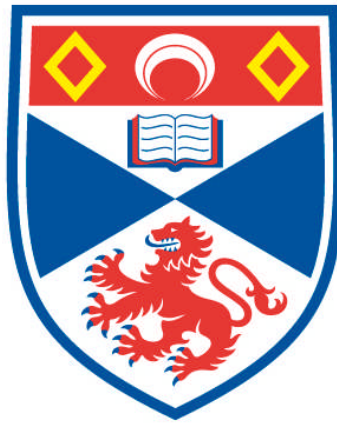


**THE UNCOCKED GUN?
REPRESENTATIONS OF MASCULINITY IN
CONTEMPORARY CRIME FICTION**

Susan Massey

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



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The Uncocked Gun?
Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary Crime Fiction

by Susan Massey

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
School of English
University of St Andrews
July 2009

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I was admitted as a research student in September 2004 and as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in September 2005; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2004 and 2009.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the representation of masculinity in the work of three contemporary male crime writers – George Pelecanos, Henning Mankell and Ian Rankin. It considers whether or not the feminist movement, and the resultant deconstruction of gendered identity, has had an impact on the work of male authors. As the topic of masculinity becomes increasingly visible both within sociological discourse and popular culture, have male writers sought to critically engage with their own gender roles or are they more concerned with propagating hegemonic norms? Crime fiction has a history of accommodating revisionist, feminist projects but is there similar space in the genre for male writers to create viable, non-phallic detective heroes?

By focusing on writers of three different nationalities – Pelecanos is American, Mankell is Swedish and Rankin is from the UK – the thesis examines the interaction between masculinity and national identity, and compares the extent to which American, Swedish and British masculinity can be viewed as being ‘in crisis’. Chapter I provides a theoretical outline, discussing the academic approach to Men’s Studies, before addressing the specific issue of the representation of gender within the crime fiction genre. Chapters II, III and IV focus on a close reading of the texts of Pelecanos, Mankell and Rankin, respectively.

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Finally, this thesis is dedicated, with love and gratitude, to my family – Jenny, Mum, Dad, Granny, Aunt Rose and Reggie – and is in memory of my grandfather, Harold Lewis Ryan, 3rd February 1913 – 30th September 2004.

Contents

Introduction	pages 1 - 6
Chapter I	pages 7 - 42
Contexts: Theory and Genre	
Chapter II	pages 43 - 86
The Crisis of Modern American Masculinity: George Pelecanos' Derek Strange Novels	
Chapter III	pages 87 - 151
'I Ask Myself Every Day What My Life Is Doing To Me': Kurt Wallander and the Ambivalent Experience of the Contemporary Detective Hero	
Chapter IV	pages 152 – 201
'Voluntary Bondage': The Masochistic Masculinity of John Rebus	
Conclusion	pages 202 - 209
Bibliography	pages 210 - 224

Chapter I

Contexts: Theory and Genre

Part One: The Genesis of Men's Studies

In her book *The Male Body*, published in 1999, the academic Susan Bordo writes:

To be a body with a sex is fine for girls – in fact, it's what we're supposed to be. But men are not supposed to be guided by the rhythms of bodily cycles, susceptible to hormonal tides. (Bordo, 1999: 19)

Her words were contradicted in September 2004 when a study undertaken by psychologists at the University of Derby revealed the tentative discovery of male Pre-Menstrual Tension (Scott, 2004: 1-2). Although the men participating in the study obviously did not experience menstruation, they claimed to have endured side effects commonly associated with the menses – headaches, mood swings and loss of concentration – all of which became more pronounced at certain times of the month. The (female) psychologist leading the research, Dr. Aimee Aubeeluck, was unable to offer a full explanation for her findings but did suggest that perhaps everyone may be susceptible to cyclical variations in mood and that these changes are simply more noticeable in women because they accompany menstruation. What is interesting about this study is not just the results themselves, but also the fact that they were printed on the front page of a national newspaper. This potentially radical linking of men with their own bodies indicates that a seismic shift has occurred in recent thinking about male identity. Until relatively recently the concept of masculinity was under-theorised. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir confidently asserted '[a] man would never set

out to write a book on the peculiar situation of the human male' (De Beauvoir, 1949: 15). Yet now such a vast body of analysis devoted to men's studies exists that Tim Edwards has observed '...we are aware of masculinity in the twenty-first century like never before' (Edwards, 2006: 1). Over the last two decades masculinity has been transformed from something considered natural and obvious into one of the most debated issues in modern sociology. To quote Lynne Segal, "masculinity" has replaced "femininity" as the problem of our time – a threat to civilisation itself" (Segal, 1990: 60).

One of the most important intellectual legacies of second-wave feminism has been its attempt to separate biological sex from socially constructed gender. Gender is not something one is born with. Kimmel, Hearn and Connell have stated:

Gender identity is more than a simple psychological property belonging to a person, something one 'has' as a result of socialization and that one consequently inserts into all interactions. Gender identity is a constant process, always being reinvented and rearticulated in every setting, micro or macro. Gender identity is the codified aggregation of gendered interactions; its coherence depends on our understanding of those interactions. (Kimmel, Hearn and Connell, 2004: 7)

Just as this reconceptualisation of identity has changed the lives of women, it has also had important ramifications for men; for if the position of women changes, then logically, so too must that of men. The feminist movement has, therefore, been credited with providing the impetus for a fresh appraisal of masculine identity. By drawing attention to the fact that men, too, are gendered beings, in Judith Kegan Gardiner's words, 'feminist theory has helped create masculinity' (Gardiner, 2004: 36). Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett have referred to the 'feminist parentage' of the current epidemic of masculinity theorists (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001: 4), and Michael Kimmel has stated that men's studies 'owe their original inspiration and their

continuing accountability to programs in women's studies and to feminist scholarship in general' (Kimmel, 1987: 293). The majority of male academics working in the field of Men's Studies self identify as staunchly 'pro-feminist', a label chosen out of a desire not to step on any toes. As Kenneth Clatterbaugh explains, pro-feminist men recognise 'the personal experience of being a woman as an important component of being feminist' (Clatterbaugh, 1990: 10), while the recent *Handbook of Men and Masculinities* (2004) rejects the term 'Men's Studies', arguing that its usage suggests parity with Women's Studies and would therefore obfuscate the specificity of the feminist struggle (Kimmel, Hearn and Connell, 2004: 2). However, in *Writing Men* (2000), Berthold Schoene-Harwood makes the excellent point that, despite their professed commitment to feminism as a guiding principle, many influential male writers seem unable to sidestep a vocabulary of masculine self-importance; indeed, as the quotation from Clatterbaugh above illustrates, the very best of intentions can be laced with condescension. Schoene-Harwood cites Harry Brod's description of Men's Studies as a 'necessary complement' to feminism as evidence of the aggrandising tendency of some theorists (2000: x). Michael Kimmel, too, seems guilty of inferring that Men's Studies completes that which feminism has been unable to finish. Men's Studies, Kimmel states, 'seeks to buttress, to augment women's studies, to complete the radically redrawn portrait of gender that women's studies has begun' (Kimmel, 1987: 11). The concerns of Schoene-Harwood have also been expressed by Alan Petersen, who has articulated his distrust of the term 'pro-feminist', claiming that it:

...is deceptive in that it often conceals ignorance of the complexities of feminist positions and a reluctance to engage critically with feminist theories. Proponents rarely fully articulate the privileged position of white, heterosexual, middle-class men, or their implicit support for those positions...Like the mythopoetic and 'men's rights' advocates, 'pro-feminist' advocates tend to cast men as 'victims of society', effectively side-stepping awkward questions about the power relations of gender and sexuality. (Petersen, 1998: 8)

The 'men's rights advocates' mentioned by Petersen are one group who have registered explicit hostility towards feminism and its resultant deconstruction of gendered identity, vilifying feminist women for turning male into a '4-letter word' (Clatterbaugh, 1990: 77). However, concern has also been raised within the feminist movement itself about the potential consequences of this new focus on men and masculinity. In *Feminism Without Women* (1991), Tania Modleski warns of the danger of feminism being entirely subsumed by the wider field of Gender Studies, which will instead be dominated by men enjoying the chance to retain the spotlight. Modleski is careful to distinguish between male feminism and male appropriations of feminism:

What is of course besetting manhood today is feminism, which the melancholy male 'hero' responds to by appropriating so that he can make its losses (for which he is thus partly responsible) his losses. (Modleski, 1991: 10)

For the majority of gender theorists and sociologists, however, this new interrogation of male subjectivity is both welcome and long overdue. Although culture as we know it is very much the story of Men, the specificity of male experience has often been overlooked. To quote Harry Brod:

While *seemingly* about men, traditional scholarship's treatment of generic man as the human norm in fact systematically excludes from consideration what is unique to men *qua* men. (Brod, 1987: 40, italics Brod's.)

Anthony Giddens has also commented:

In Western culture at least, today is the first period in which men are finding themselves *to be* men, that is, as possessing a problematic 'masculinity'. In previous times, men have assumed that their activities constituted 'history', whereas women existed almost out of time, doing the same as they had always done. (Giddens, 1994: 247, italics Giddens')

All too often men have been ignored as gendered beings, both by themselves and by wider society. Michael Kimmel, speaking of his own experience, illustrates this clearly:

When I look in the mirror...I see a human being – a white middle-class male – gender is invisible to me because that is where *I* am privileged. I am the norm. I believe most men do not know they have a gender. (cited by Whitehead, 2001: 356, italics his)

During interviews with male managers Stephen Whitehead uncovered similar gender myopia. For these men questioning their masculinity was akin to ‘questioning the existence of the sun, sky or air we breathe’ (Whitehead, 2001: 362). It may still remain true that men as a whole are largely unaware of their gender as an issue, but within academic circles masculinity is a growth industry; a fact to which both the ever-increasing number of publications and university courses devoted to Men’s Studies bears witness.¹

Masculinity is a nebulous term. Like femininity it is not an innate characteristic but is rather a learned behaviour, a social performance: ‘something that one “does” rather than something one “has”’ (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001: 18). Masculinity is difficult to define precisely because its meaning is constantly changing. It is historically and culturally contingent: what is masculine in one time and place will not necessarily be so in another. As an example of this one need only look at the British ‘New Man’ phenomenon of the 1990s, which placed a high emphasis on sensitivity and the importance of men ‘getting in touch with their emotions’: crying became a sign of strength not weakness. Yet juxtaposed against this – and running concurrently – was a revival in ‘Laddism’, which hinged upon more traditional male behaviours such as consuming alcohol and pornography in large quantities. Both of these forms of masculinity have been updated for the Millennium. The New Man has

become the 'Metrosexual'. Fashionable, well-groomed and body conscious, the Metrosexual male is a consumer on a 'feminine' scale and as such is reassured in television advertisements by the cosmetic company L'Oreal that he, too, is 'worth it'. By contrast, Laddism has evolved into the 'Menaissance', which again stresses old-fashioned male virtues such as emotional impassivity, promiscuity and a cavalier disregard for matters of health and hygiene. The tension between these two modes of being was nicely summed up in a 2005 edition of *The Guardian's* Weekend supplement (15/10/05), which featured a rugged Freddy Flintoff (the hard-drinking former captain of the England cricket team) on the cover but also included a special feature on men's autumn jackets.² Masculinity, then, is mutable and potentially inconsistent, hence its problematic status.

Three definite things, however, can be said about masculinity. The first is that the use of the singular term is in itself misleading, for it implies the existence of only one authoritative 'masculinity'. One must speak instead of 'masculinities' in order to reflect the plurality and diversity of men's subjectivity.³ As masculinity is socially constructed it will, therefore, vary according to factors such as age, ethnic origin, class and race, not to mention sexual orientation. Clearly the masculinity of an aging, middle-class, white man will be different to the kind of masculine behaviour expected of a black urban youth. As Arthur Brittan has said 'we cannot talk of masculinity, only masculinities' (Brittan, 2001: 51).

The second concrete thing that can be said about masculinity is that it consists of that which is not feminine. To quote Kimmel, 'historically and developmentally, masculinity has been defined as the flight from women, the repudiation of femininity' (Kimmel, 2001: 273). Gender is an inherently relational concept – it is impossible to explain what it is to be 'male' without referencing 'female', and vice versa. Indeed the

Collins English Dictionary defines 'masculinity' as 'possessing qualities or characteristics considered typical of or appropriate to a man...*unwomanly*' (3rd Edition, 1994, italics my own). The castigation of certain groups of men, for example homosexuals, as 'feminine' reveals that it is often easier to define masculinity by what it is not than what it is. As Robert Stoller has put it 'a man's first duty is: not to be a woman' (cited by Badinter, 1995: 47). In recent years Arnold Schwarzenegger, who famously portrayed that titan of the action movie genre, The Terminator, and is now Governor of California, has taken to denouncing his political opponents as 'girly men', an oxymoron designed to undermine their credibility by juxtaposing their supposed femininity against his very obvious, iconic, masculinity (Glaister, 2004: 2-3). Confusion may reign as to the exact nature of masculinity, but everyone knows that it is *not* girly.

The third thing is that masculinity is predicated upon insecurity. It is something that has to be fought for and that can, therefore, be lost. As David Collinson and Jeff Hearn have put it, '[m]asculine identities constantly have to be constructed, negotiated and reconstructed' (Collinson and Hearn, 2001: 149). In his book *Manhood in the Making* (1990), an anthropological study of the concept of masculinity around the world, David Gilmore records various horrific rite-of-passage rituals that young boys are put through in order to be declared men. For example, amongst the Samburu people in Northern Kenya boys are circumcised without anaesthetic and are not permitted either to move or to make a sound during the procedure; to do so would bring shame on themselves and their families (Gilmore, 1990: 134-35). For the Sambia in Papua New Guinea initiation rituals begin by making boys insert stiff grasses into their nasal passages to induce nosebleeds. The boys are then made to perform fellatio on village elders, for it is the belief amongst

theambia that only by ingesting the semen of men can boys successfully negotiate the transition from childhood to full, masculine maturity (1990: 156-57). In Gilmore's study, manhood is a state that is arrived at following severe testing and almost sadistic violence. He contrasts this with femininity:

An authentic femininity rarely involves tests or proofs of action, or confrontations with dangerous foes: win-or-lose contests dramatically played out on the public stage. Rather than a critical threshold passed by traumatic testing, an either/or condition, femininity is more often construed as a biological given that is culturally refined or augmented. (Gilmore, 1990: 12)

The point Gilmore makes is a valid one – while for girls having their first period is taken as a physical sign of womanhood, establishing manhood is a 'relentless test' (Kimmel, 2001: 272). However, it would be incorrect to overlook the equally precarious construction of femininity. Gilmore states that 'real men are made...not born' (Gilmore, 1990: 14), which is in itself a bastardization of Simone de Beauvoir's famous observation that '[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman' (De Beauvoir, 1949: 295). While often made to sound effortlessly natural – as Elisabeth Badinter has pointed out, there is no female counterpoint to the phrase 'be a real man' (Badinter, 1995: 2) – femininity is just as idealised and unrealistic a concept as masculinity, and it is just as much of a social construct. Women all over the world are fed a daily diet of unattainable images of 'feminine' beauty, almost all of which are completely removed from the normal state of the female body. Cosmetic companies and fashion magazines have made an industry out of convincing women that the natural female form (i.e. one that has hair, odour and fat in the wrong places) is unpalatable. Femininity is predicated upon sanitization, and this sanitization has become so culturally ubiquitous that men are often surprised at the disjuncture between what they have been told is natural and what actually is. Women are also

expected to adhere to certain behavioural standards and those who deviate from these imposed 'norms' risk being stigmatised as unladylike at best and mannish at worst. From tomboys to bull dykes, women who do not acquiesce with the cultural prescription of their gender are considered to lack some essential core femininity. Masculinity and femininity are thus both heavily culturally policed. However, there does seem to be more of an onus on men to demonstrate their masculinity with action. Masculinity is repeatedly represented as something to be gained through struggle, whereas femininity is often taken as a naturally occurring attribute that can be lost if women are not suitably vigilant. To quote Arthur Flannigan-Saint-Aubin:

Masculinity is a 'becoming', a process as opposed to a perceived feminine 'being' or state. Like 'progress' within patriarchy, it is something to be achieved and to be experienced as triumph over nature. (Flannigan-Saint-Aubin, 1994: 241)

This never-ending search for authenticity is perhaps one of the reasons why masculinity is so often said to be 'in crisis'. Men have traditionally been seen as the stronger sex and, although they are undoubtedly still more privileged than women, their position has changed over the last fifty years. In keeping with this a new emphasis has been placed upon the cost of being a man:

In comparison to women, there is for men a higher perinatal and early childhood death rate, a higher rate of congenital birth defects, a greater vulnerability to recessive sex-linked disorders, a higher accident rate during childhood and all subsequent ages, a higher incidence of behavioural and learning disorders, a higher suicide rate, and a higher metabolism rate, which may result in greater energy expenditure and a consequent failure to conserve physical resources. (Harrison, Chin and Ficarroto, 1989: 237)

Men work longer and die sooner than women. Even the male menopause is now a recognised medical condition with testosterone replacement therapy available to treat it (Whitehead, 2002: 201). In keeping with this emphasis on the physical toll of being

a man, a rhetoric of spiritual and emotional victimhood has also sprung up among some writers. In 1990 the poet Robert Bly published *Iron John*, which became both a bestseller and the core text for the American-based mythopoetic men's movement. Bly's argument was that men have become feminised by society and need to reclaim their 'Zeus energy' – a sort of deep, essential masculinity – ideally by retreating to the woods with lots of other men to bond and do manly things.⁴ To Bly's mind, men are victims of the modern world and, on both sides of the Atlantic, this victimization has found vocal proponents. In 1995 a British-based pressure group announced 'men are now discriminated against in most aspects of life' (quoted in MacInnes, 2001: 313). Books with titles such as *The Rape of the Male* and *The Myth of Male Power* have been published, attempting to convince men of their status as the 'new victims of reversed sexism' (Kimmel, 1996: viii).⁵ In one such book, *The Hazards of Being Male* (1976 and reprinted again recently in 2000), Herb Goldberg complains:

By what perverse logic can the male continue to imagine himself 'top dog'? Emotionally repressed, out of touch with his body, alienated and isolated from other men, terrorized by the fear of failure, afraid to ask for help, thrown out at a moment's notice...when all he knew was how to work...The male has become an artist in the creation of many hidden ways of killing himself. (Clatterbaugh, 1990: 78)

In England organizations campaigning for paternal rights, such as Families Need Fathers, Fathers Direct and, the most high profile, Fathers 4 Justice have also sought to make political capital by portraying divorced men as the innocent victims of a custody system that is heavily weighted in favour of mothers. Fathers 4 Justice, whose slogan is 'a father is for life, not just conception', have been described as 'the most controversial and high profile pressure group of modern times'.⁶ In 2004 members of the group, which demands an automatic fifty-fifty custody split following every divorce involving children, handcuffed themselves to Buckingham Palace, threw flour

bombs at the Prime Minister Tony Blair, and harassed the president of the family division of the High Court, Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss. In June of 2008 two men dressed as superheroes staged a rooftop protest at the home of Harriet Harman, the deputy leader of the Labour party, Secretary of State for Equalities and Minister for Women. While it is undoubtedly true that some men are unfairly treated by the custody courts, and that some judges may be biased towards mothers, it does not necessarily follow that all divorced fathers are victims of a society pathologically bent on depriving them of access to their children. It is also important to remember that the patriarchal system has spent hundreds of years reinforcing the idea that child care is women's work. If men feel the system is not weighted in their favour then they need to consider who created the system. Advocates of male rights, such as Bly and Goldberg, do recognise that patriarchy can be detrimental to men, but they ignore the crucial fact that ultimately all men benefit from it. All men have some experience of power based solely on their sex, all profiting to some extent from the patriarchal dividend, to borrow R.W. Connell's phrase (Connell, 2001: 40). If men are 'victims', then they are victims of a system they created and still control. As John MacInnes has accurately stated, 'if it is a bad time to be a man, it is still, in almost every area of life, a worse time to be a woman' (MacInnes, 2001: 314).⁷

A perhaps unexpected proponent of the male victimhood thesis is the American journalist Norah Vincent, who successfully managed to pass as a man in a variety of different contexts over the course of a year, in an attempt to gain an understanding of the modern male psyche. In her book *Self Made Man* (2006), Vincent details her experiences dating women, bowling in an all-male league, working in a competitive sales environment, spending time in a monastery and attending a men's group, all without anyone suspecting her true sex. What begins as

an interesting premise – Vincent writes of her own prepubescent identification as a ‘hard-core tomboy’ (Vincent, 2006: 5), uses her childhood nickname ‘Ned’ for her male alter-ego and tells the reader that as a butch lesbian she is often mistaken for a man without the need for disguise – ends in a disappointingly essentialist take on gender. For Vincent gender is something set in stone, hard-wired to the body and determined at birth. She resolutely refuses to theorise her own masculinity, instead presenting Ned as an entirely separate identity.⁸ She writes that ‘being Ned was often an uncomfortable and alienating experience, and far from finding myself in him, I usually felt kept from myself in some elemental way’ (2006: 16). Vincent’s conclusions about the men she encounters are just as under-theorised. Rather than questioning male power and privilege, Vincent presents men as ‘broken people’ (2006: 235), victims both of their own socially inculcated emotional repression and of their animalistic sex drive, over which they have no control – men can do little more than suffer ‘the painful compulsions’ of their own sexuality (2006: 102), which places them in thrall to the object of these compulsions: women.⁹

While Vincent’s analysis fails to address the issue of male dominance, power is central to the work of one of the most prominent and influential theorists of contemporary masculinity, R.W. Connell. An Australian sociologist, Connell is noted for his key texts *Gender and Power* (1987) and *Masculinities* (1995). The publication of his article ‘Towards a New Sociology of Masculinity’ (co-authored with Tim Carrigan and John Lee) in 1985 laid the theoretical groundwork for much of the current thinking on male identity and also introduced the concept of hegemonic masculinity, for which he is best known. Connell borrows the term hegemony from Antonio Gramsci’s analysis of class and redeploys it to refer to the form of

masculinity that is dominant within a given society. He defines hegemonic masculinity as:

...the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (Connell, 1995: 77)

The key phrase here is ‘currently accepted’ – hegemonic masculinity is a relational concept, not a fixed character type. What constitutes hegemonic masculinity in any one time or society is subject to change. However, the fact that only a minority of men possess it remains constant. Those few who do embody the hegemonic ideal are representatives of male authority, often idealised fantasy figures such as film stars or potent symbols of masculine strength, for example, professional sportsmen. Hegemonic masculinity is thus ‘the most honoured or desired’ form of masculinity (Connell, 2000: 10), not the kind of masculine identity available to the majority of men. Central to Connell’s analysis is the idea of power: just as power relations are played out between men and women, so too is power contested amongst men.¹⁰ Within the male gender hierarchy hegemonic masculinity is obviously pre-eminent, with other masculinities assuming an inferior position. Connell identifies two non-hegemonic kinds of masculinity: the subordinate (gay masculinities) and the marginalized (ethnic masculinities). Although excluded from the hegemonic ideal and in some cases actively repressed by it, these subordinate and marginalized men remain complicit in the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity and, thus, patriarchal dominance. The reason for this is that despite not being directly in an authoritative position, non-hegemonic men still experience some sense of power purely on the basis of their gender; that is to say that, simply by virtue of being men, they remain

part of the dominant gender. Hegemonic masculinity is thus a form of being that involves and, ultimately, benefits all men, albeit to differing degrees.

