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Projecting Culture Through Literary Exportation: How Imitation in Scandinavian Crime Fiction  
Reveals Regional Mores

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A thesis  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of Literature and Language  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in English

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by

Bradley Hartsell

December 2017

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Keywords: Nordic Noir, Swedish, identity, Henning Mankell, Helene Tursten, Maj Sjöwall, Per  
Wahlöö, Scandinavian crime fiction, Ed McBain, Raymond Chandler, Nazism, gender forward

## ABSTRACT

### Projecting Culture Through Literary Exportation: How Imitation in Scandinavian Crime Fiction Reveals Regional Mores

by

Bradley Hartsell

This thesis reexamines the beginnings of Swedish hardboiled crime literature, in part tracking its lineage to American culture and unpacking Swedish identity. Following the introduction, the second chapter asserts how this genre began as a form of escapism, specifically in Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö's *Roseanna*. The third chapter compares predecessor Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* with *Roseanna*, and how Sweden's greater gender tolerance significantly outshining America's is reflected in literature. The fourth chapter examines how Henning Mankell's novels fail to fully accept Sweden's complicity in neo-Nazism as an active component of Swedish identity. The final chapter reveals Helene Tursten's *Detective Inspector Huss* engaging with gender and racial relations in unique ways, while also releasing the suppressive qualities found in the Swedish identity post-war. Therefore, this thesis will better contextualize the onset of the genre, and how its lineage reflects the fruits and the damages alike in the Swedish identity.

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## DEDICATION

To my family and to Cayla, who motivated me and understood in giving me the space I needed to turn some nebulous idea into a bona fide piece of research.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I feel indebted to the graduate committee who voted to allow me in as a late-addition graduate assistant in February 2016. I probably should be working a dead-end job in a small town, but they unexpectedly gave me an opportunity to teach, travel, and hone my vague interests into what became this thesis. A great deal of thanks must go to Dr. Michael Cody for agreeing to chair my thesis, for shepherding me through my research, through conference etiquette, my doctoral ambitions, and listening to my hours-worth of anxieties. I am also grateful for Dr. Daniel Westover for coaching me and being incredibly supportive through my various difficulties navigating through graduate school; to Dr. Jesse Graves for endorsing my returning for a master's degree and being supportive of my research; to Dr. Scott Honeycutt, who was enthusiastically supportive of my research and was always a willing sounding board to my evolving academic direction. Lastly, I must thank Dr. Judith Slagle and Dr. Mark Baumgartner for agreeing to serve on my thesis committee, their providing a necessary expansion of additional works to also consider within the realm of crime fiction, to which I am still a greenhorn.

I am grateful to my colleagues who made me feel welcome despite being some unknown student walking in two weeks after classes had started. Luke, Kelsey, Jonathan, Gabe, and Mark talked me through so many of my anxieties. Sharing their own thoughts and perspectives, they inspired me to push myself to being as good a student and instructor as I could be. I must also thank Seth and Adam for their support and interest in my work. Sweden and its culture may not have been a particular interest for anyone in the department, but everyone encouraged me to continue pursuing my research, taking my doctoral ambitions seriously, and staying focused on the daily reading, writing, and grading that still needed to be done. I can get quite fanciful, but these professors and colleagues struck the balance of encouraging me and keeping me grounded.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

It can be said that crime fiction exposes the ailments of society. The protagonist, often some type of detective, investigates cases mired in rape, violence, drugs, and corruption. The convoluted mystery and crisp dialogue, often filled with detective jargon, intrigue readers and make solving depraved crimes feel inclusive. Readers may feel a part of the narrative, encouraged to solve the investigations alongside the protagonist serving as the reader's proxy.

Perhaps the genre's most eminent work is Raymond Chandler's 1939 *The Big Sleep*, which first introduced stalwart private detective Phillip Marlowe. Chandler's creation of a new form—hardboiled crime—led to a surge in like-minded American novels, including the 87th Precinct, Ed McBain's highly popular series of police procedurals beginning in the 1950s. This new form introduced morally ambiguous characters, ones that drank and womanized too much—a departure from the clear heroes (i.e. Lord Peter Wimsey). Hardboiled crime imbued crime literature with a complexity that allows the stories to resonate long after the reader initially has solved the mysteries; a Chandler novel thus moves beyond pulp fiction, approaching what can be seen as adult literature.

After the literary marketplace's introduction first to Marlowe and then to the 87th Precinct, Chandler and McBain's hardboiled influence spread to Scandinavia, leading to Swedes Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö's creation of what has become colloquially known as Nordic noir, which is essentially Scandinavian (or Swedish, for the purposes of this thesis) hardboiled crime fiction. Many of the same complicated aspects found in Marlowe and those in the 87th Precinct became drawn onto Sjöwall and Wahlöö's characters. In fact, the Swedish duo cites McBain as the writer that sparked Wahlöö, a former newspaper journalist, to turn to fiction with his partner.

McBain, however, can be traced directly back to Chandler's influence, making McBain subtly mediate between Sjöwall and Wahlöö and Chandler. And unlike the ensemble nature of the 87th Precinct, the partnered Swedish authors introduced their own stalwart lead detective akin to Marlowe, Martin Beck, in *Roseanna* (1965). *Roseanna* may not have been especially original as a piece of genre literature, owing much of its advent to two American writers, but Sjöwall and Wahlöö accessed something lasting and meaningful to a region of the world.

Since *Roseanna*, seemingly every crime novel hailing from Scandinavia is in dialogue with Sjöwall and Wahlöö. Some authors, who have subsequently become more popular international bestsellers, like Henning Mankell and Stieg Larsson, have furthered the duo's procedural intrigue as a filter for cultural commentary; other authors' novels, to mixed degrees, seem to forego political slants for a captivating mystery and lead character—thus, these protagonists are always harkening back to an embodiment of Beck.

In the more than fifty years of Nordic noir, a central question has persisted from both its international audience and the scholarship written about it: how can such a reputedly safe and progressive area of the world be responsible for such violent and harrowing novels? The social data being recorded in these Nordic countries certainly does not indicate a hidden, bleak reality. Likewise, it is simply too reductive to regard Scandinavian crime authors as manipulating their international audience's preconceived notions of exotic, snowy landscapes and peacefulness.

This thesis will attempt to offer something satisfying to such a question of contrast. Since that all of the materials on Scandinavian crime fiction regard *Roseanna* as the genre's inflection point, I have performed a close reading of the text to identify the authors' intentions and how the novel's rippling effect impacted ensuing literature from the region. In doing so, I aim to demonstrate how the answer to this question is rife with sociopolitical implications in modern

Sweden. My second chapter attempts to answer why Scandinavia bothers to involve itself with crime literature; through close reading of *Roseanna*, I show how Sjöwall and Wahlöö map Americanesque violent crimes onto Sweden's more socially timid landscape. This is a form of escapism, but not for entertainment purposes; the authors employ this method—which has since become the dominant template in the region's crime literature—as a means through which cultural commentary, largely of gender, race, and class relations, may be deployed. *Roseanna*'s climax hinges on impersonation, through which its cloaked-nature can infiltrate deeply-rooted cultural mores and fears, allowing them to be more readily accessed. Extrapolating from the notion that Nordic noir acts an interpolation of America, my third chapter positions respective inflection points—how *Roseanna* and *The Big Sleep* inhabit similar registers as genre literature but depart drastically as cultural reflections of gender empathy—Sweden's being much more diligent in representing its gender-forward cultural attitude.

In chapter four, I pivot away from *Roseanna*, to focus on *Faceless Killers* (1991) by Mankell's , a self-professed acolyte of Sjöwall and Wahöö's as well as a social activist. If my second and third chapters reflect the enviable societal representations, particularly of gender, to which Nordic noir can trace its lineage, chapter four examines how fears and racial prejudices reassure that Scandinavia is still riddled with fissures, particularly in a postwar Europe. My final chapter is an extensive look at another Sjöwall and Wahlöö acolyte, albeit one considerably less popular or influential than they or Mankell. Helene Tursten's work accounts for the full-spectrum of what Nordic noir embodies and is representative regarding Swedish culture. *Detective Inspector Huss* (1998) redefines and uplifts the female detective protagonist, and essentially takes accountability for Sweden's history of Nazi-complicity. These emboldened authorial decisions, in part, demonstrate a progressiveness that I show is rooted in *Roseanna*'s

movements away from harmful politics of *The Big Sleep*; yet, as I illuminate, Tursten does not shy away from the damages of patriarchal entitlement, racial prejudices, and class disparity found in Sweden. These final two chapters particularly scrutinize the largely damning components contained in what a nation perceives as its Swedish identity; the Tursten chapter particularly acknowledges a cultural suppression that grants many Swedes, including crime fiction writers, a reprieve from accepting accountability in their prejudices.

My thesis focuses on starting points—each of the three Swedish novels is the debut in a series, while the American novel is the introduction to Marlowe and a flagship text for an entire genre. Such demarcations show the rise of American and Swedish crime literature, respectively, and Mankell’s reigniting the international interest in Nordic noir. Beneath all of these stories’ mysteries, and thus, superficial entertainment, are texts directly interacting with and against the times and culture that produced them. Therefore, once establishing a defined purpose for Scandinavian crime fiction, this thesis unpacks the elements found in the Swedish identity, both in its progressive ideals and its repressive impairment.

## CHAPTER 2

### AMERICA'S VIOLENT CULTURE REIMAGINED IN SWEDEN THROUGH *ROSEANNA*

Nordic countries, particularly Sweden, have developed a reputation throughout the world approximating the idea of a certain utopia. Tall, beautiful, pagan blonds are imagined to be roaming peacefully, loving freely. Such misconceptions have led to a robust international appeal for Scandinavian crime fiction, with people reconciling their preconceived notions in light of hostile and gritty Nordic literature. The commercial zenith came with Stieg Larsson's Millennium series, a posthumous mid-2000s trilogy most known for *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, which has sold more than 80 million copies worldwide. Not only does the antisocial, completely black-clad Lisbeth Salander capture the reader's mind, going against the suave, masculine convention of literary crime solvers, such as Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe, but she also disrupts a reader's expectations of Swedish harmony. The virtuous ideal of Stockholm is at odds with Salander's raping and branding her guardian-turned-rapist, replete with this description of her tattooing: "The message was written in caps over five lines that covered his belly, from his nipples to just above his genitals: I AM A SADISTIC PIG, A PERVERT, AND A RAPIST" (Larsson 263).

