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“Novel About the Swedish Anxiety”: Crime Story as a Mirror of Social, Historical and Cultural Changes Exemplified by the “Wallander” Series by Henning Mankell

Key words: anthropology of literature, popular culture, Swedish literature, crime story, social changes in the 20th and the 21st century.

Abstract: The article above is meant to show the way in which works of popular culture are the mirror reflecting social, historical and cultural changes. Works such as films, novels or even video clips show the specific nature of the time in which they were created. Popular culture becomes the “hunting ground” for an anthropologist looking for information about the social world. In this article, the “hunting ground” is the series about Inspector Wallander written by Swedish writer, Henning Mankell. The article focuses primarily on problems which emerged after 1989 and the social anxiety. Special attention should be devoted to two aspects which frequently appear in Mankell’s works: the problem of immigration and the “collapse of educational values.” It is also worthwhile taking a look at the murderers in Mankell’s novels, who often personify the aspects that the society is afraid to talk loud about. It turns out that in a country associated with affluence, a number of problems are shoved aside.

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“To use the crime novel as a scalpel cutting open the belly of the ideological pauperised and morally debatable so-called welfare state of the bourgeois type.”

Maj Sjöwall & Per Wahlöö

Introduction

Popular culture is characterised by its' close relation to social reality. Its texts have to refer to daily dilemmas of recipients. It cannot function without appealing to the recipient's sub-consciousness, his/ her fears, hopes and dreams. Only then it can be "popular." It "reflects" the meanings that people assign to their social world. Today's popular culture manifests the accuracy of the statement that culture is a social "discourse",¹ due to the fact that the social discourse is held on its' basis. Thus, the analysis of phenomena occurring in popular culture is acquiring a pedagogical dimension.² The purpose of this article is an attempt at showing the way in which the works of popular culture are the carriers of narratives dominant in the society and, at the same time, a mirror reflecting social, historical and cultural changes of a given period in the history of the world. To discuss this thesis, novels of Henning Mankell recounting the fate of Ystad police inspector, Kurt Wallander, are used. The primary focus of the paper is on the problems which emerged after 1989 and which develop at the turn of the 21st century in Sweden.

In a foreword to a collection of short-stories about inspector Kurt Wallander entitled "Pyramid", Mankell mentions the sub-title that we was constantly looking for: "Novel About the Swedish Anxiety"³. The author confesses that his books, apart from the crime story, also smuggle "variations on the same issue: >> Which processes occur in a state under the rule of law in the 1990s? Will democracy survive if the foundation of law and order has been violated? Does the Swedish democracy have any feature that will be deemed too extravagant one day?<<"⁴. The specific features of popular culture texts include comments about the times in which they are created. Thus, such works as film, literature or music form an excellent research ground for literature anthropologists. In this place, it is worth mentioning the words of Mariusz Czubaj, who claims that "one does not have to be a fan of crime stories to know that this very genre is experiencing its' heyday".⁵

¹ M. Czerwiński, *Przyczynki do antropologii współczesności*, Warsaw 1988, p. 6.

² Cf. W. Jakubowski, *Edukacja w świecie kultury popularnej*, Kraków 2006.

³ This paper uses fragments of a master's dissertation written under the supervision of Sławomir Bobowski, Ph.D. at the Institute of Polish Philology at the Philological Faculty of the University of Wrocław in 2015.

H. Mankell, *Cios, Szczelina*, translated by I. Kowadło-Przedmojska, [e-book; format MOBI], Warsaw, 2011, doi: 56 – 57.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ M. Czubaj, *Kryminal albo śmierć*, "Kultura popularna, acta Sueco-polonica. Literatura popularna, powieść kryminalna", *Kultura Popularna* No. 2 (31)/2012, *Acta Sueco-Polonica* 17(2012), Warsaw 2012, p. 5.

Numerous re-editions of books, cover re-designs, preparation of additional works and screenings prove that the crime story in the 21st century is definitely not a thing of the past. Right after the international success of Stieg Larsson’s “Millennium” trilogy, tourist agencies started to organise trips that followed the paths of the main characters from the book. An analogous situation is encountered in Wrocław. Tour guides offer trips along the paths of Eberhard Mock – a detective known from Marek Krajewski’s books; fans organise meetings in order to re-enact certain story-lines from the novels together. A question appears: what is the cause of such significant increase of interest in crime stories?

