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GUEST EDITOR'S FOREWORD

by
Robert E. Luckett, Ph.D.[*]

When Margaret Walker founded the Institute for the Study of the History, Life, and Culture of Black People at Jackson State University in 1968, she stood at the forefront of a nascent Black Studies movement on college campuses in this country. A professor of English at Jackson State University, Walker was already a renowned poet and novelist for works like *For My People* and *Jubilee*. Yet her fame and talent as a writer did not speak to her commitment as a scholar and a teacher. Uniquely positioned in the twentieth century both to be mentored by the likes of Langston Hughes and to mentor black artists like Sonia Sanchez, Walker used her status to advance the study of black history and culture and to teach generations of young people about the richness of the African American experience.

And Dr. Walker's Institute hosted some of the first national academic conferences on the topic at Jackson State. The 1971 National Evaluative Conference on Black Studies and the 1973 Phyllis Wheatley Poetry Festival brought Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Roscoe Browne, Nikki Giovanni, and a veritable *Who's Who* of black America to campus. Today, that tradition continues through the Institute that Walker founded. Now named in her honor, the Margaret Walker Center for the Study of the African American Experience holds its annual Creative Arts Festival, inspired by the conferences Walker first organized. Scholars, artists, and activists including Haki Madhubuti, Sonia Sanchez, Amiri Baraka, and Tonea Stewart have provided insight and advice to students presenting original research, poetry, creative writing, and art. In an encouraging atmosphere, undergraduate and graduate students have learned to appreciate their own talents as well as their ability to contribute to the black experience.

In its sixth year, the 2012 Creative Arts Festival saw some of its best student presentations, and the five essays included in this

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special edition of *The Researcher* represent the most promising student scholarship presented at any of these conferences. While most of these essays advance an understanding of African American history and culture, others expound on themes common to the black experience even if the subject matter does not directly engage it. In that sense, taken collectively, the works in this edition of *The Researcher* shed light on the field that Margaret Walker helped to legitimize as a scholarly, academic endeavor and draw attention to the efforts of students like the ones Walker taught for so long as a professor at Jackson State University. Rachel Drake, Dwayne Marshall Baker, J. Matthew Ward, Evette M. Williams, and Stefani Sloma and their scholarship represent Walker's academic and artistic legacy and everything the Margaret Walker Center wants to accomplish through the Creative Arts Festival.

Perhaps no essay better demonstrates this dynamic than the first: Rachel Drake's "Blackness, Autonomy, and Power in Selected Works of Ralph Ellison and Walter Mosley"–the 2012 winner of the annual Margaret Walker Award, presented to the best essay on "the black experience in the American South." As chance would have it, Walker and Ellison were friends, and she undoubtedly would have agreed with the comparison that Drake draws between Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Mosley's *Devil in a Blue Dress*. Remarking on the futility of attempts by African Americans to attain the "American dream"–a dream created by the same white people who oppress them–Drake shows how the characters in these works "are willing to sacrifice their blackness for power, autonomy, and social acceptance" (8). It is a forceful analysis that can be drawn well beyond the works of Ellison and Mosley.

Similarly, Dwayne Marshall Baker's "Eradicating Blackness: Violence and Humanity in the Works of Richard Wright" examines African American identity and the pursuit of autonomy over that identity. Ironically, Walker was also close friends with Richard Wright, joining his Southside Writer's Group in Chicago after she moved there to attend her father's alma mater, Northwestern University. In fact, she took over that group when Wright moved to New York City, and she spent much time together with both Wright and Ellison. Ultimately, her relationship with Wright led her to write his biography: *Richard Wright, Daemonic Genius*. In this tradition, Baker analyzes Wright's *The*

Outsider and *The Long Dream*.

Like Drake, Baker indicates that racial identity is a social construct that for African Americans has been controlled primarily by a white power structure looking to relegate that identity to a subservient status. Still, as Baker notes in Wright's *The Outsider*, African Americans have defined themselves on their own terms even in the face of extreme oppression. That struggle over self-identification has not always been an ideal process. Throughout American history, whites have negatively defined the dominant conception of race that African Americans have had to contend with, and Baker realizes that Wright does not romanticize what it would take to undermine popular conceptions of race in this country. As Baker points out, Wright's characters achieve some semblance of self-determination only through violence.

Although J. Matthew Ward parts from an examination of the African American experience, he delves into a topic inherently related to Baker's analysis. For Ward, gender and not race takes center stage, and he eschews modern literary analysis for an examination of nineteenth-century memoirs. Looking at two diaries of white Southern women as they faced the displacement of the Civil War, Ward uses these personal accounts to reveal how the contours of elite, antebellum domesticity drastically shifted thanks to the War. Like race, gender here is socially constructed, and these women, like the characters in Wright's works, seek to be able to control their lives, whether in an attempt to shirk their supposed duties as genteel Southern women or to prop up the roles of women mythologized by Old South apologists. Either way, these women wanted to determine their own identities.

From antebellum Southern women, Evette M. Williams shifts our attention to the work of Eudora Welty, a twentieth-century Southern woman who challenged both gender and racial identities as the Jim Crow South moved through the civil rights movement into modernity. In "The Problem with Happily Ever After: The Subversion of Motifs in Eudora Welty's *The Robber Bridegroom*," Williams examines how Welty's book, first published in 1942, dismisses Southern patriarchy as a ruse to control women, but, more than that, her characters Rosamond and Samone reject the patriarchy, with disastrous consequences for Samone, that has informed popular culture, especially through fairy tales like "Snow White" and "Cinderella." Williams' critique

details the invasiveness of gender norms but also indicates that women like Eudora Welty and the characters in her novel can rebuff those norms in an attempt to control their own identities, much in the same way as the Southern women Ward describes.

Finally, Stefani Sloma's "The City as Character: Edinburgh in the Works of Ian Rankin" departs the most from the other essays in this special edition of *The Researcher*. Even then, Sloma engages a topic familiar to anyone who has studied the modern African American experience. In his classic book *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois famously remarks on the "double consciousness" of African Americans who have struggled with being descended both from Africa and America, and, in this same vein, Sloma demonstrates how this conflict of identity is "found in many places in Scottish history and literature, such as Edinburgh's Old Town and New Town, Scotland and England, two sides of the Scottish Enlightenment, Protestant and Catholic, Edinburgh and Glasgow, the Highlands and the Lowlands, the Gaelic language and the Scots language, and even a Jekyll and Hyde doubled psyche in literary figures" (53). Likewise, Williams comments on the "doubleness" of Welty's characters and those frequently found in fairy tales (42). Like the other essays in this volume, Sloma's work shows us how fiction reflects reality and how identity is a constant source of struggle.

In all, the essays collected here examine race, gender and the attempt to control one's own identity. How we define ourselves is an intensely personal process, and the difficulty of overcoming social constructions that expect one's identity to be pre-determined is a struggle that individuals–especially women and African Americans–have encountered throughout history and that creative writers have tackled through their characters across genres. These essays also represent five young scholars and not only their future potential but their already well-refined academic prowess. The Margaret Walker Center and I are happy to lift them up to you through this special issue of *The Researcher*.

BLACKNESS, AUTONOMY, AND POWER IN SELECTED WORKS OF WALTER MOSLEY AND RALPH ELLISON

by
Rachel Drake[*]

The sometimes tragic experience of the American minority attempting to obtain the American dream, a contrived dream of the colonizer's making, is displayed in both Ralph Ellison's revealing novel *Invisible Man* and Walter Mosley's popular novel *Devil in a Blue Dress.* Ellison's and Mosley's African American characters associate power with whiteness because of America's history of oppressing African Americans while putting Caucasian Americans on a pedestal to be that to which African Americans aspire. Ellison's invisible man and Mosley's Easy both reach for an unattainable American Dream. As they reach, they realize that they must relinquish something of themselves, their black identity, in order to succeed in the struggle; thus the ugly side of the Dream is revealed. However, Mosley's female character Daphne stands on the edges of both black and white identities, belonging to neither. She serves only as a tool for the African American men to attempt to gain the upper hand over the racist society. All of these characters put into action what Franz Fanon theorizes regarding colonizer and colonized.

While Ellison and Mosley explore the American dream or the colonized person's dream of acceptance and placement through a number of African American experiences in their works of fiction, in *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks* Frantz Fanon analyzes, through his psychoanalyst's lens, the dream of the colonized people who are forced to live in the midst of their colonizers and vie for positions in the bourgeoisie. He iterates that the minority must reckon with the intricacies of identity and the desire to rise to the highest levels of their colonized society.

While basic American history chronicles the lack of power, autonomy and social acceptance African Americans have experienced, Ellison's *Invisible Man* better illustrates the anxiety that comes when an intangible self desires to become tangible, autonomous, and socially accepted. He also illustrates what

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African Americans encounter when they attempt to achieve the American dream to become a part of the predominantly Caucasian middle class, which is utter humiliation. Ellison uses his invisible man to convey the anxieties and obstacles of all African American men attempting to be accepted by white middle-class America. His invisible character has recently graduated from high school at the top of his class, and is eager to acquire accolades from the racist white leaders in his community. The main character is invited by them to give his graduation speech which claims humility is the vehicle to progress. He is then encouraged to take part in a battle royal that is being put on, along with his speech, for the entertainment of the racist white leaders of his community. The young African American men fight each other savagely in blindfolds, and the white men give instructions from outside the ring as to how they can hurt each other. All throughout the crude fight, the young invisible man narrating the story can only think of elegantly giving his speech to the white leaders of his community and receiving their praise which suggests the African American's willingness to give up his own identity to be accepted by white middle class America and gain middle class status, social acceptance, autonomy, and power. As the invisible narrator says,

> I fought back with hopeless desperation. I wanted to deliver my speech more than anything else in the world, because I felt that only these men could judge truly my ability, and now this stupid clown was ruining my chances. I began fighting carefully now, moving in to punch him and out again with my greater speed. A lucky blow to his chin and I had him going too–until I heard a loud voice yell, "I got my money on the big boy." Hearing this, I almost dropped my guard. I was confused: Should I try to win against the voice out there? Would not this go against my speech, and was not this a moment for humility, for nonresistance? (25)

Ellison uses the white men standing outside of the ring while cheering the young African American men to fight as an example of how, in their attempts to acquire social acceptance and

autonomy, African Americans give up their power and are like puppets being controlled by puppet masters.

The invisible narrator of Ralph Ellison's novel, the young man in the midst of a racist community desiring its acceptance, illustrates Frantz Fanon's contention in his work entitled *Black Skin, White Masks* that the desire for acceptance from the colonizer is characteristic of the colonized minority. Fanon states that the colonized subject comes to seek the acceptance of the colonizer and will reject the projected "blackness" of him- or herself in order to attain the "whiteness" of the colonizer (35). The white leaders of the invisible man's community cannot let the young African American man have autonomy because, by withholding it, they not only ensure that they will remain the objects of desire while the young African American man is despised and rejected by society as a whole, but they also ensure that the young African American man never has the power of the elite, by which he could make himself powerful, autonomous, and socially accepted. In his work entitled *The Wretched of the Earth,* Fanon examines the system of oppression the colonizer formulates for the colonized minority. This system consists of the elite, the middle class, the bourgeoisie, and the colonized. He asserts that the colonized can get only as far as the level of the bourgeoisie, who pretentiously try to rise to the middle class (63).

Such determination to rise from the bourgeoisie into middle-class status and social acceptance is displayed by a number of Walter Mosley's characters, but particularly by Easy Rawlins, who is the protagonist of the novel, the hardened bartender, Joppy, and the beautiful blonde, Daphne. Mosley's character Easy Rawlins is an adult African American man of property attempting to maintain his status while in the midst of dire financial straits. Joppy is another African American property owner who takes as much pride in his small bar as Easy takes pride in his house. Mosley uses both Easy and Joppy to represent the African American man of the bourgeoisie attempting to ascend to a higher social class. He also uses these two characters to represent the African American man's desire to regain the power and autonomy taken away through slavery and colonization by use of the system constructed to keep them down. After Easy is fired from his factory job, he finds that he needs four hundred dollars for his mortgage payment. As his house symbolizes his American dream

taking formation and he desperately does not want to lose the little power he has worked very hard to gain, Easy goes to work for Dewitt Albright, introduced to him by the hardened Joppy. While Albright turns out to be a devious character interested only in money and assigns Easy to find Daphne, who likes to frequent the bars of African Americans, he also begins to expose Easy gradually to the contrived American dream. Easy begins to realize that such a dream is often obtained through greed and the loss of one's culture and humanity even more, thus acting out Fanon's theory.

  Mosley shows how, even though Easy Rawlins has left the South to escape its harmful conventions, Easy and the rest of the African American men of Mosley's novel possess some of the same convictions of a racist society in their pursuit of Daphne. Mosley implies that this is another attempt of the African American men to rise to the middle class, become autonomous, and be socially accepted. He notes that all of the African American characters know that money is not enough to be truly accepted into white America. They must also have a white face. The men, Easy in particular, try to move Daphne into their domain to make themselves more powerful and acceptable to society. Easy's quest for power is illustrated with the house he struggles to keep and the mulatto woman he fights to obtain. Mosley hints that becoming a property owner is a large part of the American dream, as the house is supposed to represent the power and acceptance associated with middle-class America. Easy is extremely proud and meticulous about the objects of his domain; caring for these objects also represents his awareness of how easily he could lose it all. More than anything else, Easy wants autonomy, power, social acceptance, and Daphne, his stepping stone and ticket into white America's middle class. Joppy, along with Easy, views Daphne as an object of both desire and power. While he does not necessarily view her as a stepping stone to the middle class status he desires, the rape of Daphne and the conquering of her body not only symbolizes his willingness to take the American dream and power by any means necessary, but it also represents his attempts to regain the identity conquered and taken by the colonizer. Through the rape of Daphne, this white-looking woman, he subconsciously believes that he is conquering the American dream. Like a number of the other African American characters of Mosley's novel, Joppy

wants power–and the rape of Daphne is a stroke to his ego that encourages him to press on towards middle-class status and the conquering of the system of his oppression; as Mosley says,

> Daphne was on the couch, naked, and the men, Dewitt and Joppy, stood over her. Albright was wearing his linen suit but Joppy was stripped to the waist. His big gut looked obscene hanging over her like that and it took everything I had not to shoot him right then. "You don't want anymore of that now do you, honey?" Albright was saying. Daphne spat at him and he grabbed her by the throat. (245)

While Easy Rawlins and Joppy are two of Mosley's most important characters who try to survive in a society which withholds power from them and attempts to reject them from middle-class America, Daphne is the character Mosley uses to embody the anxieties of an individual desiring autonomy. She is also the only one out of all of Mosley's African American characters who grapples with multiple identities that allow her to drift from one class and racial identity to another. Most of the people she encounters think she is white, but Daphne's father is white and her mother is black. She suffers because she is mulatto and cannot fit into either polarized group to which society has designated its black and white citizens. This situation also makes her a valuable blank slate on which the men of Mosley's novel can project their ideas and desires. It is because she is mulatto and looks white that she is constantly being used as a tool of ascension by the African American men, and it is because she has African American blood that she is ultimately rejected by her wealthy fiancé of the elite. Easy sees her as a stepping stone. Joppy sees her as a sex object and a way to feel like he has overpowered the colonizer. And her fiancé sees her as a comforting object of his domain before he finds out about her racial background and decides to let her go off on her own.

In addition to having to cope with the colonization of her body and self, Daphne is forced by society to "pass." In order for Daphne to rise to the middle class or upper class, she must utilize her Caucasian features and not connect herself with African Americans, even though she enjoys their company more than she

does that of her fiancé's upper-class socialite group. One might assert that she is forced, for her own protection, to disconnect herself from all classes and races in order to obtain autonomy, freedom, and power as she is desired and raped because of her white face and the men's desire to attain the American dream, social acceptance, and middle-class status. Daphne views herself as an animal caged in at the zoo with a sign telling passersby what she is and who she is. This sign takes away her true identity and the power to be her own authentic self. Her status as a mulatto is like a sign telling the African American men desiring acceptance, middle-class status, power, and a temporary feeling of power over their oppressor to pursue her and obtain her. To white men, unless she denies her blackness, she is merely an object of lust. Even her father rapes her and sees her as an object, as she tells Easy that

> I'm not Daphne. My given name is Ruby Hanks and I was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana. I'm different than you because I'm two people. I'm her and I'm me. I never went to that zoo, she did. She was there and that's where she lost her father. He came home and fell in my bed about as many times as he fell in my mother's. (251)

In the African American man's quests for the American dream, Daphne suffers because of their attempts to regain identity by dominating her body, which represents the body of white America, the body of Fanon's theorized colonizer.

The pressure for the minority to pass is extraordinary. Ellison's invisible narrator hopes to gain the acceptance of his white leaders and comes to realize that it is impossible for him to do so in the racist environment in which he is forced to live. Mosley's character Easy tries to separate himself from the extremely racist environment of the South, and he tries to separate himself from his minority group, but he soon discovers that in order for the African American to survive and regain his or her identity, the African American must acknowledge who he or she is without any delusions because the reality of the American dream is not diluted, but harsh and fueled by money and prejudice. Daphne refuses to acknowledge her blackness as well as her whiteness in her quest for social acceptance, status, and autonomy. Easy's

friend Mouse tries to help him to see that he must accept who he is to the white middle class America as he says,

> "You just like Ruby," Mouse said.
> "What you say?"
> "She wanna be white. All those years people be tellin her how she light skinned and beautiful but all the time she knows that she can't have what white people have. So she pretend and then she lose it all. She can love a white man but all he can love is the white girl he think she is."
> "What's that got to do with me?"
> "That's just like you, Easy. You learn stuff and you be thinkin' like white men be thinkin'. You be thinkin that what's right fo' them is right fo' you. She look like she white and you think like you white. But brother you don't know that you both poor niggers. And a nigger ain't never gonna be happy 'less he accept what he is." (205)

Mouse also tries to convince Easy that he cannot fit into the American dream concocted by the colonizer, but indicates that there is a slightly altered dream that should belong to Easy.

Ralph Ellison and Walter Mosley illustrate the African American's struggle to gain power, social acceptance, and autonomy through the pursuit of the American dream. While in the end of Walter Mosley's novel, Easy has the upper hand over the racist police force of Los Angeles that oppresses him, he gains this upper hand through Daphne's wealthy and powerful fiancé, who is white and willing to help him. Even though Easy uses the money from the bloody escapade to become the official owner of his own house and start his own business, he has been exposed to the real American dream and its harsh reality. Walter Mosley and Ralph Ellison reveal the complexities that lie within those of a minority group searching for identity while pursuing a dream that is not meant to be for the minority. They also show how the minority might gain that dream which involves, as Fanon asserts, seeing the ugly truths of how and why the middle class was made in America's society (23).

In both works, the African American characters struggle to acquire the American dream, as in it lie power, social acceptance, and autonomy, and rise to their society's most treasured middle class. However, in their struggles to obtain the American dream, which comes with a white face, and rise to middle class status, they also grapple with their identities and the ones offered if they deny the blackness that society projects on their culture, identity, and skin color. Using a number of African American characters, Mosley and Ellison demonstrate their desperate aspirations for a dream that ultimately rejects them; in their desperation, they are willing to sacrifice their blackness for power, autonomy, and social acceptance.

