and a remarkably even distribution of income" (Brunsdale 2015: 197). By the year 2007 Iceland ranked seventh among the most productive nations in the world. Unfortunately, the year 2008 led to one of the worst financial crisis which crippled the nation leading to severe unemployment and a looming political crisis. This led to widespread distrust when it came to the government, the ramifications of which have been explored in many Icelandic crime series.

Quentin Bates a crime writer from Iceland gives an apt description of the nation—“on the surface, Iceland looks notably idyllic, clean, safe and quiet, but under this patina there is a something of a rats nest of intrigue in unpleasant motion [...] these various conflicting facets are quite fascinating—“the Crash”, as Iceland’s massive disaster is called, has thrown a lot of the old hypocrisies into very sharp relief” (cited in Forshaw 2012: 128). In crimefictionlover.com, Indridason stated that *Black skies* is a direct result of the Icelandic financial crash.—"a denunciation of Iceland's greedy industrialist and their cynical bankers, those chiefly responsible for the crash." In this novel, Erlunder tries to solve the bludgeoning murder of a female accountant. Indridason is no economist or financial analyst but he draws a compelling picture of the effects of the financial crisis which crippled the entire nation. He sources the cause of this crisis to greed which has led to an overtly consumerist society where the chasm

between upper and the lower class is slowing increasing. His narrative is a subtle criticism of poor government policies and regulations.

One issue that the financial crash bought to surface was the problem of immigration which is turning out to be a serious issue in the rest of Scandinavia and Europe at large. The effects of immigration were felt across the nation as the society remained divided—" ghettos sprang up in Reykjavik, spawning conflicts between foreign and native youths; "but authorities still insist that this has nothing to do with race" (Brunsdale 2015: 202). Like his Scandinavian counterparts, Indridason delves into the growing problem of racism in *Arctic Chill* which involves the murder of a young Thai boy. The story of the ethnic outcast reveals some unpleasant truths about the projected liberal attitude of Icelandic people revealing their self-delusions. Sigurdur Oli's unsympathetic attitude towards the dead boy's family exposes deep-seated xenophobia. While the investigation and the questioning of the pillars of community reveals—"the realities of multicultural Iceland [where] the immigrants, convinced that the boys murder is racially motivated, are not painted as blameless victims of prejudice, and neither are the resentful native Icelanders tarred with the brush of unreasoning prejudice" (Forshaw 2012: 141). By doing so Indridason manages to present multiple perspectives on a social issue that has tormented all Scandinavian crime writers.

Besides the political and economic effects of the crash, the other social problems of the Icelandic welfare system also came into surface including drug problem and violence on women. And though Iceland has a reputation for gender equality most effectively seen in the election of Johanna Sigurdardottir as Iceland's first female and openly lesbian prime minister (2009), the reality as reflected in crime fiction does not exactly match these idyllic descriptions. In *Outrage*, Indridason is analytical of the crime of rape. Erlundur takes a backseat in this

mystery as his female colleague Elinborg tries to find the murderer of a date rape predator. The title *Outrage* seems ironical when the story is taken into consideration as the readers are unlikely to feel any outrage at the murder of a rapist. At the same time, this novel brings into forefront the rising crime against women in a nation which is considered to be a safe haven for all genders.

Silence of the Grave, his second novel translated into English tells a story of love intertwined with murder. This novel raises some uneasy ghosts as lurking beneath is a tale of domestic violence set in the background of the Second World War. In an interview in an online website named Crimefictionlover, Indridason mentions—"one of the most effective [theme] in my view is domestic violence in the *Silence of the Grave*. I wanted to write about this horrible, horrible crime that is domestic violence because it's a very hidden crime, and it goes with great shame for the victim who doesn't talk about it and the victim are the children of the family of the abused". The tale of systematic domestic torture of an unnamed woman indicates a breakdown of social values where the weak are effectively forgotten like the skeleton which lies undiscovered in a shallow grave for over fifty years. The lack of name of the victim throughout the narrative is indicative of the lack of acknowledgement and protection from the Icelandic authorities. Hence, Detective Erlendur's final unearthing of the name of the woman is significant. *Silence of the Grave* also has echoes of Njals Saga which raise –"the moral question of whether violent revenge, even murder, can be condoned if committed for reasons that may be justifiable, give unspeakable provocation. [The characters in the novel] like the saga characters, [reflects] the capacity of [...] characters for deadly action" (Brunsdale 2015: 219).