The interest in crime stories might seem a worrying phenomenon (on account of the content of the novel): murders, suicides, drug trade or mutilation of another man do not reflect on the positive traits of humanity (if one can speak about humanity in this case at all). Raymond Chandler draws attention to the fact that “a murder which is a result of an individual’s frustration – and thus the frustration of the entire species – may have and in reality has a number of sociological implications”.⁶ Maj Sjöwall together with Per Wahlöö are trying to point out to the “cause” of the specific boom of crime stories which are popular around the world. According to these writers, “this literary form has so far been the only one which in a reasonably pleasant and easily accessible form reflects certain traits of the modern humanity.”⁷ In their discussion, they provide the example of the “heritage” which is carried by cultural texts: “If somebody wishes to read a book about New York in one hundred years’ time, about the way in which this city looks today, we believe that no better descriptions can be found than, for example, in “The Young Prey” by Hillary Waugh, a novel which its’ author, in a moment of unique lucidity, described as >>too true to be good<<.”⁸ Books written “in our times” which are devoted to them, constitute a certain anthropological certificate of what the modern times are like. Crime stories, similarly to other works of popular culture, become a certain mirror which reflects social, historical and cultural changes. An excellent summary is offered by the words of Buszta and Czubaj: “A crime story tends to be a certain index of changes in the modern world, changes that are seen, obviously, from a specific angle and for the needs of the plot.”⁹

⁶ R. Chandler, *Skromna sztuka pisania powieści kryminalnych*, http://chandler.republika.pl/skromna_sztuka.htm, [access: 12.04.2014].

⁷ M. Sjöwall, P. Wahlöö, *Odnova powieści kryminalnej*, “Kultura popularna, acta Sueco-polonica. Literatura popularna, powieść kryminalna”, *Kultura Popularna* No. 2 (31)/2012, *Acta Sueco-Polonica* 17(2012), Warsaw 2012, p. 14.

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 15-16

⁹ W. J. Burszta, M. Czuba, *Krwawa setka. 100 najważniejszych powieści kryminalnych*, Warsaw 2007, p. 23.

In his article entitled “What is Anthropology of Literature? The Difference Between Explaining and Discovering Fiction”, Wolfgang Iser draws attention to the role of literary anthropologist, who has the task of showing the elusive content, which is imperceptible during the “ordinary” reading of the text. In his work, the author mentions the term “literary fiction”, offering a definition of presenting the “as if” reality: a work of literature may resemble reality.¹⁰ Simultaneously, “as if” constitutes a certain defence shield for the authors of the novel who may, in this manner, defend themselves from the accusation of showing a false reality. An excellent example of “fiction” and “as if” are crime stories. The authors of the stories, creating fiction, show the things which, in their opinion, are bad and imperceptible for the majority of people. Writers create some sort of carbon paper which, after being put on their novel, shows the information that was not perceptible during the “first” reading. Summarising Iser’s thought, the author wishes that the reader/anthropologist learns to “read between the lines” and is able to find everything that is not said straightforwardly. In his assumptions, Iser was greatly inspired by Clifford Geertz and his theory of “thick description.” The aim of this article is to read what is imperceptible for an “ordinary” reader. However, in the first place, it is necessary to think about the characters of murderers shown in Mankell’s crime stories, the implications that they carry and about the causes of sudden changes in the Swedish society at the turn of the 21st century.

Sudden Changes

At the end of the 1980s, two very important events for Swedes took place: the murder of Prime Minister Olof Palme in 1986 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989; these are very significant moments for the Scandinavian states. The prime minister’s murder caused certain anxiety; people, accustomed to freedom, related to undeniable safety, discover that such free space is taken away from them. This is what Mankell said about the prime minister’s murder in one of the interviews: “If something cracked in Sweden, then it must have happened on that atrocious night in 1986 when Prime Minister Olof Palme was murdered, returning home from the cinema... (...) Palme’s death will always be treated as the symbolic turning point that transformed Sweden. It does not seem to me that this is the truth. If Palme lived, everything that was supposed to happen, would have happened anyway. For more or less twenty years, we have been able to observe how a society relying on

¹⁰ Cf. W. Iser, *Czym jest antropologia literatury? Różnica między fikcjami wyjaśniającymi a odkrywającymi*, translated by A. Kowalcze-Pawlik, “Teksty Drugie” 2006, No. 5, pp. 11 – 35.

sick bases is being formed. It should be reformed and healed, and not completely destroyed.”¹¹ According to the author, even if the history took a different turn, it would not have changed the fate of the Swedish society much. However, for the Scandinavian residents the events of 1986 were a certain warning signal that their country was slowly starting to change, together with them. In Mankell’s books it is also possible to encounter frequent reflections of Wallander or his colleagues referring to Palme’s murder: “Mysterious, so far unexplained murder of the Swedish prime minister ten years ago not only left a trauma among policemen, but also a significant portion of the Swedish society. Too many people, both in the police and outside of it knew that the murder was probably not explained because the investigation was atrociously butchered already at the early stage by the usurpatory and incompetent provincial police commander.”¹² In this manner, Mankell puts in Wallander’s lips the common opinion which is dominant in the Swedish society about the prime minister’s murder.