This paradox is perhaps a leading reason behind Scandinavian crime fiction's being so widely exported—from the demand for Larsson to Henning Mankell's Kurt Wallander to American television shows adapted from Scandinavian originals, like *The Killing* and *The Bridge*. The phenomenon of Scandinavian crime fiction owes its compelling, paradoxical existence to Sjöwall and Wahlöö's decision to push *Roseanna* towards the hardboiled style of American crime writer Ed McBain and away from fellow Swede Stieg Trenter's "whodunit" technique. Fitting for a Sweden moving more towards Westernization in the mid twentieth

century, *Roseanna* reflects this purposeful culture shift; just as *Roseanna* policewoman Sonja Hansson impersonates the murdered American title character, Sjöwall and Walöö reimagine—in essence, impersonate—a violent American culture as a form of Swedish escapism.

The question remains, however, as to *why* the curiosity about Scandinavian crime so deeply affects outsiders. Anita Shenoï breaches this inquiry in “Sweden: A Crime Fiction Wonderland,” asking, “...[W]hat is fuelling this fascination with all things dark and dastardly in countries that have long been seen as saintly?” She suggests that “[t]he answer may lie in contrast” (9). International interest had to first come from the minds of natives interested in sharing cultural insight and critiques through the genre. This interest exists for writers restless with a sociopolitical status quo; Shenoï argues that “[f]or Swedes at least, crime fiction provides an imaginative and less confrontational platform for social and political comment” (9).

As for an audience’s intrigue regarding these seemingly scarce Scandinavian crimes, Lund University’s Kerstin Bergman cites as one potential reason a political system that can appear exotic to foreigners: “Since the 1950s, the Nordic welfare societies have developed a reputation abroad for being a successful middle way between capitalism and communism” (84). Citizen entitlement such as free healthcare and education and extended paternity leave capture one’s curiosity—even one’s envy. Bergman goes further, suggesting that perhaps these fictional crimes provide the rest of the world with some “*schadenfreude*, as international readers might take comfort, and perhaps even pleasure” in the fact that there is no absence of violent crime in places that can often be purported as utopian (85). Nordic authors and screenwriters thus fulfill this demand, leveraging the paradox of the world’s preconceptions, “whereby art becomes product and inquiry becomes identity.” Thus these writers “[commodify] curiosity itself” (Benedict 117), and reap a profit due to foreign gullibility.

This *shadenfraude* may be an effective hook for selling books worldwide, but it may not be accurate. After all, statistics reveal life in Scandinavia as a rather pleasant experience. In doing so, this data reaffirms the common belief in Nordic people peacefully coexisting. Of 193 countries with data, four Nordic countries rank impressively low in the top thirty of lowest intentional homicide rate (Iceland is fifth-best; Norway, tenth; Denmark, twentieth; Sweden, twenty-sixth); for comparison's sake, the United States ranks ninety-ninth. Not only are people safer in Scandinavia, but this also naturally contributes to constituting the happiest area of the world, based on research and polling factors concerning political, economic, and social measurements. Since the United Nations began publishing the World Happiness Report in 2012, no Nordic country has been ranked outside of the top ten—always outperforming the United States. Again, the world's presuppositions are consistently supported by data. So why would writers like Larsson and Mankell even think to create stories like that of Lisbeth tattooing her attacker or of Wallander investigating a brutal, tortuous murder of an elderly couple in rural Lunnarp?

The answer may lie in a heightened awareness of the world and the influence of McBain's 87th Precinct police procedural series first published in 1956. Sjöwall and Wahlöö were heavily reading McBain's work as well as translating it into Swedish (Bergman, *Swedish* 22). The American crime writer seems to have come to Sjöwall and Wahlöö at a pivotal time as their country was continually reinventing its cultural identity. When the partnered Swedish couple wrote *Roseanna* in the mid 1960s, Sweden was straddling the old world and modernization. Mankell, providing the introduction to a 2006 edition of *Roseanna*, recalls Sweden as still being "a society with closer ties to the past than to the future" (vii). Moreover, he sees certain moves by Sjöwall and Wahlöö as conscious social comment, such as when a ship

called *The Pig* docked and a Vietnamese tourist appeared and began observing the Göta Canal. He recalls the surprise of reading that now-innocuous detail on the second page: “A Vietnamese tourist! In Sweden in 1965! That may have happened once, at most. But here the authors are giving a nod to the major event of my generation, the Vietnam War. It was the period in Sweden’s postwar history when the world had begun to open up” (viii). By 1965, Sweden was nearing twenty years under Social Democrat Prime Minister Tage Erlander and “cars still drove on the left-hand side of the road” (“Introduction” viii); by 1967, the law of driving on the right-hand side was passed, and by 1969, Erlander resigned as prime minister, with his lasting impact as the longest-tenured Swedish prime minister still being felt. The world indeed was opening up for Sweden as the country progressed towards the incorporation of American ideals under Erlander, where capitalistic consumerism could align with Swedish mores rooted in socialism and a higher cultural and gender tolerance.

Though cultural shifts have often been concurrent with changes in art, Sjöwall and Wahlöö at least had a national template in place that they could break, as opposed to creating an entire genre spontaneously. The first generation of Scandinavian crime writers emerged in the late nineteenth century and continued to establish the genre through the 1930s; Bergman notes that the allure of Westernization was already underway as “most of these authors used foreign-sounding, preferably Anglo-American, pen names, in order to be to be associated with the international genre and take advantage of its growing popularity” (14). Even late-nineteenth-century author Prins Pierre adopted a Western pseudonym as a way of increasing accessibility—an idea ringing with capitalistic undertones. Still, the stories were often consciously protective. As Bergman indicates, the first generation consistently pinned their “whodunits” on non-natives (15), and thus, the crime’s mystery could be solved by the end of the novel without any

deleterious marks against a Scandinavian citizen. These writers were already angling into commodifying the globe's curiosity, all while reinforcing their country's reputation. Although Sjöwall and Wahlöö and Pierre were not averse to a Western-minded literature, first-generation modes of criminal storytelling found little in common with the revolution the couple would eventually set in motion.

A quarter-way through the twentieth century, “whodunits” remained *en vogue* in the West until Dashiell Hammett and Chandler began writing hardboiled crime with *The Maltese Falcon* (1929) and *The Big Sleep*, respectively. These novels expanded crime fiction from easy-reading mysteries to stories filled with increased, often noteworthy characterization and depth—“serious” novels that *happened* to be centered on a mystery. This groundbreaking complexity in the genre led to McBain's series, which he constructed to have a “squadroom full of detectives as a conglomerate hero” (McBain 359). McBain utilizes the ensemble to bring the quotidian tools of police work, as seen in police reports, interviews, and transcripts, to the reader, which allows him or her to engage with an investigation in a more authentic way than earlier iterations of crime fiction, often consisting of simple strokes of fortune and courageous acts of brawn. These hardboiled procedural novels of McBain attached themselves to Sjöwall and Wahlöö, which must have seemed pioneering, leaving behind the rote need of connecting the clues that could be found in an Agatha Christie novel. Although nearly a decade elapsed between the first 87th Precinct novel to *Roseanna*, Sjöwall and Wahlöö opened the first real entryway for Sweden's literature to sow global intrigue. More than just keeping their Swedish names and making Roseanna's killer a Swede, Sjöwall and Wahlöö found a way to irrevocably disrupt Scandinavian crime fiction and launch the region's hardboiled genre by simultaneously embracing the cultural identities of two nations—the United States and their own.

Sjöwall and Wahlöö claim they chose crime fiction as a popular platform for social and political critique (*Swedish* 22), but it can be argued that *Roseanna* re-imagines a violent, Americanesque homicide as a sort of fantasy. During 1965, the United States had just shy of ten-thousand murders to Sweden's eighty-seven; even considering the significantly higher population of America—nearly two-hundred million to Sweden's 7.7 million—the former's murder rate of 5.1 per 100,000 people dwarfs the latter's of 1.1 per 100,000 people (“United States Crime Rate”; Lappi-Seppälä; *World Population*). Surely Sjöwall and Wahlöö were not so distraught over a handful of homicides as to shed a spotlight on Swedish violent crime. Rather, the idea that they were offering a fantasy of mapping the implication of an American crime onto Sweden is illuminated in the authors' highly-specific decision in the novel's climax, in which the respected policewoman Sonja Hansson impersonates the dress and behavior of Roseanna in order to provoke the killer into attacking again, thus to prompt his arrest. The novel's protagonist is Martin Beck, and a more conventional, genre-specific resolution to the case would have focused on Beck's detailed detective work, intelligence, intuition, and some brawn to identify and capture the killer. Instead, Sjöwall and Wahlöö have Sonja perform dutiful, if not elaborate, police work, recreating the attire, countenance, and flirtatiousness of an American woman in her mid twenties.

Sonja serves as Roseanna's Swedish foil. With regards to feminine agency, she is shown as much respect for her lifestyle as Roseanna is for hers, even if the plot dictates violence done against both of them. Both the narrator and Beck's accepting attitude regarding Roseanna's promiscuity transfers to Sonja, who never has a derisive comment made against her being a single mother or perhaps for being seen as too prudish. This empathy displayed, then, by Sjöwall and Wahlöö conveys a respect for not only the character, but for McBain's work as well. Significant portions of *Roseanna* are told through police transcripts, such as Roseanna's

hometown friends Mary Jane and Mulvaney's respective interviews with Lincoln, Nebraska Detective Lieutenant Kafka, transcripts accessible to the reader because they have been sent to Beck; this echoes McBain's divulging key aspects of the story through transcripts, as he does in "Sadie When She Died" (1972), a short story in which detective Steve Carella reads a conversation transcript taken from Arlene Orton's wiretapped phone, in which she and lawyer Gerald Fletcher discuss Carella's suspicion of Fletcher's responsibility for his wife's murder, even though town junkie Ralph Corwin has confessed to the killing of Sarah:

Miss Orton: Who cares what [Carella] found out? Corwin's already confessed.

Fletcher: I can understand his reasoning. I'm just not sure he can understand mine.

Miss Orton: Some reasoning. If you were going to kill her, you'd have done it ages ago, when she refused to sign the separation papers. So let him investigate, who cares? Wishing your wife dead isn't the same thing as killing her. ("Sadie" 407)

These transcripts feel invasive and intriguing to the reader, whether it is happening unwittingly through a wiretapped phone or in Detective Lieutenant Kafka's interrogation room. They allow the reader access to private information, revealing both plot details and characterization.