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ERADICATING BLACKNESS: VIOLENCE AND HUMANITY IN THE WORKS OF RICHARD WRIGHT

by
Dwayne Marshall Baker[*]

Abstract

The purpose of this work is to highlight the ability to take control of one's own environment and to determine one's own existence as expressed by Richard Wright. In attempting to fulfill this objective, it will seek to challenge notions of individual as well as group identity, especially among blacks within the United States. Primarily, it attempts to answer how blacks identify themselves: whether through immediate and collective needs or based upon pre-determined or pre-destined ideologies. Wright, as the author, sees no good in the continued embracing of race–as it stems from pre-determined ideologies. Therefore, its main argument is that Wright views blackness and black culture as negative determinants of human existence.

Richard Wright's *The Outsider* is the primary work addressed as it most aptly addresses the need to re-create one's self. Here, Wright highlights the complete (r)evolution of the main character, Cross Damon, as he struggles to live out his own humanity. Similarly, Wright's *The Long Dream* is analyzed to indicate the inhumanity Wright perceives in the concept of race. In conjunction, the two works show how inhumane the concept of race is, and he seeks to eradicate it, replacing it with a new form of human relationships.

The Contemporary Importance of Richard Wright

Richard Wright has long been viewed as one of the leading United States black authors along the likes of Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Maya Angelou, and Margaret Walker. However, viewing Wright and any of these authors as such, in a sense, diminishes them and their work. Wright, Hughes, Baldwin, Angelou, Walker, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ralph Waldo Emerson are all truly American authors, each commenting on an aspect of U. S. culture, society, or politics.

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None of these authors' writings is wholly American, but each is in essence an American author.

Even though it can be argued that being a black author adds to the uniqueness of being American in ways that only black Americans can relate to, being black in America assumes a role that is not truly American. The black experience, or black American history along with other non-white ethnic histories, is thus often viewed as being subsets of American. I argue that Wright would not disagree. As Wright explains through the child characters in *The Long Dream*:

> "I'M AN AMERICAN!" Zeke thundered.
> "Nigger, you dreaming!" Sam preached. "You ain't no American! You live Jim Crow.… Try and git a room in that West End Hotel where Chris is working and them white folks'll lynch your black ass to hell and gone! You can't live like no American, 'cause you ain't no American! And you ain't no African neither! So what is you? Nothing! Just *nothing*! (32)

Even though being black in America assumes a role that is not truly American, the black American experience is essential to the development of America and should not be compartmentalized and relegated to a marginal role, but incorporated into the grand scheme of American thought.

Wright is important now because the racial dynamics relegating blacks to marginal roles he wrote about in the mid-twentieth century are still present in the twenty-first century: racism, hate, fear, the constant threat of violence–as a reaction from others' hate and because of one's own–and a complete lack of respect for human life. While blacks are not now being hunted down as viciously as in Jim Crow Mississippi without fear of reprisal, heinous murders and abuse due to racial woes still persist. Wright's characterizations of the hopelessness, despair, fear, and prejudice faced by blacks, though, can largely be felt today.

The only difference today, as compared to when Wright wrote, is that we are now in a better state of material development or better physical conditions: no segregated areas, access to jobs, better housing access, and the ability to date as one pleases in a

much higher regard. These developments provide the material base for people to live as human beings (Boggs 54). However, we still choose to segregate ourselves in one way or another: through housing preferences, relationships, or social activities. Why? It may be due to how past prejudicial ways have become psychologically ingrained within us. Wright recognized how relating to fellow human beings along racial lines could be detrimental to human growth. So Wright is relevant today because the underlying principle of his work aims to eradicate such inhumane relationships and, in so doing, to create a new way of being and interacting with one another.

The Outsider and *The Long Dream*

Even though the plots and literary aspects of *The Outsider* and *The Long Dream* are not necessarily in question, it may be important here to give brief overviews of each story. *The Outsider* introduces Cross Damon as the story's main protagonist: a brooding loner, deeply philosophical, and intuitive. Cross, a father of three, is a postal worker living in Chicago coming out of an unwanted marriage and into a new crisis with a pregnant under-aged girl, Dot. While still legally married to his wife, Gladys, Cross must find a way to stay out of jail for his adulterous and illegal affair. Dot, however, informs both Gladys and Cross's mother. In order to escape part of this ordeal, Gladys demands money from Cross, who has to take out a loan from his job.

Immediately after receiving his loan in cash, Cross is involved in a subway accident. He manages to escape the carnage unscathed and practically unnoticed by wedging himself free. He leaves his coat and postal identification on the body of a mangled, dead body. While he is at a bar immediately after the wreck, a news flash comes over the television which counts Cross as one of the dead.

Cross sees this as a chance to be free of his dread. He takes control of his own destiny now and seeks to embrace a new existence. He promptly hides out in a different part of Chicago for a brief spell before embarking by train to New York City. While hiding out in a whorehouse, however, he runs into an old friend of his, Joe Thomas. He decisively decides to kill Joe as Joe stands in the way of his freedom. Wright's narrator states, "His killing of Joe had been dictated by his fear of exposure" (*Outsider* 119).

Under a created identity in New York, Cross comes under the influence of communists. In carving out his newly formed existence, Cross considers the communists as stifling to the human spirit as are the religion of his mother and Gladys, the racism of Western society, and the industrial complex that he works within as a postal worker. Again, he yearns to be free without any controlling factor. While it can be argued that religion, race, and industry are guiding principles, Wright, through Cross, sees them as controlling and stifling. Cross therefore murders two individuals to be free, Gil Blount and Langley Herndon, a communist and a fascist, respectively.

Cross is also his own antagonist throughout the story. He constantly seeks a better way of existing than what is already in place. In attempting to gain his freedom, he is constantly confronted by barriers and past structures he views as repressive. He reacts violently to these structures, killing the characters most representative of them: Joe, indicative of his past and common blackness; Gil; Herndon; John Hilton, another communist; his mother–indirectly, and representative of religion; and his love interest Eva Blount–indirectly as well, as she takes her own life in finding out his past crimes, and indicative of Cross's future. Ultimately, he creates his own demise by denouncing social relationships and being too free.

The Long Dream is the last novel Wright published before his death. It focuses on the development, antagonisms, and maturation of Rex "Fishbelly" Tucker in Clintonville, Mississippi. The town backdrop can be viewed as representative of many Mississippi towns at this time: split between black and white with whites controlling both their own area and blacks' actions and with a main street separating the two. It is a much more direct and accessible work than the deeply philosophical and introspective *The Outsider.*

One individual who manages to create an identity for himself in this novel is Fishbelly's father, Tyree Tucker. Tyree owns a funeral parlor, real estate, and vice operations and establishments throughout Clintonville's black section. His wealth largely stems from black death, black exploitation, and his being exploited by whites.

Wright begins this novel detailing Fish's experiences of being black and his attempts to understand his environment. Fish

later comes under his father's wing whereby Tyree shows him the ways in which blacks are forced to live and how they attempt to exist in an area defined by white wants. After one of Tyree's properties, a place of vice, goes up in flames, killing forty-two people due to negligence, the white police chief, who has received a cut of the profits for allowing the establishment to operate, attempts to silence Tyree. Tyree threatens to out the chief and is murdered. Taking Tyree's place, Fishbelly assumes Tyree's role and comes under intense scrutiny from the chief. In attempting to recover damaging evidence of his criminal involvement that Tyree left behind, Fish is imprisoned. Instead of facing the chief head-on and continuing to become wealthy from Clintonville's blacks, Fish leaves this world of black-white relations behind and flees to France to embrace a new form of existence.

Eradicating Blackness

By "eradicating blackness," Wright can be understood as attempting to get rid of black culture in America. He views this culture as detrimental and devoid of many redeeming factors necessary for humankind to progress. In so doing, that is, stripping black people of their blackness that has been created through racism–their culture–a new more humane way of being emerges out of necessity. The purging of one's culture, then, must be violent, for Wright, since it is as painful and fearful as the body's getting rid of an illness.

This purging can come through violently, by chance, and a person must seize the opportunity. Cross seizes his opportunity after his "death" from the subway accident: "All of his life he had been hankering after his personal freedom, and now freedom was knocking at his door, begging him to come in…. It was up to him to *make* it work" (*Outsider* 84-85).

The Dependence of Blackness

Wright is attacking not only blackness, but whiteness as well. Blackness is not and cannot be an independent entity. Blackness can only be possible in relation to something else: whiteness. These two forces are essentially antagonistic. They cannot be intertwined to form a cohesive whole without getting rid of some essential element of each. To combine them means to create something new, something different than the two elements.

In order to combine them and create something new, the focus must be on some other element of their existence.

The human identity transcends such color notions. Therefore, Wright, in accordance with Frantz Fanon, proposes to extricate the black from the black man (Fanon 10). He aims to get rid of compartmentalization or divisions, the main and foundational element making oppression and racism possible. I define compartmentalization as the separating and bracketing off of one people based on the ideologies of another group to justify its own privileged status.

According to Fanon, the black man wants to be white because whiteness is a measure of humanity. Ironically, the white man has to continue to embrace and reaffirm his whiteness by negating the humanity of the black man in order for him, the white man, to appear human. The white man has to measure his humanity in some particular way. The black man, in the same way, looks toward the white man for approval and acceptance. Blackness is thereby the child of whiteness. The black man will one day grow into the white man. Fanon explicitly expresses this point when he states: "For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white" (12).

For Wright, this destiny is the privileged status that whites can give to blacks: how well blacks can materially exist within white, Western society. Blacks can hold an identity only in their relation to whites. Black's lives, as often pointed out by Wright, extend from birth to whites or white institutions: jail for Bigger Thomas, the protagonist of his novel *Native Son*, jail for Fishbelly, and communism or religion for Cross Damon.

Blacks' Internalization of Racism

The black-white oppressive relationship is also internalized by blacks, whereby they create distinctions of their own. In a privileged position as Tyree's son, Fishbelly is often told of his status: "His parents had cautioned him against these roustabouts. 'Son, they are your *color*, but they ain't your *kind*,' his mother had told him" (*Long Dream* 16; author's emphasis). Similarly, Wright points out how blacks marginalize homosexuals as well. After Fishbelly and his friends attack an effeminate boy who wants to play baseball with them, the boys begin to question their past actions:

> "Hell, mebbe we oughtn't've done that." Tony was regretful.
>
> "But when we tell 'im to go 'way, he won't go," Fishbelly argued in self-justification.
>
> "We treat 'im like the white folks treat us," Zeke mumbled with a self-accusative laugh….
>
> "Why you reckon he acts like a girl?" Fishbelly asked….
>
> "Mebbe he can't…. Mebbe it's like being black," Sam said….
>
> "But he ought to stay 'way from us," Fishbelly said.
>
> "That's just what the white folks say about us," Sam told him. (37)

Wright is aware of and highlights how blacks internalize and act in accordance with white oppression.

Additionally, in discriminating against others after being discriminated against, blacks redistribute the oppressive system. James Boggs notes this specifically when he writes:

> At the same time the class society has constantly encouraged the exploited to attempt to rise out of their class and themselves become exploiters of other groupings and finally of their own people. The struggle to rid themselves and each other of this accumulated corruption is going to be more painful and violent than any struggles over purely economic grievances have been or are likely to be. (45)

Blacks look towards white norms as standard. With Cross Damon, Wright focuses on a more introspective method, dismissing outsiders and allowing for personal responsibility in determining one's own existence. Doing so does not recreate the oppressive system so loathed by the oppressed. Instead, it dismisses it outright.

Creating the Victim

In the section "The Negro and Hegel" of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon states: "At the foundation of Hegelian dialectic there

is an absolute reciprocity which must be emphasized" (217). The master makes the slave just as the slave makes the master. The slave must recognize the master *as* the master in order for the master to *be* the master: "It is on that other being, on recognition by that other being, that his own human worth and reality depend" (Fanon 217). The slave and master form two distinct identities which are substantiated on the one's recognition of the other. Therefore, each comes to conform to the prescribed roles of the slave or master in order to be recognized.

For Fanon, however, there is no reciprocity. The master makes the slave, and any recognition the slave receives is recognition the master grants. Fanon writes, "Historically, the Negro steeped in the inessentiality of servitude was set free by his master" (219). The Negro took no part in his freedom because, if slaves cease to exist, so do masters.

Furthermore, for Fanon, "The Negro is a slave who has been allowed to assume the attitude of a master. The white man is a master who has allowed his slaves to eat at his table" (219). The Negro still remains a slave, only in a different context. Even though the material situation has changed, the relationship has not. Fanon and Wright aim to destroy this relationship outright. In the quest for liberation, in the quest to be human, the oppressed must not aim their final goal at whiteness or towards an affirmation of blackness. They must aim it at forming the best existence based on basic human needs.

Similarly, Wright views blacks as presenting themselves as victims: whether to appease whites or to gain some practical benefit. For him, to stop being a victim also means the eradication of the assailant. He expresses this point most vividly in explaining how, when picked up by the police for trespassing, the police attempt to torture Fishbelly instead of Sam. Fishbelly understands why: "they had not so much selected him as he had presented himself as a victim" (*Long Dream* 127). For Wright to acknowledge Fishbelly's presenting himself as such, then, Fishbelly also has the ability to present himself in another way. Yet this acting as inferior is correlative of a perceived notion of superiority. A diminishing of one can diminish the other.

For Wright, then, getting rid of blackness also entails getting rid of whiteness. Yet Wright views blackness not wholly as being formed by whiteness but also as actively embracing

blackness as well. As such, his writing consciously attributes an active consciousness to blacks. When faced with jail time, Tyree Tucker turns into a cowering, crying, stereotypical Negro in order to appeal to the police chief's sense of how a Negro should act. Equally, when Cross attempts to extract a birth certificate from white officials, he also acts as a bumbling, incompetent Negro to appeal to whites' perceptions. They are so amused with his ignorance that they cannot conceive that this black man could be smart enough to assume someone else's identity. However, Wright questions whether smiling and grinning is actually winning or just going along (*Long Dream* 150).

It is not as if blacks are merely unconsciously reacting to whites with their own culture, but they make a conscious effort to continue this culture that was once formed due to racial oppression. To get rid of this culture largely derived from white injustice is to also get rid of white culture. By refusing to be the oppressed, one in turn gets rid of the oppressor, as the oppressor no longer has anyone to oppress.

What is Meant by Blackness?

By blackness, we can understand Wright to refer to black culture which governs the lives of blacks. Wright views this culture as being devoid of meaning and being somewhat of a listless wandering. Black culture, also, is a reaction to white oppression. It is formed by serving as a release valve for the oppression faced by blacks from whites. It helps blacks cope with their environments instead of taking control of their environments.

What sets Wright apart, however, is his ability to show the activity of blacks instead of just reporting on their condition.[**] He shows activity instead of passivity through his writings of how black characters consciously embrace their blackness when faced with whiteness in order to better their current, immediate situations. However, this is not to say that these forms of activity exist independently; rather, Wright shows the overt reactions in order to indicate the ridiculousness of embracing blackness or the perception of it.

[**] Like Langston Hughes' Jesse B. Semple character or Baldwin's characters in *Go Tell It on the Mountain.*

Religion and Blackness

Even though he does show and advocate for blacks to control their own environments, Wright also indicates how black culture is reactionary, traditional, meek, and conservative. These qualities develop due to blacks' practicing religion. Wright puts forth negative views of religion through a few choice female characters: from *The Outsider*, Cross Damon's mother, Cross's ex- or estranged wife Gladys, and Sarah, and, from *The Long Dream*, Fishbelly's mother, Emma.

Cross's mother lives her life, according to Cross, as if she is slowly decaying without having anything to look forward to: "he walked past her into a tiny, shabby room that smelled of a sweetish odor of decaying flesh that seems to cling to the aged who are slowly dying while still living" (*Outsider* 19). This slow death of a life causes her to grieve "over the thwarted hopes that had driven her into the arms of religion for the sake of her sanity" (21).

The dependence that religion creates also expresses itself in other regards: namely in man-woman and black-white relationships. When initially courting Gladys, Cross becomes frustrated at her passivity towards whites:

> "Look, buck up." He tried to put some backbone in her. "Don't let the mere existence of these people scare you."
> "They think they're *something* and we're *nothing*," she muttered.
> "It's up to us to make ourselves something," he argued. "A man creates himself…."
> "You are a *man*," she said simply.
> He understood now; it was the helplessness of dependence that made her fret so. Men made themselves and women were made only through men. (*Outsider* 51)

Hers is a meekness that religion has instilled in Gladys by showing her that there is an outside force governing her existence. For Wright, however, each individual creates his or her own existence. Wright shows religion to be detrimental to the human experience. In *White Man, Listen!* Wright states:

> I'm numbed and appalled when I know that millions

of men in Asia and Africa assign more reality to their dead fathers than to the crying claims of their daily lives: poverty, political degradation, illness, ignorance, etc…. Indeed, the teeming religions gripping the minds and consciousness of Asians and Africans offend me. I can conceive of no identification with such mystical visions of life that freeze millions in static degradation, no matter how emotionally satisfying such degradation seems to those who wallow in it. (80)

Even though Wright wrote these lines for a global audience, he easily relates this to the black experience. Whatever satisfaction religion may give, dealing with the most immediate problems affecting the human condition is much more important.

It seems apparent that Wright is not atheistic, because he does not necessarily denounce God. Religion stifles humans due to its subjugation of them, making their lives meaningful only through a book and not through their own desires, wants, and needs. It would be doing a disservice to Wright to refer to him as an atheist because the central focus of both atheists and believers is God. The crux of both of their arguments centers on God's existence and hence on God itself. Wright neither affirms nor denies God. He dismisses the notion of God and instead focuses on human desires, wants, and needs as life's guiding principles. As Wright notes through the district attorney Houston in *The Outsider*, "'Men argue about not believing in God and the mere act of doing so makes them believers. It is only when they don't feel the need to deny Him that they really don't believe in Him'" (424). Houston further goes on to note that Cross could do anything, "'Not in a towering rage, not to save falling mankind, not to establish social justice, not for glory…. But just because you happen to feel like that one day…. You are a free man'" (424).

Wright, however, sees religion as necessary for certain individuals to become more human as they are too weak to do so on their own. Even still, Wright insists that some people need religion because they cannot find a purpose otherwise. When speaking to the communist Blimin, Cross expresses this view:

They need religion. All right; let them have it. What harm does it do? And it does make for a greater measure of social stability. But I object if somebody grabs me when I'm a defenseless child and injects into me a sedative–the power of which lasts for a lifetime!–which no one would ever be able to tell if I'd ever need it or not! (360)

People should have the ability to determine whether or not they want to make religion one of their guiding life principles instead of having it thrust upon them. Once it is thrust upon them at ages when children are just learning the basics of life, like speaking and walking, religion (and this can be extended to other ideologies like race) becomes as ingrained in them as something inherent within human beings. Instead, the ability to determine their own existence and embrace their human qualities should be thrust upon them first.

Religion seeks to control, while Wright seeks to have each human control existence as each sees fit. Being free also implies that God does not have an intelligent design and that things simply happen based on human intervention. After walking out of the subway wreckage virtually unscathed, Wright points out through his narrator: "To say that he had been 'spared' implied that some God was watching over him, and he did not believe that. It was simply the way the dice had rolled" (79).