One thing that becomes clear from even the most cursory of glances at the literature on masculinity is that it seems to be primarily an Anglo-American (and Australian) discipline. This does seem to be changing, even if the pace is still a slow one. Anthropological surveys of worldwide masculinities have been appearing with increasing regularity, although as Kimmel, Hearn and Connell point out in their introduction to the *Handbook of Men and Masculinities* there is much work still to be done, particularly in Africa and Asia (Kimmel, Hearn and Connell, 2004: 9).¹¹ Within Europe, until relatively recently, Elisabeth Badinter's *XY* (1992) was the only full-length monograph on masculinity available in English translation, written from the perspective of a continental European. While Men's Studies has flourished in Britain, Australia and, especially, America, Badinter, who is French, draws attention to the almost 'total absence' of any equivalent phenomenon in mainland Europe (Badinter, 1992: xi). The reason she gives for this lack is that 'virility is less contested on this side of the Atlantic; the men here are not as violent, they have less fear of women, and vice versa' (1992: 5).¹² The trope of masculinity in crisis has been described as almost 'a defining characteristic of Western societies at the turn of the millennium' (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001: 6) but Badinter, who depicts European masculinity as well-adjusted and relatively problem free, is not so pessimistic. However, she does end her study on a cautious note, stipulating that men are at a 'natural disadvantage' due to the mechanisms of birth (Badinter, 1995: 185). Badinter states that it will always be more difficult to 'make men':

To convince oneself of this, one only has to imagine the reverse hypothesis: if women were born from a male belly, what would be their fate? (Badinter, 1992: 185)

Badinter seems to be on somewhat shaky ground here, given that women's fate, historically, has not been as fortunate as that of men.

Alongside Badinter's contribution to the debate, most of the criticism on masculinity coming from Europe emanates from Norway and Sweden. In 2003 *Among Men*, a two-volume collection edited by Søren Ervø and Thomas Johansson was published in English translation by Ashgate. The bulk of the contributors are Scandinavian and the essays, especially in volume one, are specific and practical in tone and content, including, for example, articles on the Swedish logging industry. Also active on mainland Europe is the Research Network on Men in Europe, part of the collective Critical Research on Men in Europe (CROME).¹³ Founded in 1999, the network consists of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the UK (the notable absence of France perhaps goes some way to endorsing Badinter's thesis that French masculinity is relatively well adjusted, or else suggests that it is oblivious to the need for analysis). However, although the scope of the CROME network is wide, it is still very much a British and Northern European dominated enterprise, led by Jeff Hearn and Keith Pringle, both British sociologists now based at Scandinavian institutions. A more detailed analysis of European masculinity will be offered in Chapter III.

As opposed to the apparent stability of European masculinity (or the absence of research to indicate otherwise) the theme of masculinity in crisis remains a popular one with American writers. In her book *Stiffed* (1999) Susan Faludi explores the reasons behind this sense of crisis and concludes that its roots lie in our changing culture. Whereas we once had a 'society of utility' in which men were able to contribute via steady employment,¹⁴ we are now firmly in the grip of what she terms

‘ornamental culture’, an empty and superficial age that renders men passive by denying them the ability to be useful (Faludi, 1999: 38 and 35). Work has long been key to the successful formation of male subjectivity. To quote Victor Seidler:

Work was often crucial for men because this was the space in which their masculinities could be proved. Family life was honored in name, but men knew that as regards their male identities, their loyalties lay elsewhere. (Seidler, 2003: xiii).

As R.W. Connell has pointed out (Connell, 2004: 78), forging masculinity in this way makes men supremely vulnerable to economic factors out-with their control, and it will be interesting in this regard to see what impact the current global recession will have upon contemporary masculinity.¹⁵ Faludi’s argument, however, goes further than merely highlighting men’s socio-economic woes; indeed, she refutes the existence of male potency on an individual level, claiming that men ‘feel not the reins of power in their hands but its bit in their mouths’ (Faludi, 1999: 41). According to Faludi, men experience the expectation that they be ‘in charge’ as oppressive and, like women before them, need to mobilise to liberate themselves from this restrictive ideology. Like Faludi, Michael Kimmel agrees that men are in trouble but he does not view this as a recent phenomenon. Instead, in his vast study *Manhood in America* (1996) he offers a history of masculinity in crisis, from 1776 until the present day. Likewise, Judith Kegan Gardiner has stated that the emphasis on a current crisis is illusory: gender has never been anything less than a deeply contested issue. She argues:

...the language of a ‘masculinity crisis’ falsifies history by implying there was once a golden time of unproblematic, stable gender, when men were men, women were women, and everyone was happy with their social roles. (Gardiner, 2002: 14)

Ervø and Johansson make a similar point:

The concept of ‘male crisis’ only makes real sense opposite a ‘normal’ situation, that is hardly ever described in detail, for good reasons. According to both psychoanalytical and postmodern theories masculine identity is perceived as a permanent crisis, making the contribution made by the concept of crisis seem rather redundant. (Ervø and Johansson, 2003a: 13)

The rhetoric of crisis is remarkably pervasive, crossing the disciplines from sociology to psychoanalysis. According to Nancy Chodorow’s psychoanalytic reading of child development, male identity is necessarily forged through struggle, requiring the boy child to shift his primary identification from the mother to the father through the Oedipus complex. This psychic process leads to emotional repression within males and builds a masculine identity based on a disavowal of the mother and maternal attributes.¹⁶ John MacInnes also takes the view that the concept of masculinity is itself born out of crisis. According to MacInnes, modernity, with its emphasis on the equality of all, is clearly at odds with the ideology on which patriarchy is based – that men are superior to women. Employing an argument based upon the philosophy of the social contract, he argues that masculinity is a ‘holding operation, an attempt by men to justify their own power (MacInnes, 2001: 311).¹⁷ The concept of masculinity and the ideology of gender difference are historical constructions used to rationalize male privilege. In an optimistic assessment, MacInnes concludes that masculinity is on its way towards becoming a redundant concept:

...we are living through the final period, or at least the beginning of the final period, of belief in masculinity as a gender identity specific to men which accounts for their privileged command of power, resources and status. (MacInnes, 2001: 313)

To MacInnes’ mind, trying to convince men to pay critical attention to their masculinity is essentially a waste of time:

Instead of chasing the shadows of gender identity by analysing what is imagined to be men's masculinity or attempting to re-engineer how the people in a patriarchal society think of their selves, we may challenge the legacy of patriarchy more effectively by tackling the public ideologies which rationalise any sexual division of labour beyond that inevitably created by actual sexual differences between men and women, such as the latter's capacity to breastfeed infants. (MacInnes, 1998: 149)

MacInnes seeks to sidestep the issue of gender altogether, arguing instead that we should 'reflect on ways in which we value our selves as persons, regardless of our sex' (1998: 149). He claims that only an analysis of this sort can bring about the full equality between men and women, and once this is achieved, masculinity, the justification of male superiority, will no longer be necessary.¹⁸

Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett take a different view on the idea of crisis, rejecting its very supposition because of masculinity's multiplicity: 'it is clear that for there to be a crisis of masculinity there would have to be a single masculinity; something solid, fixed, immovable, brittle even' (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001: 8).

R.W. Connell endorses their position, asserting that:

As a theoretical term 'crisis' presupposes a coherent system of some kind, which is destroyed or restored by the outcome of the crisis. Masculinity...is not a system in that sense. It is, rather, a configuration of practice within a system of gender relations. We cannot logically speak of a crisis of a configuration; rather we might speak of its disruption or its transformation. (Connell, 2001: 45)

Scepticism about the validity of the term 'crisis' is not mere semantics, however. Whitehead suggests a tentative approach to its usage because of his fears that it will be used to justify a backlash against women. He states that for men in power 'the idea of crisis can, paradoxically, be quite attractive...for it posits them as victims, thus offering them a new form of validation and identity – as wounded and now under threat' (Whitehead, 2002: 4). David Collinson and Jeff Hearn, who have warned of

the potential risks of becoming sidetracked with what they term a 'narcissistic preoccupation' with men, share Whitehead's concerns. They comment:

...there is the danger of the emphasis upon difference and pluralized masculinities becoming a new, and perhaps more sophisticated means of forgetting women, of losing women from analysis and politics. (Collinson and Hearn, 2001: 150)

Rather than seeing the language of crisis as a means for men to radically reinterpret their own subjectivity, Modleski again injects a note of caution, warning that:

...however much male subjectivity may currently be 'in crisis', as certain optimistic feminists are now declaring, we need to consider the extent to which male power is actually consolidated through cycles of crisis and resolution, whereby men ultimately deal with the threat of female power by incorporating it. (Modleski, 1991: 7)

Modleski's point is born out by Kimmel's assertion in *Manhood in America* that crisis rhetoric is usually deployed at times of historical change, when men are unsure of their position. The fact that the crisis thesis has been so readily embraced by such divergent groups as academics working on gender, reactionary Men's Rights activists and the mainstream media, and has been used to promote such contrasting agendas as the erosion of gendered identity altogether and a return to traditional, patriarchal forms of masculinity, suggests that it might not be the most profitable way to theorise masculine subjectivity.

Sally Robinson, however, maintains that the framework of crisis is a useful one; but instead of attempting to gauge the authenticity of this crisis, she argues that this is largely irrelevant:

The question of whether dominant masculinity is 'really' in crisis is, in my view, moot: even if we could determine what an actual, real, historically verifiable crisis would look like, the undeniable fact remains that in the post-

liberationist era, dominant masculinity consistently represents itself as in crisis. (Robinson, 2000: 11)

For Robinson significance is to be found in representation and not, necessarily, reality:

A crisis is 'real' when its rhetorical strategies can be discerned and its effects charted; the reality of a particular crisis depends less on hard evidence of actual social trauma or do-or-die decision-making than on the power of language, of metaphors and images, to convincingly represent that sense of trauma and turning point. (Robinson, 2000: 10)

Thomas Byers also offers an alternative perspective and a more constructive approach to the issue of crisis. In his essay 'Terminating the Postmodern: Masculinity and Pomophobia', Byers claims that 'patriarchal heterosexual hegemony' (1995: 6) is currently under threat from dark forces unleashed by postmodernity – namely changing socio-economic circumstances and the rise of alternate subject positions.

He states:

...the current crisis threatens to transform or even overthrow the whole *concept* of identity. This is the point of the convergence of fears of late capitalism, fears of theory, fears of feminism, fears of any swerving from the path of 'straight' sexuality; the fears that, together, constitute what I want to call 'pomophobia'. (Byers, 1995: 7, italics his)

According to Byers, the development of fluid, postmodern identities presents a unique challenge to traditional, normative masculinity, which values fixity and permanence above all else. Byers' contribution is an important one and will be returned to throughout the thesis.

Alternate Masculinities

As well as seeking to make hegemonic forms of masculinity visible, Men's Studies has also attempted to draw critical attention to non-dominant masculinities, for example those of gay, black and working-class men, and women. To quote Judith Halberstam:

Unfortunately, in th[e] flurry of media interest and scholarly work on dominant maleness and its crises, almost no attention has been paid to the way that the crisis produces its own solution in terms of alternative forms of masculinity. All too often, solutions for the crisis of white male masculinity are proffered in terms of the shoring up of that same form of manhood; real solutions have to be sought out in the minority masculinities that flourish in the wake of dominant masculinity's decline. (Halberstam, 2005: 126)

An analysis of black masculinity will form the backbone of Chapter II, which will also address how white men, too, possess race, although this has often been overlooked in an attempt to make whiteness normative. As none of the crime writers considered offer an engagement with homosexuality in their texts, this mode of masculinity falls out-with the parameters of this thesis. However, Queer Theory, which has its intellectual roots in Gay Studies, can usefully be applied to all gender relations, and although the writers examined in this thesis may not offer a radical assault on ingrained conceptions of gender, their texts offer instances of uncertainty and tension that might constructively be read as queer.

Since its emergence in the 1990s, Queer Theory has sought to destabilise normative ideas about gender by paying critical attention to so-called deviant sexual identities and practices. Although resisting clear definition is part of Queer Theory's *modus operandi*, Annamarie Jagose states:

Broadly speaking, queer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatise incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire. (Jagose, 1996: 3)

One of the academics most often associated with Queer Theory is Judith Butler, whose works *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993) have been hugely influential. In *Gender Trouble* Butler outlines her theory of the performative nature of gender. Gender, she states, is not something natural but is the result of endless performative acts, appearing stable only because of these forced repetitions or reiterations. Gender is, thus, a culturally produced illusion:

The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, positioned through the gendered stylization of the body...what we take to be an 'internal' feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts, at an extreme, an hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures. (Butler, 1990: xv)

To illustrate her point Butler uses the example of drag. She argues that '[i]n imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency' (1990: 175). According to Butler, drag alerts us to the subversive potential of performance, the discrepancy between that which is being performed and the 'original' that is being replicated, offering possibilities for creating 'gender trouble' which demonstrate the non-natural state of sexual identity. One misconception that arose as a result of Butler's use of drag as an example was that she was arguing that gender performance is a matter of one's own volition, something that can be freely chosen, in the same way that one's clothes are. This was not Butler's point: she clearly conceives of gender as a forced repetition, not something we can change daily. As Butler states:

...I would suggest that performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that 'performance' is not a singular 'act' or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance. (Butler, 1993: 95)

Although Butler's theorising has, by and large, been overlooked by scholars of Men's Studies, her work on performativity has obvious relevance to the topic. As Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon have commented:

The understanding of hegemonic masculinity as a cultural ideal is consonant with Butler's argument that the gender performances which we enact are performances in accordance with a script – a script which supplies us with ideals of both masculinity and femininity. (Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon, 2002: 142)

Rather than employing the word 'masculinity', Deborah Kerfoot instead speaks of 'the masculine subject', which, she argues, 'recognizes that both men and women can be masculine' (Kerfoot, 2001: 236). Kerfoot argues '[m]asculinity exists merely as a way of being, most often but not exclusively for men' (2001: 236). Working within a queer framework, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Halberstam have both theorised non-male masculinity. Sedgwick writes of her own masculinity, stating that:

As a woman, I am a consumer of masculinities, but I am not more so than men are; and, like men, I as a woman, am also a producer of masculinities and a performer of them. (Sedgwick, 1995: 13)

Rather than seeing masculinity and femininity as being diametrically opposed Sedgwick suggests that they are '[o]rthogonal: that is, instead of being at opposite poles of the same axis, they are actually in different, perpendicular dimensions, and

therefore are independently variable (1995: 15-16). So instead of being either/or, both are possible. Judith Halberstam is perhaps the most vocal proponent of the need to pay critical attention to non-male masculinities. She argues that 'the way lesbians produce and circulate cultures of masculinity...are for the most part submerged, mediated, and difficult to read' (Halberstam, 2005: 125). *Female Masculinity* (1998), a cultural history of that most transgressive of figures, the masculine woman, ranging from the 'female husband' of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century to the modern stone butch lesbian, is Halberstam's attempt to make non-normative masculinities visible. Halberstam argues forcefully that 'masculinity must not and cannot and should not reduce down to the male body and its effects' (Halberstam, 1998: 1). Instead, she stresses the radically destabilising potential of female masculinity:

...the very existence of masculine women urges us to reconsider our most basic assumptions about the functions, forms, and representations of masculinity and forces us to ask why the bond between men and masculinity has remained relatively secure despite the continuous assaults made by feminists, gays, lesbians, and gender-queers on the naturalness of gender. (Halberstam, 1998: 45)

This fluidity of gender is not restricted to masculinity as it manifests itself in female bodies. Obviously, gay men are often represented as feminine, although this has become such a stereotype that it has arguably lost the power to be subversive, or is at least, less subversive than the masculine woman. As Halberstam reminds us:

New bonds on television between gay men and straight men (*Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and *Boy Meets Boy*) only solidify a general recognition of the important contribution made by gay white men to popular culture. Still, there is no such recognition of the influence of a lesbian queer culture, and there is no relationship between lesbians and straight men that parallels the bonds between 'fags' and their 'hags'. (Halberstam, 2005: 125)

Still, a new and potentially productive understanding of femininity as it manifests itself in men has been offered by Arthur Flannigan-Saint-Aubin. Stepping away from the traditional identification of men with the penis or phallus, which ‘derives from a very selective and partial conception and experience of the male body’, and attempting to offer ‘a nonpatriarchal conception of masculinity’ (Flannigan-Saint-Aubin, 1994: 241 and 242), Flannigan-Saint-Aubin instead explores the metaphorical potential of the testicles:

If the testicles are entered into the equation, therefore, an entirely different metaphoricity emerges, stemming from testicular/testerical characteristics: passive, receptive, enclosing, stable, cyclic, among others – qualities that are lost when male equals penis. (Flannigan-Saint-Aubin, 1994: 239)

By remembering that the male genitals consist of more than just the penis, Flannigan-Saint-Aubin offers a revised definition of what masculinity may constitute and he acknowledges that ‘if one were to imagine the masculine prototype as uniquely or predominantly testicular, it would indeed fall within the realm of the traditional feminine’ (1994: 249). Susan Bordo, too, urges a rejection of the simple equation of male sexuality and identity with the penis or phallus. Male sexuality should instead be about the whole body. She also argues that our conventional metaphorical language for the penis, which typically hinges upon hardness and potency, only serves to engender performance anxiety, setting both men and women up for disappointment. As Bordo states:

It’s time to take that metaphorical armor off, not to expose a squishy snail beneath, but to begin to think of the male body in terms of its varied feelings rather than an imagined ideal of constancy. (Bordo, 1999: 65)

As the thesis will go on to discuss, removing armour and acknowledging feelings represents a complex challenge within the representational field of crime fiction.

However, it is, nonetheless, something which all three writers in this study approach, even if their characters struggle to embrace the testicular or other, alternative frameworks of masculinity.

The Future of Men's Studies

As indicated in the previous section, approaches that seek to destabilise hegemonic masculinity from its position of primacy are possible. But the extent to which these new versions of masculine identity have filtered down through academia and into the field of popular representation remains to be seen. In their introduction to *The Masculinity Studies Reader* (2002), Rachel Adams and David Savran question the potential of Men's Studies as an academic discipline:

Unlike other relatively new fields such as postcolonial criticism, gender, lesbian/gay/queer studies, or critical race theory, there are no departments, programs, or jobs created exclusively for scholars of masculinity. (Adams and Savran, 2002: 1)

They also offer the somewhat depressing opinion that 'theoretical insights about gender have provided little pragmatic guidance for actual men' (2002: 4). Judith Halberstam is just as pessimistic in her assessment of the tangible achievements of Men's Studies, judging the subject to have made:

...little progress in generating either explanations for a perceived crisis in masculinity or imagining new social arrangements of gender, race, class and sexuality that can compensate for and replace the binary gender systems that support and produce male dominance and heteronormativity. (Halberstam, 2002: 352)

The points made by Savran and Adams and Halberstam are underlined by Kenneth Clatterbaugh who, in the Spring 2000 issue of *Signs*, stated that all men's movements are 'in serious decline' and that the kind of pro-feminist stance adopted by most of the main writers on the subject of masculinity 'has almost no life outside the university'.¹⁹ This, perhaps, is not surprising, for Men's Studies does not represent an organic and spontaneous commitment to change; instead its hand was forced by feminism. Berthold Schoene-Harwood has commented that Men's Studies 'essentially represents a reactive, post-feminist formation necessitated by, rather than originally instigating societal change' (Schoene-Harwood, 2000: x), while Peter Middleton questions the plausibility of a radical male-authored reimagining of masculinity, stating:

If men still have power denied to women how can these male oppressors produce an emancipatory political discourse on masculinity, and subvert their own dominance? Isn't this more likely to be some kind of face-saving exercise than a radical political project? (Middleton, 1992: 7)

Scholars and critics, therefore, remain largely sceptical about the prospect of any genuine change in the concept of masculinity. An interesting coda to this debate is the recent sex change that appears to have been undergone by R.W. Connell. According to Connell's staff profile on the University of Sydney website he has now changed his first name to Raewyn and seems to be living as a woman.²⁰ As yet Connell has chosen not to comment on this change of identity. Although it is obviously a courageous act to change sex, particularly when one has such a high profile as Connell, it is hard not to view this decision by a man who has expounded so much intellectual energy rethinking masculinity as an ironic embodiment of the impossibility of reimagining the male.

