

Mental Borders in Ian Rankin's *Black and Blue*

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Abstract

Published in 1997, Ian Rankin's *Black and Blue* describes the police procedure in Scotland around the mid-1990s. Throughout the book, Detective Inspector John Rebus works to resolve four murders and discovers that the killings are similar to those of a late 1960s "Bible John" case (mistakenly concluded with a scapegoat). While the police force at Craigmillar deploys a speculative search for clues, Rebus undertakes a more intuitive search for evidence. After offending his senior officials, he launches an exile among Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and then goes on to Shetland and the North Sea. Meanwhile, TV journalists investigate Rebus over a miscarriage of justice some thirty years ago.

This essay aims to explore how the victimized female body is *psychically* constructed. Conversely, it explores how the process of legal inscription of the body constructs a psychical interior. Through these questions, I propose that readers may look at the female victimized body from the viewpoint of internal criminal motivations, and that they may also look at the internal victimized body from the viewpoint of external class divisions. If the individual body involves a metaphor of the city

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as an institutionalized body, then how is the body of the city imagined, and psychically and socially produced? This essay offers observations on one corporeal aspect of Scottish underground culture, in relation to fictional criminal discourse.

Keywords: detective fiction, police procedural, female body, institutionalized body

Hidden city. The historical proof: when invading armies advanced, the populace made themselves scarce in the caves and tunnels below the Old Town. Their homes might be ransacked, but the soldiers would leave eventually—it was hard to enjoy victory without the evidence of the vanquished—and the locals would come back into the light to begin the work of rebuilding.

— Ian Rankin's *Set in Darkness*¹

Published in 1997, Ian Rankin's *Black and Blue* describes the police procedure in Scotland around the mid-1990s. In the story, Detective Inspector John Rebus works on four murders with similar killing patterns. He discovers that the murderer imitates the killing pattern of the "Bible John" case of the late 1960s which was suspiciously unresolved and mistakenly concluded with the conviction of a scapegoat. While the police force at the Craigmillar Police Station deploys a speculative method in order to collect clues for the investigation, Rebus finds an intuitive way to search for evidence. After offending his senior officials, he launches an exile among Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and then goes on to Shetland and the North Sea. TV journalists are meanwhile investigating Rebus over a miscarriage

¹ The paragraph comes from another Ian Rankin novel, *Set in Darkness*, out of the Inspector Rebus series. See Ian Rankin's autobiography, *Rebus's Scotland: A Personal Journey*, which offers a portrait of the rural Scotland of Rankin's childhood and the status quo of Scottish cities. Rankin reveals his insights about the undercurrents of present cities (running beneath superficial façades) through his fictional detective Rebus. (London: Orion, 2006) 84.

of justice.

The first plot line opens with the current Johnny Bible murders that are imitating the late 1960s killings of the Bible John murders in Glasgow. The second plot line portrays Rebus's interest in the suspicious death of an oil worker, Allan Mitchison, who was found impaled on railings outside a flat in Niddrie. A third plot line begins with mention of a possible miscarriage of justice involving Rebus, his old boss Lawson Geddes, and a criminal named Lenny Spaven, who protests his innocence before committing suicide. Media reports raise unwelcome attention for Rebus. At the same time, Rebus's younger colleague, Brian Holmes, is continually asking him for assistance. When Holmes beats a suspect excessively (due to the depression he suffers in his marriage), Rebus helps Holmes out of the lawsuit, asking him to return the favour by reviewing the Spaven case file and reassessing the investigation.

After an unsuccessful search for criminal evidence, Rebus ultimately returns to Edinburgh, and discovers that the Chief Inspector Charles Ancram claims to have arrested a major drug criminal, Joe Toal. Rebus now takes a walk and receives an anonymous phone call. Did "Bible John" make this call? Rebus stops bothering himself with this question and dumps his "Bible John" records in the bin.