Embracing the Future

The material development of modern industrial cities has made Christian morality increasingly diminish in importance. Once humans die, the only things left are their pure desires. As Wright expresses:

Modern man sleeps in the myths of the Greeks and the Jews. Those myths are now dying in his head and in his heart. They can no longer serve him. When they are really gone, those myths, *man* returns. Ancient man…. And what's there to guide him? Nothing at all but his own desires, which would be his only values. (*Outsider* 316)

Getting rid of the past defining characteristics of particular cultures and creating one's own, Wright portrays certain characters

with a god-like quality. "God-like" refers to the ability for humans to control their existence, to be absolutely free, and to have the ability to subjectively view the world in which they exist. For example, in *The Outsider* Wright describes a scene where Cross tosses money out of an eleventh-floor window to passersby below, just to see them dive ant-like for the money. Cross views their upturned faces looking for falling money as praying, and "Cross said that that was the only time he ever felt like God" (5). Also, while watching his "funeral," Cross, in a moment of transcendence, watches at a distance his former family and loved ones weep for him (97-98).

At the same time, Wright views the past as somewhat perplexing and confusing to him personally. He constantly questions the logic behind traditions and certain actions. Since the past is so ambivalent, then one must aim to solidify the future. Cross knows this as well: "Could he imagine a past that would fit in with his present personality? Was there more than one way in which one could account for oneself? ... If he could not figure out anything about the past, then maybe it was the future that must determine what and who he was to be" (*Outsider* 87).

Breaking with the past and embracing a future, one breaks with oneself as well. For Cross, "Only the future must loom before him so magnetically that it could condition his present and give him those hours and days out of which he could build a new past" (*Outsider* 90). Breaking with the past, one does not have to adhere to traditions that may or may not be beneficial. Whatever they are or were, they are obsolete when embracing a new future.

Black Solidarity

Black solidarity, as well, has no immediate benefit for blacks. As expressed in *The Outsider*: "Cross knew that most whites never dreamed that their behavior toward Negroes had bred in them [Negroes], especially when they were in the presence of whites, a defensive solidarity that had, except for latent white hostility, no valid reason for being" (*Outsider* 120). This solidarity is used merely as a tool to hold and return hate.

While Wright highlights black solidarity for certain problems, he also exposes the myth of black solidarity during times of self preservation. In *The Long Dream*, after being framed and led into police custody for attacking a white woman, Fishbelly

sees his neighbors ignore him as one of their own. These are the same people who weeks before have shared with him their life stories (375). Again, basing human connections upon ideas that debase human emotions does not cause human beings to progress.

The same sense of empty collectiveness applies to religion. Wright views religion, not necessarily as a way to bring solidarity, but as a way to dismiss the individual. The emphasis on the collective church identity hinders church members from embracing their own individual wants and desires which stem from within themselves. It similarly rejects humans' natural inclination towards curiosity. If humans' lives are mapped out by some divine force, then the novelties of life experiences are meaningless. Religion, then, allows its followers to reject "from their hearts the pathos of living, purging their consciousness of that perilous subjective tension that spells the humanity of man" (Wright, *Outsider* 188).

Race, religion, and in the case of *The Outsider*, political affiliations, all serve to control people in one way or another. Even though they stifle human freedom, Wright ponders why certain people choose to be followers and others do not: "As Cross descended the stairs he wondered why some men wanted to be free and some did not, why some needed freedom and others did not even feel its loss when they did not have it" (193). All three highlight solidarity; however, this solidarity is based upon a denunciation of the individual human spirit.

What, Then, Is Meant by Being Human?

Throughout both *The Outsider* and *The Long Dream* Wright emphasizes the notion of being human. He consistently denounces black culture as not being able to truly attain levels of human development. For Wright, being human entails embracing the basic human thoughts, emotions, wants, needs, and desires without hindrance. One of the most basic human emotions that comes across in Wright's work–whether through its negation or its absence–is equality. Considering that black and white are inherently different, they cannot be equal. Therefore, using racial means to achieve this sense of equality is inadequate. There can only be true equality as human beings, and using true human means is the most adequate way to achieve this sense of equality.

Being human, for Wright, entails determining one's own purpose while being responsible for one's own actions and

respecting others' actions and desires. Being human involves being free enough to introspectively figure out what makes one truly happy and acting upon those notions. Expressed through Cross's thoughts, Wright writes, "[T]hat all men were free was the fondest and deepest conviction of his life. And his acting upon this wild plan would be but an expression of his perfect freedom. He would do with himself what he would, what he liked" (*Outsider* 87).

Being human also entails a deep level of responsibility. According to Wright:

> Cross had to discover what was good or evil through his own actions, which were more exacting than the edicts of any God because it was he alone who had to bear the brunt of their consequences with a sense of absoluteness made intolerable by knowing that this life of his was all he had and would ever have. For him there was no grace or mercy if he failed. (123)

This is a huge responsibility. In stepping into an already made world, such as blackness or Christianity, the burden of responsibility is lifted from one's own shoulders (334). In creating one's own existence and an existence for others, the world now becomes much more difficult to exist in.

Existing, however, is the essence of life for Wright, especially in *The Outsider*. The reason for life is found in the human emotions and relationships only within existence itself. These experiences of existence are what we make of it. Being human also means embracing love. "Love," for Wright, strives "creatively toward days yet to come" (328).

The Outsider, as a novel, details existential philosophy most aptly put forth by Jean-Paul Sartre. Mainly, it highlights the need for personal responsibility:

> Existentialism maintains that in man, and man alone, existence precedes essence. This simply means that man first is, and only subsequently is this or that. In a word, man must create his one essence: it is in throwing himself into the world, suffering there, struggling there, that he gradually

defines himself. And the definition always remains open-ended: we cannot say what this man is before he dies, or what mankind is before it has disappeared. (Sartre qtd. in Abdurrahman 25)

Being responsible entails acting based on one's own moral desires and facing the consequences, both good and bad, of those actions. Thus only through establishing oneself in the world can one determine himself or herself a human.

Other Options Besides Blackness

Wright tries to find basic human qualities that could bind people. In his denunciation of black culture, he does not necessarily mean that whiteness is prototypical of humanity. Quite the contrary, whites, due to their whiteness, that is the racial manifestations that create their fears and injustices against blacks, are without it as well. So, instead of embracing blackness, or whiteness, Wright attempts to forge a new way of being that embraces our human desires. Race, for Wright, is not an inherent human quality.

At the same time that people embrace black culture, embrace the struggles, and fight against racism, and in turn strengthen black culture, they are also causing the weakening of black people's position–socially, economically, and politically–within America. This is not necessarily a call for conformity of blacks. Nor is it a call to embrace white America. The strengthening of black culture causes the future internal destruction of this same culture because it embraces non-human qualities to produce better human beings.

The problem of black culture, in interpreting Wright, arises because blacks see blackness as a means to an end and as the end goal. The end goal, for Wright, should be the development of more complete human beings. Something as un-human as the destruction and hindrance of true human equality, emotions, wants, needs, and desires as are race, religion, or selfish political agendas cannot form more complete human beings.

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"HER OWN SENSE OF RIGHT": CIVIL WAR RHETORIC AND SOUTHERN WOMEN

by
J. Matthew Ward[*]

Abstract

This essay addresses three central aspects of an evolving Southern female paradigm: the principle of diaries as personal spaces of empowerment, the rhetoric of traditional and transgressive duality within the diaries themselves, and even the apparel of Southern women as an extension of these concepts. As reference materials, this project emphasizes a few Southern female diaries as primary sources, and several secondary sources which discuss the changing wartime roles of women. Primary sources are the well known journal of Kate Cumming and an obscure diary by Elizabeth Christie Brown to rhetorically contrast a radical independence against a cursory nationalism in wartime gender roles. The two secondary sources are Drew Gilpin Faust's formative book *Mothers of Invention* and scholar Kimberly Harrison's rhetorical study of Southern female wartime diarists and the foundation of radical gender roles, "Rhetorical Rehearsals: The Construction of Ethos in Confederate Women's Civil War Diaries."

Introduction

Kate Cumming was born in Scotland in 1830, moved to Mobile, Alabama with her family, and against the wishes of her parents, elected to become a nurse in confederate hospitals. She traveled throughout the Deep South, though the majority of her service was in Georgia, and she published her journal the year after the war. Elizabeth Christie Brown resided in Natchez, Mississippi during the war, did no volunteer work at all, and kept only a partial diary through the year of 1863, which reveals none of the ardor Cumming has for altered gender roles. Both share an emphatic devotion to the Southern Cause, yet display profoundly different rhetorical dynamics to embody their concepts.

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"For most…southern ladies," Drew Gilpin Faust explains, "the very act of binding together as women marked a new departure" from the traditional social place of women (23). Kimberly Harrison argues that diaries literally gave voice to "new rhetorical roles, redefining appropriate feminine rhetoric" (259). Women actively participated in shaping what occurred around them, redefining themselves in the context of war. Personal rhetoric thus became an expression of a new feminine identity which only solidified as the former Southern society dissolved.

Emerging Paradigm

In late 1863, a companion nurse of Kate Cumming on the staff of a confederate hospital received a letter from a family member imploring her to leave the hospital because "it is no place for a refined, modest young lady" (Cumming 178). Exasperated, Cumming declared, "I am thoroughly disgusted with this kind of talk. When will our people cease to look on the surface of things?" (178). She was expressing her own sentiments of female independence and ability, while challenging the traditional gender roles of Southern society. Historians agree that "[a]rchetypal southern womanhood mandated modesty, domesticity, purity, delicacy, refinement, gentility, and subordination" (Wells 409). Facing such conventionalism, Kate Cumming, like so many Southern women, urgently searched for solid ground on which to plant herself by taking up her pen in a revolutionary rhetorical manner and recording her feelings, opinions, and fears in her journal. The rhetoric of Southern women not only reflected the birth of new selves in an evolving culture, but it also documented the struggle to maintain the appropriate social criteria within a society that was systematically destroyed by war, creating a conflicted female persona which dueled between the desire for greater expression and the lingering influence of the traditional social structure. When she contemplated the traditional constraints of female delicacy which discouraged her participation in events, Cumming applauded the women with "the moral courage they have in braving public opinion" (Cumming 178). She went on to say, "there is no position in the world a woman can occupy, no matter how high or exalted it may be, for which I would exchange the one I have" in the hospitals, and therefore, the public sphere (178-79). She did not ask her young companion to stay on in the

hospital, but recorded "her own sense of right has determined her to do so" (179). With these words, as with so many others, she had created on paper the ethos of the new Southern woman. Rhetoric, in its diverse forms throughout the war, would become the personal cathartic and dominant expression of this emerging paradigm of female participation.

Personal Spaces of Empowerment

Yet while Cumming uses her diary to appropriate a new identity that is both socially suitable and productive for the cause, she tempers her rhetoric with traditional verbiage, revealing that her newly secured sense of person was still susceptible to pre-war principles of docility. In this way, it can be just as difficult for the modern historian as it was for Southern women to articulate the subtle and dramatic distinctions between traditional women's roles, the radical transformations of the war, and how women were to balance their place between the two. For many Southern women such as Cumming, they certainly understood their expected role, yet felt compelled by patriotism to step outside that domestic sphere to more ambitious public capacities, yet not so much as to grossly violate social convention, but yet again not so little as to neglect their duty to the struggling Confederate nation. Their frustration with society and personal duty has been inherited by contemporary scholars who must navigate through the many conflicting personal and rhetorical displays of propriety and patriotism in order to establish an understanding of the highly fluid world of the wartime Southern woman.

First we must understand the importance of diaries themselves. "As women faced the dangers and deprivations of war," Harrison stresses, "they turned to their diaries to respond, using personal writing to rehearse and construct an effective ethos," which allowed them to operate effectively within both traditional social boundaries and drastic wartime changes (243). Over time, "[b]y practicing 'self-rhetorics,' diarists prepared themselves to speak and act effectively in the contexts of war" (243). These "self-rhetorics" were often both personal and political in origin. Thus women frequently bolstered their traditional condition with extravagant patriotism and Christian rhetoric which shielded a nascent radical individuality.

Women of both traditional and transgressive ideological persuasions used the rhetoric of patriotism, Christian duty, and national unity to inspire and justify themselves. Harrison argues that, "by extending the concept of audience to the writer herself, we gain insight into how women negotiated wartime dangers by constructing acceptable public roles for themselves in their diaries" (245-46). Women adapted to the war through this inward process and created a space for themselves within the predominant male social construct. This duality of traditional gender roles versus actions of patriotism and self preservation became an intense force within Southern women. They turned to diaries in which to construct their psychology, since "[t]he personal spaces of…diaries provided room for [what Harrison labels] rhetorical rehearsals and allowed women to persuade themselves that they could and should take on the new roles thrust upon them. Once they were convinced they were acting and speaking properly, they could present to their public–whether family, local community, or enemy soldiers–an ethos that accounted for the often conflicting demands of wartime culture" (260).

Traditional and Transgressive Duality

However, the rhetoric of Southern women demonstrates the duality of their ideals. The diaries of Southern women evidence common themes of "self-rhetorics," primarily national unity and gender equality. The idea of social equality was radical, but as Cumming wrote, "we, like the men, have become philosophers. War is a great leveler, and makes philosophers of us, when nothing else will. It astonishes me to see how the men adapt themselves to circumstances. The men in the kitchen," she added, "act as if that was their place, and always had been" (Cumming 98). This is a remarkable example of gender reversal in the war. For Cumming, desiring to become callous was a need to be more like the hardened male veterans around her. She implored her readers, "Let us cease to live on the surface; let us do and dare–remembering, if we are true to ourselves, the world will be true to us" (5). In urging the society around her to abandon its complacency and embrace a fresh intrinsic character, she is demonstrating her own newly discovered sense of worth and ability. For instance, an emphatic Cumming once declared, "I sometimes think it is such a pity, that

women are not allowed to hold office, as they seem to know exactly how things should be managed" (188).

Kate Cumming reiterated the growing autonomy of the Southern woman when she described her companion in nursing who was urged to leave the hospital by a relative. The daughter of a wealthy planter, she, "like many of the rest of our ladies, is determined to be independent of foreign manufacture. She has three homespun dresses of different colors, which she manufactured herself, out of...raw cotton. She has also knitted a number of pairs of socks for the soldiers" (187). Cumming seems to add this last sentence for emphasis, noting that a true Southern woman does not place her own vanity above the needs of the country. Though she is independent, making her own clothes, she must create them in an acceptable manner which still allows her to fit into society, thus emphasizing the complex duality of the Southern female persona.

Cumming later demonstrates the same principle of duality by equating women's rights with the larger social understanding of duty. "If the Christian, high-toned, and educated women of our land shirk their duty, why others have to do it for them," she wrote, "It is useless to say the surgeons will not allow us; we have our rights, and if asserted properly will get them. This is our right, and ours alone" (65). Here, while using traditional depictions of women's roles, she ardently defends the expanding nature of women which the war was quickly making necessary. For Cumming and many others, personal conflict arose due to the presence of contradictory expectations: tradition meant duty, and duty meant the breaking of tradition. Cumming, indeed, had little patience for anything other than the strictest sense of duty. While she often applauded the strength and integrity of women in the hospital, many more times she reprimanded Southern women for their reluctance to become involved. In the fall of 1862, after the Confederate Congress officially sanctioned women in the hospitals, Cumming felt obligated to inquire in her diary a year later, "Are the women of the South going into the hospitals? I am afraid candor will compel me to say they are not! It is not respectable, and requires too constant attention, and a hospital has none of the comforts of home!" (136). Cumming realized that, "[w]hile southern women performed essentially feminine tasks, they did so outside of the patriarchal temporality of the Old South.

Men were no longer the controlling force in southern nurses' lives" (Wells 417). This sense of autonomy was invigorating and inspirational to women like Cumming.

Not all women shared this enthusiasm for new wartime gender roles, however. Harrison points out being a nurse entailed working outside the home, making consequential decisions, confronting male authority figures, and often being intimate with male bodies. Twenty-one year old Elizabeth Christie Brown of Natchez, Mississippi, exemplified no enthusiasm in being associated with these controversial actions. Her diary displays typical Southern female support for the cause and the lack of personal anxiety (although not complete boredom) of many women. It was considered the Southern woman's place to inspire what Faust describes as "a high-souled, self-sacrificing patriotism, which diffuse[d] an aroma of virtue through Society" (Faust 22). Clearly Elizabeth Brown took that role seriously, while others maintained a devotion to the cause which was decidedly more personal and less conventional and self-absorbed. Numerous Brown entries describe her daily readings of Scripture and Shakespeare, her maintenance of household decoration and gardening, and suitable expressions of patriotism. The traditional wartime value construct enabled her to evaluate the patriotism of her surrounding society. When a neighbor's child died, she wrote, "I thought it seemed like a judgement on the family for their being untrue to their native land, for Father & Son were both taken since their making friends with their countrys [*sic*] enemy" (Brown 38). Cumming would have found such a statement repulsive and unwholesome. But Brown's traditional understanding of her role in wartime society dictated no more than an armchair patriotism. Her Southern spirit is genuine, yet perfunctory. Nevertheless, her strict maintenance of her pre-war image, properly punctuated with progressive rhetorical demonstrations of Confederate loyalty, is yet another example of dual female sentiment.

Wartime Apparel of Southern Women

How women dressed themselves and addressed wartime society was also a self-rhetoric. Homespun clothing developed as a reflection of their dedication to the Southern cause. This improvised custom is a demonstration of a new female self expression, yet, even as a self text, it was still vulnerable to

popular consent. Soon therefore, anything other than homespun demanded an explanation to the community at large. Cumming related, "it is a kind of disgrace to have plenty of clothes. If any one has on a new silk or calico dress, kid gloves, or any thing that is foreign, they have to give an account of how they came by it" (Cumming 249). While their journals offered secluded opportunities to vocalize themselves as author and audience, their dress represented a public, unified message to themselves and society. From reluctant pre-war selves, they elicited new, public, vocal identities. In this way, the private expression of writing became the public rhetoric of transformation.

Conclusion

Throughout the Civil War, the power of words, usually composed in secrecy, by Southern women became the fertile ground upon which they shaped new selves. Though their rhetoric was often clouded with patriotic justifications and moral musings, it still helped them create an ethos which emboldened them to action. While Cumming was clearly willing to espouse the new identity the war allowed her to foster, Brown's conventional social disposition reveals the diffidence many other Southern women displayed toward radical transformation. Still, regardless of their response, as the war reached into every aspect of their lives, women adapted to the growing equality the conflict forced on their society. Kate Cumming wrote in conclusion to her extensive diary, "A change must pass over every political and social idea, custom, and relation" (307). Enduring such changes during wartime only speaks to the powerful convictions which drove these women, whether they were (in Brown's case) the social constructs which restricted them or (as in Cumming's example) new gender roles which empowered them. Regardless of the hardships which Confederate women faced, their words remain a testament of their strength, courage, and even absolute frustration with a world they often did not desire or comprehend.

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THE PROBLEM WITH HAPPILY EVER AFTER: THE SUBVERSION OF MOTIFS IN EUDORA WELTY'S *THE ROBBER BRIDEGROOM*

by
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Abstract

This paper explores Eudora Welty's use of allusion in her novel *The Robber Bridegroom*. Included is analysis of popular fairy tales such as "Cinderella," "Snow White," the Grimms' "The Robber Bridegroom," and the Hellenic myth of Cupid and Psyche, all of which appear in Welty's novel. Also referenced are scholarly articles about the effect that fairy tales have on gender expectations. Welty alludes to these tales to call attention to the patriarchal conventions embedded within them through their popular motifs. These elements–or motifs–include the idea of physical beauty, internal beauty, survival, and love, which all contribute to traditional happily-ever-after endings.