Part Two: Gender and Crime Fiction

At the moment popular forms of culture are enjoying something of a rehabilitation. For example, in 2008, the thriller *Child 44* by Tom Rob Smith was long-listed for the Booker prize. Although the predictable furore ensued, and, needless to say, Smith did not win, the fact that his novel was included at all does indicate that genre fiction is beginning to be accorded some long-overdue critical respect. In America, the academic Steven Johnson has recently put forward the controversial supposition that consuming pop culture may actually be good for you. According to Johnson, far from being the mind-numbing activities they are typically characterised as, pastimes such as watching television shows like *The Sopranos* actually tax the viewer by using complex narrative techniques that demand close attention and engagement. Johnson's term for this is 'the Sleeper Curve'. He writes:

I believe that the Sleeper Curve is the single most important new force altering the mental development of young people today, and I believe it is largely a force for good: enhancing our cognitive faculties, not dumbing them down. (Johnson, 2005: 12)

Although Johnson himself does not extend his argument to crime fiction, it does not require much of an imaginative leap to conclude that his observations about tightly plotted television programmes could equally apply to crime texts – one immediately thinks of the interwoven narratives of Ian Rankin's *Black and Blue* (1997), for example. Crime fiction has more to offer, though, than taxing plots. Where crime fiction was once primarily about offering reassurance – the Newgate Calendar, for example, told clear tales of crime and the resultant punishment (see Knight, 1980: 8-20 for a more substantial account) – it has now developed into a form that more usually asks questions than provides answers. Stephen Knight comments:

It is a matter for conjecture, even doubt, whether crime fiction, a form that in the latest manifestations of its diversity has re-established uncertainty as a dominating principle, will ever again be able to provide, except in retrospective mood and mode, easy confidences. (Knight, 2004: 208)

Given the fact that crime fiction is a form so intimately related to the culture in which it is produced, it seems obvious that as issues of gender and sexuality become more hotly contested in society as a whole, this would be reflected within the genre. Crime fiction is thus a space in which changing social practices are negotiated. As Scott McCracken has stated, '[p]opular fiction is both created by and a participant in social conflict' (McCracken, 1998: 2). For a clear example of this one need only look at how feminist writers have been able to reappropriate the hard-boiled form for their own ends. Writers such as Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton, Stella Duffy and Katherine V. Forrest have all revised the hard-boiled stereotype, successfully creating tough girl heroines.²¹ While there has been critical disagreement over just how radical these feminist forms can actually claim to be, the fact that they exist at all says much about the possibilities inherent in the use of generic forms. Priscilla L. Walton and Manina Jones argue for an optimistic assessment of these feminist rewritings, giving weight to the 'feminist impulse of these novels in terms of both their content and their form' (Walton and Jones, 1999: 4). Their positivity is matched by Gill Plain (2001). However, Sally R. Munt takes an oppositional stance, arguing that:

Feminism is injected in order to enrich, temporize, and affirm the literariness of detective fiction, and its roots in a notional politics of liberal humanism. The tendency is to rebel within an overall conformity. (Munt, 1994: 58)

The existence of scepticism such as Munt's is not altogether surprising, given that '...the form has been fairly rigidly defined according to a masculinist model, by which 'objective', distanced rationality is the highest virtue' (Reddy, 1988: 5). To the

uncritical eye, crime fiction seems the most straightforwardly masculine of genres. The act of detection itself is traditionally seen as a male occupation, an ‘unsuitable job for a woman’, to quote the title of P.D. James’ 1972 novel. Although he first appeared in 1887, Sherlock Holmes is still considered the epitome of detached, rational masculinity. In *A Scandal in Bohemia* (1892) Holmes speaks like an automaton, informing Watson ‘I have no data yet’ (Conan Doyle, 1892: 8); while also being cast as completely unfeeling. As Watson observes, ‘[a]ll emotions, and that one particularly [love], were abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind’ (1892: 5). Holmes is typically characterised by infallibility (although in *A Scandal in Bohemia* he meets his match in Irene Adler). However, even Holmes is not immune to the taint of the ‘feminine’, as is neatly suggested when Watson, amazed by his colleague’s uncanny powers of deduction, comments ‘you would certainly have been burned had you lived a few centuries ago’ (Conan Doyle, 1892: 7). Watson here equates Holmes’ admirably masculine mindset with witchcraft, a phenomenon more usually associated with women. While Holmes himself is a living refutation of superstition, the mystique surrounding his detective skills does, paradoxically, smack of something slightly supernatural and, as will be seen later, this characterisation of the male detective as uncannily intuitive is also found in the work of Henning Mankell. That there is room for re-interpretative manoeuvre in Conan Doyle’s original Holmes material has also been borne out by the number of contemporary feminist writers who have redeployed the characters in their own fiction. One thinks, for example, of the novels of Laurie R. King, whose Mary Russell series features Holmes working alongside the eponymous prototypical feminist heroine.

Although Holmes occupies a space in popular imagination as an omnipotent superhero, his character is more complex than this legend suggests and Conan

Doyle's successors have sought to increase the complicated representation of their heroes. Twentieth-century crime writing is usually divided into two differing schools with a strong national dimension – the 'Golden Age' texts of English writers such as Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers, and American hard-boiled fiction, exemplified by Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. Although neither Golden Age nor hard-boiled writers offered a radical assault on normative concepts of masculinity, they both, in their own way, challenged assumed ideas about male identity. Agatha Christie most obviously did this through the character of Hercule Poirot. A Belgian refugee, Poirot is equipped with almost boundless narcissism and is characterised as a fastidious and effeminate little fellow, who despite his unlikely exterior, or perhaps because of it, proves to be, to criminals at least, 'about as dangerous as a black mamba and a she-leopard' (Christie, 1944: 202). Poirot's unmanly attention to personal appearances and his feminised mode of detection mark him out as distinct from his contemporaries and are, according to Alison Light, part of Christie's quest to find a 'bearable masculinity', an alternative to the male militarism that dominated the first half of the twentieth-century (Light, 1991: 73). Poirot operates via close attention to domestic detail. In *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920), for example, he is able to identify the murderer thanks to the telling re-arrangement of a set of ornaments (Christie, 1920: 288). Poirot is further presented as a passive character, a man who generally prefers contemplation to action – as he tells his sidekick Hastings, 'this affair must be unravelled from within...these little grey cells. It is "up to them"' (1920: 228).

Alternative, 'feminised' masculinities are also found in the work of Dorothy L. Sayers and Margery Allingham. Sayers' hero, Lord Peter Wimsey, shares Poirot's affinity for all things dapper and is further differentiated from traditional male

heroism by frequent bouts of incapacitating trauma. In *Whose Body?* (1923) an attack of shell-shock leaves him visibly distressed and requiring comfort from his butler. Wimsey's relationship with the woman who eventually becomes his wife, Harriet Vane, is also characterised by a mutual dependence that is atypical of the time in which Sayers was writing. Similarly, Margery Allingham's serial detective, Albert Campion, is often presented in ways that challenge established notions of masculinity. In 1938's *The Fashion in Shrouds*, Campion is repeatedly characterised by both an unmanly physique – he is thin and wears glasses (1938: 15) – and a 'half-witted expression' (1938: 175). Although the latter is frequently used as a mask to conceal his intellectual proficiency, it is unusual to find a detective presented in non-hegemonic terms as possessing a 'simple face and gentle ineffectual manner' (Allingham, 1931: 106).²²

Although hard-boiled crime fiction seems as conventionally 'masculine' as it is possible to get (drinking, fighting and womanising being recurrent themes within the sub-genre), it, too, can be read as potentially destabilising. Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe appear to conform to Frank Barrett's definition of the hegemonic ideal – 'a man who is risk-taking, aggressive, heterosexual, and rational' (Barrett, 2001: 79) – yet both are outsiders within the society they inhabit, their desire for personal integrity outweighing any quest for power or glory. Just as the Golden Age texts of writers such as Christie reflected (albeit indirectly) the dominant concerns of the time in their construction of masculinity, so too are the perils of urban modernity expressed in the novels of Chandler and Hammett. For Chandler and Hammett the question is not how to envision a 'bearable masculinity', but how to create a masculine identity that can bear modernity's threat to individual autonomy and integrity. In recent years scholars such as Jopi Nyman and Greg Forter have challenged the concept of hard-boiled

fiction as a bastion of secure masculine identity. Nyman argues that '[h]ard-boiled fiction can be regarded as a symbolic representation of anxieties over gender which stem from its historical and cultural context' (1997: 3). He refers to hard-boiled texts as a form of 'masculine romance' (1997: 77), an idealized attempt to defend male autonomy in the face of challenges from with-out. Forter makes the even more radical assertion that hard-boiled fiction reflects the desires of its characters for self-dissolution. He writes:

...the texts I discuss require men to be defiled: to take back and own up to desires for dissolution and bodily impurity that our culture authorizes them to experience as the external threat of a feminine principle that can (and must) be mastered. (Forter, 2000: 4)

Historically speaking, crime fiction does not, then, presuppose the existence of an unproblematic masculine identity: despite its conventional structures, the genre is home to a surprising amount of gender deconstruction and renegotiation. While crime fiction may in itself be a genre of crisis management, providing problems that can be solved and restoring stability and equilibrium to society, the gendered identity of the detective is often figured as precarious and problematic. Nor does contemporary crime writing endorse a single version of male subjectivity. Instead, the pre-war binary of Golden Age and hard-boiled masculinity has given way to a diverse representation of male experience. For example, gay masculinities feature in the work of Joseph Hansen and Louise Welsh and black masculinities in novels by Chester Himes and Walter Mosley, in addition to the female masculinities mentioned above. As McCracken states, '[t]he multiple versions of the detective now available suggest that the role is paradigmatic of the possible selves available in the modern world' (McCracken, 1998: 53-54). The form itself has also diversified in recent years, with the police procedural coming to prominence; a development that will be more fully

addressed in Chapter III. European crime fiction, which typically employs the procedural format, is proving increasingly popular and offers yet more perspectives on male subjectivity. Working within a relatively standard 'Euro-cop' framework, novels have appeared from Sweden, France, Greece, Italy and Spain. Although geographically varied, it remains to be seen whether or not there is any real diversity in this booming market. The relationship between these European texts and their Anglo-American counterparts also remains relatively unexplored. By employing a comparative approach to contemporary British, American and European crime fiction, grounded in a close reading of the work of three writers, this thesis aims to expand the parameters of current critical debate. What is methodologically original about the present project is that it applies criticism and theory rooted in a specific Anglo-American context to the wider field of European masculinities and their representation within crime fiction. This affords an opportunity to examine both the texts themselves and also received models of analysis. It is important, however, to remain aware of the potential risks inherent in such a comparative approach. Whilst the work of Pelecanos, Rankin and Mankell can be of value in indicating prevalent national and regional trends, it is not the intention of this thesis to argue that either author can be read as one hundred percent representative of his nationality. Reductive conclusions will be avoided; instead this thesis aims to open up debate, focusing on the value of close textual analysis that illuminates points of commonality, and also difference.

Notes

¹ Included amongst the journals devoted to Men's Studies are *The Journal of Men's Studies*; *Men and Masculinities* (edited by Michael Kimmel) and *Culture, Society and Masculinities*. All these publications are American. *Achilles Heel*, a bi-annual British magazine assembled and edited by volunteers, is not currently being produced. For information on courses being offered on Men's Studies at American institutions see <<http://www.mensstudies.info/TMD.html>>.

² Of course, as any woman can testify, the existence of mixed messages in the construction of gendered identity is nothing new. Femininity, like masculinity, is fundamentally contradictory, as is most commonly illustrated by the prevalence of the Madonna/whore dichotomy.

³ However, the term 'masculinities' is itself not unproblematic. In *Unmasking the Masculine* (1998), Alan Petersen claims that instead of being indicative of the multiplicities of male identity, 'masculinities' is simply hollow terminology. He accuses those who employ the word of sidestepping the reification of 'masculinity' only by reifying 'masculinities' instead. According to Petersen's critique, writers such as R.W. Connell are unable to escape the sin of essentialising:

Given that most pro-feminist 'men's studies' scholars avowedly reject the idea of a universal masculine 'essence' and argue that there is nothing inevitable about male perspectives and behaviours, it seems ironic that they so frequently reify and essentialise 'masculinity' in their own work. (Petersen, 1998: 6)

⁴ Information about the mythopoetic men's movement taken from Messner, 1997: 8-23.

⁵ Richard Doyle's *The Rape of the Male* was published in 1986; *The Myth of Male Power* by Warren Farrell in 1993.

⁶ See <<http://www.fathers-4-justice.org/f4j>> for more information. Quotation taken from <http://www.fathers-4-justice.org/f4j/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=39&Itemid=71> accessed 25/11/08.

⁷ In solid socio-economic terms there is little evidence to support the idea that men are society's underdogs, as the following statistics cited by MacInnes demonstrate. According to MacInnes there were three hundred and fifty dollar billionaires in the world in 1996, and they were all men. He also quotes a 1994 survey of family gender roles, in which 80% of respondents offered the rather depressing opinion that it is a woman's job to do laundry. In terms of politics, too, it seems that even in the West it is too soon to become complacent about the goals of feminism – one of the aims of George W. Bush's administration was to deny women access to abortion on demand and although his tenure at the White House has now ended the fact that such a basic right could have been lost in one of the most advanced nations on Earth is a worrying reminder that feminism's work is by no means done.

⁸ The concept of female masculinity will be more fully addressed below in the section on Alternate Masculinities.

⁹ The limited way in which Vincent conceives of male sexuality is an echo of the 'Hot Man' thesis – the idea that men are biologically hard-wired to be sexually promiscuous in an attempt to spread their genes. See Bordo (1999: 229ff) for a more detailed account of this theory.

¹⁰ Although Connell is widely respected within the field of masculinity studies his work has not been universally accepted. The British academic Victor Seidler has been a vocal critic of the centrality of power to Connell's analysis of masculinity, accusing him of staging 'a flight into the theoretical' (Seidler, 2006: 30). For Seidler, Connell ignores the individual experiences of men, refusing to engage with the reality of men's everyday lives and paying scant attention to male suffering. Ultimately, Seidler suspects that it is part of Connell's agenda, not to rehabilitate masculinity but to do away with the concept altogether. He writes:

We are encouraged to think of men as instances of particular masculinities that are related to each other through relations of power. This tends to reinforce the notion that masculinities can be thought of exclusively as relations of power. It also frames masculinities as the problem that needs to be solved, as if we could do without the term at all. Having little sense that men can change, Connell is trapped into seeing masculinities as not part of a solution. (Seidler, 2006: 4)

¹¹ See Connell's chapter 'Globalization, Imperialism, and Masculinities' in the *Handbook* (2004: 71-89) for more information on the growth of non-First World studies of masculinity. Michael Meuser suggests that the analysis of masculinity and, more specifically, the idea of a crisis of masculinity is bound to be the preserve of the developed world given that such speculation is borne out of privilege. He writes:

It is obvious that this thesis wears the index of the social milieu from which it arises. A reflexive calling into question of one's own gender status can only be found – if it is found at all – in the intellectual-academic milieu, where social status is defined by possessing cultural capital rather than economic capital. (Meuser, 2003: 128)

¹² As evidence of this contention Badinter makes the somewhat oblique claim that the obsession of English-speaking countries with virility is evident in their history, art and culture (Badinter, 1992: 5). She does not make it clear how or why France and the rest of mainland Europe have managed to escape this obsession.

¹³ See Hearn and Pringle (2006) for more information on CROME.

¹⁴ Faludi states that this 'society of utility' gave men 'a context and it promised them that their social contributions were the price of admission to the realm of adult manhood' (1999: 35).

¹⁵ Thomas Byers makes a similar point in his essay 'Terminating the Postmodern: Masculinity and Pomophobia' (1995), in which he argues that the forces of late capitalism are fundamentally at odds with traditional models of masculinity.

¹⁶ See Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978).

¹⁷ See also MacInnes' *The End of Masculinity* (1998).

¹⁸ MacInnes lacks practical information on how exactly we are to move away from the notion of gender as an organising principle. Indeed, his somewhat utopian analysis seems to suggest that escaping gender might not be that difficult, a contention with which theorists such as Judith Butler would take issue.

¹⁹ Quoted by Judith Kegan Gardiner in her introduction to *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory* (Gardiner, 2002: 4).

²⁰ See Connell's profile on the University of Sydney website (<<http://usyd.edu.au>>), accessed 25/11/08. Also, according to a search on amazon.co.uk, Connell's books appear to be in the process of being reprinted under the name 'Raewyn Connell' (search conducted on 29/07/09).

²¹ With her capacity to function as a relatively hard-boiled figure, while also remaining conventionally 'feminine' – Paretsky emphasises V.I.'s love of fashion, for example – Warshawski is characterised as an interestingly 'orthogonal' figure, to redeploy Sedgwick's term.

²² Campion is further emasculated by his run-in with the ominously named, phallic woman Mrs Dick in *Look to the Lady* (1931).

Chapter II

The Crisis of Modern American Masculinity: George Pelecanos' *Derek Strange*

Novels

I don't like work – no man does – but I like what is in the work, – the chance to find yourself. Your own reality – for yourself, not for others – what no other man can ever know. They can only see the mere show, and never can tell what it really means. (Conrad, 1902: 52)

The route to manhood is perilous, but the consequences of failure are far worse. (Kimmel, 2005: 134)

Introduction

In part one of George Pelecanos' *Hard Revolution* (2004) the twelve-year-old Derek Strange experiences two incidents that will become pivotal moments in his life. In the first, he is caught stealing a pocket comb from Ida's department store and is given a lesson in the importance of choosing right over wrong by the store's security guard, Harold Fean. The adult Derek later remembers this as being his 'lucky day' (Pelecanos, 2004: 180), not because he escaped punishment, but because Fean made him realise that 'everything you do as a young man can affect what you become or don't become later on' (2004: 25). In the other, Derek observes William Davis, a black police officer. With his smartly pressed uniform and proud walk Davis seems to Derek to be an exemplar of manhood. To Dominic Martini, the neighbourhood bully, Davis is an object of derision, but in Derek's eyes 'that's a *man* right there' (2004: 16, italics Pelecanos').¹ In these two episodes Pelecanos offers a definition of manhood that the adult Derek will come to live by: a man must take responsibility for his

actions, must have a job, must have pride in himself and, most crucially of all, his masculinity must be immediately recognisable to others, especially to other men.

George Pelecanos lives and works in Silver Spring, Maryland, near the city of Washington DC, the setting for most of his fiction. During his career to date Pelecanos has published fifteen novels. Some, for example his debut, the noirish *Shoedog* (1994), are stand-alone experiments with the genre; while others, such as the four novels that comprise 'The DC Quartet' – *The Big Blowdown* (1996), *King Suckerman* (1997), *The Sweet Forever* (1998) and *Shame the Devil* (2000) – are more complex narratives, employing a cast of recurring characters, interweaving plots and an ambitious historical sweep that puts the reader in mind of the work of James Ellroy. However, although occasional references may be made to Pelecanos' other fiction, this chapter will mainly confine itself to an analysis of the four Derek Strange novels – *Right as Rain* (2001), *Hell to Pay* (2002), *Soul Circus* (2003) and *Hard Revolution*. The reason for this is that it is in these novels that Pelecanos offers his most sustained engagement with the topic of masculinity. The first three novels in the Strange quartet are set in contemporary Washington DC and hinge upon the working partnership of Strange, a middle-aged black private investigator, and Terry Quinn, a white man in his early thirties, who has recently retired from the police force after accidentally shooting dead a black fellow officer, Chris Wilson. *Hard Revolution*, which is principally set in the 1960s, takes the form of a prequel and explores the factors that contributed to the young Derek Strange's own departure from the Washington DC police.

The circumstances of Strange and Quinn's first meeting in *Right as Rain* do not auger well for friendship: while Quinn is officially cleared of any wrongdoing, the situation surrounding Wilson's death remains confused and Strange is hired by

Wilson's mother to investigate. Eventually, with Quinn's help, Strange is able to reveal the truth about what happened, uncovering a network of police corruption and collusion with local drug dealers. Although Quinn is complicit in none of this, Strange is unable to provide redemption for him, as both men know that Quinn's racist assumptions played a significant role in Wilson's death. Despite this, Quinn and Strange become friends, bonding through a mutual appreciation of Westerns. As the series progresses Quinn becomes an active partner in Strange Investigations and the relationship between the two men develops into one of easy intimacy, characterised by mutual trust and, that lynchpin of homosociality, affectionate banter.² However, all this comes to an abrupt and shocking end when Quinn is murdered at the conclusion of *Soul Circus*. Unable to endure being 'disrespected' by a group of teenage boys, Quinn threatens them with a gun. Having thus reclaimed his masculine pride, a satisfied Quinn is driving away when the boys come after him, shooting him dead in his car. Quinn's death is indicative of one of the key problems facing men in Pelecanos' world, namely the complex balancing act required between being 'tough' enough to command respect without getting sucked into the cycle of violence that dominates life in Washington DC. In Pelecanos' brutal environment a successful performance of tough-guy, phallic masculinity is essential in terms of survival. Yet, as Quinn's murder shows, if this performance is taken too far, it leads, inexorably, to death.

This chapter, then, considers how Pelecanos links the issues of race and masculinity, analysing how he portrays both criminal and non-criminal black masculinities and a white masculinity that seems inherently unstable. It also examines how Pelecanos posits masculinity as a survival strategy, while simultaneously drawing attention to how dangerous it can be. He does this through the depiction of

two contrasting modes of black masculinity. The first of these, resistance masculinity, is predicated upon the idea that masculinity is more than just a gender identity – it is an ethical responsibility. ‘Real men’ in Pelecanos’ novels are ones who take an active role in their communities and who make a positive contribution. Juxtaposed against this is deficit model masculinity, the product of socio-economic deprivation, which is characterised by extreme violence and criminality.³ In Pelecanos’ novels men turn to crime and gangs because they are denied access to the traditional means of validating their masculinity: long-term employment with a secure income that will enable them to provide for themselves and their families. In this respect, although Pelecanos pushes a liberal social agenda towards such issues as gun control and drug legalisation, he is ultimately rather reactionary in his depiction of masculinity, unable to conceptualise a form of male identity that steps outside traditional stereotypes. As will be seen below, Pelecanos’ social vision occasionally clashes with his limited ability to conceive of masculinity in non-normative terms, resulting in textual inconsistencies that are most obvious in his characterisation of Derek Strange. While Pelecanos’ novels are not as ambivalent as those of Henning Mankell, there is a tension present in them born of the fact that, of the three writers considered in this thesis, Pelecanos is the only one who tries to solve the ‘problem’ of contemporary masculinity in his work.