Palme’s murder is a certain beginning. On the 9th of November 1989, the Berlin Wall collapses and, together with it, the “borders” for several Eastern Bloc countries cease to exist. Thanks to this, emigration becomes possible. Immigrants from various parts of the world start to come to Sweden. The collapse of the Berlin Wall is usually associated with independence, however this freedom from the Swedish point of view is limited on account of the flowing emigrants from the Eastern Bloc countries. This is one of the reasons due to which the problem of immigration is mentioned so often by Mankell in his novels. This is how Wallander talks about his native country: “This is Sweden, he thought. Apparently everything is clean and fresh, airports are built in a manner that no speck of dust is present there. Everything is in view, everything is what it seems to be. Our religion and national hope is safety, written down and guaranteed by the law, the whole world knows that dying of hunger is a crime here. We do not talk to strangers without a reason, because they might hurt us, they might dirty out streets, blacken our neon signs. We have never built an empire and that is why we have never had to look how it collapsed. We have convinced ourselves that we have created a small, but the very best world. We were the trusted guardians of the paradise and now, when the party is over, we get back at others through the most unpleasant passport control in the world.”¹³ The context is also important for this quotation. Wallander speaks these words during a trip to Riga, the capital of Latvia, a state which until recently belonged to

¹¹ W. Burszta, M. Czubaj, *Krwawa...*, op.cit., pp. 205-206.

¹² H. Mankell, *Mężczyzna, który się uśmiechał*, translated by I. Kowadło – Przedmojska, Warsaw 2007, p. 210.

¹³ H. Mankell, *Psy z Rygi*, translated by G. Ludvigsson, Warsaw 2012, p. 217.

the Soviet Union. This trip is very important for the character because it “opens his eyes” to another world; it is for the first time that he encounters poverty, corruption and endless struggle with the political system. What Swedes dislike the most about immigrants is meeting this “different world”; suddenly, they have to learn to live in a different culture and customs.

The events of 1986 and 1989 were just a beginning for subsequent occurrences. Two years after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Swedes experienced yet another shock and the events from Stockholm become, for some residents, a loud scream of the society that does not agree with the state policy. At the beginning of the 1990s, a masked murderer appeared in the streets of the Swedish capital, a sniper who targeted accidental persons whose appearance might indicate foreign origin. Camps for immigrants were overcrowded and became a target of frequent attacks – Molotov cocktails were thrown at the gates.¹⁴ In an interview with Czubaj and Burszta, Mankell speaks about these changes: “When the society experiences a thorough change, such as, for example, the one that you experienced in Poland after WWII, there will always be people who have a feeling that they have lost something important. This is what Wallander is like. Critical towards the reality. Or is it better to say that he is conservative? He is not so much looking for something significant in the past, but seriously doubting whether the changes that are happening in Sweden will be changes for the better [emphasis M.A.J.]”¹⁵ Further, he mentions the very beginning of creating Wallander’s character: “It was 1989. At that time, I decided to write about Swedish racism and how an open society and usually tolerant people can turn into xenophobes. At that time, I also understood that my character had to be a police officer.”¹⁶ For the author of crime stories, the turn of the 1990s was also an important moment; he noticed the above-mentioned changes and the growth of xenophobia in Sweden, which resulted in the novels about Inspector Wallander. This is how Slavoj Žižek writes about the stories of the Swedish author: “Mankell recalls all the traumatic subjects that offer a basis for the populism that is spreading in Sweden: the influx of illegal immigrants, the increase in crime rates and violence, growing unemployment and lack of social safety, the collapse of social solidarity... He focuses on those who are left in the shadows, desperately lost in existence.”¹⁷ Not only the Slovenian theoretician drew attention

¹⁴ G. Tamas, *Mężczyzna z laserem. Historia szwedzkiej nienawiści*, translated by E. Frątczak-Nawotny, Wołowiec 2013.

¹⁵ W. J. Burszta, M. Czubaj, op. cit. p. 205.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 206.