Roseanna's image of living on the margins of mid-sixties American convention is cast almost entirely through Mary Jane and Mulvaney's respective transcripts. Placing such significance on this authorial device shows the Swedish authors entering into a tacit, sympathetic association with McBain; in transposing McBain's police procedural onto a Swedish landscape, Sjöwall and Wahlöö reject judgment and punishment for American values, though importantly, without

compromising Swedish values of an openness towards equality and a careful consideration in line with *lagom*, a national phrase meaning “just the right amount” or “in moderation.”

Sonja’s ultimately successful impersonation mirrors Sjöwall and Wahlöö’s authorial impersonation, which struck Scandinavia with such an impact as to essentially render Nordic “whodunits” anachronistic. When Beck tells Sonja, ““You must be like Roseanna McGraw”” (173), one can interpolate Sjöwall and Wahlöö stating their intentions to be like Ed McBain. With no particular social unrest or unusually obscene violence in Sweden, Sjöwall and Wahlöö exercised creative liberties, envisioning an alternative reality in which Sweden experienced the same types of crimes McBain was able to pull from New York newspaper headlines. Mankell recalls the immediate impact of reading *Roseanna*, how “[t]heir intent was never to write crime stories as a form of entertainment” (viii); rather, the investigation is meticulous and characters are constantly battling some form of physical ailment. Sjöwall and Wahlöö may have been launched from an American procedural, but the novelty captured the attention of Scandinavian readers. The resounding effect of *Roseanna* has diffused through seemingly every Nordic crime novel since, from Mankell to Larsson to Helene Tursten to Jo Nesbø.

This groundwork evolved from two Swedish authors producing literature by transposing a violence foreign to their own country. The new form inspired the region’s future writers who would ultimately convert an international audience into reliable consumers. The flooded market has garnered worldwide admiration for characters like Lisbeth Salander, who has been portrayed in an American film adaptation by Academy Award-nominee Rooney Mara, and Kurt Wallander, played by Kenneth Branagh on the titular BBC television show. This rise in popularity has tucked Beck farther back into the margins, even as new disciples of Salander continue investigating gruesome cases. Yet, violent crime in Scandinavia remains as scarce today as it was

in 1965. Thus, the reason these writers keep meeting international demand does not come from illuminating a dark underbelly of Nordic society; they follow a unifying, visionary precedent set in 1965. As the genre has spent more than fifty years rising to prominence, it may appear that Scandinavia and crime fiction are intrinsically connected. But surely Sweden's miniscule homicide rate did not inspire the auspicious beginning of Nordic noir. Rather, Sjöwall and Wahlöö tap into escapism reimagined through the lens of McBain, most evident with the roleplaying of Roseanna; just like Sonja Hansson entrapping the killer, Nordic noir unlocked meaning and purpose through the art of impersonation, and entrapped an eager international audience.

## CHAPTER 3

### SWEDEN'S FEMININE RETRIBUTION

Mapping gruesome aspects taken from America onto Sweden is a furtive way for Swedish authors to examine their own culture. Perhaps such heinous scenes of rape and murder are purely acts of escapism, as found in a Henning Mankell or Stieg Larsson novel, but the social dynamics among coworkers, peers, and family members is a reflection of something distinctly Swedish. If sociopolitical attitudes can be traced from current Scandinavian crime fiction to *Roseanna*, the influence that Ed McBain provided Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö can, in turn, be traced from McBain's work to Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*. The Swedish duo applied, however unwittingly, many of the hardboiled elements that inspired Nordic noir—from cynical, morally ambiguous characters to brutal crime scenes—with one striking difference. In *Roseanna*, the onset of Nordic noir began with Sjöwall and Wahlöö making a definitive stance regarding gender, specifically femininity. Even as the archetypal *The Big Sleep* is loaded with sexist language and themes, Scandinavia's cultural identity of privileging gender equality shines through *Roseanna*. Although Sjöwall and Wahlöö seem to be interpolating the dark elements of American culture, largely through the demonstration of senseless violence, they counter Chandler's objectification of women with strongly independent females in *Roseanna*.

To appreciate the progressiveness regarding feminism in *Roseanna*, one must have proper perspective of the hyper-masculine, misogynistic bedrock of hardboiled crime fiction. *The Big Sleep* has received due credit for a great many aspects of its legacy, but one misconstrued facet is the novel's relationship with gender; as will be shown in this chapter, Chandler's credit for popularizing the femme fatale is misguided shorthand for feminine empowerment. Sjöwall and Wahlöö may have imagined a Philip Marlowe-esque case when they created Martin Beck, but

they were resolute in distancing themselves from the most deplorable aspects of what Marlowe represents. Although Chandler elevates the roles of sisters Carmen Sternwood and Vivian Regan as fundamental to Marlowe's case, their participation is tethered to tropes of masculinity, thus making their superficial involvement incidental to the reader. Most succinctly, to attract the reader, a woman must first attract Marlowe.

*The Big Sleep* unwittingly shows the restrictions on women in America that is not anachronistic of early to mid-1900s; the social progression nowadays is no doubt improved, but still riddled with fissures. The presence of women in the workplace, for instance, indicates progress, but comes still with a stark gender wage gap. In America in 2015, there stood a twenty-percent gap in how much women made compared to men, meaning that for every dollar a man made, a woman only made eighty cents (DuMonthier). Considering 2016 saw a woman run for president of the United States, the relatively minor improvement from the thirty-six-percent wage gap in 1955 shows a fundamental divide in the country's perspective on women. In World Economic Forum's annual gender gap index, ranking each country's gender equality based on various social and political factors, the country with the most resources in the world, the United States, places only twenty-eighth; in contrast, Nordic countries comprise the top four: 1. Iceland 2. Norway 3. Finland 4. Sweden (World Economic Forum). This gender-forward culture is not a recent phenomenon in Scandinavia; even in the mid 1960s, *Roseanna* is a strong reflection of Sweden's feminism that is still seen today.

The Swedish novel may have a male protagonist in detective Martin Beck, and a female victim found to have been raped and murdered in Southern Sweden, but Sjöwall and Wahlöö are painstaking in their fleshing Roseanna McGraw into a relatable and strong female. In interviews with the police, Edgar Mulvaney and Mary Jane Peterson repeatedly describe their vacationing

friend Roseanna as a fiercely independent woman: “I think that she suffered some kind of independence complex,” Mary Jane says (Sjöwall 82). Roseanna is a librarian who lives by herself. She has no interest in getting married or having men, like her ex-lover Mulvaney, pay for her: “She didn’t need my money, she told me from the very beginning. If and when we went out, she always paid for herself” (74). She enjoys having sex and makes no apologies for her promiscuity.

Sjöwall and Wahlöö are not ignorant of American contempt towards what can be perceived as bawdy, “unladylike” behavior. When Detective Lieutenant Kafka of Roseanna’s hometown, Lincoln, Nebraska, interviews Mulvaney, Roseanna’s friend recalls his impression of her after they had slept together on the night of their first meeting: “I thought...first I thought that she was just an ordinary, cheap tramp” (Sjöwall 72). Mulvaney’s pause may simply indicate he is reluctant to speak ill of the dead, but his language—calling her a “tramp”—would not be out of place in *The Big Sleep*. The authors immediately qualify this statement, however; in the same sentence, Mulvaney says, “although she had not given that impression at all in the beginning” (72). Not only does he say being a “tramp” did not *seem* to be her character, he recants this emphatically (“at all”); comparatively, qualifying language is not something found in *The Big Sleep*. Mulvaney continues to Kafka, talking so circuitously that he ends up indirectly backtracking all of his sexism: “Then I thought that she was a nymphomaniac. One idea was crazier than the other. Now, here, especially since she is dead, it seems absurd that I ever could have thought either of those things” (72). Roseanna’s murder only plays a part in Mulvaney’s admission of her agency (“especially since she is dead”); when he gets to know her better, he falls into an unrequited love, and thus, is incredulous (“absurd,” “could have ever”), essentially, at his sexism.

The first truly scornful remarks on Roseanna's independence come during Kafka's interview with Mary Jane. Until that part of the novel, Beck and his investigative team have been respectful and empathetic towards Roseanna, and Mulvaney's qualifiers reflexively gives her agency. Mary Jane, however, despises the way her former friend lived: "Roseanna was trash. She was in heat like a bitch. And I said that to her face" (Sjöwall 81). Unlike Mulvaney, Mary Jane never qualifies her statements, but Sjöwall and Wahlöö atone for this sexism; she is easily the novel's second-most repulsive character—behind only the killer, a psychotic Swede. Moreover, she is unreliable, not only to the reader, but to Kafka himself. In a report he has wired to Beck's office, he states, "[M]y impression was that in some way Mary Jane Peterson altered reality and that she held back certain details, obviously ones that might be disadvantageous to her . . . I have not been able to find any untruths or direct lies in Mulvaney's story" (84). Kafka establishes Mulvaney as more credible than Mary Jane, who is seen as unreliable in her accounts of Roseanna that contradict Mulvaney's. When Kafka asks Mary Jane if Roseanna was attractive, she says, "Not at all. You ought to have understood that from what I've said. But she was man crazy and that goes a long way" (82). This strong denial of Roseanna's attractiveness is at odds with every other description of Roseanna in the novel, like Beck's paternalistically observing, "She was young and he was sure that she had been pretty . . . No human being, particularly a young, attractive woman, is so alone that there is no one to miss her when she disappears" (17).

Importantly, Roseanna is never sexualized by the male characters or the narrator, and conventional perceptions towards unattractiveness are made mention of, like her slightly bow-legged gait and small breasts. Further, Mary Jane derisively describes her as wearing traditionally unflattering clothes, which is substantiated in pictures discovered of Roseanna aboard the boat *Diana*: "She took a certain pride in looking horrible. At best she went around in

slacks and a large, baggy sweater” (82). Yet, Roseanna had no trouble grabbing the attention of men who are also described as attractive. Further adding to Mary Jane’s unreliability is her speculating on Roseanna’s relationship with Mulvaney: “Lord knows how often she cheated on *him*, probably hundreds” (82). This is a gross exaggeration of her bringing a German student, Uli Mildenburger, home with her when Mulvaney is out of town—something Roseanna warned Mulvaney about, as they were not exclusive. When Kafka asks if she frequently brought men home, Mary Jane flatly says “Yes”; when pressed about how often and how many different men, she is too indeterminate: “[Peterson]: Once or twice a month. [Kafka]: Was it always different men? P: I don’t know. I didn’t always see them. At times she kept pretty much to herself” (83). The reader has no reason to trust anything Mary Jane tells the police, and thus, reinforces how resolute Sjöwall and Wahlöö are in refusing to moralize Roseanna; there is never a suggestion that she might still be alive if she were more traditional and “ladylike.”