The Urban Cowboy Rides Again: Pelecanos’ Hard-Boiled Antecedents

When speaking about his work George Pelecanos has been keen to stress his commitment to realism as a guiding principle. In a recent interview he referred to

Charles Taylor of *The New York Times*, who has described Pelecanos' oeuvre as 'urban reportage'. On the meticulous research that goes into his novels Pelecanos himself commented, 'I feel like I'm leaving a cultural and historical record of DC, so I want to be as accurate as possible.'⁴ In his determination to provide an accurate record of crime in his city, Pelecanos echoes the sentiment of Raymond Chandler's seminal article 'The Simple Art of Murder' (1950), in which Chandler chastises 'Golden Age' writers such as Agatha Christie for the implausibility of their plots and settings. Praise is heaped instead upon Dashiell Hammett for his skilful evocation of America's mean streets:

Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse; and with the means at hand, not with handwrought duelling pistols, curare, and tropical fish. He put these people down on paper as they are, and he made them talk and think in the language they customarily used for these purposes. (Chandler, 1950: 195)

Like Hammett, and, to a lesser extent Chandler himself, Pelecanos firmly grounds his texts in a grimly realistic urban setting. Commenting on the city in classic hard-boiled texts, John G. Cawelti states:

Instead of the new Arabian nights, we find empty modernity, corruption, and death. A gleaming and deceptive façade hides a world of exploitation and criminality in which enchantment and significance must usually be sought elsewhere, in what remains of the natural world still unspoiled by the pervasive spread of the city. (Cawelti, 1976: 141)

This description is just as applicable to Pelecanos' DC as it is to Hammett's Personville or Chandler's Los Angeles. The similarities extend beyond the urban setting: like Chandler and Hammett's fiction, Pelecanos' novels are characterised by violence and a strong macho sensibility, and, in parallel to Philip Marlowe, Derek Strange has a tendency to view his work as something of a crusade. This is especially

evident in *Hell to Pay*, when Strange is determined to discover who killed Joe Wilder, a member of his community baseball team, and then to punish them. Both Granville Oliver and Terry Quinn tease Strange about being on a mission to save the world; Lionel Baker, too, asks Strange if he has been ‘keeping the streets safe for democracy?’ (2003: 337). With his all-purpose utility belt, Strange does run the risk of appearing as a caricatured, superhero figure. Indeed, in *Right as Rain* Terry enquires if Derek has ‘purple tights...to go with that belt’ (2001: 83). However, rather than emphasising Strange’s heroism, these references to his preparedness undercut Strange’s hard-boiled masculinity and mark him out from his predecessors. There is something unmanly about Strange’s foresight and reliance on equipment (even if it does make him more effective at his job). After all, one can hardly imagine Philip Marlowe carrying a spare set of lightweight gloves to wear in case of inclement weather. Pelecanos further grounds Strange in reality by peppering the texts with references to Strange’s age and repeatedly emphasising his physical deterioration.⁵ Rather than simply replicating the hard-boiled paradigm of masculinity, Pelecanos offers a reinterpretation of it in which the solitary, crusading private detective (eventually) becomes a family man with a partner. The contrast between Strange and his hard-boiled predecessors is evident from the opening pages of *Right as Rain*. In introducing his protagonist Pelecanos lingers on the personal possessions that clutter Strange’s desk. Chief among these is a Washington Redskins figurine that has been painted black and which, to Strange, is priceless. Strange is thus immediately characterised by strong human connections. To quote Cawelti:

...the hard-boiled detective remains a marginal man, a loner, who must end his cases by returning to his dusty office in the broken-down office building. (1976: 151)

This, obviously, is not Strange. Although his name may be suitable for a typical hard-boiled hero, Strange, an active member of both a family and a community, is no outsider. His professionalism also demarcates Strange from Marlowe and his ilk. While Marlowe's office in the Cahuenga Building is 'empty of everything but the smell of dust' (Chandler, 1943: 18), Strange's is immaculately maintained and full of the latest technology. Strange is very much the modern businessman, armed as he is with both an accountant and a stock portfolio.

Yet one further aspect the Strange novels do have in common with hard-boiled crime fiction is their depiction of the detective as a modern cowboy figure. The link between hard-boiled crime fiction and the Western has been well-established by critics such as John G. Cawelti (1976), Stephen Knight (1980), Jopi Nyman (1997) and Richard Slotkin (1998), all of whom have discussed the importance of the West as a 'mythic space' (Slotkin, 1998: 234) for constructing American masculinity. Pelecanos has himself referred to *Right as Rain*, *Hell to Pay* and *Soul Circus* as his 'urban western trilogy' (Jordan, 2002). It is in *Right as Rain* that Pelecanos makes his urban cowboy theme most obvious. In this novel, in which Strange and Quinn take on a man called Cherokee Coleman, it is literally cowboys against Indians. It is, therefore, appropriate that the novel climaxes with a shoot-out in an old-time saloon-styled barn. The fact that Pelecanos represents both Strange and Quinn as avid Western fans serves as an acknowledgement of the importance of the Western to the genre of crime fiction, while also saying much about the kind of masculinity exemplified by the two men. Strange and Quinn hold sacred many of the values identified with frontier, cowboy masculinity; namely independence and action. Where the two men differ is that while Strange is content to listen to Western film

scores in his own private environment, using the music as a means of relaxation, Terry Quinn, as will be discussed below, actually likes to pretend he is in a Western.

Besides following in the hard-boiled tradition, Pelecanos' most important generic forbearers are Chester Himes and Walter Mosley. Himes is best known for his Harlem Cycle of novels, featuring the police officers Coffin Ed Johnson and Grave Digger Jones. Originally published in the 1950s and 60s, Himes' texts depict the tension that results when black men represent the racist, white forces of law and order. Mosley's novels are set at various stages in the life of Easy Rawlins, a resident of Los Angeles, whose attempts to live a life of quiet domesticity are repeatedly thwarted when he is called upon to play amateur detective. Of the two writers, Pelecanos' most obvious debt is to Mosley. Rawlins, like Strange, is strongly tied to his community, and both men hold, and fulfil, aspirations to settled, middle-class respectability, owning property and earning an independent living. Yet both men can step outside the law when necessary and neither functions as an uncomplicatedly heroic figure – as will be discussed later Strange's attitude to women is somewhat unreconstructed, while Easy Rawlins, although a devoted father to his adopted children, commits marital rape in *White Butterfly* (1992).⁶ Of course, a crucial distinction between Pelecanos and Himes and Mosley is that Pelecanos is white. While it would be easy to accuse Pelecanos of cultural ventriloquism, his texts reflect a genuine attempt to understand contemporary black masculinity. As a white writer convincingly depicting a black protagonist Pelecanos is not without precedent. James Sallis, too, has written a critically acclaimed series featuring a black hero. On this issue, Andrew Pepper has commented:

Nor, even, does the black crime writer necessarily have to be black; the fact that James Sallis is not but his novels, featuring African-American detective Lew Griffin, are among the 'best' examples of what we might call the black

crime novel, calls into question the validity of essentialist arguments about cultural/racial authenticity and ownership. (Pepper, 2000: 77-78)

Pepper is, of course, right. To argue that a white man cannot, nor should not, write from a black perspective is to argue that authors should only ever write directly from their own personal experiences, which would make fiction a sadly limited world. However, it is important to remember that for all his undoubted commitment to realism and the authentic rendering of urban, black experience, Pelecanos is a white man producing fiction.

‘You’re The Man You Wanted To Be’: Resistance Masculinity

In *Hard Revolution*, Pelecanos takes his readers back in time to witness Strange’s transition from youth to manhood. The novel also affords the reader a chance to meet Strange’s family – his parents, Darius and Alethea, and his older brother, Dennis, a Navy veteran who is dependent upon a government disability allowance following an accidental injury. Although Strange’s parents are not well off they provide a stable and secure environment for their son. Derek repeatedly remarks that he feels ‘safe’ at home (2004: 45 and 50), enjoying a security that many of the characters in the ‘later’ novels lack. The young Derek also benefits from ‘a good example of how grown men and women should conduct their lives’ (2004: 33). Despite facing racism from their employers, low wages and increasingly poor health, both Derek’s parents work hard for a living. Indeed, Darius Strange takes his obligations as provider so seriously that even the onset of what will develop into terminal illness does not stop him from doing his job:

He'd been getting these jolts lately, sometimes on his feet, sometimes while simply relaxing in his chair. A few days earlier, he'd noticed blood in his morning movement as well. There was something wrong with him, for sure. But what could he do? *He still had to provide*. His wife, God love her, couldn't work any harder than she already did. They were in debt, as they always had been. He couldn't afford to be sick, so there wasn't any use in worrying about it either way. (2004: 147, italics mine)

Nor are he and Alethea prevented from going to work by the riots that grip Washington DC in the wake of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King (2004: 333-35).

According to David Collinson and Jeff Hearn paid work is the 'central source of masculine identity' (Collinson and Hearn, 2001: 146). Douglas Massey, Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago, also comments:

Male identity in this culture is heavily bound up with work. If you ask a man who he is, he'll tell you what he does for a living. If you don't do something for a living, you're nobody. (Terkel, 1992: 94)

Darius Strange's depiction is a testament to the truth of these statements. As a boy Derek watches his father, a cook, at work, and Darius recognises how important this is:

It was nice that Derek could see him working this steady job here...Plenty of boys never did get to see that kind of example. Someday Derek would know that this had all meant something with regard to what he himself would become. (2004: 42)

To Darius Strange work makes a man, hence his hostility towards his elder son, Dennis, who cannot find, nor, more problematically, seems to desire, gainful employment. 'What I want is for you to work,' Darius tells Dennis, 'That's what a man does' (2004: 145-46). The words 'do your job' provide Darius with a mantra to live by and this strong work ethic passes from father to (younger) son. In times of

crisis, during the riots of 1968, Derek gains strength and motivation from the thought of getting on with his job (2004: 209 and 227). Working is such a crucial part of his identity that when his mother speaks of what Derek does she says ‘my son’s police’ (2004: 265), making it sound as if being a police officer is who Derek is, rather than just what he does for a living. Job and identity are thus completely conflated for Derek, and therefore when he abuses his position at the end of the novel his future as a police officer becomes untenable. By participating in the killing of Alvin Jones, his brother’s murderer, Strange steps outside the law and consequently can no longer represent it. As he makes his decision to leave the force the following sentences run through his mind:

You’ve been given a responsibility, son. You do something to betray that, you don’t deserve to be wearing that uniform. (2004: 374)

Pelecanos does not attribute the quotation but the words seem likely to be Darius’. In addition to being the guiding moral influence in his son’s life, Darius also offers an endorsement of the man Derek has become. He conveys this approbation in a way that, if not explicitly vocalised, is at least obvious to both:

Darius looked his son over with admiration. He didn’t have to say what he was feeling. Derek knew. He was getting, in a silent way, what every son craved from his father and what few ever got: validation and respect. It was all in his eyes. (2004: 150)

A second incidence of subtle validation also takes place later in the novel. After Derek returns to the family home from policing the riots sparked by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Darius comments ‘[y]ou had quite a day’. Derek is skilled enough at reading his father to realise the true meaning behind his words: ‘[b]y his tone Derek knew his father was telling him he had done well’ (2004: 333). Derek

revels in his father's approval, while Dennis covets it, ultimately dying because he made a choice to do something good in the hope of earning his father's respect.⁷

In her article 'The Psychological Development and Coping of Black Male Adolescents', Vera S. Paster develops the notion of 'resistance resources' that can be deployed to combat the negative self-identity common to many African-American men. According to Paster, salutogens, which she defines as 'units of health', combine 'to form resistance resources that promote the capacity to function adaptively' (1994: 217). The sense of masculine identity passed on to Derek from his father could, therefore, be defined as a kind of 'resistance masculinity', or salutogenic masculinity, as it provides a positive blueprint for Derek to follow. The fact that Derek is very much his 'father's son' (2004: 204) is evident from the other novels in the series. As coach to the Petworth Panthers, a local American football team made up of young boys, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds, the adult Derek teaches his charges the same lessons his father taught him.⁸ In *Hard Revolution* Darius instructs Derek 'don't be kickin' a man when he's down. Ain't no good reason for it' (2004: 95). Thirty years later, Derek offers the same advice to the eight-year-old Joe Wilder:

I don't like to put the boot to someone's face when they're down, and I don't want you doin' it either. That's not the kind of man I want you to be. (2002: 169)

In *Hell to Pay* sport seems almost to be a secondary function of the Petworth Panthers: Derek's real focus is to offer these boys a way of acting like men without getting caught up in the cycle of violent crime that dominates the poorer neighbourhoods of Washington DC. The murder of Joe Wilder, one of the Panthers, emphasises the very real danger the boys on Strange's team face as part of their day-

to-day lives. When Strange says at the end of practice ‘I gotta get these boys back in their homes’ (2002: 186) he is not, therefore, being melodramatic about the simple act of providing a lift. Instead he is testifying to the danger implicit in even something as mundane as walking home, or in Joe’s case, leaving with an adult who cannot be trusted. This (self-imposed) responsibility to keep ‘the kids away from the bad’ (2002: 57) is one that Strange takes very seriously. As well as demanding good behaviour from his players, Derek also insists on seeing their report cards. As a man who has benefited from a strong paternal role model Derek seems to feel compelled to set a similarly high standard for the boys on his team, especially as many of them lack fathers who play an active part in their lives. As such, Derek is generous in offering the boys his approval. After each game he informs them he is proud of them, being careful to make eye contact with each and every one of them (2002: 169 and 351). At one point he even goes as far as telling the team ‘you *are* like my own’ (2002: 351, italics Pelecanos’). Whereas Darius Strange was only ever able to offer his son his tacit admiration, Derek is able to be more openly demonstrative, rendering his approbation for the Petworth Panthers explicit. For Darius’ generation, the expression of feelings was frowned upon. Derek, however, is representative of a different era, when what it means to be ‘masculine’ has been redefined to include the possibility of a greater degree of emotional articulation. By virtue of this contrast between the two Stranges, Pelecanos neatly illustrates how masculinity is a provisional construct, always subject to change in relation to context.

A sense of duty to his community is therefore a key component of Strange’s masculinity. A passionate music fan, he sings along with the song ‘Wake Up Everybody’ as he drives through the city. The words of this song could be Derek’s motto: ‘The world won’t get no better...if we just let it be’ (2002: 16). Born and

raised in DC, Strange is proud of his hometown and loves his neighbourhood. Early in their partnership Terry Quinn notices ‘everywhere they went in D.C., people knew Strange’ (2001: 225) and this high visibility is something that Pelecanos emphasises in every novel (see 2001: 22 and 183; 2002: 282 and 2003: 36). By virtue of owning his own business, Strange functions as a paradigm of success to young black men in his neighbourhood:

He had built this business by himself and done something positive in the place where he’d come up. The kids in the neighborhood, they saw a black man turn the key on the front door every morning, and maybe it registered, put something in the back of their minds whether they realized it or not. He’d kept the business going for twenty-five years now, and the bumps in the road had been just that. The business was who he was. All of him, and all his. (2001: 7-8).⁹

Strange Investigations, with its distinctive magnifying glass logo, provides an aspirational focal point for Petworth locals, showing them that criminality is not the only means of attaining status and respect. As well as teaching by example, Strange also provides practical assistance for teenage boys who might otherwise be ‘lost to the streets’ (2002: 45). Seventeen-year-old Lamar Williams begins working for Derek as a general office dogsbody in *Hell to Pay*. With no obvious prospects Lamar is understandably concerned about his future. Derek assuages his nerves by making Lamar a promise: ‘I’ll help you in any way I can. I’m not going to give up on you’ (2002: 214). By *Soul Circus*, Derek has made good on his words and Lamar is being ‘groomed’ as an investigator (2003: 12). Derek rescues his second protégé, Robert Gray, from the gang leader Granville Oliver, re-homing him with a good Christian family and getting him involved in football.

‘I’ve Been Headed Here All My Life’: Deficit Model Masculinity

According to a recent report in *The Guardian* one in six black men in America are current or former prison inmates, compared with one in thirty-eight white men (Tisdall, 2005: 19). In 1992 the number of black men in jail exceeded the number of black men in higher education, prompting Marc Mauer to describe the American criminal justice system as:

[A]n almost inevitable part of [the black man’s] life cycle. This is not to say that it is a “rite of passage” but that it is a part of growing up, taken for granted almost as many young whites assume they will go to college. (Mauer, 1994: 90)

Jewelle Taylor Gibbs and Joseph R. Merighi do, however, define prison as a black male rite of passage, stating that:

‘Doin’ time’ for inner-city black males is analogous to joining a fraternity for college-age white males; that is, it provides an instant peer group with a special bond, a special set of initiation rites, and a special identity as brothers. In the absence of socially sanctioned paths to manhood, the inmate identity for these black males conveys validation of an introjected negative identity while simultaneously enhancing their sense of masculinity as ‘tough guys’ and ‘jailbirds’. (Gibbs and Merighi, 1995: 66)

In *The American Black Male* (1994), Richard Majors, co-founder of the National Council of African-American Men, cites a series of shocking statistics; chief among them the fact that homicide is the leading cause of death for black males aged between fifteen to thirty-four (1994: 301). Black men, he concludes, are an ‘endangered species’ (1994: 301) and their plight is only exacerbated by persistent media representations of black masculinity that focus more or less exclusively on negative stereotypes.¹⁰ Instead of offering positive representations of black men,

contemporary culture is more likely to portray them as being engaged in some form of illegal enterprise. To quote Clyde W. Franklin II:

...the Black man presently being recognized by mainstream society is not the Black man who invented the cotton gin; he is not the Black man who pioneered the development of blood transfusions; he is not the Black man who performed miracles with the peanut; he is not the Black man who fought tirelessly for civil rights and women's rights in the 1800s; and he is not the Black man who in the late 1960s led Black people on a journey to the 'promised land'. Instead the Black male recognised by mainstream society today is fearsome, threatening, unemployed, irresponsible, potentially dangerous, and generally socially pathological. Black men who *do not* share these characteristics are thought to be anomalies despite their increasing numbers. (Franklin, 1994: 11, italics Franklin's)

The habitual characterisation of black masculinity as inherently destructive and, more often than not, criminal, has been termed the 'deficit model' by Jacob Gordon (Gordon, 1994: x). Pelecanos' novels are replete with characters whose masculinity seems to correspond with this deficit model. Yet, for the most part, Pelecanos is uninterested in stigmatising these men. Instead, one of the key issues he explores throughout his fiction is an examination of what kinds of factors give rise to deficit model masculinity. Speaking of his own motivation, Pelecanos has commented:

All my books are based on true crimes. But nothing ever like that [case of the Washington sniper]. I am not interested in any thing that has that kind of unexplained psychosis or serial killers. Anything like that is not in my bailiwick. I want to know why the kid, if he had been born somewhere else by an accident of birth, would have been a doctor and instead he's down on the corner selling drugs with a gat in his back, behind his belt line. How the fuck does that happen? That's what really interests me. And that's why I keep writing about it. I'm obsessed with it. How does society fail people to the degree that that's what happens to their lives? And not just society meaning the government. I'm talking about the culture, too. How are we at the point where fathers father children and think nothing about having no contact with them? (Birnbaum, 2004)¹¹

As has already been noted, work is fundamental to the construction of male subjectivity. Pelecanos makes it clear that Strange has internalised this ideology,

thanks to the example of his father, Darius. Strange is, by his father's definition, a man – he has a job. Yet Pelecanos realises that work is not always an available option. In the United States the unemployment rate for African-American males is almost twice that of white males, the result being that nearly one third of black families live below subsistence level (Terkel, 1992: epigraph). According to bell hooks, black men need to stop striving towards matching up to the patriarchal definition of masculinity that emphasises employment above all else. Thanks to the legacy of slavery, she argues, black men have never been fairly rewarded for their toil: 'Work had never been for them the site where their patriarchal manhood could be affirmed' (hooks, 2004: 19). The idea of work providing black men with an autonomous sense of self is, to hooks' mind, a fiction, given the lack of control black men traditionally have had over their labour. Robert Staples makes a similar point:

I see the black male as being in conflict with the normative definition of masculinity. This is a status which few, if any, black males have been able to achieve. (Staples, 1982: 2)

When black men internalise the image of man as provider they are, therefore, only setting themselves up for failure (hooks, 2004: 85-86).¹² Clearly, this is at odds with Pelecanos' ideological position. While hooks maintains the necessity for black men to distance themselves from patriarchal definitions of masculinity, arguing instead for a rebel black masculinity that 'can stand as the example of revolutionary manhood' (hooks, 2004: 14), Pelecanos instead contends that black men need more access to traditional means of proving masculine identity.