This hard-boiled detective fiction² retells the conflict

² Scaggs says that in the hard-boiled tradition, "it is the individual private eye who safeguards society and attempts to restore the order disrupted by criminal activity, and it is this relationship between the individual detective and society at large, crystallized through the matrix of criminality, that finds its sharpest focus in the police procedural"

between the official and the private eye, particularly emphasizing the serial murders at the close of the twentieth century. More than this, it actually satirizes the police culture and its inability to enforce an honest and upright carriage of justice. The police and the criminals are suspiciously complicit; there are dark dealings and illegal events behind certain recognized institutes. Rankin characteristically, if not factually, juxtaposes the dark side of unprivileged Edinburgh with the public side of the city. As an anti-authoritarian, alcoholic and divorced police detective, Rebus discloses the scandals behind Edinburgh police culture at the close of the twentieth century. John Scaggs asserts that Rankin's purpose in *Black and Blue* is "not only to restore the social order disrupted by the crime of murder, but also to maintain Scottish political stability and credibility" (97). In other words, if these crimes are everyday occurrences, then what deserves attention are those "privileged" crimes behind the scenes. It is these "recognized" crimes that destroy social order and pollute civic culture.

While speaking of mean streets and urban city life, particularly in the hard-boiled tradition, Ralph Willett also suggests that the modern city in hard-boiled fiction is "a wasteland devastated by drugs, violence, pollution, garbage and a decaying physical infrastructure", and that the private eye down the mean streets of this urban wasteland must "temporarily check the enfolding chaos" (5). Readers may note this urban landscape in *Black and Blue* while the private eye Rebus realizes his awkward position between authority and conscience. Rankin

describes the face of Edinburgh during a mob uprising on the streets:

It was Edinburgh's hardest posting; a stint of duty lasted two years max, no one could function longer than that. Craigmillar was about as tough an area as you could find in Scotland's capital city, and the station fully merited its nickname—Fort Apache, the Bronx. . . . Being up an alley meant a mob could cut it off from civilization with ease, and the place had been under siege numerous times.

Rebus knew why he was there. He'd upset some people, people who mattered. They hadn't been able to deal him a death blow, so had instead consigned him to purgatory. (*Black and Blue* 8)

The tension of the modern city has obviously not been removed by its capital civilization. What is apparent is the increasing opposition between the policemen and the street people, and also between the public eye of police officers and the private eye of detective.

Christopher Ward also comments on the incredible investigation of the public policing force in *Black and Blue*, maintaining:

[Sketching] Rebus's investigations beyond the city limits of Edinburgh to encompass Glasgow and Aberdeen too, Rankin effectively produces a "state of

the nation” novel, applying the techniques he has developed in previous work to not just a single city, but an entire country. Having successfully tackled Scotland as a whole in this single novel, Rankin then essentially confines Rebus to Edinburgh for the remnant of the series, confident that the city can now stand metonymically for the rest of the country without losing sight of his greater purpose. (12)

Ward here refers to the fact that Rankin skillfully makes a device of Rebus’s investigative travel, from Lowland Edinburgh’s official crime cases to Glasgow’s southwestern drug smuggling, to Aberdeen’s northeastern masked pub culture, with an aim to faithfully articulating the contradictions, oppositions, and paralyzes of the city.

Moreover, Eleanor Bell also maintains that “Rankin encourages an ethical reading of the nation that is more focused on exploring its repressed undercurrents and dark unconscious than with glorifying its heritage” (54). Indeed, Rankin’s purpose in this detective fiction is to map out a more realistic picture different from the tourist’s view of Scotland as a romantic resort. In his autobiography of *Rebus’s Scotland*, Rankin reveals the aim of his fictional topography:

If my original project had been a greater understanding of the city of Edinburgh, those parameters soon changed, once I’d discovered that Rebus was a tough enough creation to lead the reader into an investigation of Scotland itself: a

small, proud and ancient country with a confused and fragile sense of its own identity. This is the landscape I inherited, with Detective Inspector John Rebus as my guide. Scotland has been called “the arse of Europe” (by a Papal Legate in 1529) and a place of immense civilization (by Voltaire, no less). Betjeman and Walpole have sung the praises of Edinburgh, while others (including some of its most famed citizens) have decried the suffocating petty-mindedness of the place. A contradictory city makes a good capital for a country of contradictions. (18)

It seems that as a European capital with rich cultural exchange, Edinburgh presents itself as a miniature of the conflicts between mainstream and subaltern cultures. Therefore, it is actually difficult for policemen not to overstep the legal mark, and to at the same time appease the criminal greed for wealth or underground power.