¹⁷ S. Žižek, *The Artist of the Parallax View*, <http://www.lacan.com/zizekmankell.htm>, [access: 2.12.2013].

to the specific “hidden agenda” in Mankell’s novels. Barry Forshaw’s book about Scandinavian stories contains such a sentence: “In his novels, Mankell unflinchingly reveals the deeply rooted divisions in the Swedish society, also entering the dark alleys of the psyche of his compatriots.”¹⁸ The Swedish writer treats his novels as a place for analysing the society in which he had to live and grow up.

Czubaj draws attention to the fact that “In this manner, Mankell discusses two fundamental subjects which appear in a comprehensive manner and in various shades in the crime stories of other Swedish writers. The first one is the issue of violence. (...) and the second issue, which is the failure of the teaching model. How does it happen, asks Mankell, that a fourteen-year-old changes into a serial killer? What is happening with the Swedish family and the educational model?”¹⁹ This article presents an analysis of the “failure of the teaching model” and the impact of immigration on the growth of violence and xenophobia in Sweden.

Immigration

In the discussion contained in this article, it is very important to set the modern events in the context of a comprehensive history of the Swedish state. In the preamble of chapter “*som invandrare* jak imigranci” in his book *Alfabet szwedzki*, Jacek Kubitsky writes: “History has saved Sweden from the experiences of the migration of peoples, the attacks and occupation by foreign superpowers. As opposed to other European states, Sweden has never experienced a strong political turmoil, bloody revolutions and coup d’état and primarily, the two World Wars.”²⁰ Such “political upheavals, bloody revolutions and coup d’état” contribute to the formation of the national identity and are a certain natural element of ethnic movements. Events during the last thirty years came as a certain shock for the Scandinavian residents, a region that so far has had not much in common with such grand tragedies as, for example, the two World Wars.

The above-mentioned murder of Olof Palme is the beginning of such “revolution” in history. The 1990s start with the events in Stockholm. John Ausonius (also known as the “Laser Man”) terrorises people whose appearance indicates foreign

¹⁸ B. Forshaw, *Nordic Noir. The Pocket essential guide to Scandinavian crime fiction, film & TV*, Pocket Essentials, Harpenden, 2013, p. 17. [All the quotations deriving from foreign works, not published in Poland, are provided in the Polish translation by the author of the paper, M.A.J.].

¹⁹ M. Czubaj, *Etnolog w mieście grzechu. Powieść kryminalna jako świadectwo antropologiczne*, Gdańsk 2010, p. 318.

²⁰ J. Kubitsky, *Alfabet szwedzki*, Warsaw 2012, p. 81.

origin. A decade later, between 2003 and 2010, the story repeats itself. Sweden is haunted by Peter Mangs (“Malmö Sniper”) who was recently convicted for his deeds. On 22 July 2011, close to Sweden, on the Norwegian Utøya island, Anders Breivik attacks the youth camp of the Labour Party, previously planting a bomb under the seat of Norway’s prime minister. Every one of the above-mentioned murderers is guided by the same motive: xenophobia.

Scandinavian states, which for centuries were closed to the countries outside of their region, suddenly had to face increased immigration from other countries. The “natives” did not like the fact that certain ghettos appeared next to their family homes and their peaceful, calm, Protestant culture was mixed with the “colourful” bustling culture of people from all over the world. In order to prove the claim above that the number of immigrants grew in Sweden, the following data is quoted: “In the course of nine years, between 1991 and 2000, Sweden granted permits for temporary stay to half a million foreigners, every third of whom claimed to be a refugee. Nobody knows how many actual refugees are included in this category. Experience indicates that they are a definite minority, even though one is not supposed to speak publicly about it in Sweden.”²¹

The immigrant paradox is very simple: on the one hand, Sweden is becoming an arid, open state that is basically able to accept anybody in its borders. On the other hand, through its’ activities (or, more precisely, lack thereof), it is starting to close itself to other states. This is how Kubitsky describes this “phenomenon”: “Every man, similarly to every country, needs a demarcation line. This is dictated by two factors: safety and the requirement of sovereignty. A world without borders seems to be a desert, whereas a world with closed borders is turning into a prison.”²² Analysis of some of Mankell’s stories will be made in the next part of the article.

It is already in the first story with Inspector Mankell that the issue of immigration is tackled. The main character is trying to solve the macabre murder case of a certain elderly couple and one of the few traces that he has is the word uttered by the victim right before death: “foreign”²³. One thing is known in “Faceless Killers” – the killer is a person who is not Swedish by origin. In this manner, Mankell shows the Swedish fear of otherness, which is often identified with persons who come from countries other than Scandinavian.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 83.

²² Ibidem, p. 87.