However, Pelecanos' novels acknowledge the difficulty of achieving such access and dwell on the uncomfortable reality of life in Washington DC, a city in which the majority of residents are black and in which great wealth and tremendous

poverty sit uneasily side-by-side. A shocking indication of this came in 2005, when a U.N. report on infant mortality found that the rate of death for new born babies in Washington DC was twice that of children born in Beijing. Incredibly, a black baby in DC is more likely to die in its first year than one born in the southern Indian state of Kerala.¹³ Such statistics seem almost impossible in the capital city of the most prosperous nation on Earth, and it is consequently not surprising that a strong element of social criticism forms the backbone of Pelecanos' fiction. Lee Horsley has written that '[t]he detective or crime story is an ideal form for the exploration of suppressed realities' (Horsley, 2005: 202), which seems an apposite description of Pelecanos' project. The lack of prospects facing many of Washington's young black residents is one of his key themes. Strange repeatedly draws attention to the paucity of the funding allocated to black schools, while in Anacostia, one of the city's poor black neighbourhoods, he sees 'hard young men, the malignant result of years of festering, unchecked poverty and fatherless homes' (2003: 28). The inextricable link between socio-economic deprivation and violent crime is further emphasised by Ulysses Foreman, a gun dealer, whose business depends on the perpetuation of this endless cycle:

Long as there was poverty, long as there wasn't no good education, long as there wasn't no real opportunity, long as kids down there had no fathers and were looking to belong to something, then there were gonna be gangs and a need for guns. (2003: 59)

For some in Pelecanos' novels, crime is a 'matter of sheer survival' (Staples, 1982: 41). However, Strange is represented as being unable to condone such an attitude. This is most clear in his dealings with Granville Oliver, a prominent DC gangster. Oliver, sentenced to death in *Soul Circus*, is convinced that he is being put back in his 'place' by racist white society:

Do you know why they picked *me* to execute, the only death penalty case in the District in years, instead of all the other killers they got in D.C.?...They got a picture of a strong, proud, I-don't-give-a-good-fuck-about-nothin' black man holding a gun. America's worst nightmare, Strange. They can *sell* my execution to the public, and ain't nobody gonna lose a wink of sleep over it. 'Cause it's just a nigger who's been out here killin' other niggers. To America, it is no loss. (2002: 346)

Strange knows that there is some truth in what Oliver is saying – it is a fact that black men are disproportionately well represented on America's death row¹⁴ – but he also knows that Oliver's choices have been his own. Although he recognises the disadvantages men like Oliver have faced, he maintains that others in their position have been able to negotiate the 'roadblocks' (2002: 245) in their lives and make something of themselves without resorting to crime. There seems to be a contradiction here between the point of view of Derek Strange and the kind of message Pelecanos may be trying to convey with his fiction. Throughout the series Strange is used as a focaliser by Pelecanos, and there is much in his representation to suggest that his perspective is synonymous with that of the author. However, as the quotation cited above, in which Pelecanos speaks about his own concerns as a writer, indicates, he seems to give more weight to how circumstances of birth and enculturation may affect how a person develops than Derek does. Strange is quick to dismiss these factors and to deny Oliver the position of victim, but that does not mean that Pelecanos is, or that we as readers should be. After all, there is much in Oliver's character that mirrors that of Strange. Like Strange, Oliver's identity is predicated upon a recognisably hegemonic construction: he is a self-made man of status and even if this status is based upon illegal activity he is still financially successful and serves as a role-model to certain sections of the community. Although not necessarily endorsed or validated by the author, the statement from Oliver quoted above is the closest thing to the kind

of radicalism extolled by hooks to be found in Pelecanos' fiction. Arguably, then, Oliver is representative of an alternative politics of black masculinity and although Strange may balk at his attempt to conflate his criminality with some kind of meaningful rebellion against racist, main-stream society, Pelecanos appears more ambivalent.

What Pelecanos does try to do in his novels is to explain why joining 'the life', as he refers to men in gang culture, might be an attractive option. The work of James Messerschmidt (1993) provides a useful insight into the reasons why young men might feel compelled to turn to crime. Messerschmidt challenges the idea that criminal behaviour is the result of male biology – he rejects the conventional hypothesis that men are responsible for more violent crime than women because of testosterone. Instead, Messerschmidt argues for the importance of interpreting criminality as a means of creating or asserting masculine identity. Crime is thus a means of 'doing gender' (Messerschmidt, 1993: 84), 'a resource that may be summoned when men lack other resources to accomplish gender' (1993: 85). Suzanne E. Hatty, too, sees violence as a means of expression:

[V]iolence is still the prerogative of the youthful male, especially when confronted by the contradictions and paradoxes of thwarted desire and personal and social disempowerment. Reaching deep into the historical and cultural storehouse of masculinity, a young man may still retrieve the ultimate tool of manly self-assertiveness: omnipotence through violence. (Hatty, 2000: 6)

Seen through this lens, gang activity in Pelecanos' fiction seems the almost inevitable result when men are denied any alternative means to demonstrate their masculinity. In a society that has emasculated men by rendering them passive and denying them employment, 'the life' offers a chance to reclaim some sense of masculine agency,

providing them with 'alternative avenues to play out their masculine roles in their own communities' (Gibbs and Merighi, 1995: 65).

This element of community is crucial to Pelecanos' work and in his fiction gangs function as a kind of surrogate familial unit. For example, when Dewayne Durham enlists a new recruit in *Soul Circus* he refers to his gang as being the boy's 'new family' (2003: 117). Strong homosocial ties that are expected to last for life thus replace damaged or non-existent familial bonds. Of course, life in a gang context does not necessarily last that long: in Pelecanos' novels the phrase 'in the life' typically translates as expecting an early death. Garfield Potter and Carlton Little both anticipate dying young (see 2002: 116 and 267), while Lorenze Wilder tells an unimpressed Strange 'I ain't *gotta* do nothin' but be black and die' (2002: 50, italics Pelecanos'). These men share a belief that they have been destined to go nowhere, and the same street-bred nihilism is articulated by a white man, Dominic Martini, in the quotation that begins this section. For Pelecanos it is background and upbringing that define the kind of man one develops into, not skin colour. Yet, despite its precarious nature, 'the life' remains alluring, often because of basic economic need. In both *Right as Rain* and *Hell to Pay* gangs are major employers – we are told, for example, that Cherokee Coleman provides more local jobs than McDonalds (2001: 233). Gang leaders, thus, become heroic figures in their communities, and gang membership something to aspire to.¹⁵ In *Hell to Pay* the attraction of gang life is made clear:

The Olivers had the clothes, the cars and the women, and the stature of men who had returned from war. They gave money to the community, participated in fund-raisers at local churches, sponsored basketball squads that played police teams, and passed out Christmas presents in December to children in the Frederick Douglass and Stanton Terrace Dwellings. They were the heroes, and the folk heroes, of the area. Many kids growing up there didn't dream of becoming doctors or lawyers or even professional athletes. Their simple ambition was to join the Mob, to be 'put on'. (2002: 239)

Additionally, gangs also offer a framework for men excluded from normative life, replicating the hierarchical nature of conventional society, and imposing a code of meaning and morality, albeit a skewed one, on men and boys whose lives would otherwise lack a guiding structure. Young boys join gangs early, taking junior, street-based positions, before moving up the ranks after they have demonstrated their ability by 'putting the work in'. In *Soul Circus* Allante Jones says 'time to go to work', meaning it is time to kill somebody (2003: 184). When his partner Jerome Long states, 'I'm ready to put work in' he is really saying is that he is prepared to commit his first murder (2003: 143). According to Pelecanos' ethical code work is an honourable enterprise: by their words and deeds Jones and Long corrupt this, taking a concept that should be life sustaining and applying it instead to the most destructive act possible, the killing of another human being. As well as being a morally debased source of 'work', gang life also presents men who have been deemed failures by society with the almost irresistible chance to possess the material trappings associated with success. Charles White cannot read, yet, thanks to drug dealing, he has 'a shoebox full of cash money...clothes, cars, bitches, *everything*' (2002: 119, italics Pelecanos'). Phil Wood, Oliver's second-in-command, is also illiterate, but drives a Mercedes. However, as Strange explains to Robert Gray in *Soul Circus*, none of these ill-gotten gains will last:

All that bling-bling you and your friends always talking about and looking up to, the whips and the platinum and the Cristal, you get in the life, it always goes away. Forever, you understand. (2003: 78)

Behaviour within the gangs is dominated by a strict performative code of conduct. Within this dangerous context the appearance of toughness is crucial, hence a man is meant to walk a certain way and not make prolonged eye contact unless he

intends to initiate violence. For example, when Charles White sees Lamar Williams standing by his car in *Hell to Pay* he knows that he should say something – street etiquette demands that he, the ‘hard man’, make his authority evident (2002: 275). These codes of behaviour are not restricted to criminals, and an understanding of them is essential for anyone who travels DC’s mean streets. By showing his football team how to walk with pride, Strange is, therefore, teaching them a physical language they will need in order to survive:

Strange walked as he had taught Lamar and the kids on his football team to walk when they were out on the street. Chin up, shoulders square, at a steady clip but not too fast. The effect was confidence and, in his case, authority. (2003: 38)

Terry Quinn, too, is proficient in this bodily discourse of the street. In *Right as Rain* he bumps shoulders with another man as he walks by. Although they see each other coming, neither moves out of the way: to do so would imply weakness (2001: 25). Richard Majors has written extensively on performance and black masculinity, coining the term ‘cool pose’ to describe how African American men use nonverbal behaviour as a means of self-expression. Majors defines ‘cool pose’ as a ‘coping mechanism’ that can be used for ‘survival, defense and social competence’ (Majors, 1989: 82). He writes:

To many Black males, demeanor, mannerisms, speech, gestures, clothing, stance, hairstyles, and walking styles are ways to act cool and show the dominant culture that they are strong, proud, and capable of survival despite their low status in society. (Majors et al: 1994: 247)

Although initially conceived of as a positive affirmation of self, Majors is also aware of the dangers of ‘cool pose’, warning that it can lead to emotional detachment, and with this, violence. A hallmark of Pelecanos’ deficit model masculinity is a brutality

that is almost breathtaking in its casualness. Irredeemably 'bad' men, for example Garfield Potter in *Hell to Pay* and Alvin Jones in *Hard Revolution*, kill without compunction, while in *Soul Circus* the deaths of four gang members in a single incident is declared a draw because the dead included two men each from rival mobs. The man who starts this conflagration, Jerome Long of the 600 Crew, had been out to prove himself. Yet extremes of either good or bad are rare in Pelecanos' novels. Rather than offer simplistic distinctions between right and wrong, Pelecanos strikes a more ambivalent note. As such 'good' men do 'bad' things and the criminal with a conscience is a regular character.¹⁶ Jerome Long is, therefore, typical of the kind of man who populates Pelecanos' fiction. A reluctant 'hard man', Long performs toughness in order to fit in. Following a conversation with his friend and fellow gang member, Allante Jones, during which they discuss their need to make a name for themselves on the street, Pelecanos gives silent voice to Long's reservations:

He [Long] felt he had to talk this way sometimes, so his friend and others would believe that he was hard. But he wasn't hard for real. He didn't want to kill no one, and he didn't want to die. (2003: 47)

Yet Long goes through with making his first killing, because this is what is expected of him. He shoots Jeremy Coates and is immediately violently ill, giving James Coates the opportunity to retaliate (2003:196-97).

'The Black Private Dick That's A Sex Machine To All The Chicks': Strange's Flight From The Domestic

Although Derek Strange is the character that most exemplifies Pelecanos' resistance masculinity he is far from perfect, a fact that is demonstrated most clearly in his relationships with women and the wider domestic sphere. In his construction of Strange, Pelecanos seems to be torn between creating a character who is solidly grounded in his community and one who can still assert his independence. As has already been demonstrated, Strange functions as a generalised paternal figure. However, he is shown to be more hesitant when it comes to embracing commitment and specific family-orientated responsibilities.

Janine Baker is initially introduced to the series as Strange's office manager, a highly capable woman with whom Strange also enjoys a casual sexual relationship. Strange is content with things as they are:

Friends warned him about shitting on the dining room table, but he was genuinely fond of the woman, and she did make his nature rise after all these years. He liked to play with her, too, let her know that he knew that she was still interested. It kept things lively in the deadening routine of their day-to-day. (2001: 7)

However, Pelecanos makes it clear that Janine is more committed to Strange than he is to her. Always ready with a Payday Bar in case Strange misses a meal, Janine functions as secretary, mother and lover for a man who is aware of her worth, but reluctant to settle down.¹⁷ It is significant that the extent of Janine's true feelings for Strange are revealed to him by Terry Quinn, a man who initially seems more comfortable with women than his thuggish exterior would suggest. Despite his fondness for Janine and her love for him, Strange makes regular attempts to see other women and is a frequent visitor to a Chinatown massage parlour.¹⁸ In fact, so frequent are his visits, that over the years the junkie who lives in the alleyway behind the parlour goes from being an anonymous vagrant to 'Sam' (2001: 257 and 2002: 224).

Strange's inability to be faithful to one woman is another character trait that he has inherited from his father. From an early age Strange is aware of Darius' extramarital relationship with Ella Lockheart. He does not excuse the liaison, but neither does he hold it against his father. Equally, he does not offer his father's indiscretions as justification for his own. Strange's behaviour is instead presented as emerging from a belief that promiscuity can somehow hold back the ageing process. Sex is his way of coping with the idea of his own mortality and, in this respect, his character typifies the view that masculinity can be reified by a demonstration of potency. As he leaves his mother's nursing home in *Right as Rain*, Strange's mind immediately turns to women:

Old age, sickness, loss, and pain...all of the suffering that was inevitable, you could deny its existence, for a little while, anyway, when you were making love. Yeah, when you were lying with a woman, coming deep inside that sucking warmth, you could deny even death. (2001: 103)

In *Hell to Pay* Derek talks to Terry about his fears:

Every time I start thinkin' on my age, or that I'm bound to die, I start thinking about getting some strange. Makes me want to run away from Janine and Lionel and any kind of responsibility. It's always been like that with me. Like having a different woman's gonna put off death, if only for a little while. (2002: 219)

Black masculinity has frequently been characterised as excessively sexual. To quote bell hooks, 'black men are depicted in patriarchal pornographic imagination as embodying raw sex' (hooks, 2004: 76). Strange's libidinous nature does seem to fit this stereotype and perhaps his uncontrollable sexuality could be read as a rare example of Pelecanos slipping into caricature, or of failing to re-imagine a black masculinity that is not predicated upon some degree of sexual licentiousness. Black male hyper-sexuality has been theorised as a response to the fact that black men are denied the expression of their masculinity by a racist society. Lacking the opportunity

to display their masculinity in the homosocial context, black men instead turn to sex as a means of demonstrating their potency. To quote Benjamin P. Bowser:

One way for men to compensate for this clearly unacceptable social identity as a failure and a 'bitch' is to exaggerate all that is left. And that is sex. In sex a man has not been replaced, and he cannot be simply left out. He has to be included, and what is left of his manhood demands that he control this last frontier. (Bowser: 1994, 25.)

However, this explanation does not seem to ring true of Derek Strange. As a self-employed businessman who also owns his own home Strange is an obvious success by anyone's standards. Further validation of his masculinity would seem to be unnecessary. Whatever the motivation behind Strange's sexual urges, his 'flight from commitment', to use the subtitle of Barbara Ehrenreich's *The Hearts of Men* (1983), is a sustained one and it is only an ultimatum from Janine at the end of *Hell to Pay* that convinces Strange to rein himself in. By *Soul Circus* he and Janine are married and happily living together. Derek, however, retains both an eye for other women, he is, after all 'just a man',¹⁹ and his own separate home (which he uses for business and working out). Pelecanos, therefore, seems unable to present the lure of the domestic as being enough for 'real' men and it would be interesting to see whether or not he chooses to make Strange remain faithful, should he decide to return to the character.

While Derek is able to function as a mentor to the boys of the Petworth Panthers with relative ease, his actual attempts at assuming paternal responsibilities initially meet with less success. Indeed, the fact that Janine is the mother of a son is one of the main reasons why Strange is reluctant to commit to her:

Janine had a son, Lionel, from a previous marriage, and this scared him. Hell, everything about commitment scared him, but being a father to a young man in this world, it scared him more than anything else. (2001: 6)

To Strange the role of father is sacrosanct. At no point in the texts does he consider having a child of his own, which is interesting when considered alongside his relationship to Granville Oliver. In *Hard Revolution* Strange is complicit in the death of Oliver's biological father, Alvin Jones, the man who murdered his own brother, Dennis. Oliver, who at this point in the narrative is a baby, is therefore left to grow up without a guiding paternal figure and Strange cannot help but believe that it is this absence that makes Oliver the monster he is:

I took your father out, thirty-some years ago...it was me who put you behind the eight-ball, like all these other kids out here, got no fathers to teach them by example, right from wrong. How to be tough without being violent, how to walk with your head up and your shoulders square, how to love one woman and be there for your children and make it work. Because it was me who put you on the road that took you where you are today. (2003: 347-48)

By removing Oliver's father Strange casts himself as the dominant male influence in his life and cannot help but feel culpable for the man he becomes. Oliver is, therefore, characterised as something of a bastard son to Strange, a relationship that is further emphasised by the parallels between the two men mentioned above. Given this, Strange's confession to Lionel that 'I never did have the kind of courage it takes to be a father to a boy for real' (2001: 213) is unsurprising. However, the way in which Strange mythologizes the role of the father is undercut by the texts themselves. Had he lived, Alvin Jones, a career criminal who describes fatherhood as 'women with babies trying to bust on my groove' (2004: 359), would not have provided much of a role model for his son. Good or bad fathers of 'good' or 'bad' characters are largely absent from the novels. Pelecanos chooses not to reveal anything about Quinn's relationship with his father, while he is keen to stress that most of the criminals who appear in the texts have grown up without any kind of paternal presence. Garfield Potter, Charles White, Allante Jones and Jerome Long all lack

fathers. Even Derek's father is not depicted in unambiguous terms. While Darius Strange does an excellent job of raising Derek, he is not so successful with Dennis, and also possesses obvious flaws in the form of his long-term adultery. Derek's faith in the role of the father is, therefore, revealed more as wishful thinking; indicative of Pelecanos' social vision rather than textual 'reality'.

While Strange is clearly fond of Lionel, a fondness that is reciprocated, negotiating his role in Lionel's life is depicted as a struggle. Strange is not Lionel's father, as Lionel reminds him in both *Right as Rain* (2001: 213) and *Hell to Pay* (2001: 178). As such Strange has to strike a balance between showing he cares and overstepping his authority. This is achieved with difficulty, but Strange does manage to articulate his feelings. In *Right as Rain* he tells Lionel:

...there's sometimes when I look at you, when you're making one of your jokes at the dining room table, or when I see you dressed up, lookin' all handsome and ready to go out and meet a girl, and I get a sense of pride...There's sometimes when I *look* at you, Lionel, and I get the kind of feeling that I know a father must have for his own. (2001: 213, italics Pelecanos')

By *Soul Circus* the relationship between Lionel and Strange has developed into one of comfortable intimacy: 'Mr Derek' has now become 'pop'. Although Strange is still intimidated by his new responsibilities he finds contentment being with Janine and Lionel in the home they share: 'These were the people he loved, and this was home' (2003: 101). Strange's reluctance to commit to both Janine and Lionel thus seems to suggest the ongoing fears of men in relation to the responsibilities of fatherhood: Pelecanos, like many American writers before him, struggles to reconcile masculinity and the domestic, and presents Strange as privileging the public sphere over the private. To quote bell hooks, '[a]gain and again patriarchal masculinity tells men that what they do outside the home is more important than what they do inside the home'

(hooks, 2004: 111). As already mentioned, Strange is an enthusiastic supporter of high-visibility 'community parenting', which, as well as doing genuine good, is shown to boost his reputation and ego. Real fatherhood is obviously a much more complex affair and although Strange pays strenuous lip service to the idea that fatherhood is a man's greatest achievement and biggest test, the fact that he does not actually become a biological parent points to certain inconsistencies in his worldview. Resolving these textual contradictions seems to be beyond the scope of Pelecanos, who struggles both with his representation of female characters and also to conceive of relationships between men and women that move beyond traditional patriarchal parameters. As has already been seen, Pelecanos' characterisation of Janine restricts her to an unimaginatively domestic role; while his problems with the construction of Terry Quinn's partner, Sue, will be addressed in the next section.²⁰

Terry Quinn and the Unbearable Whiteness of Being

Given that Pelecanos' focus is very much on black masculinity in the Derek Strange novels, it is easy to almost completely overlook his depiction of white masculinity. The invisibility of 'white' as a racial category has been the subject of studies by both Richard Dyer and Sally Robinson. In much the same way as specific attention to masculinity as a category of identity has helped to question the processes through which maleness is constructed and consolidated, thereby destabilising its normativity, similar attention is now being paid to whiteness. Dyer writes:

As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people. (Dyer, 1997: 1)

Dyer sees looking at whiteness as an urgent critical project, the aim of which is to 'dislodge it from its centrality and authority' (1997: 10). In theory, Robinson is in complete agreement with Dyer. However, she also injects a note of scepticism, cautioning that white hegemonic masculinity, ever alert to an opportunity to reinsert itself back into the spotlight, is now appropriating the language of victimhood and critical neglect. White males are thus positioning themselves as 'victims of victims' (Robinson, 2000: 7): with all the intellectual fuss over the identity politics of women, homosexuals and ethnic minorities, everyone has forgotten about white men.²¹ According to Robinson's thesis:

...what calls itself the normative in American culture has vested interests in *both* invisibility and visibility. Invisibility is a privilege enjoyed by social groups who do not, thus, attract modes of surveillance and discipline; but it can also be felt as a burden in a culture that appears to organize itself around the visibility of differences and the symbolic currency of identity politics. (Robinson, 2000: 3, italics Robinson's)

It seems unlikely that anyone could read Pelecanos' work and come to the conclusion that white masculinity is in more trouble than black. However, although less obviously imperilled than the men who fit Pelecanos' deficit model, there is something fundamentally unstable about Terry Quinn's white masculinity, and it is noticeable that, unlike black masculinity, which appears in both a positive and a negative form, white masculinity in the texts is exemplified only by the troubled Quinn. A similarly damaged and self-destructive white masculinity is to be found in many of Pelecanos' other novels, most obviously in the characters of Dmitri Karras and Nick Stefanos, both of whom are addicts. While it is commendable that Pelecanos manages to sidestep the dichotomisation of black masculinity as troubled, while white masculinity is secure, it is intriguing that he identifies white male subjectivity solely as a site of crisis. The characterisation of Terry Quinn as a man whose suffering is

largely self-inflicted forms a significant parallel between the work of Pelecanos and that of Henning Mankell and Ian Rankin. As will be demonstrated later in the thesis, all three writers position a masochistic sensibility at the heart of contemporary white masculinity.