Rankin is a sharp commentator on the subtle but scandalous balance between rascals and officials. While critics focus on the city's inability to curb prevailing crimes, however, there is scarcely any criticism about criminal motivation in these serial murders. I would thus like to explore victimized women in this novel, as well as the class division that emerges both in the police bureau and in Rebus's treatment of his suspects. That is to say, if we take the victimized female body as a text to be deciphered, then how is the law incarnate in this text? If the same criminal commits each of these murders (even if trained or

commanded), then how do these victimized bodies express the criminal's psychic condition? Aside from a gender division, is there any class discrimination involved in the criminal's motive? If bodies are objects of power and sites of inscription (revealing psychic and social meaning), what effect does an understanding of gender and class have on our understanding of power and culture?

This essay aims to explore how the victimized female body is *psychically* constructed. Conversely, it asks how the process of legal inscription of the body constructs a psychological interior. In other words, I propose that readers may look at the external victimized female body from the viewpoint of a criminal's internal motivation, and that readers may also look at the internal treatment of the body from the viewpoint of external class division. If the individual body involves a metaphor of the city as an institutionalized body, how is the body of the city imagined, and psychically and socially produced? This essay ultimately offers observations on one corporeal aspect of Scottish underground culture, in relation to fictional criminal discourse.

Women's Body as the Object of Power

In the first place, *Black and Blue* opens a re-examination of past sins following Spaven's suicide. The TV media cynically reports his cause of death as suicide and directs public attention to the police scandal. This public pressure also sparks an internal police investigation. Rebus bears the brunt of the public attention so that the case has to be re-investigated. While suspecting that the murderer might be an assassin for a bigger underground

group, Rebus searches for a man who is accused of taking bribes from Glasgow's "Mr. Big", the oil tycoon "Major" Weir. Rebus meets him for a short time, subconsciously refusing to be threatened by the underground's power. He uses the rascal's archetypal weapon, the wise-crack, bringing the proud Weir down. Rebus inquires: "'Can I ask you something, Major? Why did you name your oilfield after an oatcake?'" Weir's face reddened with sudden rage. 'It's short for Bannockburn!' Rebus nodded. 'Did we win that one?'" (*Black and Blue* 122). This short dialogue implies Rebus's suspicion that the oil industry is an agency of prostitution and exposes the objectification of the female body (as a refreshing "cake").

Readers may observe female reactions towards Weir's patriarchal power through his daughter, Bruce. Bruce had been abused in childhood and left the family many years earlier. Her revenge is to torment her father through protest: "'He's in this little private hell she's constructed for the two of them. As long as he knows she's out there, demonstrating against everything he holds dear...that's his punishment...'" (*Black and Blue* 251).

Besides Weir's discrimination of women, readers may also perceive police contempt towards female officials. While in disagreement with a female chief inspector, Rebus asks Holmes: "'Do you know how many women make chief inspector in the Scottish force?' 'I know we're talking the fingers of a blind carpenter's hand'" (*Black and Blue* 68). Rankin here reveals the difficulties facing women who compete in a man's world, particularly in the police world that requires masculinity and physical power. Rebus is conscious of the inequalities of gender

even more when he encounters a Glasgow journalist, saying:

She smiled: lip gloss, eye-shadow, tired face trying for enthusiasm. “Jennifer Drysdale.” Rebus knew why she was tired: it was hard work acting like “one of the boys.” Mairie Henderson had told him about it—the pattern was changing only slowly; a lot of surface gloss about equality sloshed over the same old wallpaper. (*Black and Blue* 58)

On the one hand, the female journalist feels helpless and tired with everyday news about the victimized women; on the other hand, she remains fearful that the murders are nothing more than unresolved female abuse cases, cases that will end with silent and oppressed voices “sloshed over the same old wallpaper.”