Welty calls attention to these patriarchal ideas by having her main character, Rosalind, and Rosalind's evil stepmother, Salome, go beyond their archetypes. Salome, as expected, is punished with death, not by her stepdaughter, but because of her open defiance to patriarchal culture. Conversely, Rosamond survives the story, despite having the same personality traits as her stepmother, because she is a liar and is adept at pretending to be something she is not. Thus she fails to adhere to the ideas that should promote a successful ending (Happily Ever After), and yet she still has a positive ending to her story.

Introduction

A historical fairy tale based in Natchez, Mississippi during the late eighteenth century, Eudora Welty's *The Robber Bridegroom* is ingeniously wedged between tradition and reform. Based in a time of significant historical transition and social change, Welty's novel has a sense of duality. On the surface, her novel is a whimsical parody of the Grimm brothers' "The Robber Bridegroom" with allusions to other popular fairy tales and myths

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thrown in seemingly haphazardly. However, this tale is not innocent. In fact, the word *innocent* is intended to "shine like a cautionary blinker to what lies on the road ahead" (Welty, "Fairy Tale of Natchez" 301).

Because of Welty's extensive knowledge of folk and fairy tales, it is feasible that she noticed a disturbing pattern within fairy tales, particularly those in the canon. In the canon, there is a propensity to depict characters in roles limited by sex, to place judgments on what is acceptable within prescribed gender roles, and to punish those who live outside these patriarchal ideals. Welty possibly wished to draw attention to this unsettling pattern, because of the didactic nature of fairy tales. A major reason that fairy tales have endured the test of time is because they have a "pervasive power," according to Linda Parsons (134). Fairy tale motifs have influenced literature and culture since the beginnings of literature, and in particular, they have a strong influence on women's ideals of self-worth, identity, and love. Essentially, fairy tales are "sites for the construction of appropriate gendered behavior" (Parsons 135).

Within *The Robber Bridegroom,* Welty uses allusion to challenge the expectations of those familiar with these tales and to call attention to the coercive affect they have on female acculturation. As Harriet Pollack states, Welty "silently comment[s] on the source fictions, and in a sense, deconstruct[s] them" (314). Welty's intention is to comment not only on the fictions to which she alludes, but also on the entire fairy tale genre, particularly the tales popularized by the Grimm brothers and Charles Perrault. Welty wishes to call attention to the gender-related messages implied in these beloved folk and fairy tales, and she does this through allusion. As Marilyn Arnold states, Welty's allusions are meaningful:

> Using what appears on the surface to be standard characters and motifs, Welty recreates standard expectations in the reader; but she does not fulfill them. Instead, she subverts, reverses, burlesques, and just generally scatters asunder the fairy tale sacrosanct notions about the agenda for a happily-ever-after living. (qtd. in Habeeb 56)

In essence, Welty alludes to these fairy tales within the canon specifically, because "the fairy tales that form our popular canon have been edited and selected to reflect and reproduce patriarchal values" (Parsons 137). Welty possibly manipulates common themes, ideas, and motifs within these fairy tales with the intention of revealing and commenting on the messages embedded within them. The concepts highlighted are the patriarchal ideas of beauty, the power beauty has over women both good and bad, and the ritual of punishment versus rewards for these women. These motifs are particularly important because they directly relate to the idea of achieving happily ever after.

The Beautiful Maiden

The "beautiful maiden" motif is perhaps the most recognized and important trope in fairy tales. In these tales, "a high premium is based on beauty" (Parsons 137). By simply examining the initial descriptions of fairy tale heroines, the importance of beauty is apparent. In Perrault's "Cinderella," the titular character is described as being "a thousand times prettier" than her sisters ("Cinderella" 34). In the Grimms' "Snow White," the young girl is described as being "as beautiful as the bright day" ("Snow White" 83). In the Grimms' version of "The Robber Bridegroom," the only relevant information about the miller's daughter is that she is beautiful and that she is of age to marry. Similarly, in Apuleius's "Cupid and Psyche," Psyche's beauty is so wonderful that "the poverty of language is unable to express its due praise" (115). Likewise, in Welty's tale, Rosamond is introduced in similar hyperbolic terms, but only with the intention of deconstructing this one-dimensional image afterward.

The girls of myth and folk tale, unlike their male counterparts, do not receive strength, knowledge, or courage from their helpers, but instead receive beauty. This suggests that "when the heroine is beautiful she need not do anything to merit being chosen by the prince; she is chosen simply because she is beautiful" (Parsons 137). As Parsons states, because fairy tales repeat this central idea continuously, readers come to "accept as natural the notion that passive, beautiful females are rewarded" (137). Fairy tales enforce the idea that beauty is a girl's most valuable asset, and without it, she cannot succeed, and of course, the only success that a young girl can achieve is to be married off

as quickly as possible to the first rich or handsome man who will have her.

For example, in Perrault's "Cinderella," when the prince sends a gentleman to find the girl with the glass slipper, the messenger almost refuses Cinderella the opportunity to try on the shoe. The messenger permits Cinderella to try it on only after he scrutinizes her appearance through her ragged clothes and grimy face, and only after "finding that she was very beautiful" did he allow her to try on the glass slipper ("Cinderella" 44). This scene underscores the idea that exceptional physical beauty is paramount to being chosen.

Welty recreates the scene and the message behind it within *The Robber Bridegroom*. When Jaime Lockhart first meets Rosamond Musgrove, she is dressed in elaborate clothing recently gifted to her by her father Clement. Her gown is described in terms similar to Cinderella's ball gown. Jaime remarks on the dress, calling it grand, and then he gets a "look" in his eye. Of course, he wants to steal it, but her appearance also strikes a lustful chord in him. However, the next time they meet, they do not recognize each other because Rosamond looks less like the Cinderella of the ball, and more like the Cinderella who slaves away for her stepfamily. Jaime is instantly disgusted by this "ragged and dirty" girl, and wonders "why the devil she could not have been beautiful like that little piece of sugar cane [he] found for himself in the woods" (Welty, *Robber Bridegroom* 68, 73). Jaime goes on to say that the wife of a high-ranking bandit–the spiritual equivalent to a prince– should be "a lady fit to wear fine dresses and jewels, and present an appearance to the world…and make the rest rave with their jealousy" (Welty, *Robber Bridegroom* 74). Jaime's disappointment that Clement's daughter does not fit the prescribed standards of female beauty calls attention to the idea that beauty is the key to success, and without it, a lesser woman is certain to be filled with jealousy.

The Beauty Contest

Likewise, because the beauty that meets the masculine standards of physical beauty is a high-quality commodity, the women in these tales often fight viciously for it. According to Marcia Lieberman, "the beauty contest is a constant and primary device" used for conflict within the tales, because of course those

who are deemed marginally attractive or downright hideous are jealous and spiteful (3).

In almost every text to which Welty alludes, there is a beauty contest. In Perrault's "Cinderella," the comparative nature of Cinderella's description encourages competition: "the stepsisters dressed in magnificent clothes, yet Cinderella looked a thousand times prettier, even in her shabby apparel" ("Cinderella" 31). Similarly, in the Grimms' version of "Cinderella," the evil stepsisters are so desperate to be chosen that the stepmother convinces them to mutilate themselves in order to fit the shoe, arguing that once they are queens they need not walk anymore. Ultimately, Cinderella is chosen over every other woman at the ball for purely superficial reasons.

The Evil Stepmother

Likewise, this desire to be supremely beautiful drives maternal figures to the far reaches of evil with cruelty, abandonment, and even attempted murder. Snow White's stepmother, the Evil Queen, is willing to have a seven-year-old killed over petty jealousy. Once again, the comparative wording instantly suggests competition, the narration stating, "[Snow White] had become more beautiful than the queen herself" ("Snow White" 83). The Queen is obsessed with being the fairest of them all and never knows a moment's peace until she believes the hunter has properly assassinated Snow White. Similarly, in "Cupid and Psyche," Venus, Psyche's future mother-in-law, becomes inflamed with jealousy at the praise that Psyche, a mere mortal, receives for being beautiful. As a result, she sends her son to "punish that contumacious beauty" (Apuleius 116). Throughout the myth, Venus is remarkably cruel, but because the rules of folk tales do not apply to a goddess, Psyche has another set of jealous female enemies in the form of her sisters. Psyche's sisters, who initially seem to be the voices of reason, only want Psyche to ruin her relationship with Cupid for the chance that he will choose one of them as a replacement.

Conversely, Rosamond's female enemy defies the assumption that all women are vain, petty, jealous beings desperately in need of validation from men. While Salome does have many similarities to the Evil Queen of "Snow White," the evil stepmother in "Cinderella," and even Venus and the sisters of

Psyche, her motivations are remarkably contrary to what readers have come to expect from her character archetype. Welty alludes to the competition, narrating, "If Rosamond was as beautiful as the day, Salome was as ugly as the night" but there is no competition (Welty, *Robber Bridegroom* 33). There is no sexual rivalry between this evil stepmother and Rosamond who, traditionally, would represent the "innocent persecuted heroine" in this situation (Tatar, *Annotated Fairytales* 83). Instead, Welty seeks to deepen Salome's role, giving her motivation for scheming a deeper purpose. As a replacement for petty jealousy, Salome is envious of Rosamond's carefree ignorance about the harsh realities life on the southern frontier. Rosamond's whimsical behavior and idealistic notions seem to remind Salome of her own "days of gentleness" before tragedy left nothing but "ambition…in her destroyed heart" (Welty, *Robber Bridegroom* 24). Not once does Salome express a desire to compete with Rosamond to be the "fairest of them all." Instead, she argues against Rosamond's romantic idealism and vanity when Clement showers Rosamond with unnecessary things, saying, "These fancy things will be putting thoughts into her head" (Welty, *Robber Bridegroom* 36). Later, when Salome sees Rosamond dressed in the gown that will seduce Jaime in the subsequent scene, her reaction is not envy, but instead exasperation and dread.

Salome initially believes that Rosamond is too frivolous, useless, and stupid. Despite having servants, she forces Rosamond to do menial tasks, possibly with the hope of building Rosamond's character. Furthermore, Salome sends Rosamond on potentially dangerous errands in the hope that some type of horrible thing may happen to her during her trips. Salome's underlying intention seems to be to have Rosamond become sensible about the world she lives in, and perhaps become as bitter and as shrewd as she is. In fact, Rosamond is sent out to the same general area where Salome meets with the tragedy that alters her perception of the world, as well as the world's perception of her. Regardless, Salome does not envy Rosamond's beauty, but instead envies her carefree attitude enough to be annoyed by it. In addition, Salome has other motivations, for "the goals of Salome's plots…are power, choice, autonomy, and wealth–all characteristics of the masculine world of action" (Harrison qtd. in Habeeb). Nonetheless, Salome is never as cruel as her counterparts are to

their beautiful stepdaughters and sisters. In fact, their so-called competition ends not with death but with some form of bonding and understanding when Salome realizes Rosamond is not as harebrained or as perfect as she initially seems to be:

> There has to be a first time for everything and at that moment, the stepmother gave Rosamond a look of true friendship, as if Rosamond too had won her man by unholy means. So the next day Salome got Rosamond away alone and they were sitting by the well, like a blood mother and daughter. (Welty, *The Robber Bridegroom* 122)

Welty's decision to alter the usual role of the evil stepmother has a hint of feminist reasoning. Habeeb states that Welty wants to "dismiss the masculine assumption that all women, even sisters, are evil" and he goes on to say that by excluding the traditional idea of an intensely evil, jealous, maternal figure, Welty "wants to stress the importance of sisterhood for women" (50). In addition, Welty effectively subverts the claim that all women are insecure and cannot function rationally without validation from the all-powerful voice of masculine society.

Furthermore, Salome's relationship with Rosamond goes against the masculine claim that "daughters must avoid mother figures if they want to achieve independence and maturity" (Habeeb 47). Instead, Habeeb asserts that Welty replaces this assumption by showing that "daughters cannot achieve independence without being connected to the mother figure" (48). For the reasons stated above, the mother figure is usually dead, but in Welty's tale, Salome *is* Amalie, Rosamond's biological mother. Interestingly, the Grimm brothers "added a prefatory episode about Snow White's birth and about her mother's death to later editions of their collection. In the 1810 manuscript version of 'Snow White,' there is only one queen, and she is both Snow White's biological mother and persecutor" (Tatar, *Annotated Fairytales* 82). Additionally, Tatar states that "fairytales often split the maternal figure into two components: a good, dead mother and a mobile, malicious stepmother" (*Annotated Fairytales* 91). In other words, the female villains of this type are usually "thinly disguised substitutes for biological mothers" (Tatar, *Hard Facts* 144).

Welty cleverly utilizes this fact through the doubling motif. Doubling of characters is a pattern often implemented in fairy tales, dividing the world and the characters into "good" and "bad." Thus, doubling involves having two characters represent extreme opposites of similar character archetypes. Correna Merricks states that the philosophy of doubleness is "a paradoxical state of being that emerges from chaotic conditions" (5).

In Welty's novel Clement confides in his daughter, saying, "Sometimes I wonder if even my own wife has not been one person all the time" (Welty, *Robber Bridegroom* 126). Thus, if Salome and Amalie are the same person, this suggests that Salome is also playing the role of the maternal guide, a role never given to the antagonist. If Salome is the embodiment of the maternal figure, then Salome's role goes far past that of the petty, vengeful, jealous stepmother. She guides Rosamond away from unrealistic, fanciful notions about love, and is the sole voice of reason about Rosamond's potentially dangerous relationship with an essentially faceless man whom she knows to have dual identities. While Psyche's sisters also warn her about the dangerous potential in Cupid, unlike them, Salome has nothing to gain from her words, which refutes the patriarchal pattern of women squabbling pettily over a man. Ultimately, Salome's dislike for Rosamond is sensible, and while her intentions are not exactly pure, her words are wise, and Rosamond benefits from her guidance.

Rewards and Punishments

Thirdly, the inevitable pattern of rewards and punishments commonly seen at the end of folk or fairy tales directly relates to the concept of beauty and ugliness. The third stanza in Perrault's moral at the end of "Cinderella" summarizes these patriarchal ideals concisely:

> Beauties: that gift is worth more than a dress.
> It'll win a man's heart; it will truly impress.
> Grace is a gift that the fairies confer:
> Ask anyone at all; it is what we prefer.
> ("Cinderella" 43)

The moral seems to be teaching that grace is related directly to being beautiful. The "we" mentioned suggests masculine society and the standards of beauty it places on women.

There is also a thinly veiled threat within Perrault's moral which suggests that to fall short of these standards will result in punishments, which, in fairy tales, are always extravagant, humiliating, and typically fatal.

Noteworthy is the fact that fairy tales exist in a world where "the figurative or metaphorical dimension of language takes on literal meaning" (Tatar, *Hard Facts* 80). Therefore, being beautiful does not stop at physical attractiveness in fairy tales, but also extends to a so-called inner beauty that is exhibited through behavior. Truly beautiful characters are usually of "good temper" and are passive, submissive, and essentially non-threatening to dominant masculine society. The other women, usually portrayed as marginally attractive stepmothers, evil sisters, and ogres, customarily harbor potentially threatening traits such as cleverness, assertiveness, pride, and curiosity. These women are generally "so demonized that they possess no redeeming features" (Tatar, *Hard Facts* 182). Because almost all fairy tale heroines obey these rules, they are labeled as "good," and they are rewarded with a husband, a new station in life, and comfort. The "bad" women are usually rewarded with torture, humiliation, and death.

Welty cleverly challenges this idea through her protagonist. While Rosamond is physically beautiful, and initially seems to follow the criteria for a good, beautiful, virginal persecuted heroine, she actually embodies many "ugly" qualities. Rosamond, like many fairy tale heroines, has a unique character trait. Usually this trait is beauty, or a domestic skill such as musical ability, or being talented with a spinning wheel. However, Rosamond's trait is that she is a pathological liar. Wit, cunning, and cleverness are positive in a masculine figure, but these traits in a woman are dangerous to the masculine state of affairs. A lying woman would be a severe threat to masculine society, because to be a deceiver, one has to be clever. A good girl is supposed to be as transparent as a glass slipper or casket, but lying suggests that Rosamond is hiding her true persona. However, instead of this trait's being considered unpleasant, Welty describes it as if it is a positive attribute, stating that "Rosamond was a great liar" and that "these lies simply fall [out of her mouth] like diamonds and pearls" (Welty, *Robber Bridegroom* 38-39). Rosamond's lying puts her against her beautiful, innocent, heroine archetype, and Welty is

acutely aware of this, coyly addressing it in her talk before the Mississippi Historical Society:

> Diamonds and pearls usually fall from the lips of fairy tale maidens because they can speak nothing but what is truthful and pure–otherwise the result is snakes and toads–but Rosamond is a romantic girl, not a wicked one, and the lies she's given to telling are simply a Rodney girl's daydreams, not intended to do any harm: perfectly good pearls. (Welty, *"Fairy Tale of Natchez"* 305)

While Rosamond's lies may not be good for masculine society, they are in fact "perfectly good pearls," for they help her survive numerous times. Rosamond, a supposedly pure and innocent girl, consciously deceives and manipulates the men in the story in order to benefit for herself. Not to mention, she enjoys telling lies about her supposedly dangerous adventures with a tone of facetiousness when speaking with Salome, a trait that suggests Rosamond is acutely aware of the power of her words, and that these lies are not simply daydreams.

Rosamond lies to her father in order to pass the chastity test after she returns from her long stay with Jaime and is obviously pregnant. Rosamond blatantly lies to her father, claiming that she has married Jaime. While the lies are obvious to readers and to Salome, Rosamond manages to convince her oblivious father that a drunken preacher properly married her and Jaime. This scene is intended as parody, and her lies are meant to satisfy the patriarchal need to protect a good woman's virtue.

Rosamond's lies also do away with the need for a male hero to rescue the hapless maiden who will ultimately be his prize. Every fairy tale girl alluded to in Welty's fiction is eventually saved from death by a reconciled lover, a nameless prince, or a band of male family members, but Rosamond saves herself numerous times using her unique skill. Passive women are desired not only because this implies they are obedient, but also because their inability to save themselves promotes the necessity for a man to appear in a blaze of glory and rescue them. This is typically the sole purpose of male heroes in these types of fairy tales, and his appearance pushes the narrative along towards an inevitable

ending. Nonetheless, Rosamond's lies make *her* an active hero. Rosamond ultimately saves her own life from the hands of a vengeful Indian tribe through her proficiency at deception.

The Hero

During this important scene, there is only one character not captive, and that is Goat, who plays the role of the traditional helper. Like most helpers, he wants something irrationally valuable in return for being of assistance. Goat asks for her hand in marriage and wants her to do domestic chores for him as part of the bargain. Welty's decision to have Goat say this calls attention to the typical way that fairy tale marriages are arranged. Obviously, Goat thinks this is a reasonable request, and does not realize that Rosamond is not playing by the rules, for though she agrees to his terms, she is not sincere. Welty gives a sly aside to the readers to emphasize this fact, saying, "it was lucky for her that she did not have to learn to tell a lie on the spot, but already knew how" (Welty, *The Robber Bridegroom* 152). Despite Goat's being the one who unlocks her cage, Rosamond's ability to tell lies saves her. Rosamond is her own hero, and "succeeds in managing her affairs without the assistance of a princely husband" (Habeeb 57).

In fact, Rosamond's self-sufficiency is accentuated by the humorous detail that she is the only character to complete the hero quest not once, but twice. Goat, Clement, and Jaime, who is meant to be the embodiment of the traditional masculine hero, barely begin their hero quests before they fail, or, in Jaime's case, consciously ignore his responsibilities. Habeeb suggests that Welty's intention is to "undermine the masculine assumption embedded in fairy tales that the heroic quest is limited to the male hero, the hero that rescues the heroine from the wickedness of women" (56).