An important point of contrast between Strange and Quinn is their attitude to physical threats to their masculine autonomy. Strange will use violence if necessary – he is not above using brute force to intimidate, as he does with Ed Diggs in *Hell to Pay*; he will kill if he has to, as demonstrated with Adonis Delgado in *Right as Rain*, and he can be cruel to those whom he thinks deserve it (as is illustrated when he almost severs Horace McKinley's nipple at the conclusion of *Soul Circus*). However, while Strange is clearly a 'tough guy', aggression does not play a part in validating his male identity. Strange does not believe he has anything to prove in the homosocial sphere and will walk away from a fight without feeling as if he has compromised himself. Strange's attitude to the potential conflicts that arise as part of his job is a realistic one:

You couldn't answer each slight, or return each hard look with an equally hard look, because moments like this went down out here every day. It would just be too tiring. You'd end up in a constant battle, with no time to breathe, just live. (2002: 52)

To Strange, being disrespected is simply part of his job (see 2003: 289-90). Quinn, on the other hand, is always so eager for confrontation that he is able to fool Strange into believing that he is ready to pick a fight with a blind man for staring at him (2003: 190). For Quinn, masculinity is 'a "homosocial" experience: performed for, and judged by, other men' (Kimmel, 2008: 47). Quinn's representation stresses that he is not man enough unless other men respect him, and he is determined to achieve this respect regardless of the consequences. For Terry, therefore, it is dishonourable to

walk away from a fight; as he tells Strange, '[t]ake a beating if you have to, but a beating's never as bad as the feeling of shame you get when you back off' (2001: 74).

Michael Kaufman has described masculinity as:

...terrifyingly fragile because it does not really exist in the sense we are led to think it exists; that is, as a biological reality – something real that we have inside ourselves. (Kaufman, 1989: 16)

These words seem to reflect the construction of Quinn's masculinity. He experiences it as inherently provisional, so it needs to be constantly proved. When Quinn thinks he has been disrespected his face flushes and a vein on his forehead throbs: the mental image conveyed by Pelecanos is one of a man on the verge of explosion. It is Quinn's volatility and obsessive need to vanquish any perceived threats to his personal autonomy that lead to his death.²² While searching for another teen runaway in *Soul Circus* Quinn encounters a group of young black men who seem to hold vital information, but who will not talk. Eventually, frustrated by their persistent refusal to take him seriously as a man, Quinn pulls a gun on one of them. This achieves the desired result: the boy talks. But, as has already been mentioned above, Quinn's victory is brief and he is shot by the same gang while driving away from the scene (2003: 152 and 339ff).

Pelecanos' work seems to confirm that men are, in Philip Hodson's words, 'the death sex' (cited by Edley and Wetherell, 1995: 46). In *Hard Revolution*, Alvin Jones feels his blood tick when he thinks about committing murder (2004: 104 and 201). The same ticking is experienced by Quinn in *Hell to Pay* when he speaks to Worldwide Wilson (2002: 112), and also appears in another form as 'The Beat' in Pelecanos' first novel, *Shoedog*. It is as if men are in possession of their own perverted form of the (supposed) female biological clock, one that urges them on to

destruction, not creation. All men in Pelecanos' fiction have the potential for violence. Even if, like Allante Jones, they are the kind of reluctant 'hard men' described above, the ability to perform violence as and when necessary is posited as something crucial to their identity.

Masculinity is therefore presented in Pelecanos' texts as having a strong performative dimension, and the work of Judith Butler can usefully be applied to this aspect of his fiction. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler argues:

There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results. (Butler, 1990: 33)

Gender is not, thus, a stable identity but is instead an act of 'doing', a cultural production:

...*gender* is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. (Butler, 1990: 33, italics Butler's)

According to Butler, there is nothing voluntary about this process: gender is a forced set of repetitions, not something that can be picked and chosen at will. Of the two protagonists in Pelecanos' fiction, it is Terry who seems to have the most trouble with his performance of masculinity; whereas performing protects and enables Derek, it seems to undermine Quinn. By over-performing 'tough guy' masculinity Terry merely draws attention to the fact that he is performing, destabilising himself and – in a curious inversion of Butler's drag paradigm – exposing the constructed nature of that which he is attempting to pass off as natural. This is underpinned by Quinn's

tendency to pretend he is a character in a Western film. His regular night-time walk through his neighbourhood takes Quinn to an old train station, where he is fond of closing his eyes and imagining that he is in one of the films he adores (see 2001: 27 and 2002: 105). When Terry discovers that his actions have contributed to the murder of Olivia Elliot in *Soul Circus* his immediate reaction is to go to the train tracks. Once there he closes his eyes:

Now he was away from his world. Enemies and allies were easily distinguished by hats of black and white. Honor and redemption were real, not conceptual. Justice was uncomplicated by the gray of politics and money, and, if need be, achieved at the point of a gun. Quinn knew he was out of step. He knew that his outlook was dangerous, essentially that of a boy. And that it would catch up to him in the end. (2003: 214)²³

Quinn may be aware that his mindset is dangerously old-fashioned, but he is reluctant to leave it aside. Ultimately, Quinn is unable to compromise between the mythological morality that he would like to live by and the actual way in which the world works, and this failing contributes to his death.²⁴

Quinn is, thus, presented as being unable to satisfactorily validate his masculinity in a homosocial context. A perfunctory reading of the novels seems to indicate that he has more success at proving his masculinity via his relationships with women. However, once again, Pelecanos here seems to be setting his white protagonist up for a fall. Terry is initially presented as finding intimacy with women to be a less complex affair than Derek makes it. During the series he has two relationships: the first, a short-lived fling with a waitress called Juana, and the second a serious, long-term affair with Sue Tracy, a fellow investigator. For a man who picks fights as if it were a recreational activity, Quinn is surprisingly willing to adopt a passive role when it comes to women. With both women it is they who initiate sex, not Terry. In *Right as Rain*, Juana tucks Terry's hair behind his ear, a gesture that

more usually works the other way round, while Terry can only tremble at her beauty (2001: 109). Sue takes a similar, dominant approach in *Hell to Pay*. After inviting herself into Terry's home she proceeds to tell him that she will be staying the night. Terry can only marvel at her audacity, 'Christ, you got some balls on you', before placing himself in her hands: 'You're in charge' he tells her (2002: 158). Sue further compromises Terry's masculine authority by taking an interest in his Chevelle. Predictably enough, Sue likes to drive fast cars; but she does surprise Terry by revealing a working knowledge of that bastion of masculine technical know-how, the car engine. After looking over his Chevelle Sue asks, '[w]hat's under the hood, a 396?' To which Quinn replies, 'now you're making me nervous' (2002: 175). While Terry is happy to let Sue take the lead in their relationship in the private sphere, he is less pleased when Sue dominates in public. In *Hell to Pay* the two are looking for a young runaway, Jennifer Marshall, who is working as a prostitute for the pimp Worldwide Wilson. When their plan to extricate the girl from Wilson's control goes badly wrong, leaving Terry alone and vulnerable, Sue saves him. Bursting into the room where Terry and Wilson are about to fight, Sue, carrying her own unregistered firearm, holds Wilson back while Terry and Jennifer escape (2002: 148ff). Watching Sue with lascivious interest Wilson comments:

Damn, baby. You are like...you are like a *man*, you know it?...You got a lot more man to you than this itty-bitty motherfucker right here, I can tell you that. (2002: 149, italics Pelecanos')

Terry, who has already been told by Wilson that he has a 'girl's name', is thus forced to endure a further abrogation of his masculine identity by being relegated to a passive, 'feminised' position. The fact that Wilson places Sue in the role of cowboy, referring to her as the 'cavalry' and saying that she will 'hold the Indians back while

the women and children leave the fort' only serves to compound the humiliation of the Western-loving Quinn (2002: 149). 'Punked', to use the vernacular of the street, by Wilson and rescued by his girlfriend, the only way Terry can restore his pride is by taking Wilson on alone. At the end of the novel the two fight and Terry is victorious.²⁵

It is worth having a closer look at how Pelecanos constructs Sue's character and how her representation impacts upon that of Quinn. With her ability to take care of herself, and others, and her sexual aggressiveness, not to mention her name with its evocation of Dick Tracy, Sue is a heavily masculinised character. Her masculinity, which is not 'female masculinity' in the sense that Judith Halberstam employs the term, but is, rather, tough-guy, phallic masculinity transposed onto a female body, is further emphasised by her proficiency with the hard-boiled wise-crack.²⁶ As Quinn admires her body when they have sex for the first time, Sue jokes that her breasts are useful for holding her bra up (2002: 162). As Dennis Porter has commented on the wise-crack, '[t]he style in this case makes the man' (1981: 166).²⁷ Well, in this case, the style is all Sue's. Although Sue is described by Worldwide Wilson as 'all woman' (2002: 150), her physique is usually noted by Quinn for its muscularity (see 2002: 162 and 2003: 93-94). Quinn also, strangely, admires the shape of Sue's neck and jaw (2002: 134). As well as praising non-conventionally 'feminine' body parts and muscle tone, Quinn approves of Sue's cop mentality:

Tracy has been a cop, too, just like him. With her, he didn't have to pretend that he didn't care about the action, that he didn't crave it all the time. There wouldn't be any of that bullshit fronting, the mask he'd felt he had to wear when he was with other women. In that way, they were good for each other. She took him for who he was. (2002: 163)

A cop mentality is synonymous with a masculine one. Quinn may have been joking when he tells Sue that she seems like 'an okay guy' to him (2002: 67), but to all

intents and purposes, Sue's identity is predominantly configured as masculine. The work of Luce Irigaray offers an insight into Pelecanos' problems with female subjectivity. In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1984), Irigaray states that the male subject's love of the other is really a love of the same:

The love of the sameness among men often means a love within sameness, which cannot posit itself as such without the maternal-natural-material. It represents the love of production by assimilation and mediation of the female or females. (Irigaray, 1984: 100)

Tasmin Lorraine unpacks Irigaray's thinking, commenting:

Irigaray suggests that our current norm for subjectivity operates according to a specular logic: the contemporary masculine subject reflects himself onto a feminine other in order to affirm himself repeatedly as a self-identical and self-sufficient subject [...] The masculine subject denies the feminine other's role in providing the ongoing and literally material support required to maintain the illusion of a self-contained and repeatable identity and reduces her to the other of a self-same subject. This entails denying the feminine other subjectivity in her own right. (Lorraine, 1999: 23)

Of course, if Sue is to be read as a narcissistic projection of Quinn's ideal masculine self then this problematises Quinn's relationship with her, rendering it as much more homosocial than it first seemed. Instead, therefore, of serving as an exemplar of the kind of man who is comfortable taking a more passive position in a relationship with a woman, Quinn appears instead like a man who is perhaps in denial about his sexuality.

Conclusion

In *Born in a Mighty Bad Land* (2003) Jerry Bryant examines the archetype of the 'badman' in African-American folklore, tracing its evolution from slavery to the present day. He subdivides the archetype into two basic forms: the badman who breaks laws and who commits crimes indiscriminately against both black and whites and the 'moral hard man', a more complex figure who is both tough and frightening, yet who functions as a positive example for his community.²⁸ Bryant, thus, demonstrates that an element of 'bad' need not necessarily be detrimental and this offers a useful insight into the kind of heroism displayed by Derek Strange. In Pelecanos' world, where two opposed versions of masculine identity come into violent conflict, it is fitting that his hero should be a man characterised by an element of moral ambiguity. While clearly on the side of the 'good', Strange is still able to be a 'badman' if so required. On his way to Ida's Department Store in *Hard Revolution*, the young Strange passes a bar where 'Stagger Lee' is playing on the jukebox (2004: 8). According to Bryant 'Staggerlee' is 'the star of the badmen', a man who received a magic hat from the devil and then killed Billy Lyons for touching it (Bryant: 2003: 13-14). By having this music play in the background to an event that shapes the course of Strange's life Pelecanos is perhaps subtly suggesting what might have been if Mr Fean had not caught Derek. Maybe instead of becoming a 'moral hard man' Strange could have been a 'badman', terrorising his community instead of contributing to it.

In a 2003 interview George Pelecanos drew attention to what he described as the heroism of ordinary people, people who are 'valiantly trying to keep it together' (Levy, 2003: 23). This is the kind of heroism he bestows upon Derek Strange, a man who epitomizes resistance masculinity by just trying 'to keep it together'. With obvious failings Strange is not an idealised figure, but he is a man who works hard

and who gives back to the community he lives in. From Pelecanos' perspective the responsibility of men towards their society is matched by society's responsibility to them. While he does not state that a change in the socio-economic conditions facing much of DC's poorer communities would automatically end all crime – Pelecanos is no delusional social romantic – he does argue, persuasively, that unless men are given legitimate opportunities to be men, via employment, the situation in America's capital will continue to spiral out of control. In this respect Pelecanos seems to be in agreement with Susan Faludi. In *Stiffed* (1999), Faludi states:

Where we once lived in a society in which men in particular participated by being useful in public life, we are now surrounded by a culture that encourages people to play almost no functional public roles, only decorative or consumer ones. The old model of masculinity showed men how to be part of a larger social system; it gave them a context and it promised them that their social contributions were the price of admission to the realm of adult manhood. (Faludi, 1999: 34-35)

Pelecanos argues strongly for a revival of this 'old model of masculinity', wherein men play a key part in their communities. Although Pelecanos' books in many ways represent a liberal social agenda, his depiction of gendered identity is a fundamentally conservative one, yearning, as it does, for a time long since gone, when men were men and a job was for life. One wonders, however, about the veracity behind Pelecanos' nostalgia. According to Judith Kegan Gardiner, an unproblematic, crisis-free masculinity (or any gendered identity, for that matter) has never existed:

Masculinity is a nostalgic formulation, always missing, lost, or about to be lost, its ideal form located in a past that advances with each generation in order to recede just beyond its grasp. Its myth is that effacing new forms can restore a natural, original male grounding. (Gardiner, 2002: 10)

Within the framework of the crime fiction genre, however, Pelecanos seems fundamentally incapable of escaping from a concept of masculinity that is 'a nostalgic

formulation'. This nostalgic, and indeed fundamentally conservative, representation of gendered identity may have its roots in Pelecanos' own ethnic background. As an American of Greek extraction it is perhaps unsurprising that traditional family life, hinging upon a clear-cut division between the sexes, is emphasised in his texts. Pelecanos' work posits the past as a solution to present difficulties – it remains to be seen whether Rankin and, especially, Mankell, who hails from the more socially progressive climes of Northern Europe, are equally retrogressive in their novels. In Pelecanos' texts modern society emasculates men and the only way to resist this is to perform tough-guy, phallic masculinity. Pelecanos' answer to the 'crisis' of masculinity, therefore, seems to be more masculinity.

Notes

The quotation that prefaces 'Resistance Masculinity' is taken from *Hard Revolution* (2004: 210).

The quotation that prefaces 'Deficit Model Masculinity' is taken from *Hard Revolution* (2004: 302).

The quotation that prefaces 'Strange's Flight from the Domestic' is paraphrased from the song 'Theme from Shaft' by Isaac Hayes (1971)

¹ It is worth noting that the adult Martini achieves respect for uniform the hard way, via a tour of duty in Vietnam. Ultimately he aligns himself with the forces of law and order when he refuses to use violence against the police during the botched bank robbery that takes place near the end of the novel. Although Martini lets himself be coerced into participating in the robbery as an accomplice, he will not turn on the police, men 'who served like he'd served' (2004: 312). The theme of war making men is central to Pelecanos' most recent novel, *The Turnaround* (2008), in which he endorses military service as a means of attaining and proving masculinity, while also cementing life-long bonds with brother officers.

² Antony Easthope has written extensively of the centrality of banter to male friendships, stating:

Outwardly banter is aggressive, a form in which the masculine ego asserts itself. Inwardly, however, banter depends on a close, intimate and personal understanding of the person who is the butt of the attack. It thus works as a way of affirming the bond of love between men while appearing to deny it. (Easthope, 1986: 88)

³ The terms resistance and deficit model masculinity are developed from the work of Vera S. Paster and Jacob Gordon and their implications will be discussed below.

⁴ Both quotations are taken from Jordan (2002). That there is substance to Pelecanos' claim to be something of a social historian is backed-up by the fact that one of Britain's leading criminologists, Professor Jock Young, has cited Pelecanos' texts in his work on male ethnicity and social relationships in prisons. See, for example, *Theoretical Criminology*, 7.3 (2003), 407.

⁵ For example when Terry tells his girlfriend, Juana, about meeting Derek, in *Right as Rain*, he describes him as 'old' three times in just two pages (2001: 107ff). In the same book, Derek makes the un-heroic assertion that 'my knees and this cold aren't the best of friends' (2001: 18). However, it is worth noting that when he is referred to as 'old man' by both Sherman Coles and Adonis Delgado he demonstrates his physical superiority by violently subduing the former before taking him into custody and killing the latter in hand to hand combat. (2001: 91ff and 314ff).

⁶ For a more detailed analysis of the work of both Chester Himes and Walter Mosley see Gosselin (1999), Jablon (1997) and Pepper (2000 and 2003).

⁷ Dennis is killed by Alvin Jones after he decides that he cannot go through with a robbery the two had planned and instead takes steps to ensure that Jones will not be able to do it alone. Although a drug addict and an alcoholic, Dennis Strange is not depicted as a violent man and does not want to be drawn further into the criminal world of Jones and his ilk. Relieved by the choice he has made, and determined to make a fresh start, Dennis is executed by Jones before he has a chance to make good on his promises of change. Significantly, as Jones cuts his throat, Dennis' last thought is of his father (2004: 233). It is crucial to note that while Pelecanos emphasises the importance of providing one's offspring with stability, security and positive role models, he does not suggest that producing a child who will eventually function as an upstanding member of the community is as straightforward as this. After all Derek and Dennis Strange grow up in the same household, yet one becomes a police officer and the other a drug dealer.

⁸ In his memoir, *Dreams From My Father* (1995), Barack Obama writes of the importance of sport for young boys in building a healthy and stable sense of black identity. Although Obama played basketball rather than football, his words echo what Pelecanos depicts Strange as trying to achieve with the Petworth Panthers:

I was living out a caricature of black male adolescence; itself a caricature of swaggering American manhood. Yet at a time when boys aren't supposed to want to follow in their father's tired footsteps, when the imperatives of harvest or work in the factory aren't supposed to dictate activity, so that how we live is bought off the rack or found in magazines, the principal difference between me and most of the man-boys around me – the surfers, the football players, the would-be rock-and-roll guitarists – resided in the limited number of options at my disposal. Each of us chose a costume, armor against uncertainty. At least on the basketball court I could find a community of sorts, with an inner life all its own. (Obama: 1995, 79-80)

⁹ Strange's success is even more impressive and therefore more valuable as a positive example when the odds against black entrepreneurs are considered. In his essay 'The Black Male: Searching Beyond Stereotypes' (1994), Manning Marable states that 90% of black businesses in America go bankrupt within thirty-six months, and that 80% of all black men who own their own firms must take second jobs in order to make ends meet (Marable, 1994: 75).

¹⁰ This rhetoric of black men as an 'endangered species' is something that bell hooks takes issue with in her book *We Real Cool* (2004). hooks argues that such language, more usually associated with animals, only serves to dehumanise black men (2004: 134).

¹¹ Despite this statement, Pelecanos has recently written a novel featuring a serial killer: *The Night Gardener* (2006) is the story of three police officers coming together to investigate the 'Palindrome Murders'.

¹² hooks goes on to state:

Patriarchal masculinity, which says that if a man is not a worker he is nothing, assaults the self-esteem of any man who absorbs this thinking. Often black males reject this way of thinking about work. This rejection is a positive gesture, but they often do not replace this rejection of the patriarchal norm with a constructive alternative. (2004: 30)

However, she is vague as to what form exactly this 'constructive alternative' might take.

¹³ Information broadcast on *Newsnight*, BBC 2, 09/09/05.

¹⁴ Despite the fact that African-Americans constitute fewer than 12.9% of the total US population, black men make up 40% of the inmates on death row. Statistics taken from 'CIA - The World Factbook - USA', 17/05/05, <<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/us.html#People>>, accessed 22/05/05, and Mauer, 1994: 82.

¹⁵ The idea of the criminal as counter-cultural hero is nothing new. In *Adventure, Mystery and Romance*, John G. Cawelti writes of the enduring appeal of the 'romantic image of the criminal' (1976: 57), which he traces from Robin Hood to Billy the Kid. Ernest Mandel has also commented:

The modern detective story stems from popular literature about 'good bandits': [...] But there has been a dialectical somersault. Yesterday's bandit hero has become today's villain, and yesterday's villainous representative of authority today's hero. (Mandel, 1984: 1)

¹⁶ Each of the four Strange novels features 'bad' men who have second thoughts about their actions. In *Right as Rain*, corrupt cop Eugene Franklin assists his ex-partner Terry Quinn in the novel's shoot out finale. Charles White in *Hell to Pay* is wracked with guilt over the murder of Joe Wilder; and in *Soul Circus* Mike Montgomery defies his boss, Horace McKinley, by refusing to harm Devra Stokes' young son. The role of criminal with a conscience in *Hard Revolution* is played by Strange's own brother, Dennis.

¹⁷ In addition to her office duties, Janine frequently looks after Strange's dog, Greco, and often prepares extra food just in case Strange feels the need for a home-cooked meal. An episode from *Hell to Pay* effectively illustrates the dynamics of their relationship. On page seventy, when Janine asks Strange if she will see him later that night he replies, walking away, 'I'll let you know'. As with much of their interaction in the first two novels Janine makes the invitation and Strange leaves her hanging.

¹⁸ Strange often thinks about making phone calls to other women (for example see 2001: 22, 110 and 240), however, he either forgets or when he does call they are not in. Perhaps Pelecanos is wary of compromising his hero in the eyes of his readers. Paying a stranger for manual relief, as Strange does on several occasions throughout the series (see 2001: 257ff and 2002: 14, 86ff and 224) is one thing. Yet actually dating other women behind Janine's back may be a step too far.

¹⁹ Derek's wandering eye is referred to on page 136, from where the quotation is taken, and then again on page 189.