Public pressure over these cases urges Rebus into a fistfight with his old friend, Jack Morton. Rebus expresses his helplessness and laments the victimized women:

Teeth bared, Rebus swung again, even more wildly, giving his friend plenty of time to dodge and launch a punch of his own. Rebus almost defended himself, but thought better of it. Instead, he waited for the impact. Jack hit him low, the sort of blow that could wind a man without doing damage. Rebus doubled over, fell to hands and knees, and spewed on to the ground, spitting out most liquid. He went on trying to cough everything out, even when there was nothing left to expel. And then he started crying. Crying for himself

and for Lawson Geddes, and maybe even for Lenny Spaven. And most of all for Elsie Rhind and her sisters, all the victims he couldn't help and would never be able to help. (*Black and Blue* 188)

If Rebus's personal frustration epitomizes police distress, Johnny Bible's fourth victim takes this depression to the extreme. Somewhat ironically, when Rebus asks his superior, Ancram, to view the crime scene, Ancram seems unaffected in any way by the young girl's death:

"Do me one favour," Rebus said.

"What?" They were back in the back of Ancram's car, heading for Rebus's hotel, where they'd picked up his car.

"A quick detour down to the docks."

Ancram glanced at him. "Why?"

"I want to see where she died."

Ancram looked at him again. "What for?"

Rebus shrugged. "To pay my respects," he said.

"Listen, Rebus...all this interest is because you once bought a prostitute a cup of tea?"

"Her name was Angie Riddel." Rebus paused.

"She had beautiful eyes." (*Black and Blue* 159)

Again, the value of the woman's body depends on her social status, her beauty rather than her respectable life. Rankin describes this: "He felt her eyes were on him as he walked out of

the bar towards reception. He had to force his feet up the stairs towards his room. Her pull was strong” (*Black and Blue* 111).

Elizabeth Grosz, a feminist scholar, conceives the body “as a surface on which social law, morality, and values are inscribed,” and refers the “lived body” “to the lived experience of the body, the body’s internal or psychic inscription” (1995: 33). If the victimized female bodies are shamelessly ignored and even belittled by the police, we may regard the “complicity” of the police force as one crucial factor leading to these serial murders. The ignorant patriarchal regard for these female bodies underscores not only woman’s subordinate position in society, but also the insult facing those in the lowest social classes such as prostitutes. If men value female bodies as imaginary objects, according to their physical beauty or social prestige, we may suggest that the social morality inscribed on these female victims is trite and not up to the moral standards of civilized society.

Readers may observe Rebus’s reaction as he hears the news of Lawson Geddes’s death. What deserves attention is Rebus’s struggle to restrain the emotion he feels over the loss of a man who was like his father:

He sat in his chair by the window, thinking of Lawson Geddes. Typical Scot, he couldn’t cry about it. Crying was for football defeats, animal bravery stories, ‘Flower of Scotland’ after closing time. He cried about stupid things, but tonight his eyes remained stubbornly dry. (*Black and Blue* 30)

Geddes in some way represents the spirit of justice,

characteristically the spirit of Scotland in Rebus's mind. The national masculinity is worthy of respect while the patriarchal one is not.

When Rebus receives the news of Geddes's death, he returns home with his usual fish supper, making a statement to members of the press:

"Ladies and gentlemen of the press, I have a short statement I'd like to make." ...The noise died down. Rebus held his wrapped package aloft.

"On behalf of the chip-waters of Scotland, I'd like to thank you for providing our nightly wrappings." He was inside the door before they could think of anything to say. (*Black and Blue* 86)

Rankin here ironically informs of the weight of a man's dead body that epitomizes a nation's masculinity greatly over women's dead bodies that are subordinate to patriarchy's masculinity.

In contrast, another model figure of masculinity, but of a nation's dark side, encounters a threat from his offspring. Johnny Bible, the name referred to as the suspect of current murders, is named by the media after the suspected murderer Bible John of the 1960s: "Bible John, supposing he were still alive, would be in his mid-to-late fifties, while this new killer was described as mid-to-late twenties. Therefore: Johnny Bible, spiritual son of Bible John" (*Black and Blue* 9). Readers know at the end of the novel that Johnny Bible commits his murders as an act of

homage to his spiritual father Bible John, who is now called Ryan Slocum. Notably, this regime of discursive underground power challenges the legal power as an inscriptive model of corporeal subjectivity. What differs is that Bible John's regime is unprivileged. Rankin here seems to draw attention to his recognition of the differences between sexes and social classes, and to further question the assumed legitimacy of the prevailing models of subjectivity.