Furthermore, Rosamond is set apart from her beautiful, obedient counterparts by the active role she takes in her romantic life. Cinderella, Snow White, Psyche, and the miller's daughter in the Grimms' "The Robber Bridegroom" are not active participants in the selection process for a husband. Cinderella is chosen simply because the shoe fits. Snow White is unconscious, and when she awakens, the strange prince simply informs her that she "will stay with [him]" and "shall be [his] bride" ("Snow White" 93). Similarly, the oracle Apollo decrees Psyche's future, and nothing

can change her fate. Likewise, in the Grimms' "The Robber Bridegroom," the miller's daughter is given to the first suitor who walks by and looks rich. Unlike the others, the miller's daughter is leery of her suitor, the narration saying that she "did not like him as much as a bride should like her bridegroom. She did not trust him and whenever she saw him, or thought about him, she felt within her heart a sense of horror" (*"The Robber Bridegroom"*). However, despite her instincts, she ignores her feelings, and obediently goes to visit him in his home in the forest, where her death awaits. Even within Welty's fiction, Goat's six sisters, known only as the unwed virgins, sit passively at home waiting for their brother to create dowries and find suitors for them so that they may be married. These sisters are meant to represent the usual passive heroine in juxtaposition with Rosamond.

Conversely, Rosamond refuses to submit to anyone, not even to a tutor, preferring to be independent and self-sufficient. Rosamond makes a conscious effort to choose a suitor for herself and ultimately carve out her own life. Rosamond, despite seemingly obedient appearances, actively defies her father's efforts to find a suitable man for her, preferably one who is "strict" and can "keep her from lying" (Welty, *Robber Bridegroom* 118). In typical fairy tale fashion, her father wishes to use her as a prize for the heroic Jaime Lockhart if he can succeed in catching the bandit that has threatened his daughter's all-valuable chastity. However, Rosamond has already met Jaime as a bandit, and has already made her decision about what sort of man she wants. She refuses to be given to a princely dandy who shines "like the sun from cleanliness, youth, wisdom, and satisfaction" (Welty, *Robber Bridegroom* 69). Rosamond plays the role of the meek, innocent damsel, but she subtly does things to turn this suitor away. Because she knows she cannot refuse him outright, she uses his apparent masculine ideas of beauty and grace against him. First, she does not care for her appearance, taking pains not to look presentable when her would-be savior arrives, and then throughout the evening, she continues to irritate him by continuously hitting him in the head and dropping food into his lap. This continues to the point that Clement suspects that Rosamond does not *want* to be rescued. Finally, Rosamond succeeds in completely repulsing Jaime when she asks him to kiss her. Instead of sealing their future romance, this kiss destroys the last of his patience, given that she

has smeared her mouth with mustard. Ultimately, Rosamond is crafty enough to play the traditional role expected of her, while simultaneously defying traditional conventions by taking an active role in her life and finding a suitor of her own choosing. In essence, according to Habeeb, Rosamond seeks "options other than the unfortunate fate of the fairy tale heroine, who is either given as a gift to the chivalric bridegroom, or mercilessly killed" (64).

Correspondingly, while rewards are given to the beautiful good girls who obey the patriarchal script set out for them, the disobedient, ugly girls are punished with torture, humiliation, and death. The sisters of Psyche are bashed to pieces on rocks, the evil queen is tortured with hot coals until she dies from exhaustion, and in the Grimms' version of "Cinderella," her evil stepsisters have their eyes pecked out by birds. However, Welty's Rosamond is the exception to this trope, by not only harboring bad traits, but also surviving the story and achieving happily-ever-after status.

Rosamond conceals several undesirable traits that are adverse to the patriarchal idea of beauty and grace. In fact, she embodies one of the worst cardinal sins in fairy tales: female curiosity. Moreover, she is sexually curious, which is a type of female curiosity that "calls for death sentences" (Tatar, *Hard Facts* 167). Even before she is influenced by Salome, Rosamond is sexually curious. She sees the pretty gown that her father buys her as a tool to finally attract a man, being glad that her father brought her something other than a "childish and harmless toy" (Welty, *Robber Bridegroom* 37). Of course, Salome is aware of this, stating that the gown will "put thoughts in her head," and cause her to run off with some "river rat" (Welty, *Robber Bridegroom* 36). Furthermore, Rosamond treats Salome's chores not as punishments but as a chance to encounter the unknown lover whom she constantly sings out to in romantic and sexually suggestive ballads. In fact, Rosamond's singing suggests that she is yearning for some form of romantic love and is "educating herself to an idea of a…sexual union" (Pollack 323). In fact, Rosamond takes "the time to dress herself in a light blue gown" and to "bind her hair with ribbon" for a typically dirty job, which implies that she is hoping to meet and seduce a desirable man (Welty, *Robber Bridegroom* 33). Similarly, Rosamond's words are tinged with overwhelming hints of sexual desire when she encounters Jaime for the first time. According to Habeeb,"it is Rosamond who first hints at the

possibility of sexual adventure with Jaime," for through her uncharacteristically outspoken interlude with Jaime, she states "well then, I suppose I must give you the dress…but not a thing further" (47). Arguably, this desire for a sexual encounter is why Rosamond's apparent rape scene is colored with such romantic language. What is more, once Rosamond is no longer chaste, she is not ashamed, but instead is "haughty and proud" (Welty, *Robber Bridegroom* 116).

In addition, Rosamond has the curiosity for knowledge awakened in her by her wise, deceitful stepmother. Unlike Psyche, who only wants to know who Cupid is out of mere curiosity, Rosamond's desire is motivated by a desire for knowledge that will "enable her to remove the confusion about the real identity of her future husband" (Habeeb 52). While not as severe as sexual curiosity, "Rosamond's desire for knowledge is seen as a menace to patriarchal culture" (Habeeb 52).

Moreover, returning to the theme of doubleness that runs throughout Welty's novel, Rosamond inherits the traits of Salome, who is representative of the Evil Queen in "Snow White," the evil meddling sisters of Psyche, and the evil stepmother of Cinderella. Salome's internal ugliness is so great that she is described in monstrous, inhuman terms, such as having eagle vision and talons and an ogre's hands, girth, and eyes, and of being a witch-like figure. Clement even comments that he believes Amalie and Salome are the same person, but he "loved her beauty so well in the beginning that it is only now that the ugliness has struck through to beset [him] like a madness" (Welty, *Robber Bridegroom* 26). Clement sees her ugliness only now because she has become domineering, shrewd, and greedy, which are hideous traits in a woman. Because of the implied maternal link between Rosamond and Salome, it is suggested that Rosamond has also inherited these traits, for in fairy tales, good and bad traits are always said to be "genetic, or at least transmitted" by the birth mother (Lieberman 8).

However, Rosamond manages to survive the tale and achieves a happy ending while Salome dies after suffering a humiliation and torture befitting the ugly and the disobedient. Her death scene implies that this is her final stand against masculine society. Salome, when told to sit still and be obedient by her Indian captives, says that man nor elements will have power over her,

because she is "[her]self in the world" (Welty, *Robber Bridegroom* 161). Salome's attempt to control the sun is significant. According to Habeeb, the sun is a "symbol of masculinity in the Indian's patriarchal society" (55). Thus, Salome's inability to control the sun represents the futility of challenging masculine culture in fairy tales, which results in her humiliating death. While her death scene mirrors that of Snow White's mother, Welty manages to make her death even more humiliating by having Salome strip naked during the process. Salome wants to participate actively in the masculine world, but that is not acceptable; therefore, Salome must undergo the "process of humiliation and defeat…that signals a loss of pride and the abdication of power" (Tatar, *Hard Facts* 95). Noteworthy are the circumstances of Salome's destruction, for it is not a reckoning for the mistreatment of Rosamond. Instead it is meant "as a kind of parody of fairy tale motifs in which the order of patriarchal society is restored by getting rid of such rebellious women as Salome" (Habeeb 60).

Similarly, Rosamond's survival is attributed to the fact that she, unlike Salome, is able to play both roles, using her lies as protection, and her beautiful attributes to mask the ugliness. Rosamond's survival undermines the pattern of punishments and rewards in fairy tales, as well as challenges the idea of what constitutes a "good" woman. Rosamond's role in Welty's tale seems to promote the idea that perhaps being a different kind of beautiful is not bad, and definitely does not warrant severe punishment until submission or death. In addition, by having Rosamond use lies to control her destiny and to achieve her goals, Welty is emphasizing the need of an active voice in female fairy tale characters.

Conclusion

Welty creates a complex story that pretends to be an innocent fairy tale, but beneath the surface, actually subverts traditionally held notions relating to them. Through her manipulation of fairy tale motifs, themes, and ideas, Welty disappoints the expectations of readers familiar with these popular tales with the intention of making commentary on the ideas imbedded in these treasured stories, especially pertaining to gender roles and the expectations related to the idea of living happily ever after.

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THE CITY AS CHARACTER: EDINBURGH IN THE WORKS OF IAN RANKIN

by
Stefani Sloma[*]

Abstract

Ian Rankin's eighteen Inspector Rebus novels are based in Edinburgh, Scotland, a city with a doubled aspect. Doubles are found in many places in Scottish history and literature, such as Edinburgh's Old Town and New Town, Scotland and England, two sides of the Scottish Enlightenment, Protestant and Catholic, Edinburgh and Glasgow, the Highlands and the Lowlands, the Gaelic language and the Scots language, and even a Jekyll and Hyde doubled psyche in literary figures. Rankin not only uses Edinburgh as the setting for these novels, but he also allows the city to help form the protagonist, making the city a character in the novels as well. This analysis is supported by a personal interview with the author, which is appended in its entirety for the reader's reference.

Introduction

Ian Rankin, an Edinburgh-based crime fiction author, published his first Inspector Rebus novel, *Knots and Crosses*, in 1987. Rankin never thought of his work as crime fiction, though the series centers on a police officer who investigates crimes in his city and surrounding area. Although the novel was not supposed to be crime fiction and was only supposed to be a one-off, Rankin's Inspector Rebus series continued for twenty years and eighteen novels. Even though John Rebus is the main character and protagonist in these novels, equally important is the city of Edinburgh; in Edinburgh, Rankin has created such a real, active setting that it has become a character, and it develops just as much as, if not more than, John Rebus.

The city is not only a character in these novels but a two-sided one, constantly contradicting itself. There is the beautiful, old, historical city that draws in tourists from all over the world, but underneath that there is a dirty, crime-ridden underbelly that

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lies in wait just below the surface. Rankin describes it through his characters:

> "Such a beautiful city," she said. Rebus tried to agree. He hardly saw it any more. To him, Edinburgh had become a state of mind, a juggling of criminal thoughts and baser instincts. He liked its size, its compactness. He liked its bars. But its outward show had ceased to impress him a long time ago. Jean wrapped her coat tightly around her. "Everywhere you look, there's some story, some little piece of history." She looked at him and he nodded agreement, but he was remembering all the suicides he'd dealt with, people who'd jumped from North Bridge maybe because they couldn't see the same city Jean did.
>
> "I never tire of this view," she said, turning back towards the car. He nodded again, disingenuously. To him, it wasn't a view at all. It was a crime scene waiting to happen. (Rankin, *Falls* 153-54)

This quote, that comes from Rankin's thirteenth Inspector Rebus novel, *The Falls*, is a prime example of what Ian Rankin accomplishes in every Rebus novel he has written: the city of Edinburgh is not only the setting of many of the novels, but it also comes alive as a character of its own. When Rankin began writing these novels as a graduate student at the University of Edinburgh, he had come to the conclusion that

> there were these two sides to this city that were attractive to writers, the kind of Jekyll and Hyde nature to the city, or the kind of structural way it's broken up into New Town and Old Town, where the New Town was designed to be rational and geometric because the Old Town's chaotic. That's kind of two sides to the human nature, seems to me, the organized and the sort of feral. (Appendix I, 71)

After having come to this conclusion, he came up with the character of John Rebus, a police officer who investigates the details and questions about human nature that Rankin himself

would like to know the answers to. Rebus is as divided as his city is, and one could even say that a two-sided city created a two-sided man. Rebus is a "flawed but humane detective," who is addicted to both his job and his drink. Just like its two-sided man, Edinburgh is a city of darks and lights, of history and present. It is "a city of banking and brothels, virtue and vitriol…. Underworld meeting overworld" (Rankin, *Exit* 506). Edinburgh is, as Rankin says, a Jekyll and Hyde city, at once both beautiful and attractive and dark and sinister.

Doubles

While Rankin has seemed to perfect this impression of Edinburgh as a double city, this idea is not something that he invented. Edinburgh is a city that does not shy away from the idea of the double; in fact it fully embraces it, as one can find doubles everywhere. The city is proud of its history and proudly displays it at every turn, not only in history and structure but also in its literature. Before discussing the way that Rankin has used his city to create a real world and real characters, it is important to discuss these doubles in Edinburgh and Scottish history. However, it is also imperative to note that this history matters only in the context of Rankin's novels and fiction.

By just scratching the surface of Scottish history in Edinburgh and Scottish literature, one can discover that the double is all too apparent a theme. In history, the double that is the most noticeable is that of the Old Town and the New Town of Edinburgh (See Appendix II, Figure 1). The Old Town is the medieval part of the city that sprang up haphazardly around Edinburgh Castle and down along the High Street, and the New Town is the Georgian, structured, planned, and linear part across North Bridge from the Old Town. These two parts are recognized as architecturally and culturally significant. The United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization said that "the harmonious juxtaposition of these two contrasting historic areas, each with many important buildings, is what gives the city its unique character" ("Old and New"). The two opposing sides of the city, facing each other across Waverley Valley, North Bridge, and the Mound, create a double of two harmonious, but not identical, halves.

Not only is there a double in the landscape of the city, but one can also find the idea of the double in the city's history. The Acts of Union of 1707, which united the parliaments of England and Scotland and created Great Britain, created a double, as well, that of England and Scotland. The modern political connection between England and Scotland actually started in 1603 when King James VI of Scotland inherited the English crown and simultaneously became King James I of England. However, after the Acts of Union, these two very different countries had to work together as one through the united Parliament. Soon after the treaty, around the middle to the end of the eighteenth century and continuing on into the nineteenth century, came the Scottish Enlightenment, a time of internationally significant philosophical ideas. While this Enlightenment made great strides in intellectual thinking and concepts, as with any great movement, it created a division not only between those who were considered forward thinkers and those who were more traditional, but also between those philosophers who were attempting to move society forward, such as David Hume and Frances Hutcheson. Masao Miyoshi says in *The Divided Self* that not only were people divided against each other, "but in the nineteenth century, each individual was 'divided against himself'" (ix).

Another important Edinburgh double is a result of the opposing Christian beliefs of the Catholics and Protestants, a division that dates to the Reformation; in Edinburgh, it was "a loathing born of tradition, handed down the generations and, thereby, difficult to eradicate" (Rankin, *Rebus's* 44-45). This double was created during the Scottish reformation when the Scottish Parliament of 1560 passed laws that essentially rejected the Pope's authority and approved a Protestant Confession of Faith.

This religious double shows up in Edinburgh culture and sports, as well. There is a distinct, and sometimes dangerous, double between Edinburgh's two soccer teams, the Hearts of Midlothian (Hearts) and the Hibernians (Hibs), who have a rivalry so strong that one needs to be careful not to walk into a bar if he or she is supporting the wrong team. This rivalry is often noted to be linked to the teams' religious background. As the Hibs were formed by a group of Irish immigrants, the players were first required to be members of the Catholic Young Men's Association,

and even though that requirement was eventually taken away, the team has a distinct Catholic following. As such, the Hearts are commonly linked with followers of the Protestant faith. Rankin illustrates this in the books with the character of Siobhan Clarke, Rebus's partner. She is from England and is a big supporter of the Hibernian Football Club. Because she is English born and educated, "she didn't understand the finer points of Scottish bigotry" (Rankin, *Mortal* 41). Her fellow officers attempt to explain it to her:

> She wasn't Catholic, they explained patiently, so she should support Heart of Midlothian. Hibernian were the Catholic team. Look at their name, look at their green strip. They were Edinburgh's version of Glasgow Celtic, just as Hearts were like Glasgow's Rangers. (Rankin, *Mortal* 41)

One of the most obvious doubles in Scotland is that of Edinburgh and its neighbor city Glasgow. Because Glasgow is the bigger, more populated city, it is yet another counterpart to Edinburgh, which is the smaller, more village-like city. These two cities have been competing for a long time. With this double comes an idea that is mentioned in a lot of Rankin's novels: that of the Glasgow "gangsters." Because Inspector Rebus is a cop, he spends a lot of time dealing with gangsters and their misdeeds; but almost always, Rankin is sure to mention that these gangsters are either from or have some ties to Glasgow and just happen to be in Edinburgh currently. Since Edinburgh is a city that is so careful about how it looks on the surface, and takes care to not let most people peek below, it seems to point its fingers at Glasgow and say that this crime doesn't happen here, the gangsters are over there, all the crime is over there. Edinburgh is a very repressed city, "as opposed to Glasgow, which seems to be very Celtic and open and brash and loud" (Price). Crime is different between these two cities: Glasgow's crime is usually easily solved, no deeper meaning than maybe someone "wearing the wrong football colors and you get stabbed to death" (Price). But in Edinburgh the crime would be something hard to solve, like grave robbing. Rankin discussed in my interview with him (See Appendix I; See also Appendix II, Figure 2) on June 14, 2011 that after the novel

Trainspotting openly discussed the explosion of HIV and heroin use in Edinburgh, people were shocked. Readers could

> imagine it happening in Glasgow, but they found it really hard to imagine it happening in Edinburgh because Edinburgh to them was *Miss Jean Brodie* and Sir Walter Scott, and it was culture; it was Edinburgh Festival, and it was fantastic monuments and castles. (Appendix I, 73)

It is for this reason that Glasgow and Edinburgh are an example of the double in Scottish history. Glasgow doesn't want to be looked at as this dirty city, but because Edinburgh is the more historical, proper, and repressed city, it is seen as such.

Additionally, another double that reveals itself is that between the Highlands and the Lowlands of Scotland, the Highlands being associated with the more traditional Scottish heritage and the Lowlands the more modern (and therefore more English influenced) area. The double of the Highlands and the Lowlands leads directly into another: that of the Highlands' Gaelic language and the Lowlands' Scots. The double of the language differences between these two regions is an important one because Scotland residents use their language as a way to identify themselves. Without these language differences, they wouldn't be who they are. Because of the Acts of Union, Scotland was basically forced to relinquish its identity and become a part of Great Britain; many believed that, if they were then deprived of their unique languages, they would have nothing. Language is "part of [Scotland's] make-up, without it [they] cease to be Scots in the truest possible sense" (Siol). The difference between standard British English and the Scots dialect is another Scottish language double; just as England and Scotland mirror each other, the dialects used in each country do the same. Through this double, one can see illustrations of the major differences in these two countries, and the problems caused by the dissimilarities in their languages which reflect the cultural conflicts.