²⁰ Pelecanos' other fiction also reveals his limitations in this regard. In *The Turnaround*, for example, women only feature as mothers, potential sexual conquests or waitresses.

²¹ In *Taking It Like A Man: White Masculinity, Masochism and Contemporary American Culture* (1998), David Savran, too, analyses the attempts made by white men to position themselves as 'the new persecuted minority', referring, ominously, to '...the ascendancy of a new and powerful figure in U.S. culture: the white male as victim' (Savran, 1998: 3 and 4).

²² Why Quinn should be so completely lacking in self-control is not made clear by Pelecanos. In a neat reversal of the usual buddy dynamic, it is Strange who is given the complex characterisation, while Quinn, the white man, takes on the role of sidekick. Quinn is a defensive character and does seem to feel, in *Right as Rain*, as though he has been victimised for his part in Chris Wilson's death (he does, however, eventually come to terms with his own culpability for Chris' murder). Still, the existence of his short fuse predates Wilson's shooting so this cannot be offered as an explanation for his behaviour.

²³ Quinn's overly simplistic worldview is juxtaposed against Derek's more mature perspective. In *Hard Revolution*, Derek takes a girlfriend to see *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* and is dismayed by her comment 'I like it better when you can tell who the good guy is and who the bad guy is' (2004: 122). The young Derek is, therefore, presented as being already well aware that life is not as black and white as Quinn might like.

²⁴ Pelecanos offers a further example of Quinn's tendency to live in a world of cinematic fantasy in *Right as Rain*. Before travelling to the Boones' country home for the novel's showdown scene, Quinn prepares himself by standing in front of a full-length mirror and practising the freeing of his gun from its holster (2001: 299). The episode is reminiscent of Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976) and its famous 'You talkin' to me?' scene, in which the film's protagonist, Travis Bickle, talks to an imagined adversary in the mirror. The parallel between Quinn and one of modern cinema's most unstable white men is further emphasised when Worldwide Wilson calls Terry "Theresa Bickle" in *Hell to Pay* (2002: 333)

²⁵ Another 'punking' incident occurs in *Right as Rain*, when Terry is called a bitch by Richard Coles. Unable to endure the sound of another man's laughter at his expense, Terry catches Coles off guard in a toilet and pulverises him with a steel meat-tenderising mallet (2001: 91ff).

²⁶ Whereas Pelecanos presents Sue as little more than a man in drag, Halberstam argues that women, too, possess masculinity as part of their identity. For a more detailed consideration of Halberstam's thesis see Chapter I.

²⁷ As Porter also notes, the hard-boiled model is, invariably, a masculine one:

To be hard-boiled and to have retained a heroic integrity was to be a man. The culture had generated no precedent for a tough-talking, worldly-wise woman, capable of defending herself in the roughest company, who also possessed the indispensable heroic qualities of physical attractiveness and virtue. (Porter, 1981: 183)

²⁸ The term 'moral hard man' is actually Lawrence Levine's and is cited by Bryant on page three. As an example of a 'moral hard man' Bryant offers Muhammad Ali.

Chapter III

'I Ask Myself Every Day What My Life Is Doing To Me': Kurt Wallander and the Ambivalent Experience of the Contemporary Detective Hero

Amid a multitude of mutually compounding economic, political, and social crises, amid the repeated shattering of everyday taken-for-granted, amid the repeated invalidation of meaning-memories, it could not be otherwise that identity crises have come to abound in Sweden. It could not be otherwise that women and men, individually and collectively, have repeatedly driven to wonder: What in the world is going on here? Where in the world am I, are we? Who in the world am I, are we? (Pred, 2000: 16-17)

This chapter examines the crime fiction of the Swedish writer Henning Mankell. It is divided into two parts – the first places Mankell in context against the backdrop of contemporary European crime writing and also explores issues around translation theory and 'European' masculinity, while the second part is devoted to a specific analysis of Mankell's texts.

Part One: Crime in Translation

The last decade has witnessed a boom in sales of crime fiction in translation, the appetite of British readers for which seems to defy the usual Anglo apathy towards translated literature. According to figures cited by the journal *Crime Time* only 3% of UK reading matter is in translation, compared with 40% percent in Holland and Spain and 14% in both France and Germany (Hopkinson, 2004: 37). While foreign literature as a whole does not, therefore, seem to find a receptive audience in Britain, crime fiction in translation has, in recent years, carved out a successful niche for itself,

spearheaded by independent publishers such as The Harvill Press. Although now part of the Random House conglomerate (but still continuing as the Harvill Secker imprint), The Harvill Press provided the impetus for the current wave of crime in translation when, in 2000, it published *Sidetracked* by Henning Mankell. Already a huge commercial success in his homeland and across Europe, Mankell quickly established a sizable cult following. To date there have been ten Kurt Wallander novels: the eight in the Wallander series itself; a short story collection *The Pyramid* (1999) and *Before the Frost* (2002), which takes Linda Wallander as its central character but still includes her father in a prominent role. Together, these books have sold just under one million copies in the UK, with worldwide sales – Mankell's work has been translated into some thirty-five languages – standing somewhere in the region of twenty-five million (Nestingen, 2008: 224). It is testament to Mankell's popularity in Britain that the BBC recently screened an adaptation of three of the novels, with Kenneth Branagh taking the lead role.

Throughout the history of Anglo-American crime fiction, novels written in English but set in exotic locales or featuring idiosyncratic, foreign detectives have been consistently popular. One thinks of Edgar Allen Poe's French private detective Auguste Dupin, or of Hercule Poirot, Agatha Christie's Belgian sleuth. More recently, writers such as Nicolas Freeling, H.R.F. Keating, Michael Dibdin, Peter May, Donna Leon and Tom Rob Smith have all published novels set, respectively, in the Netherlands, India, Italy, China, Italy again and Russia. Of course, Mankell is not the first foreign author of crime fiction to gain a foothold in the British market. His most famous precursor is arguably the Belgian writer Georges Simenon, whose French serial detective, Commissaire Maigret, featured in seventy-five novels. Other writers whose popularity preceded the current mania for translated crime fiction include

Janwillem van der Wetering, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, and the Swedish couple Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö, whose influence on Mankell will be discussed later. Still, it took the unexpected popularity of Mankell and his Danish contemporary Peter Høeg, the author of the international bestseller *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow* (1992), to open the floodgates to European exponents of the genre. At present, the British market for translated crime fiction is dominated by writers from Northern Europe. Names such as Karin Alvtegen, Karin Fossum, Camilla Läckberg, Stieg Larsson, Eva-Marie Liffner, Liza Marklund, Håkan Nesser, Jo Nesbø, Pernille Rygg and Helene Tursten, not to mention Mankell, have combined to make Scandinavian crime fiction 'the hottest genre in town' (Crace, 2009: 14). But writers from the rest of Europe have also made an impact, including, for example, Boris Akunin (Russia); Andrea Camilleri, Massimo Carlotto and Carlo Lucarelli (Italy); Jean-Christophe Grangé, Pierre Magnan, Daniel Pennac and Fred Vargas (France); Petros Markaris (Greece) and Arnaldur Indriðason (Iceland).

There is perhaps an argument to be made that crime fiction in translation has achieved a certain literary respectability that its Anglo-American counterparts lack. As with all genre fiction, crime writing is often dismissed as formulaic and insubstantial; yet, by virtue of being translated, foreign writers seem to have escaped many of these negative connotations. While being translated into English need not necessarily be indicative of any great literary merit, it does lend writers such as Mankell a certain kudos that is not afforded to his British or American counterparts. Indeed, foreign writers have not only proved popular with British readers, they have also met with substantial critical success. Mankell's novels are published in Britain to rave reviews and he is a popular interviewee in the broadsheets' literary pages. In 2001 Mankell won the prestigious Crime Writer's Association Gold Dagger Award

for *Sidetracked* (1995). His victory was followed in 2002 by that of another translated text, José Carlos Somoza's *The Athenian Murders* and in 2005 Arnaldur Indridason's *The Silence of the Grave* won from a shortlist of six novels that included four texts not originally published in English. In his editorial for *Crime Time*, Barry Forshaw commented that the conferral of the hallowed Gold Dagger to not one but three foreign writers was a sure sign of the cosmopolitan nature of the CWA (Forshaw, 2004: 2). However, the subsequent decision of the CWA to exclude translated texts from consideration for its Daggers does serve to undercut this remark somewhat. Under new rules introduced in 2006 translated fiction would no longer be eligible for the main prizes but would be confined to a category of its own, where prize money (amounting to significantly less than that available to authors writing in English) would be shared between author and translator. Although commendable for drawing attention to the work done by translators of foreign fiction, reaction to the CWA's decision, denounced as 'a sinister backlash from the Anglomaniac tendency of the crime-fiction world' was, for the most part, unfavourable.¹

The reluctance of the British reading public to embrace foreign writing is not a new phenomenon. Lawrence Venuti, both a professional translator (of Italian crime fiction, amongst other things) and one of the leading authorities on translation theory, attributes this reluctance to Anglo-American cultural hegemony and the arrogance that accompanies this dominance. He comments:

British and American publishing...has reaped the financial benefits of successfully imposing Anglo-American cultural values on a vast foreign readership, while producing cultures in the U.K. and the U.S. that are aggressively monolingual, unreceptive to the foreign, accustomed to fluent translations that invisibly inscribe foreign texts with English-language values and provide readers with the narcissistic experience of recognizing their own culture in a cultural other. (Venuti, 1995: 15)²

Venuti has also drawn attention to the precarious position translations hold in the Anglo-American book market. Not only are publishing houses often unwilling to commit to the financially risky business of commissioning a translation, but the worth of translations themselves is further undermined by British and American copyright law, which classifies them as 'derivative work' (1995: 8). The act of translation is not perceived as a creative endeavour in its own right; instead it is often viewed as little more than poorly paid manual labour. Venuti also takes issue with the kind of translation that predominates in the Anglo-American market. When foreign texts are translated into English, he argues, they are often domesticated in order to seem less demonstrably 'other' – instead of letting idiosyncratic details that clearly flag the foreignness of a text stand, translators are encouraged to iron out these cultural indicators, thereby ensuring a smoother reading experience. Translation in Britain and America is, therefore, in Venuti's opinion more a matter of assimilation – the 'forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with a text that will be intelligible to the target-language reader' (1995: 18) – than it is a reflection of any genuine interest in heterogeneity. Instead of learning about another culture from a translated work, it is more likely the reader will simply be offered a text that reflects their own culture and its values. Venuti states:

A translated text should be a site where a different culture emerges, where a reader gets a glimpse of a cultural other, and resistancy, a translation strategy based on an aesthetic of discontinuity, can best preserve that difference, that otherness, by reminding the reader of the gains and losses in the translation process and the unbridgeable gaps between cultures. (Venuti, 1995: 307)

Venuti defines resistancy in this context as an approach that 'produces an estranging translation', one that provides the foreign text with 'a momentary liberation from the target-language culture' (1995: 306). Juxtaposed against the aggressive domestication

of translated texts, and corresponding with Venuti's 'strategy of resistancy' (1995: 296), is a means of translating that instead seeks to highlight difference and incongruity. Called, obviously enough, the foreignizing method, the idea behind this technique is to avoid what Venuti sees as the violence of domestication. One of Venuti's main complaints about contemporary translation is that its success is contingent upon its capacity to render itself invisible – a good translation is one that does not seem obviously translated. Translators and publishers strive for fluency, yet this fluency necessarily entails domestication and therefore results in both an obliteration of any sense of 'otherness' and a lack of critical attention to the process of translation itself. Venuti accuses translators of complicity in their own disappearance, making the point that for many it is the ultimate accolade to be told that one of their works does not read like a translation. One of Mankell's translators, Laurie Thompson, confirms this, declaring that he regards reviews that fail to mention his involvement as complimentary. Another crime fiction translator, Adriana Hunter, goes even further, stating:

Translating is a bit like character acting: the translator has no voice as an author, he or she must disappear into the English version of the original author's voice as an actor disappears into a character...the more talent they have, the more they disappear.³

This is a statement with which Venuti would clearly take issue, yet Hunter's words, and indeed the whole issue of translation replicating easily identifiable patterns, open up interesting ideas in relation to genre fiction. Hunter's comment on character acting, whereby the individual personality is obfuscated by a disappearance into norms and convention, is suggestive not only of crime fiction's appeal to a great many of its fans – that it offers a familiar and reassuring reading experience – but also of some of the

criticism that has been levelled at genre fiction on the grounds that it is fundamentally conservative and is constrained by the imperative to replicate generic forms.

Three different translators – Stephen T. Murray, Ebba Segerberg and Laurie Thompson – have worked on Mankell's novels. While Venuti (1995: 306, 311) maintains that translators should be recognised as authors in their own right and should be seen as having a personality distinct from that of the original author, little information about Mankell's translators is available to the reader. Each of the Wallander books offers a sentence or two about its translator, mentioning other publications and where they work, but none state the nationality of the translator, which would be useful in ascertaining the particular cultural baggage and associations that they bring with them to a translation. Venuti's observations about the invisibility of translation seem equally borne out by a survey of Mankell's British and American reviews. Of twenty-five different reviews, published in newspapers and journals between 1999 and 2005, the majority made no reference at all to the text's translated status.⁴ If the translator was specified at all it was only as part of the book's publication details, included in a sidebar next to the review itself. Those few that did choose to address the issue of translation did little more than offer a cursory value judgement that inevitably seems lacking in substance given the unlikelihood of the reviewer being fluent in Swedish. Writing for *The New York Times*, Marilyn Stasio is a particularly good example of a critic who appears duty bound to comment on the translation without actually being able to offer anything insightful – her remarks on the work of Murray, Segerberg and Thompson range from 'pensive' and 'sober' to 'fastidious' and 'well-paced'. This seems to be the critic's dilemma – either they mention the translation and risk commenting on something they know nothing about, or they ignore the fact that the text is translated and are therefore guilty of

contributing to the invisibility of the translation process itself. Of the reviews consulted, only one, Mark Lawson's review of *One Step Behind* (1997), published in *The Guardian*, actually grappled with some of the issues raised by translation (Lawson, 2002). Lawson drew attention to the differences between the British and Swedish police forces that the novel makes apparent through its depiction of the ongoing tension that characterises Wallander's relationship with the prosecutor's office. Lawson enjoyed discovering these contrasts, which seem to correspond with Venuti's ideas on the importance of foreignizing. The Harvill Press has also been keen to focus upon its desire to resist domesticating Mankell's work. Writing in *Crime Time*, Harvill's Becky Toyne states:

Location and atmosphere are really important to these novels and so we try to preserve as much of that as we can. Names of people, places, organisations and official titles and forms of address are kept in the original language as far as possible in order to retain the original flavour. We are only translating the text of these novels into English, but by no means anglicising them altogether. We commission maps for many of our crime novels featuring locations in which the investigations take place. Again, therefore, rather than trying to hide the "foreignness" of the novel, we are highlighting it as a unique feature that will appeal to readers. (Toyne, 2004: 29)

However, despite this emphasis on difference, Mankell's novels seem to have struck a cord with readers and critics searching for something recognisable. To quote the influential crime critic Marcel Berlins:

If you think about it, these Scandinavian whodunits are really quite British. Of course there's something new and strange in them for Anglo-Saxon readers, but they're also curiously, comfortingly familiar. The morose and grumpy Wallander is a sort of Baltic Inspector Rebus. And the flat, monotonous landscapes in these euro-thrillers reminds one of Norfolk. (quoted by Thomson, 2003: 21)

Although Berlins could be accused of practising the kind of cultural narcissism of which Venuti has accused Anglo-American readers, he does illuminate at least part of

the appeal of contemporary European crime fiction. Writers from all across Europe are being translated into English and read by ever-increasing numbers of people – yet for all their geographical heterogeneity these novels tend to employ a very specific blueprint when it comes to the depiction of their hero's masculinity. The typical Euro-cop, whether his beat is Reykjavík or Athens, tends to be a cantankerous middle-aged man, usually in poor health, who is estranged from his wife and family and is fairly pessimistic in outlook. Without fail, these men are obsessed with their jobs, and although their approach to detection may not be conventional (in fact, it usually is not), they all achieve the desired results. The Euro-cop also tends to drink heavily and only to be able to relax via an idiosyncratic hobby. When Berlins and others read the novels of Mankell, Karin Fossum or Petros Markaris, to name but a few, they are reminded of popular characters from British crime fiction, such as Ian Rankin's Inspector Rebus or Colin Dexter's Morse. The fact that Mankell's Kurt Wallander was recently offered up as the televisual successor to Morse – with the inevitable 'Inspector Norse' pun – only serves to emphasise this point. As Berlins has rightly stated, for many crime fans the new generation of Euro-cop resembles a British policeman on a busman's holiday: something reassuringly familiar at the heart of a novel that is otherwise exotic. Readers are therefore able to feel they have experienced something new without being taken outside their comfort zone. All of which raises questions not only about how successful Mankell (and his translators) are at offering a vision of the 'cultural other', but, more importantly for this thesis, just how 'other' this culture actually is. Is it the case that there is more common ground between European and UK masculinities than the ingrained tradition of British Euro-scepticism would have us believe? Is there a pan-European sense of masculine

identity that stands in marked contrast to the American masculinity depicted by Pelecanos?

Henning Mankell has said that he is happy with the translations of his novels and that, in his opinion, nothing essentially Swedish has been omitted.⁵ As this thesis focuses on Anglophone criticism and writing, it examines Mankell's texts in English. In terms of accuracy or fidelity to Mankell's original text it is impossible for me to comment on the translations made by Steven T. Murray, Ebba Segerberg and Laurie Thompson – if Mankell has declared himself pleased with their work then there seems no reason to question this. Whether or not the translations do a good job of retaining a sense of otherness is, however, something that can be commented on. If Mankell's novels were completely domesticated by his English translators then it would arguably be a doomed enterprise to try to extrapolate from them any sense of specific, Swedish masculinity. Yet, despite the fact that Wallander does have much in common with the traditional grumpy British cop, the novels themselves are still markedly different from a Rankin or a Dexter. Although it is hard to identify the personality of any of Mankell's translators – none of the three seem to have put a distinctive stamp on their work and as a result the series flows seamlessly together – all have successfully maintained a 'foreign' sensibility. Constant allusion to the Swedish landscape and detailed evocations of its winter weather, coupled with references to holidays such as Midsummer's Eve and the use of Swedish addresses and place names, take the reader out of his or her culture and into another.

Part 2: Introduction

Between 1991 and 1999 Henning Mankell published eight Inspector Wallander novels and one collection of short stories in his native Sweden. In chronological order they are *Faceless Killers*, *The Dogs of Riga*, *The White Lioness*, *The Man Who Smiled*, *Sidetracked*, *The Fifth Woman*, *One Step Behind*, *Firewall* and *The Pyramid*. Beginning in 2000, with *Sidetracked*, the series was then translated into English and published non-sequentially. The eight novels are set in the small coastal town of Ystad and span a period of seven years in the life of Kurt Wallander as he attempts, not just to fight crime, but also to come to terms with a rapidly changing Swedish society. Wallander is bad-tempered, hampered with personal problems and plagued with an almost overwhelming sense that he is past his best and no longer up to the challenges of policing. From his first appearance, in *Faceless Killers* (1991), he seems unsure of his position, musing:

Maybe the times require another kind of policeman...Policemen who aren't distressed when they're forced to go into a human slaughterhouse in the Swedish countryside early on a January morning. *Policemen who don't suffer from my uncertainty and anguish.* (1991: 18, italics mine)

By contrast to what we might expect of a typical heroic male protagonist 'uncertainty and anguish' are benchmarks of Wallander's characterisation. Crime fiction has a long history of offering unconventionally heroic figures – for example, the armchair detective Auguste Dupin, the fastidious Hercule Poirot or the shell-shocked Lord Peter Wimsey. Yet Mankell goes further than his predecessors, creating a character whose aptitude for his job and sustained professional success stand in marked contrast to his inability to function as a 'normal' human being. Although a much more subtle writer than George Pelecanos, Mankell's novels are also texts of masculinity in crisis. Unlike Pelecanos, who sees potential and, crucially, stability in traditional forms of masculinity, Mankell instead emphasises how the hegemonic ideal can lead to

emotional alienation and the fragmentation of identity. In Mankell's fiction the costs of adherence to the masculine script – one that emphasises control, independence and self-reliance – are clearly shown, as Wallander struggles with bodily trauma and psychological disintegration. Rather, therefore, than offering a vision of non-phallic masculinity, Mankell deals with the ramifications of a mode of being that is predicated upon crisis-inducing behaviour.

Central to Mankell's strategy is the ambivalence of his leading man. Wallander is both heroic and cowardly, sympathetically drawn and yet still capable of alienating readers. By contrast to the novels of Pelecanos, in which work is depicted as an uncomplicated source of male validation and self-respect, Wallander's career exerts a destabilising effect on his life. Although he excels at his job and privileges it above everything else, he remains wracked by professional insecurity. A highly intuitive and emotional policeman, Wallander is manifestly unable to deal with the complexities of his personal life, repeatedly failing to articulate his needs and desires. Wallander's character, therefore, is full of inconsistencies and contradictions. His reliability is further problematised by Mankell's narrative techniques. Although written in the third person, the novels employ Wallander as a focaliser and the reader is thus forced to witness events purely from his point of view. Mankell occasionally undermines Wallander's perspicuity but it is not until *Before the Frost*, in which Linda dominates, that the reader is offered a real opportunity to see Wallander from the outside and is, consequently, challenged to rethink existing assumptions about the series as a whole and Wallander in particular.

This chapter, then, focuses on how Mankell both adheres to and challenges ideas of heroism. By linking the body of the detective with that of the nation-state it explores how Mankell depicts both as being in crisis due to permeability and a lack of

stability. However, although the tone of the Wallander series is largely pessimistic, the choice of Linda to follow her father into a career in law enforcement does offer a note of possibility. Like Ian Rankin, Mankell, having explored phallic masculinity and found it wanting, posits a female successor to his male hero. The implications of this for the genre and for masculinity itself will be discussed.