Speaking of the deviance in contemporary crime fiction, Haut maintains that modern crime writers "created a genre whose predominant artifice is its apparent lack of artifice; consequently, the line separating fiction and reality has become increasingly blurred" (2). Nevertheless, through the detective hero's eye, Rankin exhausts realism in order to offer an authentic but also speculative picture of the Scotland of his age, past and present. Regarding the extent to which reality may be presented in fiction, Bönnemark confirms that detective fiction often attempts to create "an *illusion* of reality", and this illusion in realistic fiction is often taken by readers to be real (74; emphasis in original). This illusion is in fact the imagining of the subject, and in these criminal cases, is inscribed on the woman's body.

Institutionalized Body

Besides the gender inequalities that Rankin attempts to raise in this fiction, the author also reveals social signs of class division through the establishment of an oil industry, Burke's Club, which is one of the connected agencies. Rebus investigates the people this oil industry attracts and its subsequent effects.

This problematic industry is one of the factors linking all the murders in his fiction.

To the reader's surprise, every time he visits this industry, he is haunted by the victims, and cannot help but doubt their connection with his industry. He is tortured by his sense of responsibility and pain: "People died and you couldn't bring them back. Some of them died violently, cruelly young, without knowing why they'd been chosen. Rebus felt surrounded by loss. All the ghost[s]...yelling at him...begging him...shrieking..." (*Black and Blue* 220). In figurative terms, he fights not only with sheriffs, but also with gun fighters, with privileged legal agents and with unprivileged legal outcasts. This industry, located in Aberdeen, has born the burden of north-eastern economic growth in Scotland. Rebus describes this:

For all the associations with granite, Aberdeen had a feeling of impermanence. These days it owed almost everything it had to oil, and the oil wouldn't be there for ever. Growing up in Fife, Rebus had seen the same thing with coal: no one planned for the day it would run out. When it did, hope ran out with it. (*Black and Blue* 96).

Just like the features of this industry, Aberdeen's people are industrious and pragmatic.

In the industry, he meets Stuart Minchell, TBird's Human Resources manager. Rebus consults with him on the death of Allan Mitchison, a humble painter at Sullom Voe, and on the

Bannock oil platform in the North Sea. The polite and friendly Minchell informs Rebus of another character, Jake Harley, Allan Mitchison's only friend, employed by T-Bird Oil and concerned with the ecological pollution of his country. However, the darker side of reality is disclosed gradually as Rebus gets access to the death of Allan Mitchison. The world of the oil platforms is called "a real frontier" (*Black and Blue* 99), because it runs with its own rules far different from those of society. Nicol suggests that there are two "sides of this frontier which separates the twin realities of the oil industry—the legitimate force for economic prosperity and the more lawless, money-driven corrupter of morality" (65). In my opinion, this frontier exists within people's minds, particularly representing the class division. Namely, those people in economic poverty encounter the temptation to upgrade their class--choosing either to overstep lawful boundaries, or to keep themselves within the limits of the laboring class, even the bottom class.

In other words, the tension between two sides of social class, the wealthy and the poor, the lawful and the outlaw, is also discernable in Edinburgh:

The housing scheme, when they reached it, was much like any scheme its size in Edinburgh: grey pebbledash, barren play areas, tarmac and a smattering of fortified shops. Kids on bikes stopping to watch the car, eyes as keen as sentries; brisk baby buggies, shapeless mothers with dyed blonde hair. Further into the estate, driving slowly: people watching from behind their windows, men at

pavement corners, muttered confabs. A city within a city, uniform and enervating, energy sapped, nothing left but obstinacy. . . . (*Black and Blue* 54)

The slums of Edinburgh show scene of poverty that are in sharp contrast with the capital development:

In the late sixties, it had been reinventing itself: knocking down old slums, building their concrete equivalents on the outskirts. New roads, bridges, motorways—the place had been an enormous building site. He got the feeling the process was still ongoing, as if the city still hadn't acquired an identity it could be comfortable with. (*Black and Blue* 36)

The severe gap between different economic classes shows the radical development of material culture, but simultaneously exhibits the misery of the increasing distance between the wealthy and the poor.