This sensitivity to feminism is subtly underscored by the scene of the crime—*Diana*, the Swedish tour boat. On multiple occasions, Beck corrects his partner Detective Ahlberg on nautical terminology, including proper feminine pronoun usage and correct identification of parts. When Ahlberg says passengers on the other side of the wall certainly would have heard Roseanna’s screams, Beck interjects: “the bulkhead, not the wall” (61). The authors, via Beck, project a continuous sensitivity to any diminishing regard for femininity, both metaphorically in respecting *Diana*, and, literally, with upholding the dignity of the title character.

If one is suspicious that Sjöwall and Wahlöö siphon off their nation’s cultural mores onto an American—one that is raped and murdered, no less—Sonja Hansson serves as Roseanna’s Swedish counterpart. Sonja is also independent—a twenty-five-year-old single mother and policewoman regarded glowingly by Beck: “[I]n spite of the fact that he didn’t know her very

well, he thought a great deal of her. She was shrewd, and down to earth, and dedicated to her job. That was a lot to say about someone” (176). As Sonja is sent undercover to lure Roseanna’s killer, Folke Bengtsson, into another attack and thus his arrest, Beck never “mansplains” the case to her. When a traffic accident blocks her fellow officers from getting to her apartment as quickly as possible and Sonja is sexually attacked by the intruding Bengtsson, she is remarkably composed after Beck and his partners intervene; she is even sympathetic towards the mentally disturbed individual, while Beck is the one shown to be emotionally rattled:

“I can walk myself,” she said tonelessly.

In the elevator she said, “Don’t look so miserable. It wasn’t your fault. And there’s nothing seriously wrong with me.”

He wasn’t able to look her in the eye . . .

When they went out to the ambulance she said: “Poor man.”

“Who?”

“[Bengtsson].” (202)

*Roseanna*’s explorations of these brutal sexually-fueled violent crimes are uncomfortable, but can be seen as borrowing from the gritty and bleak tradition started in American crime fiction in the mid 1900s. By making Roseanna and Sonja subvert American expectations of femininity, however, and giving dissenting voices to non-Swedish characters and one Swedish sociopath, the authors relay their culture’s deep connection to feminism, even in the most horrific circumstances. The presence of Bengtsson and even Mary Jane suggest certain forces, external and domestic, will always impose on female agency, but the novel features a resolute infrastructure to uphold its progressive worldview. In addition, this worldview is one that does not privilege the specificities of gender.

Though Roseanna and Sonja frequently demonstrate their respective independence, with noted differences, Sjöwall and Wahlöö do not insist either woman is the archetype of the “Independent Woman.” As she prepares to go undercover, posing as Roseanna to lure Bengtsson, Sonja even states the differences between herself and the character she will emulate: “My personality and hers are completely different. Her habits were different too. I haven’t lived as she did and I’m not going to either” (176). Sonja does not condemn Roseanna’s promiscuity, but rather, is representative of the core of feminism: choice. Sexuality does not equate to feminism, but one’s *choice* concerning sexuality does. Sonja reasserts her own agency by preemptively declaring to Beck that she does not intend to change her lifestyle just to represent Roseanna. Moreover, Roseanna’s proclivity towards sex is even normalized by two characters on separate occasions; when Kafka asks Mulvaney if she was difficult to satisfy sexually, he replies in the negative, saying, “She wanted what all normal women want” (76). Later, after Bengtsson has been arrested and Beck interrogates him, he unloads his deepest psychoses: ““She forced herself on me. She stayed there and talked and laughed. She was like all the others. Shameless . . . People can be disgusting”” (206-7). Roseanna’s so-called forcing herself onto him was simply her being social; he indiscriminately categorizes her with “all the others”—the disgusting people.

Sjöwall and Wahlöö reassure the reader, through Mulvaney, Bengtsson, and indirectly through Mary Jane’s skewed discretion, that Roseanna was no outlier, but rather, a varied manifestation of female agency. Just as Iris Marion Young insists, “[I]t is not necessary that there be distinctive structures and behavior typical of the situation of women. This understanding of ‘feminine’ existence makes it possible to say that some women escape or transcend the typical situation and definition of women in various degrees and respects” (140). Young stretches the idea of femininity beyond preconceived limitations of the womanly body. As Sjöwall and

Wahlöö preemptively demonstrate Young's theory, privileging choice significantly widens the spectrum of gender. Compare Roseanna's sexuality with the narration of Beck's unnamed spouse, a self-appointed housewife:

She had given up her job in an architect's office when her daughter was born twelve years ago and since then had not thought about working again. When the boys started school, Martin Beck had suggested she look for some part-time work, but she had figured it would hardly pay. Besides, she was comfortable with her own nature and pleased with her role as a housewife. (Sjöwall 8)

Assuring readers that this lifestyle was her choice, the narrator only suggests that perhaps she is unmotivated, but she certainly is not confined. Women like Beck's wife, Sonja, and Roseanna independently coexist in a novel that does not objectify them. Thus *Roseanna* continually empowers the agency of women, as it reflects Scandinavian mores and rejects robbing them of independence as in the novel's American prototype, *The Big Sleep*.

Of Chandler's novel Maysaa Jaber has written that in *The Big Sleep*, the "narrative fleshes out how women's agency is mobilized in relation to notions of sexual appeal and visibility" (149). A close reading of *Roseanna*, reveals that Jaber's analysis of what constitutes women's agency is disconcerting, as she supposes that having agency at all requires submitting to masculine ideals. This is fitting, though, for the paramount novel in hardboiled crime, which John T. Irwin identifies as a "men's genre" (264). Of hardboiled crime, Jaber says that "female characters serve the purpose of asserting the male characters' control" (17).

In opposition to this notion, however, *Roseanna* consistently shifts these kinds of assertions about male characters' control; as aforementioned, never does the narrator subject Roseanna, Sonja, or any other female character to the degree of objectification that Marlowe

bestows onto Carmen, who has been victimized through drugs and forced into pornography and also demonstrates the symptoms of mental illness—someone who is “an epileptic and infantile murderess” (Jaber 149). Chandler could have chosen that the reader sympathizes with an abused and afflicted young woman, but he instead undermines this notion with Carmen’s ensuing attempt to seduce Marlowe, when she is undressed and waiting for him as he enters his apartment. Even though an unwelcome woman has slinked into his home, he still manages to relay her sexuality to the reader: “A blond head was pressed into my pillow. Two bare arms curved up and the hands belonging to them were clasped on top of the blond head. Carmen Sternwood lay on her back, in my bed, giggling at me” (Chandler 176). Marlowe may be exasperated by Carmen’s bawdiness rather than enticed, but his describing her in his bed is meant to titillate the reader.

Marlowe’s attributes, including his sexism and objectification of women, become prototypical in hardboiled crime novels. Beck thwarts such characterization, however. Thus, it seems unfathomable that Sjöwall and Wahlöö would have encouraged Chandler to reinforce Marlowe’s masculinity by depicting Carmen as something to be physically desired, especially as she is shown to be emotionally and mentally unstable. Roseanna may have been raped and murdered and Sonja may have been sexually abused, but neither Beck nor the narrator ever interjects to remind the reader of these women’s desirability.

Disrupting the undue praise *The Big Sleep* received as a progressive novel, Hélène Cixous illuminates with her article “The Laugh of the Medusa” that Carmen’s repeated phrase of “you’re cute” is submissive, not assertive—it is merely “speech which has been governed by the phallus” (2044). Cixous urges that “[w]omen should break out of the snare of silence” and that “[t]hey shouldn’t be conned into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem.” Through

illuminating transcripts, Roseanna is allowed to break from the silence, while Sonja repeatedly asserts herself to Beck and, thus, the reader. Chandler, however, is stubborn with meting out female agency. He relegates the women concerning much of the mystery in *The Big Sleep*, from murder to blackmail photographs, to the background as men more powerful than they dictate their story; when they are given a focal scene, like Carmen's attempt at seduction, Chandler almost quite literally subjects her to being a mere item in a harem.

There is a fair amount of commonality between the two main women in these respective flagship novels; Roseanna is found murdered and Carmen is ill and socially malignant, while Sonja and Vivian are vital women, both in terms of their lives and in progressing the plot. While Sjöwall and Wahlöö choose to empower Sonja instead of make her a stimulating object for their male protagonist, Chandler disappointingly does not merely limit the pedestal of feminine sexuality to Carmen; Vivian, her sister, is equally ogled by Marlowe. Upon first meeting her, Marlowe dedicates the entirety of a lengthy paragraph detailing the physical attributes that he finds desirable in her:

I sat down on the edge of a deep soft chair and looked at Mrs. Regan. She was worth a stare. She was trouble. She was stretched out on a modernistic chaise-lounge with her slippers off, so I stared at her legs in the sheerest silk stockings. They seemed to be arranged to stare at. They were visible to the knee and one of them well beyond. The knees were dimpled, not bony and sharp. The calves were beautiful, the ankles long and slim and with enough melodic line for a tone poem. She was tall and rangy and strong-looking. Her head was against an ivory satin cushion. Her hair was black and wiry and parted in the middle and she had the hot black eyes of the portrait in the hall. She had a

good mouth and a good chin. There was a sulky droop to her lips and the lower lip was full. (Chandler 17-18)

One aspect of the narration in *The Big Sleep* may be Marlowe's describing the furniture and layout of a particular room, but here, he conflates décor with Vivian's perceived sexuality. The "deep soft chair" assumes vaginal qualities; he not only notes her stockings but regards them as the "sheerest silk"; the "ivory satin cushion" becomes something precious and luscious; her "hot black eyes" pierce Marlowe, making him recall the officer's portrait with an equally striking gaze that is hanging on the wall outside. Vivian's sexual radiance affects everything around him. This leaves him entranced with the area perhaps most associated with a male sexually "conquering" a female—the oral. Vivian is irrevocably objectified by the blunt determination of her having a "good mouth." This "good mouth" is appraised by Marlowe, and it overtly presumes intimacy, with connotations of his kissing her and of oral sex; thus, she becomes subservient to the hero.