One of the sub-plots in *Silence of the Grave* introduces the effects of drugs on the younger generation as Erlendur's daughter Eva Lind struggles from drug addiction. The readers keenly follow Erlendur's harrowing search for Eva from one ramshackle apartment to another after a phone call asking for help. On the way, he is faced with the uneasy truths about child neglect and abuse beneath the polished exterior of the welfare state as he navigates through families splintered by drug abuse. He questions drug peddlers who function in collaboration with the corrupt officers only to find his daughter bleeding on a footpath. This draws a picture of apathy on the part of the community.

Silence of the Grave won the Glass Key Award in 2003 but it is *Voices* which beguiles the readers. A doorman at a hotel is savagely stabbed to death as Erlendur—"works his way through the very bizarre fellow guests who share the hotel with him, he encounters a nest of corruption that gives even this jaundiced detective [a] pause" (Forshaw 2012: 139). *Voices* captures the dichotomy between tourist Iceland and the reality lurking beneath—

> "on the surface, everything is opulent and plush: a Christmas buffet loaded with delicacies, a magnificent lobby, and American Christmas music. Behind the scenes, there is the staff accommodation, drab and pathetic, cleaners working in poor condition, prostitute who works at the hotel and people who profit from the misery of others" (Jakobsdottir 2011: 57).

Far from ordinary life and divorced from reality this picture of the beauty of the Icelandic landscape is shaken up by the gruesome murder which takes place leading to several uneasy questions.

As the series progresses, the Inspector Erlendur novels discuss contemporary social issues while paralleling it with the crimes of the past probing into the Icelandic history often referring to the Second World War and the Cold War era. *Strange Shores* concludes the Inspector Erlender series though Indridason published three books about Erlundur's early years. In *Strange Shores*—"Erlendur untangles a woman's sad story, a saga itself of love, betrayal, and revenge, mourning himself for the old traditional Iceland he feels slipping away in the whirlwind of Iceland's industrialization, new technology, and imported foreign ideologies" (Brunsdale 2015: 220). Thus, Erlendur has lived through Iceland transformation from a society of impoverished fisherman to a modern society which is caught in underlying societal tensions. Indridason's non-Erlendur series books also delve into the rich Icelandic history. *Operation Napoleon* is a mystery about a Nazi German bomber crashed during a blizzard in 1945.

Finland is often referred to as 'Land of the Midnight Sun', a name which captures the contradictions which are inherent in this nation. Finnish crime fiction was introduced to the English speaking audience relatively late due to the difficulty of the Finnish language. However, since its introduction, it has been flooding the international markets like its Nordic neighbours. One recurrent theme in all Finnish crime novels is the reflection of the troubled relationship Finland has with Russia. Following the trend of the spy thrillers, Finnish crime novels tend to present Russians as villains. This focus on the historical occupancy of Finland by Russia shows that like its Scandinavian counterparts Finnish crime fiction has deep socio-political roots. Writer Lehtolainen stresses that Finland has a "common history and a long border with Russia, and it [is] impossible to forget it" (Brunsdale 2015: 105). Therefore, the question of one's nationality and identity remains paramount along with the emphasis on the other which troubles each of the Scandinavian nations.

Torn between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, Finland suffered some of the most tumultuous years during the world wars which left the country in shambles. The post-war years marks the period of a major transformation of the nation from a primarily agrarian society to an economy backed by industrialisation. While the nation was revelling in the utopian state, the Martin Beck series was creating a rippling effect across Scandinavia with the exploration of the negative impact of the welfare state programmes—

> "The two extremes were represented by the leftists like Sjowall and Wahloo who used their procedurals to critique political systems they felt did not sufficiently espouse or even betrayed Marxist goals, and the capitalist-oriented rightist authors who used their crime stories to show that the welfare state's socialistic policies were doomed to failure" (Brunsdale 2015: 114).

Finnish crime writers, on the other hand, took a more neutral stance due to the effects of the Finnish civil war which had a major influence on the formulation of the political-economic policies of the welfare state.