If we take the material environment as the body of culture, we may find various forms entangled or interwoven within this body. According to Grosz, culture remains:

the active force molding and reworking nature to make it amenable to individual, social, and collective use: culture tames nature, enlivening it in the process of making it function for our historically and geographically variable uses. Culture writes on and as

nature, making the natural its inscriptive surface, the neutral and indifferent medium for any message. Culture scripts the natural; it writes it, divides it, manufactures it in socially useful, palatable, and expected forms. (2005:45)

The above paragraph illuminates the cultural effect on nature. Cultural scripts, in the respect of lived experience, are mostly produced by the cultural material world. After the class appraisal of Rebus, Bible John searches Rebus's flat for his business card, not knowing that he is a policeman. Bible John depicts the material environment of Rebus's flat:

He felt now he *knew* Rebus, at least to a degree—he felt the loneliness of his life, the gaps where sentiment and warmth and love should have been. There was music, and there were books, but neither in great quantity nor of great quality. The clothes were utilitarian, one jacket much like another. No shoes. He found that bizarre in the extreme. Did the man possess only one pair? (*Black and Blue* 209; emphasis in original)

Bible John fundamentally regards Rebus as a pragmatic detective who focuses on spiritual life with “music” and “books”. Rankin here seems to remind readers of the material metaphor of Rebus's flat. In terms of social status, Rebus is superior to Bible John. In terms of wealth, Bible John outweighs Rebus. Rebus himself is conscious of the material environment: “Rebus knew

what he saw: a middle-aged lush, a pathetic figure in a cheap suit" (*Black and Blue* 132). Material culture in the respect of class gap certainly informs readers of the exterior experience. However, what lies beyond the exterior? What makes up such a lower-middle-class person as Rebus?

Rebus is far from being with the oil men when they bring up the torch: "Rebus had half a mind—maybe more than half—to throw the torch over the side" (*Black and Blue* 148). Wealth can enrich a man's life, but can never sharpen a man's character. As a detective, Rebus trusts himself. The exterior subaltern club surroundings can never change Rebus's understandings of those bottom classes in the club; conversely, Rebus's insight about a person's personality can never be diminished by his exterior material guise. Dualism between mind and body here seems mutually exhaustive, if not exclusive. The four female murders are associated with the Burke's Club at play. Johnny Bible meets his first victim, Michelle Strachan, at this Club. This Club has police officers with responsibility for an oil industry link, so that its owners can offer the rigs with drugs and pornography, undisturbed by police investigation.

Quite differently, in Holmes's case, the failure to reconcile the duties of working men and family men results in violence: "Brian Holmes: friend. Difficult to equate with the person who had roughed up Mental Minto. Schizophrenia, the policeman's ally: a dual personality came in handy" (*Black and Blue* 81-82). Regarding the characteristics of violence in crime fiction, Wood argues:

through a distribution of violence legitimated by a “customary” mentality that organized retributive, autonomous and disciplinary violence. From neighbourly “rough music” to direct interpersonal assaults, customary violence marked and defended the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and enforced conformity to community standards (or individual interpretations of those standards). (111)

From this perspective, readers know that Holmes’s violence results, partially if not completely, from the patriarchy of his occupation. As a policeman, Holmes is unable to relieve his tension from the imbalance between his job and family. Institutional masculinity seems to have formed a community aura in which the community members are prone to take masculinity as a measure to solve the problems. Similarly, the external working aura of masculinity (sometimes expressed in the form of violence, but sometimes not) has continually urged Rebus to solve the criminal case at once. When he is informed of the fourth murder, he says without hesitation: “Four murders. One more already than Bible John of the sixties. It was galling, he had to say it. It rankled. And someone would have to pay for it. Very soon” (*Black and Blue* 230). Undoubtedly, the policing mechanism generates the patriarchy; in return, the police workers imagine the masculine regime to sustain their possible success.