It can be said, as Jaber argues in her thesis, that Chandler makes some interesting choices with the novel's seemingly elevated role for women. Carmen's revealed crimes, like the murder of Vivian's husband, for instance, could have been committed by a traditional male antagonist, while Vivian's immersive involvement in the case could have been greatly reduced while still functioning as a conduit to Marlowe's sexual tension. Moreover, the novel ends not with an incredulous Marlowe ruminating over his messy investigation or achieving some sexual resolution, but with a sense of longing for the enigmatic Mona "Silver-Wig" Grant, Eddie Mars's wife, whom he never sees again. This brief passage can be seen as the only place in the novel where a woman has some independent control over a man. Still, Marlowe previously introduces Mona to the reader by ogling her chin, hair, and eyes, and though she is described as faithful to

her husband, she assents when he tells her to kiss him goodbye: “Her face under my mouth was like ice. She put her hands up and took hold of my head and kissed me hard on the lips. Her lips were like ice too” (Chandler 223). Therefore, the author presenting these nontraditional roles for women is severely undercut, as he “merely highlights the threat posed to his masculinity by the dangerous women around him” (Jaber 151).

By the end of the novel, perhaps the reader has found the complex mystery satisfactorily resolved, all while getting attached to the sardonic detective. Perhaps Chandler evoked a fair distrust in institutions and established wealth, as there are plenty of analogous historic examples at the local and national level. Yet, a reader cannot point to constructive femininity in *The Big Sleep* like has been done with *Roseanna*. While Chandler appears to give women a more prominent role in a “men’s genre,” including their being just as morally compromised as the men, he too closely tethers women’s agency to masculine dependency. Regarding the voice of women, Cixous indicates an issue that Chandler is quite guilty of—he cons his female characters as much as he cons the reader. He has Carmen, Vivian, and Silver-Wig simply speak louder as a way of hiding just how much *The Big Sleep* still relegates women to the margins. Though Carmen is the killer and Roseanna is killed, the former’s presence is to titillate and have her agency shackled to the whims of masculinity, while the latter’s agency is relatively unbound from patriarchy. Chandler gives Carmen a gun, but he does not give her a choice in firing it, while Sjöwall and Wahlöö encourage Roseanna to represent herself autonomously—the one area Nordic noir would not dare try replicating from America.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE GAPS IN MANKELL'S CULTURAL REFLECTION

If Sjöwall and Wahlöö germinated Nordic noir by way of Ed McBain, Henning Mankell is the *Roseanna* acolyte truest to the American author's literary ethos. Mankell successfully impersonates Sjöwall and Wahlöö akin to Sonja Hansson's impersonation of Roseanna, though Mankell bends towards destabilized race relations in place of *Roseanna*'s feminist empowerment. Mankell's first Kurt Wallander novel in a series of eleven titles, *Faceless Killers* (1991), finds a detective inspector in a position similar to that of Martin Beck. They both oppose the Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and first-generation Scandinavian crime fiction model of detective protagonists heroically solving the case alone; like Chandler and Hammett though, Mankell comes with underrepresented baggage. In Mankell exists a disharmony between his perceived reputation and his actual textual evidence, most namely in his sloughing off the most damning racial relations in Sweden's recent history as noteworthy historical aspects rather than freshly revealing the suppressed aspects of the nation's contemporary cultural identity.

*Faceless Killers* begins the series-long tradition of paying homage to the forerunners of crime fiction, both Swedish and American. True to McBain's model, the novel is a procedural in which the entire squad actively investigates brutal attacks in Lunnarp; though not written condescendingly so, Wallander's colleague Inspector Rydberg, for example, is often proven more correct than Wallander on key aspects of the case. When primary suspect Erik Magnusson is finally cleared from being the killer, Wallander's fallibility is exposed: "Wallander felt a crushing guilt at having steered the entire investigation in the wrong direction. Only Rydberg seemed unaffected. He was also the one who had been the most sceptical from the beginning" (249). Rydberg's sagacity is not written as a disguised heroism; he is simply experienced and

talented at his job—a valuable contributor to the squad room. Though Beck does not have a foil, so much as complementary partners in detectives Ahlberg and Kollberg, Sjöwall and Wahlöö lay a track that Mankell, an international bestseller, could follow to achieve accolades and a heightened global profile.

Mankell's elevated status meant that, despite his accomplished publishing history that includes writing, in part, poetry, drama, and children's literature, Swedish journalists were interested only in Mankell the crime author; this can be seen in their seeking Mankell out for speculation following the 2003 assassination of prime minister heir apparent, Anna Lindh of Sweden's Social Democratic Party (Nestingen 223-4). Mankell ascended in the 1990s to become something of a cult hero. Instead of idling in his rise to international celebrity, he remained steadfast and attuned to diplomacy, activism, foreign policy, and race relations. While he was still living, Mankell himself moved to Maputo, Mozambique for portions of the year, and used Africa as a setting for several of his novels, including as the primary location for *Kennedy's Brain* (2005). It should come as no surprise when Bergman calls Mankell the author who most "dedicated his life's work to exploring the Swede's relationship to the Other" in the genre of crime fiction (53), including the Martin Beck pioneers and the best-selling international phenomenon of Stieg Larsson.

To be sure, Bergman may rightfully link Mankell with Sjöwall and Wahlöö (53), given their pioneering status, but the duo examines from within, while Mankell examines beyond the borders. In short, *Roseanna* brings an American girl onto Swedish waters, but the suspicions of Beck and his partners are largely domestic, and the ultimate killer is a Swede. *Faceless Killers*, then, sees Mankell immediately finding much more to comment upon about race than his predecessors; the *Roseanna* narrator may mention a Vietnamese tourist on some nearby boat, but

Wallander awakens from a dream of a “black woman with whom he had just been making fierce love,” only to think casually moments later that the dispatcher that morning may merely be calling him about a “car crash” or “trouble with refugees arriving from Poland on the morning ferry” (Mankell 7). Thus, it is apparent “at the outset of the [Wallander] project” that Mankell’s “major concern...[is] to highlight the alarming rise in racism, xenophobia, and anti-immigration” in Sweden (McCorristine 78). While *Roseanna* can mostly be seen as an extremely clever piece of codified language and symbolism to forward its message, the narrator in *Faceless Killers* and Mankell in interviews alike do not mince words about placing racial strife at the forefront of the text.

Fitting for Mankell’s alignment with Sjöwall and Wahlöö, just as *Roseanna* is a mystery ostensibly about identifying the American girl’s killer that actually unpacks gender politics in Sweden, *Faceless Killers* serves a dual purpose; the novel attempts solving the torture and murder of an elderly farming couple in rural Lunnarp, Sweden, while acting as a conduit for Mankell to reveal the sociopolitical sphere in the country as he views it. After all, Mankell, following nearly-two decades of writing (beginning with his 1973 debut novel, *The Rock Blaster*) decided that crime fiction was the ideal genre “if one’s aim was to discuss important issues in society while simultaneously reaching a larger audience” (Bergman 53). Reflecting this ambition, Wallander has multiple instances of fetishizing the black woman in his dreams, feeling apprehension about his daughter Linda’s “coal-black man” of a boyfriend (36), and hearing people fearful of and angry about the Other, such as when a doorman says to Wallander, “[Keep] those damned niggers on a short leash. What kind of shit are we letting into this country[?] . . . [W]e should kick ’em all out. Chase ’em out with a stick” (136). When assessing not how many Wallander books Mankell sold, but the fact that journalists approached the author

in regards to the assassination of Lindh, we may reasonably assume that Mankell was not merely acclaimed, particularly in Sweden, merely for his ability to weave a captivating murder mystery, but for the insight and incisiveness of his social commentary.

Perhaps these tensions crest in *Faceless Killers* as Sweden was adapting to brewing changes in the political arena and ultimately joined the European Union in 1994. In doing so, Swedes had to reconcile their country's opening itself to a political alliance with the Other—those seen as “un-Swedish,” though by no quantifiable measure. In a 2000 study of Sweden's ultimate rejection of a referendum on adopting the Euro as currency, Olof Petersson draws startling similarities between attitudes comprising the Euro rejection and the EU accession; though the referendums received different results, resistance was felt from the same demographic: “attitudes to [Economic and Monetary Union] divide the population in the same way as views on the EU. Resistance to EMU is particularly great among older voters, women, Northern Swedes, residents of rural areas, the less well-educated and workers” (18). With this perspective, the murdered couple in *Faceless Killers*, Johannes and Maria Lövgren—rural, working-class Northern Swedes—seem as though they would be particularly against accession into the EU, as though Mankell is hinting at some sort of justification to what befalls the Lövgrens. Perhaps this sentiment is rooted in Mankell's observing the often-damaging stronghold that anger or fear of circumstance play in a person's attitudes and behaviors; the novel opens with the narrator admitting as much: “With age comes a sense of dread; there are more and more locks, and no-one forgets to close a window before nightfall. To grow old is to live in fear. The dread of something menacing that you felt when you were a child returns when you get old” (3). The attack on the Lövgrens is discovered by their elderly friends and neighbors, and given that this is a small, bucolic farming community, the crime—the brutality of it, with

their being tied to kitchen chairs and beaten—almost automatically indicts the Other, because only someone from outside of the closely-knit community could be capable of such a transgression.

For his part, especially considering his reputation in the public sphere, Mankell seems to admonish such a closed-off mentality, effectively severing Swedish nationalism. In addition to empathy for African culture and immigrants, “particularly of the AIDS crisis” (Bergman 55), as seen in the author’s moving to Mozambique and his writing *Kennedy’s Brain*, Mankell, extended compassion to Eastern Europe, to both the republics of the former Yugoslavia and to Jewish people. In particular, Mankell attempted to canvass against this xenophobia found in Sweden, which can be viewed as a “continuous threat to all notions of solidarity” (Bergman 55). Perhaps as a way of challenging a reader’s morality in relation to a complicated hero, *Faceless Killers* finds Wallander growing out of touch with the increasingly gentrified Sweden; he “perceives the demise of the [Swedish] Welfare State as related to not only to immigration, but also to the very fabric of a national ideology” (Westerståhl Stenport 6). Thus, Wallander feels “threats to notions of a secure Swedish identity” that cannot “sustain itself” (McCorristine 78; Westerståhl Stenport 6), and his fear and anger carry him so far early in his murder investigation that he *hopes* refugees are responsible for the Lövgren torture and murders, so that “[t]hen maybe it’ll put an end to the arbitrary, lax policy that allows anyone at all, for any reason at all, to cross the border into Sweden” (Mankell 44). Wallander knows he cannot say something so scathing to his partner, detective Rydberg, but the narrator brings forth harmful ideologies of the character the reader most associates with, as Mankell uses the protagonist as a window into Swedes’ anti-immigration stance.