As mentioned earlier, the shift towards industrialisation favoured the construction of the welfare state which resulted in widespread prosperity and improved overall quality of life. This rosy picture of Finland is also reflected in the fact that this nation was Newsweek 2010's choice for the best country in the world. In contradiction to this image, Finnish crime fiction explores a different aspect of this society reflecting the serious tensions that the nation faces. The rise of the extreme rightist nationalistic Finns party and its ever-growing popularity has been seen as a potentially destructive force to the nation as the recent elections is seeing a dramatic increase of seats that this party is winning. The Social Democratic Party or SDP also faces a lot of criticism

for looking into the interest of organized labour alone which has resulted in income inequality. While Finland does enjoy a worldwide reputation for being a model prosperous country the deficiencies of this welfare state has begun to surface like in the rest of the countries following the Scandinavian model. Thus, the harsh economic and redundant health policies are finding a reflection in Finnish crime fiction. Finnish crime fiction exposes the reality that even the most content of nations has begun to show the deficiencies of the system and following the tradition of crime writing in Scandinavia Finnish crime fiction too explore the darker realities of the welfare state—

> 'the socio-economic-political problems apparent in today's Finnish welfare state often provide the causes or precipitating events for the crimes that the detectives, often scarred by the same problems, have to solve. Such problems include the rise of far-right political groups; immigration issues and racism, especially involving Muslim incomers; drug and alcohol abuse; gender issues; organised international crime; and Finland's complex relationship with Russia" (Brunsdale 2015: 112).

More than the varieties found in other Scandinavian nations, Finnish crime fiction is more ready to engage playfully with the conventions and traditions of the crime novel requiring a deeper level of commitment on the part of the reader who is obliged to remain tuned in and alert. This is because while presenting a fully realistic fictional world to the readers the Finnish crime novel is never free from the undercurrents of social critique. While Finnish crime still remains in the background of the Scandinavian crime fiction some writers have managed to find an international audience.

Born in 1948, Matti Joensuu worked as a journalist before working as a full-time policeman. Matti Joensuu is one of Finland's most popular crime writers who is the creator of detective sergeant Timo Harjunpää. The crimes series featuring his gloomy detective led to Joensuu becoming the first writer to win the Finnish state award for literature with a crime novel. Thereafter he has won numerous other awards like the Clew of the year award while *The Priest Of Evil* was nominated for the Glass Key award. In comparison to the other writers his output is not very large but Joensuu has been –"praised for its skilful combination of police procedure with insights into the psychology of ordinary people who feel that disruptive changes in society have driven their world out of control, the often ominous significance of dreams, and individual attempts to function proactively in the modern world" (Brunsdale 2015: 145). One of his finest work *The Priest of Evil* deals with the apparent suicide of a young man in the Helsinki underground train. This novel presents a serial killing along with deeply troubled characters with disturbing filial relationships. Joensuu's career as a policeman gives an added realism to his writing while delving into the psychology of how a criminal is created as well as touching upon the existence of absolute evil. The novel also raises some important issues of the welfare of the younger generation and treatment of mental illness. These thematic issues are similar to the overall trend in Scandinavian crime fiction where social issues are brought into the forefront in a crime novel. On this point, Joensuu remarks—

> "Helsinki is the only metropolis in Finland, which inevitably creates a special emphasis. The possibilities of disparate types of crime and other social upheavals are multi-fold there [...] my examination of these issues is not specifically political[...] but I am socio-political in my work as a police officer, I was constantly exposed to the grim effects of crime and violent death [...] transmuting this experience into my books can hopefully

> achieve a kind of truthfulness[...] I know all too well that part of society that is kept away from the eyes of respectable citizens" (Forshaw 2012: 149).

To emphasize this focus on realism Joensuu talks about how the location of *The Priest of Evil* is a real place. There are over 300 kilometres of underground tunnels in Helsinki which is where we discover the priest of evil doing his rituals. The issues of mental illness is raised here by Joensuu who is dissatisfied with the system in Finland where a person cannot be committed to a mental hospital against their will and since most of them refuse to go to a hospital, they do not get the required treatment leading to serious maniacal behaviour. Likewise, Joensuu has written about crimes committed by children in *Harjunpää and the Stone Murders* which echoes a real-life crime. *The stone murders* is a police procedural which looks into the problems of Helsinki as the society seems rife with problems of child abuse, alcoholism, and prostitution while exposing the shortcomings of the bureaucracy to handle any problems. *To Steal her Love* provides a unique examination of the welfare state as it exposes the frustrating inner workings of institutional politics and powerplay within the Helsinki police.