This masculine inscription can be clearly manifested through Rebus’s desire to avenge for the raped body. The past image of the raped female body haunts him at the present:

The problem lay somewhere inside him, and it hadn't been eased by things like the Johnny Bible case, by women abused and then killed. Rape was all about power; killing, too, in its way. And wasn't power the ultimate male fantasy? And didn't he sometimes dream of it, too? He'd seen the post-mortem photos of Angie Riddell, and the first thought that had come to him, the thought he'd had to push past, was: *good body*. It bothered him, because in that instant she'd been just another object. (*Black and Blue* 111; emphasis in original)

Rebus's guilt over his incapability to take revenge over those raped bodies makes him obsessed with alcohol. Plain considers that "Rebus's obsession with the serial killers Johnny Bible and Bible John emerges less from a sense of righteous indignation, than from a knowledge of his own contamination" (62). In other words, his guilt comes from his lament over his past paralyzed involvement with other police colleagues, and from awakening out of his blindness in the trap of Bible John. When he reveals his guilt to his friend Jack Morton,

Jack forced a smile, lifted his glass. "John, tell me though, why do you drink?"

"It kills my dreams."

"It'll kill *you* in the end, too."

"Something's got to."

"Know what someone said to me? They said you were

the world's longest surviving suicide victim.”

(*Black and Blue* 179; emphasis in original)

In fact, Rebus even doubts that he is the damnable participant complicit in the murders, asking his colleagues: “There’s a question I’ve been asking myself. Do we let it happen, or do we make it happen?” (*Black and Blue* 159). This doubt reveals a paradoxical relationship between the mind and the body: does the mind inscribe meaning upon the body, or does the body formulate a mental perception of the external?

Rankin skillfully describes the appearance of this institutionalized money-maker:

The area around the airport was a mix of farming land, new hotels, and industrial complexes. T-Bird Oil had its headquarters in a modest three-storey hexagon, most of it smoked glass. There was a car park at the front, and landscaped gardens with a path meandering through them to the building itself. (*Black and Blue* 100)

This seemingly positive public institute negatively funds Burke’s Club, and Burke’s Club meets illicit demands in return: “The legit and the illicit working side by side, each feeding the other” (*Black and Blue* 226). In this Club, drugs are one of the illicit goods supplied. Again, the Club’s subaltern culture contaminates the industrial worker’s perception of a commercial world. This does not mean that drug users are prone to criminal behavior; however, the drug dealers’ community undoubtedly makes

criminal behavior a fashion. Regarding the connection between drugs and crime, Innes maintains that “drug use does not directly cause criminal behavior, but the same circumstances that might lead a person to begin committing crimes may also contribute to the development of drug habits” (2). That is, the power of the communal culture, as a form of cognitive force, effectively drives the community’s perception of the commercial world, including the misleading idea that drug abuse is a customary habit in life. It is this communal power that causes different classes to co-exist within this industry, a site where sins are subconsciously and admittedly incorporated into their communal culture.

Conclusion

With detective passion, responsibility, and perseverance, Rebus realizes his truth-seeking spirit, although these four cases remain suspended at the end of the novel. Rebus finally mocks himself: “I’m a peeper, he thought, a voyeur. All cops are. But he knew he was more than that: he liked to get involved in the lives around him. He had a need to *know* that went beyond voyeurism. It was a drug” (*Black and Blue* 190). Like the drug user, his obsession with the mystery of Bible John leads him to discover the gender stratification emergent both in the police culture and in the underground, and to recognize that people’s perceptions, and lived experiences are shaped not only by the mode of class production, but also by the dominant *form* of gender relations in their society. Women’s bodies are subconsciously objectified in

the class mode of commerce under which they live.

Taylor suggests of the police procedural that

cops piece together stories that are in process and driven by continuously shifting imperatives, in the hope that their story is accurate enough to allow a prediction of what the next—and maybe crucial—narrative move will be. (27-28)

Although the authority of the police institute is ironically conflated in contrast with Rebus's different discovery, what matters is our attention to the interrogation—how different physical forms are conceptually stratified in contemporary life, and how our mental perceptions of the world may be continually and effectively influenced by those physical forms.

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