Mankell thus builds the recklessness of these bigoted, nationalist attitudes into *Faceless Killers*. Bergman considers cultural identity—in this case, Swedish identity—as navigating “the relationship to ‘the Other.’” Consequently, these “Others” define themselves as “being different” from the perceived (or actual) homogeneity (57). Mankell appears dutiful in his pursuit of exposing fear and confusion as a way of filling the gaps for the damaging and unstable tenets of national belief that Mankell perceives many Swedes to hold. Honing in on early, vague clues of the attacks, Wallander and Rydberg react to news that Maria Lövgren manages to utter “foreign” from her hospital bed before she ultimately succumbs to her attack. Rydberg and Wallander discuss focusing their investigation on those who look “‘un-Swedish,’” to which Wallander rightfully ponders, “‘What does an ‘un-Swedish’ person look like?’” (41). Bergman suggests that in Mankell’s novels, he consistently challenges the reader to expand the idea of “Swedishness,” even if that simply means widening and modernizing the threshold of “Swedishness with a more current notion of being European” (57). A perfunctory appraisal of Mankell as a social critic, and thus, a culturally important author beyond a rollicking mystery storyteller, may regard him as the rightful heir to succeed Sjöwall and Wahlöö.

Yet, such recklessness that he paints upon Wallander, a surly, bitter man with sexist tendencies and unhealthy personal habits, unwittingly finds its way into Mankell’s work itself; such vulnerability as a cultural critic goes beyond simply the mechanizations of the author uncovering through his characters the exclusivity found in Swedish culture. These oversights come through Mankell’s merely halfway engaging with Sweden’s problematic history during World War II. Bergman indicates that the 1990s—the onset of the Wallander series—saw Sweden’s Nazi alliances during World War II become public knowledge, though the country claimed to be—and was globally perceived to be—neutral; as Bergman flatly elucidates, though:

“There was actually extensive support for the Nazis in Sweden during the war: from individuals, groups, and political parties” (57).

When this information became public knowledge, Mankell’s activism naturally led him to expose and assign blame to this Swedish shadow history, primarily in *The Return of the Dancing Master* (2000). In this novel, the murder victim is Herbert Molin, an elderly Swede who joined the German Waffen-SS during the war and kills a Jewish dance teacher in Berlin. He remains a confirmed Nazi until his flogging death, nearly fifty years later, at the hands of the teacher’s son. Bergman remarks that such scenarios depicting Jewish-Swedish relations in a crime novel are quite typical: “an old Nazi or former Nazi is murdered by one of his wartime victims or by a descendant of one of those victims, and the novels are then dedicated to finding this out” (58). Authors like Mankell employ such a technique to modify “the concept of Swedish cultural identity as we know it today” (Bergman 58); in doing so, authors negotiate—or massage—these facts of Sweden’s wartime history into being a palatable admission of a component comprising Swedish identity. Seemingly unconcerned with jarring the reader in the middle of novel’s murder mystery, such a notion of this massaging of information acts as education to the reader—a Swede or otherwise—and places a degree of blame on, say, a reticent public school system and government. In *The Return of the Dancing Master*, protagonist Stefan Lindman wonders “what had happened to all that history when he was a schoolboy”; “he vaguely remembered...[that] Sweden had succeeded...in staying out of the war” (*Dancing Master* 465-6). An international reader certainly has little way of knowing what Swedish students are taught in their history classes, thus, this passage is quite illuminating. In addition, even Swedes of any ilk—progressive or conservative alike—may deepen their understanding of a damaged, suppressed history, now be public knowledge but still held at cautionary distance.

However, even the renowned Mankell is participatory in an oversight often found in Swedish crime literature when it comes to appraising the ramifications of Sweden's war and postwar history, as "blame is almost always attributed to the victim, the murdered Nazi, whereas the killer is justified in his or her actions" (Bergman 59). The murder victim can be seen as an outlier, a deleterious mark in Swedish society, properly dealt with by an act of vengeance—essentially, "street justice" that a reader can acceptably condone. This decision appears as a half-measure, though—one of reluctance on the author's part. As Bergman indicates, the protagonist is often far removed from the affairs of the Nazi and the avenging descendant, as the author is wont not to meddle the hero (the reader's conduit) in too-sensitive political arenas. Moreover, making matters more disconcerting is how unwilling these authors appear to be in having Swedish citizens, institutions, or otherwise, taking genuine ownership of their nation's history; after all, these writers *are* ostensibly educating the reader about underpublicized historical truths. Such restraint thus "creates a distance to any Swedish guilt regarding World War II events, rather than a coming-to-terms with the past" (Bergman 60), leaving the reader with complicated and disconcerting information that is ultimately left halfway reconciled by the author. Bergman asserts that Mankell and others are "taking the easy way out" (60) instead of depicting Nazi complicity with any particular stakes beyond unseen or "off-screen" dispatching of anti-Semitism via some seeker of cosmic justice. Further, these authors conflate the Nordic region as participatory in WWII history, often noting concentration camps and Nazi-abetting activities in Norway and Denmark, which further "diverts attention from what happened in Sweden during the war" (Bergman 60). Overall, it rings with disappointment that a preeminent Swedish writer such as Mankell, seen almost as a civil servant, essentially fails at holding a mirror up towards Sweden to take responsibility for a past he so readily elucidates to the reader.

*Faceless Killers* may not address Jewish-Swedish relations nearly to the degree that *The Return of the Dancing Master* does, but Wallander and his fellow Swedish police officers solve the case that was committed by two Czech neo-Nazis seeking political asylum—one “on the grounds that he was persecuted as a member of an ethnic minority” (Mankell 269), in which he makes a dubious claim of being a “gypsy.” While certainly not protracted to the degree found in *The Return of the Dancing Master*, *Faceless Killers* furtively offloads the problem of Swedish anti-Semitism to two foreign neo-Nazi refugees, which preserves an air of something non-confrontational around the Swedish identity. Regarding what inspired his writing of *Faceless Killers*, Mankell says he read about a real, elderly Swedish couple brutally murdered and that “[a]llegations were made against ‘foreigners’” and that it “‘angered’” him, saying that he believed “‘racism is a criminal position, and it shouldn’t be swept under the carpet like just another topic of debate’” (Jörgenson 2). To this claim, University of Washington scholar Andrew Nestingen deepens the tenuous space between Mankell’s role as a storyteller and a cultural critic, though he ultimately sympathizes with the author, stating the author does not “underline [this belief] in his novels,” that is to say, overtly to the reader, and, in fact, “the criminal position is Wallander’s” (250), who drives drunk, something heavily stigmatized in Sweden (250) and, in other novels, elicits prostitutes. To go further than Nestingen, Mankell may have drawn a complex, troubled figure in Wallander, but complicating the protagonist only makes for more interesting prose. Mankell fails in inciting Wallander as a catalyst in what is perhaps the most deeply held belief of the author’s—destroying racism. When *Faceless Killers* is examined as a text of activism, distance remains between the text and the reader; as such, the “Other is thus even further established as *Other*, and the image of what it means to be Swedish is allowed to remain” unchanged (Bergman 60).

Mankell's work, particularly the unique perspective he offers into African culture, is credited as culturally meaningful. When African settings and characters are taken in addition to his consideration for Jewish and eastern European relations with Swedes, he certainly offers a wide scope of sociopolitical concerns. In fact, Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek praises Mankell's work as providing "an insight into the totality of today's world constellation" (129). Yet specific inspection of Swedish guilt in *Faceless Killers* reveals the disconcerting distance that Mankell keeps. In his work, there is a triangulation of the protagonist, the reader, and unpleasant racial relations he unwittingly finds better dealt with circuitously than accepting Sweden's cultural ownership.

## CHAPTER 5

### IRENE HUSS CAN ‘STAND THE ROUGH STUFF’

Scandinavian crime fiction enjoyed an insatiable international audience as the 1990s rounded into this century, with Larsson’s Lisbeth Salander serving as the Phoenixesque avatar—an accessible exemplar to represent something exciting and empowered. While attracting a foreign audience cannot simply be pared down to the genre’s growing reputation for its strong female protagonists, thus “reflecting a Nordic emphasis on gender equality” (Goarant), these crime authors’ display of female protagonists has no doubt resonated with readers globally.

Helene Tursten’s 1998 novel, *Detective Inspector Huss*, exists much more on the margins of Scandinavian literature, however—especially when compared with Larsson’s 2005 phenomenon. Still, the Swedish dentist-turned-crime writer’s novels are focused on the hardworking and intuitive Irene Huss, through whom Tursten’s work quietly serves not only as a gallery to the narrative touchstones typically found in the burgeoning genre, but also provides uncommon access points through which to observe Swedish culture. In doing so, she does not *subvert* the genre’s conventions, but rather, finds new ways to meld its common themes with fresh components and an authorial point of view inadequately patrolled.

While Larsson’s iconoclastic Salander is the captivating sidekick to journalist Mikael Blomkvist, Huss is an untethered female detective, who actually works *in* the police department. Not only does Tursten thwart such a masculine-dominated space, but the debut Huss novel explores new ways of providing commentary on outliers in Sweden’s more-homogenous class structure, as well as levying particularly incisive judgment on the culture’s tenuous grasp on race relations at the close of the twentieth century.

Scandinavian crime fiction has surely earned its gender-forward reputation through quantity, and perhaps quality, in the minds of many readers, but it was not gained by means of inventing the form. The first female detective appeared in an 1864 English novel fittingly called *The Female Detective* by James Redding Ware (published under the pseudonym Andrew Forrester). As Kathleen Gregory Klein indicates, Forrester's female detective, Mrs. Gladden (sometimes just "Miss" Gladden), keeps her personal information veiled, such as her marital situation or whether or not she has children, and in doing so, Forrester "redirects attention to her position as a detective" (18). Even in Forrester's fictional London, the police department Mrs. Gladden is a part of seems to be as obfuscated as the reader on the details on her identity; commenting on her constable, Mrs. Gladden states how she sincerely believes that "he never comprehended that I was a detective. His mind could not grasp the idea of a police officer in petticoats" (Forrester 25). The constable's prejudice likely mirrors that of many readers, and elucidates an issue that lasts well over a century. In 1995's *The Woman Detective*, Klein notes how Mrs. Gladden and W. Stephens Hayward's Mrs. Paschal—novels separated by only six months—were the only known literary female police detectives. In fact, Hayward seems prescient in how curiously absent female police detectives would still be in literature more than a century after he claimed that these women were "much-dreaded, but little-known people called Female Detectives" (3).