With all of these examples, it is not difficult to determine why the image of the double is a constant presence in Scottish Literature. Lynn Holden writes, "The theme of the Double or Doppelgänger is familiar to Scottish literature and exemplifies the

tensions within Scottish society that can divide or shatter the individual psyche" (Holden). This common double, or second self, can be characterized as coming from within (this is called *division*), such as in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which is one of the most well-known of these examples. Stevenson's story is that of a reputable doctor by day and his immoral, violent inner demon that reveals itself at night. His inspiration for this novel is yet another historical double: his character is based on Deacon William Brodie, the respectable Deacon of the Wrights and Masons and a cabinetmaker who made copies of his customers' keys so that he could come back in the night to steal from them. The image of the double can also be depicted as coming from outside the first self (this process is called *duplication*), such as in James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, which centers around Robert Wringhim and his doppelgänger Gil-Martin. Wringhim is told by his father that he is one of the "elect" and therefore predestined to go to heaven; because of this belief, he, along with the psychologically exploitative Gil-Martin, commits many crimes, including murder. Another example of the double in Scottish literature, but one that is not centered on one person, is that of the Tolbooth Prison in Sir Walter Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian*. It is the image of the Tolbooth Prison next to St. Giles' Cathedral, creating the saying that the people were "near the church and far from God" (Scott 31). Considering this existing foundation and emphasis on the double in Scottish history and literature, it is no wonder that Ian Rankin built on this tradition of the double and created his own, through his main character Detective Inspector John Rebus and the city in which he lives, Edinburgh.

By using this tradition of the double, Rankin has created a character of the city of Edinburgh. Rankin asserts that the city "of Edinburgh itself [is] as much of a character as John Rebus," a character "as brooding and as volatile as Rebus" (Ian Rankin's). Like Rebus, the city is two-sided, with sides that conflict with each other. There is the beautiful, old city that tourists and most residents see, but there is also a dirty, crime-ridden underbelly that the police, such as Rebus, are forced to reckon with. Edinburgh is "a place of conspiracies, a city with a village mentality, where everybody knows everybody else" (Price).

City as Character

Edinburgh is a city proud of its history: "the past was certainly important to Edinburgh. The city fed on its past like a serpent with its tail in its mouth" (Rankin, *Black* 49). It wants people to know who it is. Visitors go there to see its history and to feel a part of the past. Yet it is modern. Edinburgh mixes its history with modern-day qualities. Rankin understands this combination of past and present, and through his novels, he makes Edinburgh not only the setting, but a current living character. Therefore, "the reader comes across a personified city in…Rankin's strait-laced old town of dead souls" (Pitton-Hédon 254). Within these books,

> Rankin erodes boundaries between public and private, innocence and guilt, certainty and doubt. His novels not only focus on violence and lawlessness; they reflect on social exclusion, deprivation and hopelessness, as does their unusually ruminative protagonist. (Pitton-Hédon 254)

Rankin has said that showing all sides of Edinburgh is what he has always tried to do: to show people an Edinburgh that the tourist never sees, to show that there is more than meets the eye. And he does just that, not only through using it as a setting, but through the way he talks about his city. His books "question rather than represent the city" (Pitton-Hédon 255). Each book brings up a hidden but current topic that is present in Edinburgh, such as pedophilia, people trafficking, xenophobia, or poverty, and makes the reader question which side of this city is actually the right or believable one. By doing this, Rankin also is able to figure it out for himself; if there are questions that Rankin has about society, he will "dump them on Rebus and find a plot that will allow him to explore that question" (Appendix I, 76). However, a lot of the time, Rebus will not agree with Rankin. Rankin tries to

> change [Rebus's] mind. So [Rebus] starts off with a kneejerk reaction to pedophilia [in *Dead Souls*]: they should all be locked up and if they're let out

everyone should know about it and get to kick them. And then I try to change his mind. And sometimes I can and sometimes I can't. Sounds weird, right? Because he *is* inside my head; he's not a real person. It often feels like we're having this conversation [about these topics]. (Appendix I, 76)

Yet another way that Rankin personifies his city in his writing is through the use of place descriptions which actually exist: real bars, real police stations, and real streets. However, he did not always use this method. In fact, the first four books Rankin published have Rebus working in a created police station, Great London Road Station, and going to fictional bars. The one constant throughout his setting, though, is Arden Street (Appendix II, Figure 3), the street that Rebus lives on and the one that Rankin lived on when he created Rebus. But the fictional police station and bars had to evolve for Rankin to create more fully a suspension of disbelief in his readers. As a result, Rebus' original police station burned down at the end of the fourth novel, *Strip Jack*, and he moved to St. Leonard's Police Station (Appendix II, Figure 4): "[Rebus] was back at work one full day when Great London Road Police Station caught fire. The building was razed to the ground" (Rankin, *Strip* 305). His move to St. Leonard's was not really emphasized, just mentioned in the first pages of *The Black Book*: "When Great London Road police station had burnt down, Rebus had been moved to St. Leonard's, which was Central District's divisional HQ" (Rankin, *Black* 8). He also then began going to real bars, like the Oxford Bar (Appendix II, Figure 5), where Rankin is a regular customer, and to the Royal Oak (Appendix II, Figure 6): "To defer the inevitable, he stopped at a pub. They didn't come much smaller than the Oxford Bar, but the Ox managed to be cosy too" (Rankin, *Mortal* 106). While this might seem like a minor change in Rankin's novels, for readers from Edinburgh or for visitors to the city, it creates a much more realistic atmosphere, thus bringing the setting to life, and blurring the difference between fact and fiction. Marie Pitton-Hédon says that this "is the world of Rankin…. Those narratives at once represent and are our new, global reality. The invasion is complete. The city is no longer a separate and identifiable entity" (260). Rankin said in our interview that, at first, he thought:

it has to be a fictional world. You know, fake names of streets, fake names of bars and restaurants, fake areas of the city. And then I realized later on you can use the real city, and actually it's quite fun to use the real city, because then you do get that suspension of disbelief again. You know, oh if that bar really exists, maybe he exists. (Appendix I, 80)

Because of this thought, Rankin made a change from fictional to real settings within Edinburgh. He started basing some of his books around real events, such as the building of the new Parliament in Edinburgh and the G-8 conference that created riots in the city. Rankin puts a slight twist on events that have actually happened "because then you get that suspension of disbelief. The reader goes, 'Hey, I remember something like that happening somewhere else,' so it could happen and it could happen in Scotland and it could happen in Edinburgh" (Appendix I, 76). After Rankin realized that he could use the real city instead of creating a fictitious setting within Edinburgh, he "burned down his fictitious police station, and…took him to a real police station, took him into a real bar, and mentioned the name of the street he lives on, Arden Street. You can actually go there and you can see where he lives." This change in setting created a change within Rebus as well. It changed him into a three-dimensional, well-rounded, and believable character, so much so that people will come into the Oxford Bar looking for him, but are "always disappointed when they just find me there instead, because I'm not as complex as him, or as damaged as him, or as dangerous as him" (Appendix I, 80).

Because the city is a realistic and recognizable character, Rankin has to use realistic and identifiable characterizations for his audience to believe it. Therefore, he has to show the two sides that are present in his city. Rankin does so by laying out for inspection the layer of the city just below the surface, the underbelly of the city that no one wants to see but is always present. Rankin believes

there's this other side to the city, and crime fiction is a perfect way to explore the fact that below any beautiful, shimmering surface anywhere in the

world, there's the typical human failings going on, and there's, you know, passions, envy, jealousy, criminality, all the vices are there. All the sins are there, but in Edinburgh, quite well hidden. (Appendix I, 73)

Rankin goes beneath that "beautiful, shimmering surface" of his city to create a realistic setting. The eleventh Rebus book, *Dead Souls*, begins with a description of the city that defines it as a character and shows Rankin going below that surface:

> From this height, the sleeping city seems like a child's construction, a model which has refused to be constrained by imagination. The volcanic plug might be black Plasticine, the castle balanced solidly atop it, a skewed rendition of crenellated building bricks. The orange street lamps are crumpled toffee-wrappers glued to lollipop sticks.
> Out in the Forth, the faint bulbs from pocket torches illuminate toy boats resting on black crepe paper. In this universe, the jagged spires of the Old Town would be angled matchsticks, Princes Street Gardens a Fuzzy-Felt board. Cardboard boxes for the tenements, doors and windows painstakingly detailed with coloured pens. Drinking straws would become guttering and downpipes, and with a fine blade–maybe a scalpel–those doors could be made to open. But peering inside…peering inside would destroy the effect.
> Peering inside would change *everything*. (Rankin, *Dead* 3)

This description of the city makes it into something that any reader can picture. But then Rankin says that just peeking inside, or below the surface, would destroy this perfect picture, because just below the surface of this pretty, fictional playground is the crime that Rebus sees.

Creation of a Character

With a city that seems to be alive comes a character that could be real, Detective Inspector John Rebus. It's apparent that Rankin has created a character that is very realistic. In an interview he said,

> Everywhere I go in the world, wherever I do a gig anywhere in the world, there's always somebody in the audience who's a cop or an ex-cop, and he says, "We had a guy like Rebus. We had a guy like Rebus." And there's certainly at least one person in Edinburgh who thinks that Rebus is based on him, even though I've never met the guy. (Appendix I, 88)

One could say that the city has created this character; a two-sided city has created a two-sided man. In *Rebus's Scotland*, Rankin says, "Rebus, throughout the books, remains a product of his environment, hardly helped by the career he has chosen" (28). According to Rankin, Rebus's environment, which has been primarily Edinburgh, has changed him and created the Rebus that is known to the reader from the beginning. It has exposed him to the ugly side of the human soul, the side that murders, rapes, and commits other wrongful atrocities. Rankin says that Rebus's darker Scotland is not his Scotland:

> Doing the job that he does, [Rebus] tends to deal with victims and the families of victims, with criminals and the dispossessed, many of them in the least happy of circumstances. This leads Rebus to see Edinburgh–to my mind one of the best and most beautiful places in the whole world–as a series of crime scenes, and to always be mistrustful of the people he meets. (*Rebus's Scotland* 12)

One such person that he knows that he must always mistrust is Morris Gerald Cafferty, also known as Big Ger. Cafferty is an Edinburgh crime boss and gangster, whom Rankin developed as "almost like [Rebus's] Mr. Hyde, who's always tempting him to cross that line just that little bit too far and then not be able to jump back to the good side again" (Appendix I, 72). Additionally, it was

"hard to turn a corner in this city and not find Cafferty's paw prints nearby" (Rankin, *Exit* 116). Rebus and Cafferty have a very similar background: they are about the same age, have a pretty similar philosophy for life, and though they are from different sides of the game have a similar moral code to live by. Even though they are enemies, the two of them do work together occasionally. When Cafferty's son is murdered in *Mortal Causes*, Cafferty helps Rebus track down the murderer, though his reasons are different than Rebus's. Rebus also enlists Cafferty's help occasionally. Rebus's daughter Samantha is injured in a hit and run accident in *The Hanging Garden*, and Rebus "make[s] a deal with the devil to find the culprit" (Rankin, *Hanging*). However, the two of them are not friends, either. Rebus thinks Cafferty "stood for everything that had ever gone sour–every bungled chance and botched case, suspects missed and crimes unsolved. The man wasn't just the grit in the oyster, he was the pollutant poisoning everything within reach" (Rankin, *Exit* 199). Therefore, Cafferty could be thought of as being both Rebus's Mr. Hyde and also his Dr. Jekyll. Throughout the series, Cafferty not only helps Rebus on occasion, but he sometimes pushes Rebus so far he could be about to go over the edge. However, a protagonist cannot be without his antagonist. Rebus wouldn't be who he is without Cafferty's always being behind him whispering to go further, do more, being "a kind of devil who is always standing behind Rebus with a seductive voice" (Plain 133). They need each other to exist. So when Cafferty is beaten up and hospitalized in *Exit Music*, it affects Rebus. Cafferty flatlines on the last pages of the book, and Rebus "stormed back in, hauling himself up onto the bed, straddling the prone figure. Started pumping with both hands down on Cafferty's chest" (Rankin, *Exit* 529). A hard, emotional scene follows in which Rebus attempts to bring Cafferty to life. Rebus thinks "there should be mess…and fuss…and blood" (529). He cannot bear to think that Cafferty could die without a fight between them. Readers and Rebus are left unsure whether Cafferty lives:

> The machines were making noises. Sweat in his eyes and the hissing in his ears–couldn't tell if they were good news or not. In the end it took two doctors, an attendant, and a nurse to drag him off the bed.

"Is he going to be all right?" [Rebus] heard himself ask. "Tell me he's going to be all right…." (Rankin, *Exit* 530)

Rebus cannot imagine life without Cafferty in it, especially when Cafferty might have died a peaceful death while in a coma. Sometimes it is hard to determine which of the two is the Dr. Jekyll and which is the Mr. Hyde.

Being part of Edinburgh, and "having a sense of place, enables Rebus to understand, if not to condone, the crime he sees. It also, however, exacerbates his sense of powerlessness" (Plain 46). Because he is hardly ever in control of himself, because of his ongoing battle with alcoholism, or because of his investigations, Rebus pushes the idea of the flawed hero to the limit of the definition. He is flawed but humane. He is an "isolated obsessive, struggling to hold himself together in the face of new demands and new threats, taking refuge in the past to avoid the failings of the present and clinging onto the fantasy that the little guy, the individual investigator, can make a difference" (Plain 67). Without Edinburgh, Rebus would not be the same type of character. Rankin develops Rebus as a product of his environment. He would not be the man he is if he had not joined the British Army at fifteen, if he had not attempted to join the SAS (Special Air Service) and been broken by it, if he had not become a police officer for the Lothian and Borders Police department.

Conclusion

While risking the suspension of disbelief and undoing the preceding analysis, it should be emphasized that these books are Rankin's body of fiction. However, the literature and the author cannot be thought of as completely separated; the literature comes from Rankin's mind. According to Rankin, Rebus

> is inside my head; he's not a real person. It often feels like we're having this conversation. I mean, maybe that's the divided character, it's actually the author. Because the author of these books obviously has all these different characters and these different ways of seeing the world inside their head. It's like The Who once said, Pete Townshend of The Who

said, "We're not schizophrenic; we're quadro-phrenic. We've got more than two voices in our head at any one time." (Appendix I, 76-77)

As an author and a resident of Edinburgh, Rankin himself is a kind of double. He was born in Cardenden (just as was his character Rebus) but was educated in Edinburgh. While the city created the character of Rebus, the author created them both. Rebus is a product of Rankin's imagination; therefore, they are alike in many ways. Rankin says in his book *Rebus's Scotland: A Personal Journey* that he wonders "now if all this time, I've really been trying to make sense of my own upbringing, in order to better understand myself" (Rankin 7). In my interview with him about Rebus and Edinburgh, Rankin said:

> Well he's got the same background as me: he grew up in the same town, and he went to the same high school, a generation before me. So he's got the same kind of working class experience in his childhood and in his teens. And a lot of the things, in a book like *Dead Souls*, a lot of the stuff, a lot of the flashbacks to his time at school were things that happened to me or things that happened to friends of mine at school. But then when he left school, his path and life were very different to mine. I went to university and slowly grew estranged from my background, I guess. I went home less and less on weekends. Saw less of my old friends. Whereas he went back; well he doesn't go back to Fife that often. He's certainly got very little in the ways of family. (Appendix I, 79)

One of the most interesting things about Rankin and his creation is that had Rebus gone to university instead of going into the army, they could have ended up the same. Rebus "had never gone to university, and never would. He wondered how different he would be if he had or could…" (Rankin, *Strip* 16). In *Dead Souls*, Rebus wonders what would have happened to him "*If I'd stuck around Fife…not joined the army…what would I be thinking now? Who would I be?*" (Rankin, *Dead* 253; original italics). He could have

ended up going to university and becoming just like Rankin. But as it stands, he is not Rankin. However, the two of them are not as different as they appear at first glance. Both Rankin and Rebus investigate: Rankin for his books and essays, and Rebus for his crimes and cases. In fact, both of them investigate in much the same way–at the National Library of Scotland: "Rebus went to the National Library annex on Causewayside [Appendix II, Figure 7]. It wasn't much more than a five-minute walk from St. Leonard's" (Rankin, *Falls* 127). Not only do the two investigate in much the same way, but they also both like the same bars (the Oxford bar), some of the same music, memories. Maybe "Rebus is the underbelly of Rankin, the cynic that keeps him so well balanced" (Cabell 174).

Therefore, again, it all reverts back to the fact that Rankin is the designer of this world, of this version of Edinburgh, and its creation, Rebus. He has created a character in the city of Edinburgh that is doubled and, from that, a character in Rebus that is a direct result of this two-sided city. Rankin has produced a character that is believable and true, through the transition from fictional to real settings, such as bars, streets, and police stations, real events, such as the G-8 conference, and realistic characters, like Rebus. Through all of this Rankin has created a suspension of disbelief in the readers of his novels and has a character that has become real to its readers.

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Appendix I: Interview with Ian Rankin by Stefani Sloma on June 14, 2011 at Starbucks on Forrest Road, Edinburgh

Stefani Sloma: Part of our honors' senior year, we have to do an honors project, and mine is "The City as Character: Edinburgh in the Works of Ian Rankin." I want to do two things with the project; I want to talk about Edinburgh as a character, how it develops just as much as Rebus, and I also want to talk about Rebus. I am kind of discussing how both of them are doubles: Edinburgh kind of has two different sides, the pretty side and the not so pretty side, and Rebus has that doubleness to him, too. What do you think about that?

Ian Rankin: Well, they're all good points. I'd been studying Scottish literature at Edinburgh University, and I certainly came to the conclusion that there were these two sides to this city that were attractive to writers, the kind of Jekyll and Hyde nature to the city, or the kind of structural way it's broken up into New Town and Old Town, where the New Town was designed to be rational and geometric because the Old Town's chaotic. That's kind of two sides to the human nature, seems to me the organized and the sort of feral. So yeah, I'd seen it in Jekyll and Hyde, and then I'd seen it in the character of Jean Brodie, Miss Jean Brodie,[1] and also the city that she takes the girls around; they go for a walk, and they actually see the other side of the city. They see the poor and the dispossessed and the unemployed, which is something that's been alien to them, these quite posh wee school girls going to a nice school in a nice part of town. And I decided I wanted to write about contemporary Edinburgh. I thought if I want to look at these different layers to the city, a cop is a pretty good way of doing it, because unlike most characters in fiction, he has access, a cop has access to the highs of the city and the lows: the politicians, the business peoples, the corporations, but also the dispossessed, the disenfranchised, the petty criminal. So that was fairly conscious, I think. I'm trying to write about contemporary Edinburgh. And to show the tourist and the visitor that there's more to it than the city preserved in aspect that you sometimes see, because they don't tend to go beyond the usual tourist haunts. There's an awful lot in the city just below the surface. I was heartened by a story that

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[1] *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, a novel published by Muriel Spark in 1961, became a successful film in 1969.

someone told me, maybe a [unclear] that Robert Louis Stevenson[2] as a young boy would tiptoe out of the house in the dead of night and troop up the hill to the Old Town because he enjoyed the other side of the city. He liked hanging out with the poets and the vagabonds and the prostitutes and the drunkards. So there's something in that. Rebus himself, I mean I guess, I did eventually set up a conflict for him by giving him this character called Cafferty, who's almost like his Mr. Hyde, who's always tempting him to cross that line just that little bit too far and then not be able to jump back to the good side again. Because Rebus does enjoy breaking the rules, but he always jumps back to the position of being the good guy. But Cafferty is there as a kind of, you know, Cafferty has got very similar background to Rebus; they're very similar in their philosophy of life. They do have moral codes that they live by. Although Cafferty was meant to be a very minor character in book three, he just refused to leave the stage, you know? There was a lot I could do with him. So I set that up. Rebus himself, I mean, he is quite haunted at the start when we first meet him. Mostly because I never envisioned it as a series of books; it was meant to be just one book. So I thought, let's have this very conflicted character, who may be a suspect in the reader's eyes. But all the way through the writing of *Knots and Crosses* [1987], I wanted Rebus to be potentially the killer. So he has these blackouts, he has these moments of violence, he has a locked room in his apartment, and I was hoping the reader would think, "Oh, wait a minute, maybe this," but of course now that doesn't work because people know that Rebus is the good guy. But back then, I kind of made him as conflicted and haunted character.