²³ This paper uses the translation into Polish by Anna Marciniakówna (Mankell Henning, *Morderca bez twarzy*, translated by Anna Marciniakówna, Grupa Wydawnicza Foksal, edition IV, Warsaw 2004); other translations feature such words as “foreigner”; Swedish original: *unländsk*.

During the entire investigation, the reader is a witness to several other “foreign” incidents. Immigrants are not always the guilty ones. We learn that one of the centres for immigrants is set on fire and burns down almost completely and one of the Somali refugees is murdered. Was it a way in which Mankell wanted to “clear the battleground” by showing that the “guilt” lies on both sides of the barricade, with the isolated immigrants and the strongly isolated Swedish society?

In spite of the fact that the crime motive turns out to be a trifle, and the murderers did not have any xenophobic acts in mind related to their origin, Mankell leaves a certain gate open for further discussion about immigrants in the Swedish state and how both parties are approaching this problem. In the “Faceless Killers” we can see that there is not one “guilty” party.

The example of Sweden as a “prison” is perceptible in “The Dogs of Riga”.²⁴ The main character, Wallander, travels to Riga for work purposes. His activities are dictated, *inter alia*, by the appearance of the “mafia tentacles” in the Swedish territory. So far, the characters from Mankell’s crime stories have associated the “phenomenon” of a gangster with cult-like films such as “The Godfather” or with regions as distant as Sicily. This is how Martinsson talks about the “phenomenon” of mafia, which is one of the elements of the plot in “The Dogs of Riga”: “Mafia,’ said Martinsson, who was quiet until now, being content with offering right English words and phrases to Wallander, ‘is something new for us. Well-organised Russian or Eastern European crime syndicates. Several years ago the Swedish police became aware of the fact that Soviet origin groups started to appear here, primarily in Stockholm. But we still know little about them. Some brutal crimes resulting from internal vendettas were the first signs that something was starting to happen. And a warning that these people, in the next couple of years, would be trying to put a wedge in the local crime world and take up the key positions in it.”²⁵ For the Ystad police, the appearance of organised crime from Latvia in Sweden is a very abstract and, at the same time, an absurd phenomenon. It is shocking not only for the residents, but also for the policemen who should, however, have their bearings in crimes of this type.

However, the mafia is not all. In relation to the committed crime, Wallander is forced to travel to Riga. Contrary to appearances, this stage of the journey is very important for him. Crossing the Swedish border, he gets to know the other “wonderful world.” He starts to become aware of the things which he has so far

²⁴ Mankell, in the sub-chapter of the book entitled “Hand” recalls that the second volume of the novel was primarily aimed at recounting (and, at the same time, making the Swedish readers aware) of the events which are happening in Europe after the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

²⁵ H. Mankell, *Psy...* op.cit., p. 86.

seen only on television. He has the opportunity of seeing corruption and a state full of political tension. The main character admits that he is closed to what happens outside of his native country. "Wallander knew what she had in mind. Not a month has passed since the time when elitist Soviet units, known as the black berets, fired shots at the building of the ministry of foreign affairs in the centre of Riga. A number of innocent people died. Wallander saw photos of barricades in newspaper photos, erected from stone blocks and welded iron pipes. In spite of it, he did not really understand what had happened. He started to realise that he always knew too little of what was going on around him. [emphasis: M.A.J.]"²⁶ Wallander, wandering around Riga, encounters a conspiracy group which is trying to make him see how the life of a displaced person in and out of Latvia looks like. Immigrants who, on account of various political situations, but also economic causes, were forced to leave their country, do not want to lose their identity. For them, life in a country that is so different from their own is tantamount to saying goodbye to their culture and, primarily, their national identity. That is why, among other reasons, immigration ghettos are created. However, the "fault" is on both sides: immigrants do not show willingness to any changes and on the other hand Swedes, like children, keep their eyes shut, pretending that there is no problem.

It is also in "The White Lioness" that Mankell is trying to show Swedes the world that exists outside of the borders of their country. Information that reaches the residents of Scandinavia about apartheid is ignored, and the majority of them use the commonplace phrase "it does not concern us." In this novel, Mankell tries to show them that in spite of appearances and in spite of the distance, Sweden and the Republic of South Africa have a lot in common. Michael Tapper makes an excellent punch line: Similarly to the post-apartheid Republic of South Africa of Nelson Mandela, due to certain reasons "the great world" outside of Sweden cannot be only associated to tyranny, violence and death as the embodiment of evil.²⁷ Both Sweden and the Republic of South Africa shut themselves to the "great world" – for these states, everything that is different is associated "with tyranny, violence and death as the embodiment of evil"; however, in the course of time, it turns out that this is not really the truth. Everything depends on the approach that consists in not making one's country a prison.