Many more amateurs and private detectives, like Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, have since been added to crime fiction. In particular, there has been a deluge of female protagonists in Scandinavian crime fiction over the past two decades. These women are often prosecutors or journalists, like Liza Marklund's photojournalist protagonist, Annika Bengtzon, in 1998's *The Bomber*. Yet until end of the twentieth century, Klein's extensive research uncovered a mere two

policewomen in Mrs. Gladden and Mrs. Paschal. Tursten's *Huss* thus explores a long-dormant literary occupation. Kerstin Bergman credits *The Bomber* for making women protagonists "struggling to balance work and family life" a "staple theme" for the genre's women writers since around the early 2000s (26). She fails to properly recognize Tursten, however; in the same year as Marklund, Tursten embarked on a space she still occupies with relatively few others: to set a female character in the still-underserved market of police procedurals focused on female detectives. Following Huss's debut in 1998, Anna Jansson began her Maria Wern series, and though the presence of female authors like Tursten led to authors Mari Jungstedt and Camilla Läckberg, perhaps now the most successful of these, only Tursten and Jansson are internationally-known female authors writing about female police officers.

The novelty of Tursten's literary pedigree should not overshadow the incisive patriarchal critiques her prose makes. *Detective Inspector Huss* focuses on the title character, who is a former national and European judo champion and a highly-respected homicide investigator in the Gothenburg police department. As Bergman notes, "Huss . . . is very much a hard-boiled hero type, who always stands up for herself and her cases against figures of authority and tough criminals alike," while also managing to project "a feminist outlook" (75). At home, she is married with twin teenage daughters, but the bulk of Tursten's debut novel's narrative details Huss's investigating the mysterious death of Richard von Knecht, one of the city's elite, who falls from his apartment balcony. In neither her colleagues nor those she officially interviews, her gender is never a matter of conflict regarding her profession; rather, she is immediately looked to in her department to serve as the case's lead investigator, receiving utmost respect for her ability to solve the circumstances of a high-profile citizen's death.

Yet even with Sweden's reputed excellence in gender equality, the novel does not fail to comment on the masculinity associated and privileged within the occupation. One of Huss's colleagues, the young, "cute, blond, and cuddly" Birgitta Moberg, bears the brunt of a significant amount of discrimination, as "[p]lenty of guys in various departments had tried to make a pass at that little angel" (Tursten 31). Moberg is even sexually harassed by fellow officer Jonny Blom and sexually assaulted by a suspect in a related-and-concurrent investigation. More significant with regards to the central narrative, the esteemed Huss even evokes skepticism from her irascible and largely narrow-minded superintendent, Sven Andersson. After Huss and her partner are nearly killed in an attack at the hands of Hell's Angels members, her ensuing days back at work find her understandably emotional at times, yet Andersson internally wonders: "Was she having a breakdown? Maybe women couldn't stand such rough stuff" (226). The narrator consistently relays male characters' sexist thoughts against women with authority, indicating Tursten does not consider even metropolitan Sweden immune from rebuke for gender prejudice.

At least part of the intrigue with Nordic noir is that the violent murders ravaging the region's literature are largely absent from reality; yet to bolster her social critique on men dominating women, Tursten may have statistics to support her. Though the World Economic Forum consistently ranks Nordic countries as the world's most gender-equal, Sweden has paradoxically become known as the "rape capital of Europe." Data from a 2010 European Institute study ranks Sweden, circa 2006, as the seventh-worst offender in the world, at 40.6 reported rapes per 100,000 people (39); by 2010, this number climbed to approximately 63 reported rapes per 100,000 people, the second worst in the world (Alexander). These jarring statistics reveal an ugly truth behind the World Economic Forum's findings, and perhaps even mar the country's comparatively admirable homicide rate. Commensurate with sobering data,

Bergman downplays international exaggeration of Sweden's gender "utopia": ". . . Sweden is still a patriarchal society where men are often paid more than women for doing the same job, where most positions of real power—in both the private and the public sector—tend to be occupied by men, and where violence against and discrimination of women still constitute a sometimes hidden but grave problem" (70). Moreover, Bergman claims that as of 2014, Sweden is "experiencing an anti-feminist backlash, and post-feminist ideas have become increasingly dominant" (70). Unsurprisingly, Bergman draws Sweden's cultural patriarchy with its tendrils also on literature; while certainly more inclusive than the days of Forrester's Mrs. Gladden, authors with a "female-as-usurper" point of view like Tursten's are still of the minority.

To be fair to a country not lacking in recognition for an enviable international reputation, the glaring rape data has largely been explained away as Sweden's aggressively thorough criminal recordkeeping producing garishly negative results. According to a sociologist at the National Council for Crime Prevention in Stockholm, Klara Selin, speaking to the BBC, the country has taken great strides to "explicitly . . . record every case of sexual violence separately," thus making this proliferation "visible in the statistics" (Alexander). Selin explains that the dramatic spike in reported rapes comes from a national reform in 2005 making "the legal definition of rape much wider than before," and, just as crucially, perhaps due to higher gender tolerance, women feel more comfortable reporting sexual misconduct; Kristine Eck and Christopher Fariss of *The New York Times* confirm that Swedish women receive support when reporting such misconduct, asserting that they "pay lower social costs for going public with a rape allegation—and are very unlikely to be shamed, retaliated against, or put on a parallel trial, as often happens in the [United States]." Tursten seems to strike a balance between these conflicting ideas—data and rhetoric—which exist in a gray area between perception and reality.

Though Tursten does not attempt to illustrate Sweden as a utopia, Birgitta does make the decision to go directly to Superintendent Andersson immediately after the suspect, Bobo Tursson, attacks her, saying to her boss, ““He shoved me up against the wall, grabbed my crotch, and bit me on the breast! I think I’m going to report him!”” (165). Tursten is fair in her representation, in that while women are not beyond objectification and sexual assault in Sweden, they are empowered to not only have two women in key positions in a masculine workplace, but to have women comfortable enough to cry out against sexual misconduct.

Tursten may not be bashful about critiquing gender relations, nor are characters beyond being sexualized, such as Birgitta and Charlotte von Knecht, Richard’s exceptionally beautiful daughter-in-law, but the author does not bury Sweden’s un-American allocation of gender roles. Having Huss serve as lead homicide investigator should not be of light distinction, of course, nor should assigning another prominent female police officer in Birgitta to the department, but Tursten reaffirms gender mores typically thought of for Scandinavia (and thus subverts American expectations) in comparatively small moments, as well. Irene Huss’s husband, Krister, is a chef who works part-time for most of the novel; he is the homemaker, watching after their daughters, especially as Huss pulls overtime taking on the von Knecht investigation: “He would make a good dinner for his daughters. Everything had been organized to run smoothly in the family, even without [Huss’s] help” (3). He serves as a juxtaposition to the macho, largely sexist superintendent. He is always patient with his wife, as Tursten depicts their marriage as a cohesive partnership. Elsewhere, their daughter Jenny wants money to buy an electric guitar to play in her boyfriend’s high school punk rock band, White Killers. Her behavior skirts, even infringes upon, teenage rebellion, but Tursten chooses Jenny to act out by aligning herself in a typically masculine space. More positively, Huss’s other daughter, Katarina is like her mother—

a successful youth judo pupil who earned her green belt four years ahead of when her mother earned hers.

Even on the novel's fringes, however, women make considerable impact in masculine spaces. Yvonne Strinder is a medical examiner, who is "undeniably one of the country's most talented pathologists" (4) and is introduced at the beginning of the novel to investigate von Knecht's fall. The narrator provides a fitting mix of praise of Strinder's ability, in line with Sweden's reputation, and prejudice via Andersson that shows the country is still far from a zenith of equality; this is most overt in a moment when Huss harbors "a strong hunch that, deep down, the superintendent did not regard forensic medicine as a proper job for a woman" (4). Later, Huss and her boss briefly clash over Strinder when she assures him that the medical examiner earned her place, and that she did not "marry into the position," yet if "Andersson heard her he didn't let on" (33). Tursten seems to point to these brief ruptures in customary polite society as insight into aspects that Sweden deserves as due credit for progressive worldviews, yet still much in need of empathy and empowerment towards the feminine, particularly in places of places of authority.

*Detective Inspector Huss* is far from a treatise on the dichotomy of Sweden's sociopolitical treatment of femininity, however. Tursten pays homage to the lineage of the genre, even in the novel's most foundational elements. The prominence of Birgitta and Andersson, among other officers in the novel, harkens back to the origins of the hardboiled genre of Nordic noir. Sjöwall and Wahlöö's *Roseanna* indeed first released Scandinavian crime fiction from the "whodunit" model; likewise, the police procedural novels of Ed McBain outlined the world Sjöwall and Wahlöö's hero, Martin Beck, would inhabit; that included giving Beck highly-competent partners to work with, in addition to realizing McBain's tenet of the "conglomerate

hero.” This staple of procedural literature imported from McBain by way of Sjöwall and Wahlöö has remained constant in Nordic noir ever since, yet Bergman notes the decline in popularity, particularly in the 1980s, which began favoring adventure and escapism over Sjöwall and Wahlöö’s style of sociopolitical commentary. Bergman includes Tursten, however, in the wave of 1990s and early 2000s Swedish crime writers who “took up the torch of Sjöwall and Wahlöö, and set about presenting social critique in police procedurals” (50). In line with the form that the couple launched from McBain’s heavy influence, *Detective Inspector Huss* has entire chapters that feature important police work done by officers other than its title character; chapter six partly focuses on Birgitta’s interviewing Richard von Knecht’s best friend, Valle Reuter, while chapter eight is almost entirely the squad’s morning meeting to dissect the minutia of the case as it stood. Like Martin Beck, Irene Huss is the one who solves the final portion of the murder investigation, but the ability to make her astute conclusion comes from the tedious work of the “conglomerate hero” that surrounds her, of which she is part.

In placing a female detective in a police precinct, Tursten is far from simply servicing the established conventions of the genre, but in addition to the adoptive “conglomerate hero,” the author re-explores well-worn ground. Scandinavian crime novels preceding *Detective Inspector Huss* pivot many of their investigations around sexual deviance; certainly the genre’s commercial zenith, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, sees Larsson examining such perversion, as the killer cites Leviticus in Scripture as cause for his decades of rapes and murders. In this regard, *Huss* continues the lineage of the genre. Richard von Knecht’s role in this continuum is foreshadowed early, as his apartment has art displaying “[n]aked bodies, mostly female...[though] also a few men pictured”; Huss deems some of the paintings “downright pornographic, or perhaps erotic” (24). As the case evidence becomes clearer, it is discovered that

Richard and his daughter-in-law have been having an affair. He impregnates her, and the horror of his son, Henrik, discovering this fact leads to his attempted murder of his father, by placing an explosive in his office. However, it just so happens that Charlotte independently strikes first by bludgeoning Richard and pushing him over the balcony railing. Concurrent with a progressive culture, Tursten importantly does not utilize sex as a morality ploy, where characters must be punished for not adhering to a puritanical creed. But if intimacy leads to passion, which is the root for a majority of killings, then Richard and Charlotte's salacious, near-incestuous affair is universally taboo, and understandably condemns the von Knechts.