The issue of violence against women and vice-versa has also come up in his writings. Nestigen in "Unnecessary Officers: Realism, Melodrama and Scandinavian Crime Fiction in Transition" observes that Joensuu's depiction of violence distinguishes him from other writers as in his novels the—

> "murder is sudden and miserable sum of coincidence and contingency. Such realism neither blames the perpetrator for the moral failing nor pathologizes the criminal but instead finds the roots of violence and crime in the condition that allows coincidence

> and contingency to aggregate into murder. The construal of crime causes in Joensuu gives voice to social critique in a realist rather than melodramatic way" (176).

Harjunpaa becomes the central character through whose critical eyes the author presents a grim view of the society—"a society of isolated individuals, a modern dystopia in which social life and authentic love and interaction between individuals have disappeared" (Bergman 2014: 161). Thus, Matti Joensuu's novels are important to the overall development of the police procedural in Finland as they are realistic portraits of society which depict the hardworking stoic policeman.

One of the most cosmopolitan Nordic nations, Denmark is blessed with a rich cultural and historical heritage. The country is considered to be inhabited by the happiest people of the world. A thought elaborated by the American writer Donald Spoto who has been living in Denmark for several years—

> "here, people want to work hard, have a good education for their children and guaranteed free healthcare in a successful social democracy[...] unemployment is very low here[...]. There is no time for – or interest in – any sort of prejudice, actually; certainly no time for sexual intolerance. Very many people live happily and openly as gay men and women, alone, with partners or married to them. Danish society doesn't blink an eye at that. This is just one reason why I call it a model society" (cited in Forshaw 2012: 158-59).

This picture captures the progressive Denmark where individuals enjoy a level of liberty and freedom which is not readily available elsewhere. But there is a duality in this nation which is reflected in its rich literary history. The earliest of Danish literature can be traced back to the

pagan Vikings who celebrated the victories of their courageous warriors while the founding father of Danish literature Ludwig Holberg is remembered for his drama which displays a unique satiric humour. Influenced by European writers Holberg's characters had one obsessive trait, a technique used by the later crime writers including Jussi Adler Olsen. Holberg's importance in the development of Danish literature lies in the fact that though he wrote mostly comedies his work—"consistently maintained a strong moral purpose [...] Holberg's social-satire[...] appealed to and reinforced the peculiarly quirky Danish sense of humour" (Brunsdale 2015: 9). This typical sense of Danish humour is however dark with a touch of madness as observed in contemporary Danish crime fiction—"Kolberg's social satire echoes down the years into the work of contemporary Danish crime authors, giving their fiction a distinctive dark dimension which the English-speaking world is now discovering, notably in Jussi Adler Olsen's Department Q crime novel series" (Brunsdale 2015: 9). This dichotomy that exists in Danish literature is also better captured in the fact that it is the birthplace of the beautiful fairy tales of Hans Anderson Christian and the dark brooding existential philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard. The Danes project the image of optimism and hope which was the hallmark of Anderson's fairytales with his deep moral messages. Unlike the Swedes who have been criticized of being overly regulated by the government, the Danes enjoy a fairy tale atmosphere of a laid back stress-free lifestyle with a set of liberal laws which is cherished by the citizens.

However, a closer look into this society exposes the fact that this fairy tale does not necessarily have a happy ending. Like the rest of Scandinavia, the political scenario is being taken over by the right-wing political supporters. Immigration has turned into a paramount issue with the nation engaged in a conflict with Iraq while the capital city is rife with problems of prostitution, gang violence and abuse of power by the authorities. Amidst this dichotomy that exists in the

Danish culture and literature, we see the rise of the crime novel which reinterprets this fairy-tale image set against the backdrop of a chilling landscape.

One of Denmark's leading crime writers is Jussi Adler Olsen whose Department Q series has given him international acclaim. Olsen comes from a unique background of varied interests. His entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Nordic crime fiction* reads like this—"before he began writing [...] he studied university-Cinematography, ran a second-hand bookstore, wrote Walter Lntz cartoons and Disney scripts, edited magazines and comics [...] composed music for [a] film, wrote and published two books on Groucho Marx" (36).

Such a diverse background is bound to lead to an interesting outlet which has led to the crime series 'Department Q' with the central protagonist Carl Morck. The series follows the life of Detective Carl Morck who has recently been transferred to the cold case division. Though a brilliant detective Morck is not liked by his colleagues and we find that he has been transferred to the cold case division after a police raid which led to the death of one of his police partner and left the other paralysed. Following the Scandinavian crime fiction tradition, we meet an emotionally damaged Morck who is working from a forgotten police basement. He has two colleagues in his new department—"Rose Knudsen [...] a superb researcher and an abrasive washout from the police academy, as his secretary and Hafez-al-Assad, an eccentric and enigmatic Middle Eastern assistant who speaks riotously imperfect Danish, drives like a pig and provides both near –constant comic relief and sympathetic insight into the Muslim immigrants life in Copenhagen" (Brunsdale 2015: 38).