For Wallander, every new crime is an experience from which he learns. He not only learns more and more about people, but also about the history and culture of other states: "In the recent years, Wallander encountered foreigners involved

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 79.

²⁷ Cf. M. Tapper, *Swedish Cops. From Sjöwall & Wahlöö to Stieg Larsson*, Intellect LTD, Chicago 2014, p. 171.

in various crimes a number of times. They were the victims of crimes or their potential perpetrators. His earlier opinions about the existence of absolute truths, about the good and evil, about the crime and innocence do not have to be commonly applicable. Depending on the origin, being brought up in a specific culture, the classification of a crime could also change. In such a situation, he often felt helpless. He lacked knowledge to ask the proper questions which could lead to the solving of the case²⁸; in the course of time, Wallander becomes convinced that a single good legal system does not exist. There is no absolute truth. He talks about his conclusions in the following manner: “I live in a country where we believe that all truths are simple. And indisputable. Our entire legal system relies on such principle. Now, I am becoming aware that something quite opposite may be applicable. Truth is complex, ambiguous and full of controversies. On the other hand, a lie is black and white. Truth is perceived differently by those who contempt human life and by those who respect it.”²⁹ The sentence above also fits another problem analysed in this article, namely the “collapse of educational values.” Wallander discovers that “what you see depends on where you stand” and sometimes an ordinary theft is a crime for somebody, whereas a murder is just a trifle.

The examples above are only a part of the immigration motives that appear in Mankell’s novels. Only these were selected that offer the best reflection for the problem with which Sweden has been struggling in the recent years. In the “Faceless Killers” the issue of immigration and hatred is shown from two sides – a person arriving in a new state and its’ permanent residents. “The Dogs of Riga” and “The White Lioness” show how being closed to “the new, wonderful world” creates problems and, simultaneously barriers which, after some time, become impassable.

Collapse of Educational Values

“We should not fear lack of morals in great people
But the fact that it often leads to grandeur.”
Alexis de Tocqueville³⁰

Another issue analysed by the Swedish writer is the “collapse of educational values” nourished for years in Sweden. One of the elements of life that has a huge impact on education is work. Kubitsky, referring to Voltaire, draws attention to the im-

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 288.

²⁹ Ibidem., p. 284.

³⁰ Quoted after: H. Mankell, *Mężczyzna...* op.cit., p. 5.

mense role of work in the education of an average Swede. According to the French philosopher “work allows people to avoid three misfortunes: poverty, crime and boredom.”³¹ For every man, work is a very important element, yet for Swedes it is one of the most important stages in life.³² Kubitsky finds two “causes” of such attachment to work: climatic conditions and the influence of Lutheranism.³³ Further on, we read: “Lutheranism, the Swedish version of Protestantism, referring to the Bible, emphasised the significance of work and its’ role in the formation of character more emphatically than Catholicism. A man was – and in principle still is – understood primarily as *homo faber* (Latin: “man the maker”) and not *homo ludens* (Latin: “man the player”). Hard work was one of the virtues which the Swedish Church imbued in its’ followers since the beginning of Reformation in 1527.”³⁴ Work forms one of the elements of education of a young man; family and the environment in which a child is brought up are equally important.

In “The Man Who Smiled” Wallander examines the murder of two attorneys, a father and a son, Gustaf and Sten Torstensson. In the course of the investigation, certain traces appear which lead to Alfred Harderberg – the owner of a huge property, a castle in Farnholm. Harderberg is a very important person in the Swedish economy, known primarily for his charity activities. In the course of time, it turns out that Gustaf Torstensson who worked as Harderberg’s lawyer before his death, helped him cover up some financial flows. Wallander discovers not only traces of a large financial swindle. It turns out that the entire charity work was only a cover-up aimed at creating the so-called smoke-screen for the actual source of revenues. Harderberg is primarily involved in trading in human organs. Mankell writes about his reflections on the discussed book: “The starting point for the story in “The Man Who Smiled” was the worst type of crime against property that can be perpetrated and that one can be exposed to. And here, I do not have in mind the fact that somebody was deprived of his/ her wealth. Here, a part of man’s body, an organ. is stolen, which is later sold further, for transplants.”³⁵

In this novel, Mankell shows the greediness triggered by money. Harderberg did not think about helping people and he called human organs “goods.” For him, work was not associated with toil, but primarily with profit; he was not *homo faber*, but *homo ludens*; money offered a possibility to play. The Swedish writer also

³¹ J. Kubitsky, *Alfabet...* op. cit., p. 13.