The fall of the von Knechts simultaneously functions as an examination of class, which is another area preceding Scandinavian novels openly critique. *Detective Inspector Huss* skewers the wealthy; Richard comes from privilege, as his father was Gothenburg's shipping magnate, which position he inherits, in turn becoming a local celebrity and socialite, alongside his wife Sylvia. Such a lifestyle transgresses Nordic ethos. The Law of Jante is a Scandinavian custom people are taught, behaving by "putting society ahead of the individual, not boasting about individual accomplishments or being jealous of others" (Nikel). The von Knechts are in clear violation of Jante, and Huss scrutinizes the materialistic Charlotte throughout the novel for needing to present herself at the height of fashion: "Her black boots alone, with their stiletto heels, would cost Irene a month's salary" (36). Charlotte wears fake contact lenses to make her eyes "[shimmer] like the ocean" (37); Huss notes catching an unprepared Charlotte with much duller eyes, and later, is "irritated" when she sees Charlotte "had taken the time to put on her contacts and some makeup" (358) to walk into the damning police interview with Huss and Jonny Blom. Similar to previous Scandinavian crime writers, Tursten gives the wealthy their comeuppance, essentially, for acting above The Law of Jante.

Moreover, Tursten evokes another cultural term—*lagom*. Swedes “gravitate toward the middle” and crucially, *lagom* “permeates all facets of the Swedish psyche” (Åkerström). Tursten funnels the prevailing ethos towards the center, not only by cutting down the wealthy, but by having both Charlotte and Henrik conspire with the economically disadvantaged, which ultimately proves as detrimental. Lasse “Shorty” Johannesson and Bobo Torsson are ex-convicts, repeat offenders of burglary and drug crimes. They are both from broken families and begin peddling drugs through the Hell’s Angels motorcycle gang. Charlotte is friends with Bobo, an aspiring fashion photographer, and through him, becomes a drug addict herself and ends up owing him 85,000 Swedish kronor (which comes to nearly \$9,600 U.S. dollars nowadays). When Charlotte admits to Huss and Glom that Richard is the hooded man in the incriminating photograph of the two having sex, she argues that she “didn’t have a choice,” because she owed Bobo “[a] lot of money” (363). Tursten conflates this revelation with Huss finally deconstructing Charlotte’s laborious beauty and all-consuming materialism: “Her face was a clay mask. It was inconceivable that it could ever have been considered beautiful. Her features were distorted with loathing” (363). Tursten’s decision to intersect the economically disadvantaged and privileged in the novel’s labyrinth of violent murders furthers the virtue of the middle class, like Huss and her colleagues, and thus, reinforces *lagom*.

If Swedish culture has an aspect that cannot be refuted with data or explained away as inconclusive information, however, it is racial relations. Swedish literature often finds crime fiction authors volleying between Swedish identity and “the Other.” Bergman recognizes Mankell, as the preeminent social critic who investigates the “growing concern for xenophobia and increasing interest in exploring the relation to the Other” (Bergman 54). Bergman claims that by using Wallander as the “average Swede,” the character displays “prejudices and fears” and

“sometimes even racist tendencies” which “many Swedes share” (Bergman 67). Mankell was directly influenced by Sjöwall and Wahlöö’s socialist views and fascination with the Swedish Welfare State, but Bergman indicates racially-charged crime novels gained particular popularity in the 1990s, as the knowledge that Sweden was not neutral during World War II became public (57). Mankell was the leader in centering novels around this conflict between proud cultural identity and denials of a regrettable past. Yet, Bergman indicates how even writers like Mankell were at least partly complicit in not truly purging “Swedish guilt”: “...they merely assign guilt to single individuals and create a distance between those individuals and Swedish society, rather than implicate the Swedish government or Swedish society as a whole” (60). Killing these Nazi characters is often justified, and Mankell “even encourages the reader to feel empathy for the murderer,” as the Nazis alone have been redistributed to being the Other (59). The sentiment in these novels is that by eradicating this blight on society, Swedish culture is necessarily pruning outliers, rather than acknowledging this history in its cultural identity.

*Detective Inspector Huss* is again Helene Tursten’s showing herself enmeshed in Nordic noir ethos of the 1990s, but the novel rests at an interesting inflection point—just as it does with tension in gender relations. As the European Union “expanded and its influence grew in the 1990s” (Bergman 54), it is fitting that Huss is uneasy when remarking to friend and colleague Tommy Persson about the increased migration to Sweden from across Europe: ““It’s true that both Krister and I have griped about certain immigrants who come here and live off our taxes. And as a cop I’ve seen a lot of felonies committed by immigrants”” (190). Huss hints at Swedish culture’s tendency towards moderation, qualifying only “certain” immigrants, but she still expresses a pushback against the ensuing immigration as a result of the European Union’s inclusivity effort.

In talking to Tommy, Huss is ultimately having a visceral reaction against her daughter Jenny's brush with neo-Nazism. Infatuated with her boyfriend, the White Killers's lead singer, a skinhead Jenny both claims to merely enjoy the music, with lyrics such as "We're gonna clean this country and throw the Jew pigs in the sea" (250), and to be a Holocaust denier. When Tommy comes to the Huss house to tell Jenny a haunting story of his grandmother, a Jewish girl being gang-raped at thirteen years old, who later dies in childbirth, Jenny interjects: "There were never any concentration camps! That's just propaganda!" (251). Though this identifying as a skinhead does not come through Huss, her teenage daughter provides much more reader relatability than many Swedish crime writers offer, in which the murder victim is someone distant and barely known to the reader, if at all.

Interestingly, Tursten does not allow Irene Huss to be the hero in resolving Jenny's skinhead phase. She remains distraught about her daughter's rebellious and harmful behavior until Tommy's story finally connects with Jenny and moves her to tears. Moreover, Tommy does not merely jolt Jenny out of her bigoted ignorance, but Tursten has him act almost as a direct voice to the reader, which is precisely what Bergman is critical of Mankell, among other writers, for not doing. Talking to Huss, Tommy begs for empathy towards "young criminal immigrants" since they are not shown "any feeling of solidarity with Swedish society." He insists that these "outsiders," both in language and education, are "consistently locked out of everything" (191). When Huss is rendered speechless by mild-mannered Tommy's eruption in fearing for Swedish culture's making bigotry accessible and convenient, one has to wonder if Tursten is not overtly placing the reader in Huss's position. "Ratifying" xenophobia and racial hate in Scandinavian crime fiction is usually done by plot mechanics—killing the Nazi sympathizer, for instance—

rather than engaging directly with social rebuke; Tursten should be considered by the likes of Bergman as the foremost voice in Sweden's race relations.

Tursten's incisive commentary may be positive, but it illuminates a stunted area of growth in Nordic noir post-*Roseanna*. First and second generation Scandinavian crime writers, from the late nineteenth century largely up until Sjöwall and Wahlöö, gave their seemingly-superhero detectives murders to solve that were almost always committed by foreigners, so as not to incriminate Scandinavian virtue. Though Nordic noir has engaged in cultural critique and actually began allowing Swedes and Danes to be literary rapists and murderers, many of the 1990s and early 2000s Swedish authors are remarkably timid in identifying their country with being complicit in Hitler's terror of World War II. Tommy makes a plea that he and Huss contain a vested interest in fostering more empathy in their culture due to their both having children; further, his pleas just as clearly read as Tursten's directly speaking to the reader only in a vague allegory. Tursten begs the reader to reflect on the costs of so much prejudice and, worse, racism. When Tommy insists, "We have to take responsibility. We can't abdicate it," he reminds Huss that law enforcement is to protect its entire society, of which the "skinheads are a part of" (191). He is decisive in declaring that increasing bigotry is a "symptom of our society's ills" due to Swedish culture that "forces people outside" and refuses to reintegrate them (192). He claims neo-Nazis latch on to the outsiders, such as marginalized youth, to strengthen their numbers, leading to the groundswell that seizes Jenny, if only briefly. In this, it seems safe to assume Tursten not only censures the hate-mongering of the perceived rise in Sweden's neo-Nazism, but condemns an insular Swedish culture that abets the nationalists and the radicals seemingly just as much; to Tursten, these damning components are one and the same.

Such an impassioned middle portion of the novel makes it feel ironic that *Detective Inspector Huss* was met with such modest international interest. Tursten has turned Huss into a respected series, worthy of several Swedish films and at least a small portion Bergman's scholarship, yet attention to her work pales in comparison to that paid to Mankell, Larsson, and even female author contemporary, Camilla Läckberg. It is quite possible that a female police officer working homicides is unable to register with patriarchal international audiences the way a Kurt Wallander or iconoclastic outsider Lisbeth Salander can. After all, it must be noted that Huss occupies an exceptionally small space as a female police detective, a position scarcely filled since 1864, for a particular reason, largely triggered by the audience's lack of receptiveness.

Regardless of celebrity's fickle nature, though, *Detective Inspector Huss* demonstrates a Swedish author respecting the conventions and history of Nordic noir, tracing back to Sjöwall and Wahlöö's channeling through McBain's police procedural. All the while, however, *Detective Inspector Huss* stretches beyond simply paying homage to its forebears, as Tursten pushes boundaries of the genre's major themes. Huss comes in the first major wave of an era highlighting and empowering female protagonists in crime fiction, and excels in the masculine-dominated space of law enforcement. Not only does Tursten explore femininity, but she also critiques class in the novel's sendup of privilege and the desperate measures of the Welfare State, akin to Mankell; in doing so, she has the two disparate classes converge and wreak havoc upon one another. Tursten suggests this constant tugging back-and-forth leads to a homogeneous and parochial Sweden casting out the "un-Swedish," largely in the form of oppressive nationalism and neo-Nazis; this in and of itself may be boilerplate "social commentary" in a Nordic noir novel, but Tursten's seeming to speak so directly to the reader and reprimanding an apparent lack

of compassion is among the most headstrong acts in the genre. Irene Huss may never earn a fraction of Mankell's or Salander's adulation from an international readership, but Helene Tursten's debut cements Scandinavian crime fiction's import and points forward to both a societal and literary march towards higher equality and empathy, both in and between cultures.

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