But I wasn't influenced by crime fiction, because I hadn't read really any crime fiction before I started writing this stuff. So it wasn't like I was looking at other conflicted characters in crime fiction. But I do think it's true that as readers we enjoy our main characters if they have some flaws; we don't like perfection, we don't like superheroes, superhuman people in our fiction. We like them to get things wrong, we like them to fail occasionally. And Rebus often feels that; he feels that maybe he got the right person for the wrong reason, or that solving a crime doesn't really make

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[2] Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894), born in Edinburgh, a novelist, poet, and essayist whose works include *Treasure Island, Kidnapped,* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.*

anything better, that crime comes along and fills up that vacuum. You lock away the bad guys; there's another generation of bad guys going to come along, and they're more feral and they have less of a moral code than the people like Cafferty.

So there's all of that stuck in there somewhere, and I don't know how much of it was conscious, until people started to talk to me about it or I started to do interviews about the characters or series. I didn't sit down with some great overarching plan to create this character that would sort of mirror the city, or a city that would mirror the character.

We can go on now, that's done?

SS: Yeah. Part of my proposal for my project, one sentence said, "A two-sided city created a two-sided man." Do you think that's true? I know you said it wasn't conscious, but if there's so many doubles in Scottish history and literature, did it influence you?

IR: Yeah. You know, if you look at it, Edinburgh on the surface is this beautiful, old city that is packed with tradition and culture and statues and monuments and lovely buildings, terrific vistas, great geology. It's spectacular. But if you scratch the surface, there's a lot of bad stuff and always has been. It's what *Trainspotting*[3] explores, you know, that was all about that explosion in HIV and heroin use in Edinburgh in the early '80s; that was another city entirely, that was a city that readers and people outside Edinburgh went, "What?" They could imagine it happening in Glasgow, but they found it really hard to imagine it happening in Edinburgh because Edinburgh to them was *Miss Jean Brodie* and Sir Walter Scott,[4] and it was culture; it was Edinburgh Festival,[5] and it was fantastic monuments and castles and stuff. I do think there's this other side to the city, and you know, crime fiction is a perfect way to explore the fact that below any beautiful, shimmering surface anywhere in the world, there's the typical human failings going on, and there's, you know, passions, envy, jealousy, criminality, all the vices are there. All the sins are there, but in Edinburgh, quite well hidden. When you look at the rational New Town, you can hardly imagine anything bad happening there. Bad stuff happens there every day, just we don't always get to know about it, because

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[3] *Trainspotting* (1993) is a novel by Scottish writer Irvine Welsh.
[4] Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) is an internationally famous Scottish historical novelist and poet.
[5] The Edinburgh Festival is a series of theatrical and musical events that take place in Edinburgh each summer.

Edinburgh's very good at hiding its secrets. The thing I think about Edinburgh is that it's not a very public city, I don't think. It didn't make its money; it didn't provide jobs through creating anything, not shipbuilding, no car making, no coal, no nothing. It was invisible industries; it was banking and insurance, and the law and the church. So people went about their business very quietly; they led very quiet lives. It's a very different city in character and the people are very different that live in it to Glasgow. Glasgow seems to me to be very Celtic, very outgoing, you know, passionate on the surface; strangers will talk to you in the street. Edinburgh's very different; Edinburgh seems very repressed, and then there's two weeks a year, four weeks a year now when the Festival arrives, Edinburgh loosens its corsets and comes out to play, but then as soon as the Festival goes, the corsets come back on again. So you got people that kind of seem repressed, people that are good at hiding stuff; you start to think, well, what are they repressing and what are they hiding? And so for a fiction writer, it's perfect, especially if you're doing crime fiction. Because what you're looking at is, you know, let's go beneath the surface of people. We know that on the surface they work in this kind of great socialized environment. Even psychopaths open doors for old ladies; it's just that 0.1% of the time they're psychopaths. So it's a great city for that; it's a great city for showing that just below the surface, the calm, ordered surface of the city and the people within it, there's all this other stuff potentially happening.

SS: Do you ever think of your novels as giving a voice to the Scottish people or to that underbelly that nobody usually sees?

IR: I don't know if I give a voice to it. I mean, I guess people outside Scotland are more aware that there's more to Edinburgh that just the castle and someone playing bagpipes wearing a kilt on the street hoping you'll give them money, that it's a real contemporary city with contemporary problems and issues. Each book in the Rebus series tries to add another little bit of the jigsaw of what is contemporary Scotland. I mean, you know, starting with Edinburgh and then, once it got a little bit more confident, I suddenly thought well maybe Scotland, since Scotland is going in an interesting direction as well, politically and socially. So people now come to Edinburgh and do the Rebus walking tour. They don't come to Edinburgh just for the castle. There's a *Trainspotting* tour, as well. You can go down to Leith and go on a

Trainspotting tour. Because the other books people are going to, are unlikely to be recommended by the tourist board, right? Because they're painting this dark picture. And then people slowly realized that people want that, they want, when you visit a place people don't want to just see the past; they want to see what the city is like right now and what the people in it are like. So although it's still fiction, maybe it does give a kind of realistic portrayal of the kind of people that live in Edinburgh and what they get up to. And the Rebus books are translated into, I think the last count was, thirty-two languages. And these are people who, a lot of them only have a very sketchy notion of what Scotland is like. They think Scotland is a town just north of London; they think if you go to the castle you can see France; they think we all wear kilts and have bright red hair. You know, they have the usual clichéd preconceptions of the place. And writers don't just want to show that; we don't live in that country, we live in another country that's parallel to that country. Edinburgh gets a bad rep; if you go elsewhere in Scotland, people say Edinburgh is snobby, full of the English; it's not really a Scottish city. I wanted to give light to that as well, having lived here as a student. Although I know Philippa Middleton studied English here; you know Kate Middleton's sister, the one who just got married to the Royals?

SS: Oh. Yes.

IR: The sister who was a bridesmaid? She studied English here; she studied English lit at Edinburgh. So maybe they're right; maybe it isn't really a Scottish city.

SS: In an article called "Re-imagining the City," Marie Odile Pitton-Hédon says that you "question rather than represent the city." Do you think that's true?

IR: There was a far greater novelist than me, I think it was Milan Kundera,[6] who said that the great thing about the novel is not that it has answers but that it has lots of questions. And what I try to do in the books is ask the readers lots of questions: "What would you do in this situation?" "What do you feel about the fact that these things go on in our society?" People trafficking, xenophobia, poverty, whatever it happens to be. There's usually one particular thing picked out in each book, and you say to the reader, "What do you feel about this? What do you feel about the fact that you live in

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[6] Milan Kundera is a Czech writer best known for his 1984 novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*.

a culture, in a country, in a city where this goes on?" That's why the crimes that happen in the books might not have happened, but the potential is there for them to happen in real life. So oftentimes I pluck stories from newspapers, things that have actually happened, and I just give it a slight twist, because then you get that suspension of disbelief. The reader goes, "Hey, I remember something like that happening somewhere else," so it could happen and it could happen in Scotland and it could happen in Edinburgh. So yeah, I think asking questions is very important, and what you maybe do is then see if the reader has any answers. If I've got any problems or any questions about the world, about politics, about society, about good and evil, I just dump them on Rebus and I find a plot that will allow him to explore that question. And his take on the world is very different from my take.

So for example, in *Dead Souls* [1991], a pedophile is released from jail into the community and Rebus outs the guy, basically, and the guy then ends up dead. Rebus then feels a little bit guilty about the fact that he has caused this guy's death, he thinks. So then he has to investigate the death to sort of make things alright again, to atone. Rebus's take on pedophilia is very different from mine, because he's a very different character from me. He's a different generation; he's an older generation. He didn't go to university; he left school at fifteen and joined the army because that was about the only job that was open, you know. Then joined the police after that. He's kind of blue collar, working class, and he sometimes has kneejerk reactions to things. And being a police officer, of course, is in favor of the status quo. He's weary of change, and he's quite conservative with a small 'c.' He would see me as being a wishy-washy liberal. He would have very little time for me if he actually met me. So my job in the novel is often to change his mind. So he starts off with a kneejerk reaction to pedophilia: they should all be locked up and if they're let out everyone should know about it and get to kick them. And then I try to change his mind. And sometimes I can and sometimes I can't. Sounds weird, right? Because he *is* inside my head; he's not a real person. It often feels like we're having this conversation. I mean, maybe that's the divided character, it's actually the author. Because the authors of these books obviously have all these different characters and these different ways of seeing the world inside their head. It's like The Who once said, Pete Townshend of

The Who said, "We're not schizophrenic; we're quadrophrenic. We've got more than two voices in our head at any one time."[7] So I'm sure that there's a lot in that divided character thing, and asking questions. And it doesn't really matter if you find the answers; what's important is the question.

SS: Can you talk a little about how you came up with Rebus? I know that you were at university.

IR: Hmm. I mean, it's in my diary. I used to keep a page a day diary. I've got the diary entry for it, and I had actually gone into the university, and there's was a publishing house called Polygon, which was actually owned by Edinburgh University Student's Association, and they published a newspaper, a student magazine, and they'd gotten into publishing, and they'd had quite a success. Almost the first book they'd published was the first book of short stories by James Kelman,[8] who's eventually gone on to win the Booker Prize and be a big international name. So they were feeling quite confident about new Scottish fiction. And I'd sent them the manuscript of my second novel–first novel got nowhere– but I'd sent the manuscript for the second novel. And they'd accepted it, so I was thrilled. So I'd gone into Buccleuth Place, which is where Edinburgh University Student's Publications Board had headquarters, and I had signed a contract for this book. Very exciting. I think I was going to get 200 pounds, something like that. Then I went back to my flat, which was in Marchmont, Arden Street, same street that Rebus lives in. And it was that same evening that I got the idea for a story, in which a character is haunted by someone from his past who is sending him little puzzles, picture puzzles. So being an English lit student, you know, full of postmodernism and deconstruction, I called him Rebus, which means picture puzzle. A guy who's receiving picture puzzles is called Rebus, unbelievable that I could do that. [Laughter from both.] And in that first novel, you know, the problem is solved by a professor of literature at the university, who works out the puzzle. *Deus ex machina*.

I don't like that first book, it's far too literal. It's obviously written by a lit student. I can tell it at a hundred yards. There are words in there that I don't know what they mean. But the character

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[7] The Who is an English rock and roll band formed in 1964 by Roger Daltrey, Pete Townshend, John Entwistle, and Keith Moon.
[8] James Kelman is a Glasgow native who writes fiction, plays, and political essays.

jumped into my head, and for some reason halfway down the first page of notes, I just put "might be a cop." I didn't read detective fiction; I didn't know, nobody in my family was a cop. I didn't have any friends, well, I had one vague friend who was a uniform cop at that time. But I don't think that he played any part in it. I think I just liked the idea of the detective. I mean, again, having gone through two or three years of post-grad, where I was reading a lot of literary theory, the idea of fiction as a game and the idea of the detective. So I was a huge fan of Umberto Eco's *Name of the Rose* [1983], which is a kind of pastiche of a traditional whodunit, but also brilliantly re-imagines the whodunit with a monk as the main character solving a crime. So I quite liked that; I was aware that critics, some critics, were taking crime fiction seriously, detective fiction seriously. And it was a very playful genre. So I thought, you know, I want to write something playful, something that's got an element of game and puzzle to it, something that's set in contemporary Edinburgh. I'll do a cop; he'll be a cop. I didn't think of it as being in the tradition of crime fiction, though. I mean, I was still kind of pissed off when I went into the bookstores and saw it in the crime shelf.

And that's when I started writing crime fiction, contemporary crime fiction, was when I saw that's what I was classed as. I got a letter from the Crime Writers Association saying you've written a crime novel, why not join us? And I looked at the list of members, and I thought, "Okay. I better start reading some of these books, since this is obviously what I am. The world has decreed that I am a crime writer." And when I read the books, I thought they were great. I liked the sense of place; I liked the structure; I liked all of the characters, the traditional narrative. The strength of the crime novel really appealed to me. And I thought, if I can say what I want to say about the world in this genre, then why not? Why not?

But you know, Rebus was meant to be a one-off. He died at the end of the first draft of the first book. He was shot dead in a tunnel. For some reason I brought him back in the second draft. But it was meant to be a one-off. You know. I did a spy novel and a thriller, and I was kind of slow to come back to Rebus. I had no conception of it being a series, no conception of it taking over my life. And he evolved very slowly, I think. It was really, the first

four or five books were like an apprenticeship; it was me getting to know him. What can I do with you? What sort of person are you?

So in the first novel, he's a way of pushing forward the plot, asking the questions the reader wants answered. By book four or five, he's a more three-dimensional character, and a much more interesting character, I think. And by the time you get to *Black and Blue* [1997], which is the first successful novel in terms of sales and awards and interest from overseas, I think I did know him. And then I was more confident with what I could do with him, so in that book he actually goes outside the city. He goes up to Shetland, and he goes to Glasgow, and he goes to Aberdeen, and he travels widely. Because I'd grown in confidence.

SS: You've said that you two are quite different, but you also said that you share a lot of the same memories. So how alike are you?

IR: Well he's got the same background as me: he grew up in the same town, and he went to the same high school, a generation before me. So he's got the same kind of working class experiences in his childhood and in his teens. And a lot of the things, in a book like *Dead Souls*, a lot of the stuff, a lot of the flashbacks to his time at school were things that happened to me or things that happened to friends of mine at school. But then when he left school, his path and life were very different to mine. I went to university and slowly grew estranged from my background, I guess. I went home less and less on weekends. Saw less of my old friends. Whereas he went back, well he doesn't go back to Fife that often. He's certainly got very little in the ways of family back there in Fife. I gave him a brother, which is quite interesting, because I had a brother who died before I was born. I grew up with two sisters, but my brother died years before I was born. And I start to wonder if maybe Rebus was kind of the brother, and he's got a brother who is estranged from him. I just wonder if I was trying to give myself the brother that I never had. I'm not sure about that. Might need a psychoanalyst to look at that, rather than a literary critic.

Again in the early books, you know, his taste in music was different than mine. I thought, "What do loner, existentialist cops listen to late at night? Jazz and classical." I was horrified to read *Knots and Crosses* [1987] and have him listening to classical music in the car. So then there's a kind of sea change, and he starts listening to rock music which is what I listen to. So I gave him my taste in music, and also my taste in pubs. So for the first few books

he drinks in fictitious pubs, and he works in a fictitious police station. And I burned down his fictitious police station, and I took him to a real police station, took him into a real bar, and mentioned the name of street he lives on, Arden Street. You can actually go there and you can see where he lives.

So I guess at first I thought writing fiction, it has to be a fictional world. You know, fake names of streets, fake names of bars and restaurants, fake areas of the city. And then I realized later on you can use the real city, and actually it's quite fun to use the real city, because then you do get that suspension of disbelief again. You know, Oh, if that bar really exists, maybe he exists. It's funny the number of people who come to the Oxford Bar looking for Rebus. They're always disappointed when they just find me there instead, because I'm not as complex as him, or as damaged as him, or as dangerous as him. So yeah, we are similar in some ways; we do have similarities. You know, some of the stuff he does. I've never smoked; people who smoke find it hard to believe because he is apparently quite a realistic smoker. He'd find it really hard to smoke nowadays, but he'd never give up now. He's in his sixties now. I mean, I suppose he comes from a compartment in my head; there's lots of compartments, lots of characters there. So he's a little bit like me, but not totally like me.

SS: Siobhan is often picked on for being English, but she helps to give a view of the city for someone who's not originally from Edinburgh. Was it intentional for her to give an outsider's perspective?

IR: Yeah, I think it was. I'd given Rebus a colleague early on called Holmes, Brian Holmes, another joke. Then I thought, No, Rebus doesn't need a sidekick. So I got rid of Holmes. But somebody had to be there to ask the questions the reader wanted answered: How do you know that? Where are you going now, Rebus? Why are you going there? So I thought, he needs somebody, so along came Siobhan, and I thought, nice that she's female; you got a few sparks that fly between them. A different generation from him, been to college, computer literate. What the hell? Make her English as well. I'll give her an English accent, which allowed me very casually to talk about stuff like racism and xenophobia. And also the relationship between and her and Rebus would be more interesting. And it kind of shows the way the police are changing as well. It used to be a very male-dominated career in

Scotland, and it just isn't anymore. We've now got female chief constables; it took a long time, but we've got female chief constables. Two of them, I think, at present. So Siobhan has something to aspire to.

But yeah, I like her a lot. Again, she was a minor character. A bit like Cafferty, who was just too interesting to remain a minor character. She demanded that I do more and more with her, until she had priority in the books. She was on the page as often as Rebus was. And when Rebus retired, one possibility was to keep the series going with her. And I might do that. Maybe.

SS: What about Gill?

IR: Gill Templer. Well she appears in the first book, and when I decided it was a series, I thought well I've already got cops who've been in book one so I might as well do stuff with them. And I quite liked it that Rebus had a female boss. Again, Siobhan looks at Gill and thinks the only reason she's risen through the ranks is she's played the game. She's tried to be like one of the lads to fit in with this male-dominated hierarchy. And Siobhan's not willing to play that game, I don't think. So she's not going to progress unless the actual profession changes, which thankfully it is and it has. So Gill is like a character, a cop from a different period. I mean, Rebus is a dinosaur; he's the last of that breed of cops. He used to be fairly common, who didn't rely on computers and the internet and everything else, but had a sea of contacts around the city, small-time players who would share information with him, who worked by instinct, who were allowed to break the rules, who enjoyed breaking the rules. He can't get away with that anymore. That style of policing is just gone. So it was kind of just natural that Rebus would have to retire, because his style of policing doesn't work anymore, isn't allowed to work anymore.

SS: *Exit Music* [2007] leaves room for more books, and I've heard you change your mind daily from Colin Brown,[9] so where is your mind today? There can't be anymore *Detective Inspector* Rebus books, but….

IR: Well, there can. For two reasons: one, they've changed the retirement age and they've put it upwards, so Rebus wouldn't have to retire at 60 anymore. And also, as is mentioned toward the end of the series, there is this cold case review unit that really exists in

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[9] Colin Brown is the founder, owner, and tour guide of the Rebus Tours in Edinburgh.

Edinburgh, which is staffed by three retired detectives and one serving detective. Rebus would be perfect for that. Just give him an old unsolved case, let him dust it off, and just let him go through it, see what he can dig up. He would love that. So that's exactly what he's doing. He's working at Fettes, Police HQ, in Edinburgh, same building Malcolm Fox works in, my new detective. And he's looking at old cases. So I can bring him back, the potential is there to bring him back. The potential is there to bring Siobhan back and have Rebus there either helping or hindering, because there's no way he's going to let her get on and do her own thing without him looking over her shoulder. I think she was relieved when he retired, because she can go and do her own thing now. She's not got this shadow of Rebus hanging over her. So I don't know what would happen if he actually came back. She might feel really annoyed about that, that he's trying to interfere, which could be interesting in fictional terms.