³² Ibidem.

³³ Ibidem.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 14.

³⁵ H. Mankell, *Ręka*, translated by Paulina Jankowska, Grupa Wydawnicza Foksal, Warsaw 2013, p. 119.

indicates two elements which are responsible for the “fall of values” of such upbringing: lack of humility and the indifference of the Swedish society. For years, the Lutheran model of upbringing showed how much good can hard work offer. The problems start to appear when people only think about their work and they treat the rest of the world as the potential “goods.” This was the case of Harderberg. This is the manner in which Wallander speaks about the modern economy: “Previously, without thinking too much, he lived with a feeling of complete trust to the tradition in line with which the Swedish economy, like the emperor’s wife, was beyond any suspicion. Swedish men and women, representing great concerns, were the foundation on which the miracle of affluence was erected.”³⁶ In this manner, Mankell tried to show that the success of great concerns frequently relied on the tragedies of ordinary people. Some are trying to “redeem their faults” by charity activities; on the other hand, others do not see any problem.

The next novel entitled “Sidetracked” to a certain degree combines both of the discussed problems: immigration and the collapse of educational values. Everything starts with the self-immolation of a black young woman on a field of rape. Wallander cannot imagine how anybody can choose such painful mode of suicide as self-immolation. This crime poses not only a moral, but also a legal problem, as the police does not know how to “classify” such crime: “Nobody committed a crime, but it was a murder. She murdered herself. (...) – To murder oneself and to commit suicide are not always the same thing (...).”³⁷ The girl’s suicide is just a beginning; a serial killer appears in Ystad who collects the scalps of his victims. For Wallander and his colleagues this also comes as a shock, just like the earlier appearance of the mafia (“The Dogs of Riga”): “So far, I have thought that serial killers were only in the USA. But here? In Ystad? In Skania?”³⁸

It turns out that the serial killer is a fourteen year-old boy, Stefan Fredman, who wants to avenge the tormentors from his life; he thinks that he will be able to save his sister who has been in a psychiatric hospital for years. The idea for such actions derives from a comic. The boy planned and executed four murders in cold blood – including one on his father, who sold his daughter (Stefan’s sister, mentioned above) to a luxury escort agency providing entertainment to the Swedish elites.³⁹ In reality, Fredman dons two masks: of the Indian warrior Geronimo and of the FBI boss, Agent Hoover. This was the way in which the boy was prob-

³⁶ H. Mankell, *Mężczyzna...* op. cit., p. 202.

³⁷ H. Mankell, *Falszywy trop*, translated by H. Thylwe, Warsaw 2012, p. 44.

³⁸ H. Mankell, *Falszywy...* op.cit., doi: 2816.

³⁹ Mankell, describing this story was probably influenced by the Geijer case which happened at the end of 1970s.

ably trying to “cleanse” his actions: by assuming the face of the guardian of order (Hoover), he justified his actions which go beyond the law of a Swedish citizen. In her analysis of Fredman, Samsel-Chojnacka refers to the Nordic saga where retaliation was a natural thing and even an obligation⁴⁰.

In “Sidetracked”, Mankell tackles one more important issue: the collapse of a family model. Stefan Fredman was brought up in a family which may be called pathological. Stefan’s father, mentioned above, is a minor black marketeer, capable of selling his daughter. On the other hand, the mother does not want to see the world without glasses provided by alcohol. The father is known to the local police for beating up his pregnant wife, Stefan’s mother. The young boy, the future serial killer, does not have a moral spine and thus, he is not provided with proper educational values. As a four year-old, Stefan was so afraid of his father that he was trying to gouge out his eyes; this is how Wallander reacts to this news:

“This is impossible. Not in Sweden.

Exactly in Sweden. In the middle of the world.”⁴¹

The above-mentioned examples are only a part of the cases described by Mankell. In “The Fifth Woman”, Wallander is dealing with a ruthless killer who turns out to be a woman, Yvonne Ander. The murderer decides to serve justice to the oppressors of women. She plans subsequent murders with great precision. This novel shows the collapse of educational values also in the police: “Wallander noticed that his colleagues showed understanding for Yvonne Ander’s deeds.”⁴² The police and Ander are aware of the fact that if it was not for her, these people would have never been caught. It is possible to suggest that Ander and the fourteen year-old Fredman from “Sidetracked” are a far-fetched Batman-type characters. On the one hand, everybody is grateful to Batman, Ander or Fredman for putting the streets “in order” – they murder murderers, killers or other people who are beyond the margin of “normalcy.” On the other hand, everybody knows that the Code of Hammurabi has not been functioning for a long time and that true criminals should be tried before a real court. However, the experience of the characters shows that justice often overlooks criminals and if they are caught by the police, the dimension of the punishment does not always correspond to the committed crimes.