The Keeper of Lost Causes published as *Mercy* is the first novel in the Department Q series which investigates the disappearance of a young politician five years ago. As the narrative

progresses Olsen introduces psychopaths living in this fairy tale land where the abuse of power is rampant. Barry Forshaw in his review of the book for Independent UK sheds light into the overall theme of *Mercy* as well as the entire Department Q series—" Mercy deals with corrupt individuals, social outsiders and manipulative psychopaths. The spectacle of abuse of power in the "perfect" social democracy (not to mention grim visions of torture in this sylvan setting) has a lacerating force" Hence, the series follows the tradition of social-political realism which is inherent in all Scandinavian crime novels. The police department is one of the institutions of authority put up for scrutiny as the cold case department is relegated into the background constantly made to battle for funds and other amenities.

Olsen's novel *Disgrace* centres around Kimmie a homeless person living on the streets of Copenhagen. Born to a father who was a psychiatric doctor and having spent a bulk of his childhood in the premises of a mental institution, Olsen has a keen insight into the inner workings of the human mind which is reflected in his portrait of Kimmie's fragile mind. The plot centers on the brutal murder of a brother and sister and as the novels progress, we are left with the question who is the real culprit and who is the real victim. The novel reveals a group of wealthy influential people as sociopaths unmasking their true nature by the end of the novel.

Hence in keeping with his literary predecessors, Olsen draws his readers to the deeper questions of the individual and society drawing a darker portrait of humanity. This dark vision is also reflected in *Guilt* which exposes a gross violation of human rights. Moark comes across a missing person case of 1987 which opens up a can of worms of the deeds of the Purity Party, a neo-Nazi group who aimed to promote pure Danishness by aborting foetuses which did not meet their requirements and forcefully sterilizing women whose were considered unfit to promote this line. This novel like the previous one in the series presents the difference between

the insiders who enjoy the benefits of the social democratic ideal while the ones labelled outsiders are left to fend for themselves. This novel also highlights the alarming rise of the right-wing political parties with their utter disregard for human values and rights. The effect of the strong anti-immigration stand taken by the right-wing parties is highlighted again and again in the character of Assad, a Syrian immigrant.

Jussi Adler Olsen thus, highlights the 'outsiders' in his Department Q series exposing the marginalized individuals ironically living in the happiest nation of the world. These outsider figures become a mouthpiece for the author to shed a critical light into the life of the many unwanted people in Denmark while voicing larger issues of injustice. In his official website, Olsen elaborates—

> "I hate power abuse and injustice and in everyone in my novels, I tell a version of power abuse and show a way in which you can break it. I am convinced that my readers do not just want to be entertained [...] but they also want to learn something and take something with them, which invites reflection [...] evil is a useful tool and when you describe the contrast between good and evil, you can send a message".

Though criticised for depicting extreme violence, Olsen's narrative is a realistic portrayal of evil, hence connecting crime with realism and social critique as he wades through the murky waters of various social conditions that may result in the violence manifested in his novels.

Since crime and violence reflect the social and human challenges that the welfare society faces crime fiction it mirrors the fears that individuals have as well as reflects the larger threats to society. The use of art and literature can be interpreted in different ways but one important element of literature is its ability to deal with human concerns. Such writing is considered to be

'committed literature' which has the intention of inspiring real, political, and positive change in the world. This is what separates Scandinavian crime fiction from other popular genre fiction- the choice to engage with contemporary society. It contradicts the remarkable optimism and refusal to accept certain truths. Scandinavian crime novel forces these truths in the open at a time when the government is turning a blind eye still touting claims of utopia.

Thus, it is apparent that in a Scandinavian crime novel the site of murder consequently becomes a site of critique. William Stowe refers to this genre as 'a literature of crisis' as it depicts "individuals and social institutions confronted with threats to their very existence, with the theft of their children, their substance, their lives, and with a disruption of social order" (Malmgren 2001: 10). This crisis violently leads the individuals to come face to face with issues that they may have been reluctant to face, an idea which finds ample evidence in Scandinavian crime fiction.