But the other thing now is I've got this new cop, who is internal affairs. Well if anyone is right to be investigated by internal affairs for past misdemeanors, I would suggest that it's Rebus. So again the possibility exists for the new cop, Malcolm Fox, to investigate the old cop. So there's lots of possibilities, almost too many. It's choosing between them. Somebody said maybe I should write a Cafferty book; somebody said go back in time, it'd be interesting to see Rebus back in the 80s when he was a young cop and he was just getting to know Cafferty to start with. And it would be very non-PC, you could have them drinking whiskey in the cop station, smoking in the cop shop and stuff, and punching first and asking questions later. It would be gloriously non-PC. So I don't know, you have too many possibilities.

But it won't be the next book; I mean, I'm just finishing a book now, that's the internal affairs. And I've got an idea for a book next year, which is neither Rebus nor internal affairs. So it would be the year after that before I have to start thinking about this. So that's 2013.

SS: I was clutching at the book in the last couple of pages when Cafferty was about to possibly die. Does it surprise you that people like him and care whether he survives?

IR: No, because these characters have become real to people. Well, that wasn't the end of the book. When I handed the manuscript over to my publisher, the book ended with Rebus

picking up the police officer outside Haymarket station and driving him towards the hospital, and it was a very open ending. You never found out what happened or after. And my publisher said, "Oh, my God. No. If this is the final Rebus book, we need some closure. We need Rebus, Siobhan, and Cafferty. A final scene with the three of them." And I said, "Really? Are you sure about that? I quite like this open ending." And he said we need that. And he convinced me. So I went home and within a couple of days I'd written out a final scene. I mean, I did quite like it when I'd written it. I thought, Rebus, in a funny way, can't live without Cafferty. The two are almost symbiotic. They need each other. They're very similar to each other. They're almost conjoined. So the fact that here's the bane of Rebus's life about to die and Rebus is fighting for him to live. I quite liked that. And there's no doubt in my mind that Cafferty survives, and he survives because Rebus was there. Again, if I bring them back in the future that's interesting as well. Cafferty owes his life to Rebus. Makes for an interesting relationship.

SS: Who are your major influences? I know that *Dead Souls* is a kind of rewrite of *Confessions*,[10] and you've obviously been inspired by Stevenson.

IR: Yeah, well early on, there is a novelist in Scotland called William McIlvanney,[11] and he's a serious novelist, proper literary novelist. And then in the late '70s, early '80s, he wrote three crime novels set in Glasgow with a character called Laidlaw. And that kind of made it okay to write crime fiction. I thought if a literary novelist like McIlvanney is writing crime fiction, then there's no stigma attached to crime fiction. And then I figured out there is stigma attached to crime fiction. But I remember going up to him at the book festival in Edinburgh, in either '83 or '85, and I said to him that I was writing a book that's a bit like Laidlaw but it's set in Edinburgh. And he signed the book "Good luck with the Edinburgh Laidlaw." Which was nice. So he was an influence.

So when I was writing my first novels, I was still a full-time Ph.D. student doing Muriel Spark. And the fact is that a lot of Spark's books are structured almost as whodunits; there's a lot of elements of the whodunits in her books, and border ballads, which

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[10] *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) is a novel by Scottish novelist James Hogg (1770-1835).
[11] William McIlvanney published his first novel, *Remedy Is None*, in 1967.

are full of ghosts and hobgoblins and superstitions. And there's that element to Edinburgh, that gothic element to the city of Edinburgh that I was trying to get across in the early books. So that was an influence.

And when I started to read crime fiction, it was the American hard-boiled stuff that I really liked. So Lawrence Block[12] had a private eye called Matt Scudder, and although he's a private eye, he's good friends with a gangster, and Cafferty was kind of invented as an homage to that character. And James Ellroy's[13] Los Angeles I liked. And when I discovered James Ellroy sometimes uses real crimes as a starting point for his books, that was a big influence on *Black and Blue*, when I used a real crime consciously to get the start of the book.

But you know, who are your influences? Man, you could go on forever. You could literally go on forever. That'll do for starters.

SS: Are any of your characters based on real people, other than the ones that are real people?

IR: Yeah, but I better not say who because I could get into trouble. I mean, there's a few. Some are done in jokes. Sometimes people can see themselves in the books even though I say, "It isn't you." But people sometimes see themselves in the books. Because I've taken lots of stuff from my background, my childhood. You know, there'll be things that happen to people that I know that will be in the books. And also people pay money to charity to be in the books; so occasionally there's a real person in the books who's paid money to charity to be there.

For example in, this is a weird one, in *A Question of Blood* [2003], Peacock Johnson, I thought was real. Someone called Peacock Johnson paid money to charity to be in the book, and I never met him; I just communicated through email. And then it transpired that there was no Peacock Johnson. He was a guy, he was a bass player with Belle and Sebastian pretending that it was a real person called Peacock Johnson. So I made a fictitious character I thought was based on a real character, but it turns out the real character was a fictitious character. Then the bass player went and wrote a novel, which is unpublished, in which Peacock

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[12] Lawrence Block is an American crime writer who published his first New York City-based novels in 1976.
[13] James Ellroy is an American crime fiction writer best known for *The Black Dahlia* (1987) and *L.A. Confidential* (1990).

Johnson, who is a petty criminal in Glasgow, is framed for murder and comes through to Edinburgh and asks the novelist Ian Rankin for help to prove his innocence.

SS: Have you ever used Rebus as a release?

IR: Oh yeah. All the time. Any problems I've got, any questions about the world, anything that's sort of worrying me or bothering me, I dump it on Rebus. And I probably take that to an extreme: when the younger of my sons was born disabled and we were told he probably wouldn't walk, the very next book I wrote I put Rebus's daughter in a wheelchair as just a way of dealing with it. Then I felt a bit guilty about it; it was bit wrong of me to do that, so she did eventually learn to walk again. That was just a direct reaction to what was happening to me in my personal life. So yeah, he's been a useful punching bag down the years.

The Rebus novels start to get good around the time my son was being diagnosed, and I was realizing there was nothing I could do about it. But in fiction, I could play God and control the world, but in real life I couldn't. So I used the books as I kind of therapy. So halfway through *Black and Blue* when I was at a pretty low ebb in my personal life, I had Rebus get into a punch-up with his best friend, Morton, and the two of them are there on the Meadows in Edinburgh punching each other to a standstill, on their knees, snot coming out of their noses, bloody bout. That was an exaggeration. It was his King-Lear-on-the-heath moment, but it wasn't far off it. It was about as low as Rebus was going to get, because it was that point in my life where I wasn't going to get much lower.

SS: How do you feel about the Rebus TV series?

IR: Mixed feelings about TV. I don't think you can contain a novel or start to contain a novel in two hours of television. So trying to do it in 45 minutes is really tough, which is what they were doing to Rebus was giving it 45 minutes. A 45-page script per novel. No novelist is going to want that for their creation. I look on very jealously at these Scandinavian cop shows that give them 20 hours or even something like *The Wire*[14] which gives a novel several series to get its points across. And in the UK we've gone and gave a character like Rebus 45 minutes. It's frustrating. I mean it was in the works a long way back. When the first book was published, *Knots and Crosses*, fairly soon there was an editor

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[14] *The Wire* is an American television series which aired on HBO from 2002 through 2008.

in London along with a producer who were going to buy it and turn it into a cop show in London, London-based, starring a guy called Rebus, which would have been weird. I might not have written any more books if that had been the case. And then the BBC had the rights for a long time and they were looking at Robbie Coltrane playing Rebus and it never came off that. I tried writing scripts for them, didn't quite work. And then eventually after years of it being in the wilderness, John Hannah, he had his own production company, and he said he'd like to buy the rights. Then the television people said "Yeah, we'll put it on only if you agree to play Rebus. We need a big name." So almost against his better judgment, John Hannah played Rebus in the first three or four films. Then when he went off to Hollywood, ITV looked again and they found Ken Stott, who fans tell me is a much better fit. He's physically more like Rebus. But I don't watch it; I've never watched it all the way through. So because I didn't want actors' voices interfering with the voices in my head. And once at dinner very early on in the process when Ken Stott was going to play Rebus, I was taken out to dinner with the producers and the director and Ken Stott. Sat next to this young woman, chatting away at her, seemed very pleasant. Said "So are you production crew or scripter?" She said, "Oh no, I'm Siobhan." And I was kind of startled, because physically she was nothing like I imagined Siobhan would be. I mean just totally unlike Siobhan. But you know, that's television. They asked me if I want to read the scripts. I said no. Did I want to watch it? No. Did I want to try writing it? No. It's just another creature.

SS: Is it true that you became a suspect after researching for a book?

IR: Yeah, vaguely. Vaguely, I mean, I've probably blown it up a bit out of proportion to what actually happened. I wrote to the chief constable of Edinburgh and said, "I'm writing a novel, will you help me with the recent background?" And I was asked to go along to the Leith police station and meet these two detectives, which was great. And I went there and I told them the plot of *Knots and Crosses*, which was actually quite close to something they were investigating. A child had gone missing from a fun fair. Now later on that child would turn up dead, and six other kids would turn up dead. They did eventually catch the guy. Only one of the murders happened here. The guy was like a lorry driver, so he was all over

the UK. Anyway, I go in to these two detectives who said, "What is the book about?" I said, "Well, it's about kids going missing in Edinburgh." *Hold on*. And they said, "Well do you want to see how an investigation works?" I said, "Yeah, that'd be great." So they took me through to the investigation room, and they go, "Well, if you were a suspect, we'd take some details from you. Like your full name." And they typed it into a computer, old fashioned computer. "And your address, and your date of birth, and your occupation and stuff. That's what we would do if you were a suspect." And I thought, "Okay," and I just left it at that, got to ask my questions and stuff, and I thought, "Well that was a bit odd."

Later on, it dawned on me that these police officers were investigating this and here was this guy telling a story that he's writing a novel, which sounds like the case they're working on, and they stuck me in the computer. Years later, I met one of them again, met one of them in a pub, and he said, "Oh yeah, you were on the list. You know, we checked you out. We didn't have many suspects back then."

But yeah, it makes a great story when I make public appearances now; it's all bells and whistles when I tell that story now, so it's all very rococo. And it's kind of hard to remember what the real story is, because the fiction is much more entertaining.

SS: How did you go about researching the police to give it an accurate description? Because I know at first you said that you didn't really give it an accurate description….

IR: Yeah, I didn't. I just made stuff up and sometimes got it right and sometimes got it wrong. Then, well let me think. Yeah, several things happened: number one, it became a job; it wasn't a hobby anymore, it was a full-time occupation. I thought, well, I should start to do the research; I should get the details right. If I'm making money off of these guys, whether it's the pathologists, or the lawyers, or the cops, I should at least know how to do their job. And another thing was that I did a reading, a signing, at a bookshop in Edinburgh, and this cop came up and he said, "You know, I enjoy your books, but you do make a lot of procedural errors." And he gave me his card, and I met up with him and we talked. He became a mate of mine, and he still is. He's retired now, but we're still friends. And he sneaked me into police stations, and

he sneaked out murder case files. You know, files and files of stuff that goes on during a murder investigation. He introduced me to other cops, pathologists, and all sorts of useful people. And I knew that I could phone him up, if I needed him. You know, what does a warrant card look like, an ID? What do you call it? Do you call it a warrant card? So he was great.

But I didn't want to do too much research. I didn't want the books to become PR, public relations for the police. I wanted still to be able to write about bent cops and cops who might cross the line. How can you do that if all the people you know are good cops? So I would contact him maybe once or twice a year. I mean, we'd meet up and have drinks and that, but I wouldn't really quiz him once or twice a year.

But he's retired; a lot of the people I knew are retired. So I've got to start making contacts again. But it's funny, everywhere I go in the world, wherever I do a gig anywhere in the world, there's always somebody in the audience who's a cop or an ex-cop, and he says, "We had a guy like Rebus. We had a guy like Rebus." And there's certainly at least one person in Edinburgh who thinks that Rebus is based on him, even though I've never met the guy. I'm not sure why he would think that's a good thing, to have Rebus based on him.

SS: I want to be an editor after I graduate, so do you have any advice for me?

IR: Well, it's a tough profession to get into; I'm not exactly sure how you get into it, except through persistence and showing that you have certain skills. Publishing is changing so fast; I mean one problem at the moment is that books aren't being edited. If you're an author you can sell your book direct to Amazon, and they'll just sell it for 99 pence, and they don't give a [expletive] if it's properly spelled or punctuated. They've got no storage space; they've got no warehousing problem. They're just selling files. So in the next few years we're going to get very, very sloppy books published, because there's no quality control. What an editor brings to the process is quality control. So I think it'll make a comeback. Initially what's going to happen is we're going to get lots of freelance editors saying to authors, "Look if you're going to put your stuff on Amazon, if a reader looks at the first page and it's full of spelling mistakes and it's just badly written, they ain't gonna buy it. So you need an editor." So there's going to be lots of

jobs for freelance editors, and then I think we'll go back to the standard publishing procedure, where even if it's e-books, there will be a publisher somewhere in the process.

But my editor has been my editor for donkey's years, but she actually retired many years back. Well, she got another job outside publishing. And I said to her, "Will you keep me on on a freelance basis?" So she's got the new book just now. In fact she's had it for over a week; she's had it for ten days, and I've not had any feedback yet. And I'm sort of waiting on tenterhooks, because once she gives me the feedback, then we have a little fight. She'll say things like, "I don't understand why this is happening. Why's this person going here? Wasn't this person that person's boyfriend?" You know. So she picks up factual errors, but she also picks up on stuff that readers ask themselves: "Why is this actually happening?" if I've not made it clear enough. So then we have a little fight about how much I'm actually going to change, how much do I need to change. But you know, she's been my editor for donkey's years; it *is* an important relationship.

And it's a bit of everything. I mean, I've got another "editor," in inverted commas, who works daily for me in London at the publishing house, and who's the person who's looking at jackets and looking at promoting the books, and all that kind of stuff. But when it comes to the kind of copyediting, the actual looking at the script and making suggestions, it's my old editor that I depend on.

SS: Do you ever let your wife or your kids read your books?

IR: I mean, my oldest son, 19-year-old, he tried to read one of my books, but he didn't really get on with it. He's not a crime fiction fan, or maybe he was just embarrassed at reading his dad's books. So the only book of mine he's ever read is the graphic novel that I did, the comic book.

My wife is my first editor; she is the first [unclear]. So with this new book, for example, she read the second–nobody reads the first draft, nobody ever reads the first draft, except me–but I let her read the second draft, and there was something she wasn't sure about. So I gave it a third draft before I sent it off to the publisher. So she's the first reader. And she reads a lot, and she reads a lot of crime fiction, so I can depend on her usually to get it right. If she thinks something's a problem, then it probably is a problem.

And on this new one, about feedback, my agent said there was a little tweak at the end that he would like; the day-to-day editor down in London said he'd like a little tweak at the end… same tweak. So that's quite interesting if two people are saying the same thing. But I'm waiting to see what the copy editor says before I do the final, final, final draft. But the publisher in London wants it by the end of June, so she's going to have to be [expletive] quick getting that email to me with all the things she sees as problems or I'm not going to have time to do it. The book comes out in October, first week in October.

SS: Can you tell me what it's called?

IR: Yeah. It's called *The Impossible Dead* [2011]. I gave them a list of five titles. I said, "I can't decide between these. What do you like?" And the publisher in London put it around the publishing house, and the one that he liked was *The Impossible Dead*, which wasn't my favorite. I thought it sounded a bit like a zombie flick, but he liked it. So, okay.

SS: Cool. Well, I know we talked a little bit about this suspension of disbelief, but I don't remember if you said if it was intentional or not, but sometimes your crimes are based on real ones; you have real places, real events, real dates like in *The Naming of the Dead*, so it forces that suspension of disbelief.

IR: Yeah, I mean that can be problematic. If you're writing about a real city in a real country in real time, then if stuff happens you kind of have to refer to it to be realistic. I mean, I knew there was no way I couldn't write about the new Parliament, for example, when we finally got a Parliament. I had to write about it. When the G-8[15] came to Edinburgh, and there was riots in the streets, I had to write about it. You know, cops were involved; cops were in overtime and were stretched to the limit. And I thought there was one cop that wouldn't be allowed to get near the G-8, and that was Rebus. So I'll write a book about the G-8. But then having decided I was going to write about the G-8 week, but then there was an explosion in London, and I'll have to write about that as well, because that really happened. It can't not happen. So if you start writing about the real world, you do give yourself problems; you

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[15] The G-8 (The Group of Eight) [1975] is a forum for the governments of the eight major economies: France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Russia. When the group met in the UK in 2008, many people took to the streets of Edinburgh to demonstrate for the Make Poverty History campaign.

do give yourself problems. No doubt about it. And it makes the books age very quickly as well, I think. I mean, the G-8, who's going to, a generation from now, who's going to have any interest in the fact that the G-8, there was a little riot in Edinburgh for a day? Probably nobody. So, again, you've got to be careful.

It actually amazes me how quickly the books have aged. The early books, you know, where nobody has a mobile phone, hardly anybody has a computer in their house. If Rebus needs to make a phone call, he stops at a phone booth. The fax machine is a little god in the corner of the office; when a fax comes in, it's got to be important because it's a fax. I mean, nobody has fax machines these days. Yet that was new technology in 1986. It's weird how quick things have moved. Makes it tough for the crime writer because people know this. They know all this new technology is out there; there's new ways of investigating a crime scene, new ways of looking at fingerprints, looking at trace evidence. So the audience knows more than the authors do, some of the time. They know their *CSI*[16] back to front; they think it's real, whereas *CSI* is ridiculously over the top. But you've got to keep all that on board. It's getting awfully hard to think of crimes that wouldn't be solved quickly. Somebody was out on the internet the other day saying that, you know, "Why can't we have a DNA database, where everybody's DNA is put in this database at birth? So we could have a record of everybody in the country; whenever there's a crime we'd be able to solve it." I said, "Are you trying to put me out of a [expletive] job?"

[Laughter from both.]

We'd have very short books. "Oh no, someone's been murdered. Oh, I've got a hair! Excellent!"

[Laughter.]

SS: Well, I guess that's about it.

IR: Cool.

SS: Thank you so much!

IR: No problem.

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[16] *CSI* (Crime Scene Investigation), an American television series, first aired on the CBS network in 2000 and is still running as of this writing.

Appendix II: Places in the Novels

Figure 1: Old and new town of Edinburgh
http://www.welt-atlas.de/datenbank/ karten/ karte-1-828.gif

Figure 2: Ian Rankin and Stefani Sloma, June 14, 2011
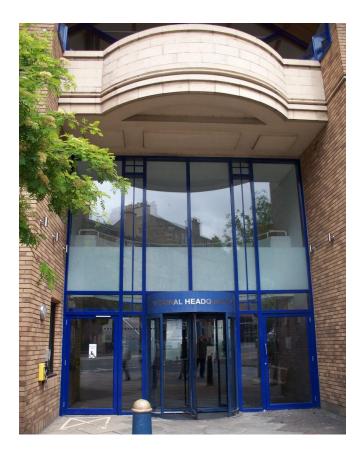
Figure 3: Arden Street

Figure 4: St. Leonard's Police Station

Figure 5: The Oxford Bar

Figure 6: The Royal Oak
http://www.undiscoveredscotland.com/edinburgh/pubguide/images/royaloak-header.jpg

Figure 7: National Library of Scotland

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