⁴⁰ Cf. M. Samsel-Chojnacka, *Morderca o wielu twarzach. Portrety zabójców w serii o komisarzu Wallanderze*, “Kultura popularna, acta Sueco-polonica. Literatura popularna, powieść kryminalna”, *Kultura Popularna* No. 2 (31)/2012, *Acta Sueco-Polonica* 17 (2012), Warsaw 2012, p. 132.

⁴¹ H. Mankell, *Fałszywy...* op.cit., p. 60.

⁴² H. Mankell, *Piąta kobieta*, [e-book; format MOBI], translated by H. Thylwe, Warsaw, 2006, doi: 7999.

In “One Step Behind” Wallander fights with a serial killer murdering young and happy people who are his opposites. He cannot tolerate the sight of happiness, so he decides to annihilate people who represent it. Monika Samsel-Chojnacka in her article entitled “Morderca o wielu twarzach. Portrety zabójców w serii o komisarzu Wallanderze” refers to Philip Zimbardo’s thought: “One of the worst things that we can do to other people is to deprive them of their humanity, make them worthless by subjecting them to the psychological process of dehumanisation. This happens when one concludes that <<others>> do not have the same feelings, thoughts, values and life purposes like we do. (...) in the course of time, the person who applies dehumanisation is engulfed by the negative aspect of such experience and then it changes the <<I>>, which, in result, leads to the relation <<It – it>>, relation between items or between the perpetrator and the victim.”⁴³ Each of the above-described murderers fits Zimbardo’s thoughts perfectly. Dehumanising their victims, criminals become human wrecks. In order to perpetrate a crime that consists in depriving somebody of their life, they slowly shatter their humanity into tiny pieces. Samsel – Chojnacka draws attention to the aggravating “differences between the rich and the people shoved to the margin of the society – the unemployed, the homeless (in spite of the lofty ideals of socialist democracy fed to the Swedish citizens for decades)”⁴⁴ – this refers both to Harderberg and Fredman.

For several years, the ideal image of the Swedish state has been marred by shapeless scratches which, in the course of time, have changed into the “crack” from the Polish title of one of Mankell’s novels⁴⁵. A good metaphor for Wallander’s musings is an ordinary cut: when the body is healthy, it will deal with a wound without any problems. But when a man is sick, just like the Swedish society is (suffering from indifference), subsequent scratches will not heal so easily in the course of time; the situation is the same with the “escalation of violence.”

The murderer is a certain personification of social anxiety. Swedes are most afraid that the vertebrae of the spine of “Swedishness” such as work, family, language and even appearance are slowly starting to collapse. They know that the source of such problems is the policy conducted with respect to other states. However, they are aware of the fact that from the country of tolerant people, they may easily transform into a country of xenophobes. Characters from novels such as Fredman, Ander or Harderberg are the literary “counterparts” of real killers such

⁴³ Quoted after: M. Samsel-Chojnacka, *Morderca...* op.cit., p. 128.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 131.

⁴⁵ One of the Polish titles of Mankell’s short stories is “Szczelina” (“The Crack”) (English version: “Wallander’s First Case”).

as Ausonius, Mangs or Breivik. On the one hand, the readers sometimes identify with serial killers and don their “masks” in order to breathe their air. They want to be like the title character from “Dexter” series, “cleaning” the city from other criminals. On the other hand, the recipients know that such acts are bad and that by becoming another Dexter, they become another Breivik. Such books are a certain safety valve which allows the society to shout noiselessly. At the same time, they indicate that “something is rotten in the state of Sweden” and on the other, they provide an opportunity for looking at the reflection offered by the mirror of the book.

The phenomenon of an anthropological crime story is starting to gain popularity around the world, not only in Sweden and it is also reaching the Polish publication market slowly. Zygmunt Miłoszewski with his trilogy (*Uwikłanie* [2007], *Ziarno prawdy* [2011], *Gniew* [2014]), perfectly fits Mankell’s model of “reflection” on the modern world. This may be the formula for success: not to make novels extravagant, but make them as realistic as possible. When critically reading crime stories, we can learn a lot about our reality; at the end, it is worth quoting the paraphrased slogan of Fidel Castro: “Crime story or death.”⁴⁶

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⁴⁶ H. Mankell, *Psy...* op.cit., p. 5.

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