Wallander's Ambivalent Heroism

Work has long been accepted as central to the formulation of male subjectivity. Traditionally, a man has always been defined by what he does and by his ability to provide for his family, while this sense of utility has in turn provided men with a source of pride and self-respect. For many men, then, their masculinity is contingent upon a paid, public demonstration of usefulness. Jonathan Rutherford has described work as 'the principal source of...masculine self-esteem and personal integrity' (Rutherford, 2000: 90), while Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett have commented that:

...the public sphere has traditionally been held to be that place where males 'become men', and, thus, have their manliness and masculinity validated. (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001: 141).

In Pelecanos' fiction work affords men the chance to affirm their masculine identity. As a private detective Derek Strange enjoys the autonomy that comes from being his own boss, while also functioning as a self-appointed guardian of the community. Unsurprisingly, Wallander's job, as a paid representative of the state, is more complex and, on occasions, compromising. The shift in form from the private investigator to

the police procedural is an important distinction between the novels of Pelecanos and those of Mankell and Rankin.

Since the American author Ed McBain published the first book in his influential 87th Precinct series, *Cop Hater*, in 1956, the procedural has come to dominate contemporary crime writing. Typically, the police procedural focuses on a team of detectives and emphasises the routine nature of modern policing. It can, therefore, claim greater verisimilitude than fiction that centres upon an independent investigator, a form that seems increasingly obsolete in these security conscious, heavily policed times. To quote LeRoy L. Panek:

...amateur sleuths and private eyes have little relevance when it comes to the real criminals and real crime in the last half of the twentieth century. For those one needs cops. (Panek, 2003: 155)

While George Pelecanos has himself commented on his own novel *Soul Circus*:

Not to give anything away, but they [Strange and Quinn] don't solve anything in this book. It's an anti-detective novel. They are constantly one step behind the police throughout the book, as they would be. You know, private detectives don't solve murders. Police do. It's trying to show the futility of what they are doing. (Birnbaum, 2003)

Of course, the supposed realism of the police procedural is still tempered by the fact that it is a work of fiction, written by people with books to sell. Hence, while being more formally plausible than texts that feature inspired, idiosyncratic amateurs or hard-boiled, crusading P.I.s, there is potential tension in the work of writers such as Mankell and Rankin between a desire to maintain credibility and the need to keep readers interested.⁶ In both cases, Mankell and Rankin attempt to overcome this tension by creating policemen who, although nominally part of the system, tend to work largely as independent agents (albeit backed by the force of the Law). To use

Rankin's term, Wallander and Rebus are 'irregular regulars' (Rankin, 1997: 372), marginal figures who frequently read like private detectives in uniform. Interestingly, the names of Wallander and Rebus, like that of Strange, reflect their status as outsiders. A rebus is a form of puzzle, while Tiina Mäntymäki notes that the second syllable of Kurt Wallander's surname is similar to the Swedish term for other – 'den andra' or 'andre' (Mäntymäki, 2004: 292).

When the reader first meets Kurt Wallander he is Ystad's most senior police officer and is ostensibly part of a small, efficient team unit. Mankell goes to great lengths to emphasise this team ethos. Throughout the series Wallander repeatedly uses militaristic vocabulary when referring to or thinking about his investigative squad: they are described as being 'on the offensive' (1991: 77) and 'ready for battle' (1991: 239); their work is akin to 'making preparations for a complicated military campaign' (1994: 168); even when things go badly they are 'no vanquished army beating a retreat' (1994: 219). Yet this rhetorical insistence on teamwork is undermined by the fact that it is Wallander as an individual who solves the crimes. When he tells his colleague Lisa Holgersson, 'I have a killer to track down', she replies, correctly, 'Not you...we' (1997: 350). But this is a revealing slip. Wallander usually acts independently and with his own agenda. He has a tendency to withhold crucial information from his colleagues, even though he is aware that this reticence is 'a cardinal sin for a police officer' (1994: 28). Wallander also routinely finds himself, as the Chief of Police Otto Björk puts it, 'in situations that are out of normal procedures' (1994: 55). Like John Rebus, Wallander benefits from a relatively flexible approach to the law he represents – in both *One Step Behind* (1997) and *Firewall* (1998) he illegally gains entry to the homes of suspects, while in *The White Lioness* (1993) he shelters the fugitive assassin Victor Mabasha, before using police equipment to forge

him a passport. For Wallander the law is not set in stone; rather, in what is an idiosyncratic position for a police officer, it is something to be negotiated:

In recent years his experiences as a police officer had taken place in a no man's land where any good he might have been able to do had always involved *his having to decide* which regulations to abide by, and which not. (1994: 238, italics mine)

In *Before the Frost* he spells this out in more explicit terms to his daughter Linda, who has herself just joined the police:

I've been breaking rules since I first started work. According to Martinsson's calculations I should have been locked up for a minimum of four years for all the things I've done. But who cares, if you're doing a good job? (2002: 75)

Wallander's relentless individualism seems to be born of an almost pathological inability to delegate responsibility. He may tell himself that 'he couldn't single-handedly solve every violent crime that happened in Ystad. He could only do his best' (1995: 159). However, these words are not born out by the texts, in which Wallander is depicted as a character who is compelled to demonstrate his capacity for individual action at every chance. Wallander embodies the kind of precarious masculinity that 'demands constant performance from men' (Bordo, 1999: 34). His job provides the crux of his identity: his whole sense of self is contingent upon the successful completion of his duty. As such, he can never rest on his laurels or experience a feeling of security. As Timothy Beneke has aptly commented:

What makes the need to prove manhood compulsive is that it can never be satisfied; one is momentarily a man and then doubts reassert themselves – you're only as masculine as your last demonstration of masculinity. (Beneke, 1997: 45)

Work is the framework through which Wallander attempts to give his life significance and the fact that he imbues it with such importance means that it is also a source of great vulnerability to him. Wallander has internalised the masculine ideology of constant control and, as such, makes enormous demands of himself. He regularly berates himself for making mistakes (see, for example, 1991: 228 and 1993: 31) or for leading his team in the wrong direction (1991: 249, 1996: 270 and 1997: 388), and while some of these criticisms are justified, the majority stem from his own unreasonably high expectations. When Wallander does make a mistake he is his own harshest critic and his reaction often seems disproportionate to the initial error. For example, when an inflatable dingy packed with drugs is stolen from the Ystad Police Station Wallander is furious at himself for not thinking of deflating it and discovering its contents:

...he couldn't shake the sense of having made an unforgivable mistake. He was despondent and woke every morning with a headache. (1992: 91)

Wallander's faculty for self-criticism is so robust that he even chastises himself for enjoying a full night's sleep:

Wallander stayed at home until nearly 10am on Thursday. He had woken early, feeling fully rested. His joy at having been able to sleep undisturbed for a whole night was so great that it gave him a guilty conscience. He often wondered where his overdeveloped work ethic had come from. (1998: 362)⁷

At several points in the series Wallander's exaggerated sense of personal responsibility metamorphosizes into something more troubling and he begins to think of himself as being in some way culpable for the crimes *his* killers are allowed to commit. In *Faceless Killers* he muses '[p]olice work was a team effort, but he thought of the murderers as belonging to him' (1991: 218). In *Sidetracked*, Mankell writes:

He would not relax until they had caught Wetterstedt and Carlman's killer. Wallander knew his strength was his determination. And sometimes he had moments of insight. But his weakness was also clear. He couldn't keep his job from becoming a personal matter. Your killer, Ekholm had said. There was no better description of his weakness. The man who killed Wetterstedt and Carlman was actually his responsibility. Whether he liked it or not. (1995: 147)

Wallander thus becomes responsible for both the perpetrators of crime and the victims. He invests everything he has in his work and as a result lacks the ability to detach himself from what he does. The fact that work is such a personal matter to Wallander is both his major flaw and greatest strength, as the character himself acknowledges:

My biggest weakness as a police officer, he thought. I always prefer to go alone. Over the years he had begun to question whether it really was a weakness. (1994: 199)

The pressure Wallander feels to succeed is, however, not entirely self-inflicted. Throughout the series he endures the trials and tribulations of being 'a police officer with a national reputation' (1994: 97). Wallander leads the Ystad investigative team and despite the nominal presence of Otto Björk, and later Lisa Holgersson, as Chief of Police, it is he who makes the key decisions. As the most prominent member of the Ystad police, Wallander is acutely aware of the demands of his position:

I'm in charge of solving one of the most brutal serial killings in Sweden in years. Every police officer's eye is on me, since one of the victims was in the force. The press are hounding me. I'll probably be criticised by the victim's parents. Everyone expects me to find the killer in a few days and to have collected the kind of evidence that would make even the most hardened prosecutor weep. The only problem is that in reality I have nothing. (1997: 246)

The fact that he is so highly esteemed by his colleagues only intensifies Wallander's burden. In *The White Lioness* Björk informs Wallander that the team 'feel helpless without you' (1993: 373), while in *Sidetracked* Svedberg tells him 'You have to take charge. Even if you don't want to, you're the one who does it best' (1995: 81). Unlike John Rebus, Wallander is very much at the heart of the Ystad team. While Rebus is just as driven to produce results as Wallander, there is rarely a sense in Rankin's fiction that Rebus is being relied upon by his colleagues or those further up the chain of command. Rebus is an unrehabilitated outsider and, although Mankell maintains a strong element of this maverick approach in Wallander's characterisation, he also depicts Wallander as being much more integrated within the conventional structures of policing.

Speaking in an interview with *The Guardian*, Henning Mankell has commented on Wallander's acute sense of personal accountability:

...he takes responsibility, and that's what I love. He feels tired because the work is too much. But if he didn't do the work, he'd feel worse, he would leave a big black hole in himself. I think he's of the Calvinist generation, in the sense that you are supposed to work and pray, while you are sweating. That is supposed to be your life. (Hasted, 2002)

Mankell creates the impression that if Wallander did not apprehend Sweden's criminals, then no one would. In this respect Wallander is very much depicted as a hero. It is he alone who gets the job done and Mankell emphasises this in overly dramatic dénouements that tend to pitch Wallander one-on-one against the criminal. The conclusions of both *The Man Who Smiled* (1994) and *One Step Behind* see Wallander engaging in individual heroics. In the latter, Wallander pursues the serial killing substitute postman Åke Larstam into a nature reserve. He then stalks Larstam in the moonlight, eventually knocking him unconscious before tying him up and

dragging him to the police station (1997: 427-28). There are elements of the Western in this episode, with Wallander employing good old brute force to literally get his man. This was no team effort: as Wallander tells Thurnberg, the prosecutor, when he phones him to come and take care of the bureaucratic business of issuing formal charges, 'I have Larstam' (1997: 429). Wallander, thus, not only solves the case, he also gets to prove his superior crime fighting skills to someone who had earlier vocally doubted his abilities. Undeniably then, Wallander is a heroic protagonist. At one point Mankell even allows him to sound like a superhero, telling Linda, '[t]hey found a man dead in the woods...That means they call me' (1996: 127). While these words sound ridiculous coming from the mouth of an overweight, middle-aged provincial policeman, Wallander is unquestionably a man who achieves results: if catching felons is what makes a character in crime fiction heroic then Wallander certainly fits the bill.

Yet Mankell's depiction of Wallander is more complex than this and his protagonist's heroic stature is constantly questioned and undermined. Wallander is capable of bravery and spontaneous action but Mankell places equal emphasis upon his tendency to behave in a manner unbecoming to an ace detective. Wallander readily admits to experiencing anxiety, confusion and loneliness; is bumbling and shambolic in both appearance and demeanour; and, as will be seen below, increasingly seems to be fighting a war against his own body. Privately, Wallander often admits to being scared and in *Before the Frost* he openly voices these fears to his colleagues (2002: 108).⁸ Interestingly, *The Man Who Smiled* seems to suggest that being afraid is the sign of an accomplished policeman. While driving with Ann-Britt Höglund, Wallander becomes suspicious that their vehicle might have been booby-trapped:

He did not need to explain further. She understood right away. That convinced Wallander on the spot that she was already a good police officer. She was intelligent, she knew how to react to the unexpected. But he also felt for the first time in ages that he now had somebody with whom he could share his fear. (1994: 121)

Rather than being perceived as a weakness, Wallander's, and Höglund's, capacity to experience disquiet and learn from it is posited as a strength. Mankell continues his unglamorous depiction of Wallander by introducing an air of almost comic ineptitude to his characterisation. While in no way impinging upon his professional credentials, Mankell makes Wallander into something of a disaster area. Not only is he accident-prone, regularly showering himself with scalding beverages and foodstuffs (1994: 66 and 1998: 207), but he is also the kind of man who forgets to bring his wallet when he eventually finds time to go to the supermarket (1998: 327). Aside from these light-hearted episodes, Mankell does seem genuinely keen to render Wallander mortal in the eyes of his readers. On two notable occasions Wallander's potential heroism is devastatingly undercut. While illegally searching for Major Liepa's secret files in *The Dogs of Riga* (1992), Wallander is completely overcome with nerves at the situation and ends up defecating in a bin (1992: 292): his body betrays him during a time of crisis and he experiences the familiar tang of self-disgust. *The White Lioness* also includes an episode that finds Wallander cowering in fear beneath his bed (1993: 267). Wallander is, thus, presented as an ambivalently heroic figure: one who manages to attain remarkable results, while at the same time remaining fallibly human. To return to Arthur Flannigan-Saint-Aubin's testicular masculinity thesis, Mankell presents Wallander as much more of a Clark Kent than a Superman. While identifying Superman with traditional, phallic masculinity, Flannigan-Saint-Aubin sees Clark Kent as emblematic of the 'testicular mode', which he defines, in almost

maternal terms, as 'nurturing, incubating, containing, and protecting. The testicular masculine is characterized by patience, stability, and endurance' (Flannigan-Saint-Aubin, 1994: 250). Patience and stability are qualities that are notably absent from Mankell's depiction of Wallander, but, like Rebus, he does endure: in fact Mankell's texts posit policing as 'little more than a poorly paid test of endurance' (1996: 267). As will be demonstrated below, Wallander is also gifted with a surprising well-developed sense of empathy. However, both Wallander and Rebus are more representative of the negative aspects of testicular masculinity:

Staying power and steadfastness might become stubbornness or intractability and might lead to a holding on when letting go would be preferable; incubation might become, in an exaggerated state, stagnation. The testicular masculine then is characterised by testiness and all that being testy implies: petulant, fretful, insolent, temperamental, morose, and so forth. (Flannigan-Saint-Aubin, 1994: 250)

That ambivalence is the essence of Wallander's policing experiences is further emphasised by the lack of security and job satisfaction his work provides him with. Rather than taking pride in his own detecting capability, Wallander instead offers occasional, grudging admissions that 'I probably do it as well as anybody else' (1998: 112). Given that his job contributes so much to his sense of self the lack of egotism Wallander displays is striking. He almost always refrains from self-congratulation and manages to remain modest, despite his achievements. One rare exception to this rule comes in *Faceless Killers* when Wallander enjoys a brief moment of job satisfaction while en route to see the prosecutor, Anette Brolin:

He knew that he'd done a good job. He had trusted in his intuition, acted without hesitation, and it had produced results. (1991: 212)

This contentment is, however, short-lived. Wallander arrives at Brodin's flat flush with confidence and makes an ill-judged pass at the prosecutor, which is rebuffed (1991: 212 ff.). Here, professional success is swiftly followed by personal disaster and an episode that initially saw Wallander in buoyant form ends in drunkenness, embarrassment and shame. Wallander's only recourse to recover from Brodin's rejection and his own sense of self-disgust is, of course, to think about work. The chapter ends with the words, '[h]e went home to Mariagatan. The next day he would have to get back onto the hunt for the Lunnarp killers. (1991: 216).

As the series progresses Wallander is depicted as feeling increasingly vulnerable in the workplace. While he is, for the most part, respected and admired by his colleagues, he is extremely sensitive to any perceived criticisms of his leadership. In *One Step Behind*, while investigating the murder of one of his fellow officers, Wallander repeatedly clashes with the new prosecutor, Thurnberg. The presence of Thurnberg – young, successful and a slick performer at press conferences – is enough in itself to make Wallander insecure and the mutual hostility between the two reaches boiling point when Thurnberg questions Wallander's ability to lead the investigation into Svedberg's death:

He should have felt angry, but instead he was frightened. It was one thing to question your own abilities, but it had never occurred to him that someone else might do so. (1997: 261)

The thought of being relieved of his responsibilities frightened him. Being in charge of an investigation like this meant being under an almost unbearable strain, but the thought of humiliation was even worse. (1997: 263)

The relationship between the two men is placed under further strain when a member of the public – a jogger who interrupts a crime scene and is then threatened by an irate Wallander with arrest – files a complaint, which Thurnberg gives credence to,

although in the end no punitive action is taken against Wallander. A second, more serious, complaint is made against Wallander in *Firewall*, following an incident in which he slaps a fourteen-year-old girl he has been interviewing. Wallander's behaviour is neither brutish nor disproportionate: the hysterical teenager had been physically attacking her mother when Wallander intervened. However, a photographer happens to document the incident and when the picture appears, out of context, in the media, he faces both a public outcry and an internal investigation. Wallander's position is rendered even more difficult when the girl and her mother lie about what happened, seeking to pin the blame exclusively on Wallander. At no point does Wallander consider that an investigation might be either proper or justified, instead he sees it solely as a personal attack and responds accordingly. When Lisa Holgersson questions him about the event Wallander feels he has no option but to resign (1998: 99) and threatens to do so when Holgersson announces her intention of suspending him (1998: 365–69). Throughout this episode there is an air of childish pique to Wallander's behaviour, an aspect of Wallander's characterisation that will be more fully considered below.

In *Firewall* Wallander's position is further undermined by the duplicity of Martinsson, one of his junior officers. Both Martinsson and Thurnberg can be read as representative of what Michael Kimmel has termed 'Marketplace Man'. According to Kimmel the 18th and 19th centuries saw the emergence of two models of American manhood, the 'Genteel Patriarch' and the 'Heroic Artisan' (Kimmel, 2001: 269-70). Kimmel stresses that, although markedly different in outlook, the rural patriarch and the urban artisan managed to co-habit peaceably, 'in part because their gender ideals were complementary' (2001: 270). As capitalism began to dominate the Western world, however, these models were supplanted by 'Marketplace Man'. Defined as a

man who 'derived his identity entirely from his success in the capitalist marketplace, as he accumulated wealth, power and status', Kimmel's 'Marketplace Man' was a 'businessman', characterised by 'aggression, competition, anxiety' (2001: 270 and 271). Where solidarity amongst males was once a guiding principle, the emergence of the ruthless, self-serving 'Marketplace Man' injected a note of rivalry into homosocial relations. As will be further addressed in the next chapter, Gill Plain has redeployed Kimmel's terminology to describe the various modes of masculinity in Ian Rankin's fiction (Plain, 2003a: 59-60) and they can equally be applied to Mankell's texts. Martinsson is under thirty, technologically proficient and even communicates easily with his foreign counterparts thanks to his fluent English, all of which makes Wallander resentful and slightly jealous (see 1992: 84; 1997: 350; 1998: 346 and 434). By contrast, Wallander, despite his professional achievements, frequently feels obsolete. Computer illiterate and uncomfortable with his public profile, he also dislikes interaction with the media and performs badly at press conferences (1998: 66-68). Like Rebus, he is presented, resolutely, as an old-fashioned policeman, one who values action above the political nous that increasingly seems to be part of modern law enforcement. Both Rebus and Wallander are also conspicuously lacking in ambition: for them, the job itself is enough, and careerism of the kind displayed by Martinsson and Rankin's Derek Linford is reprehensible. While this conflict between the two older detectives and the junior officers they work with is in some ways a generational one, there is more to it than just age. Both Wallander and Rebus place more value on attaining knowledge and an understanding of crime than simply enforcing law and order. When Martinsson is first introduced much is made of the age gap between him and Wallander – Martinsson is supposed to be representative of the

new generation of police officers, capable of making sense of contemporary Sweden in ways in which men Wallander's age cannot. Mankell defines policing as:

...being able to decipher the signs of the times. To understand change and interpret trends in society. And for this reason perhaps the younger generation of police officers were better equipped to deal with modern society.
(1996: 174-75)

Yet Martinsson not only quickly feels out of his depth, but more significantly, he is not interested in attempting to comprehend the violence that surrounds him. Martinsson explicitly states in *Firewall* that he does not want to know why two teenage girls violently assaulted a taxi driver with a knife and a hammer (1998: 27). For Wallander, on the other hand, his job demands that he at least try to grasp the motivation behind this attack and every other apparently senseless act of violence he investigates. It is for this reason that Wallander volunteers to interrogate Eva Persson, one of the girls responsible:

Wallander's response was immediate. 'I'll do it. I want to know what's going on in this country.' (1998: 41)

Symbolic sons are, therefore, found to be lacking, and it is a fascinating parallel between Mankell and Rankin that daughter figures are turned to instead. Although both Wallander and Rebus develop relationships with male protégé figures – Martinsson and, as will be shown in the next chapter, Brian Holmes – neither of these men actually graduate from a position of cadetship to one of inheritance. Instead, as will be detailed below, it falls to two female characters – Linda Wallander and Siobhan Clarke – to carry on the legacy of their literal and symbolic fathers.

Employing the example of the Howard Hawks' film *Red River* (1948), Antony Easthope has made useful observations on the father-son bond that can be applied to

Mankell's texts. Easthope notes that with a strong, aggressively independent patriarch figure, such as John Wayne's character Thomas Dunson, the son is invariably feminised and forced to assume a subservient position. The father, a self-made man, is unwilling or incapable of ceding authority to his son, who is, therefore, left with no option but to rebel. As Easthope states, '[f]ather threatens son but son also threatens father' (Easthope, 1986: 20). The dynamic between Wallander and Martinsson is a similar one, as Wallander encourages the younger officer in the early novels but refuses to actually delegate to him in any meaningful way. Rebus, too, is depicted as almost infantilising Holmes by restricting him to tasks that require no real skill. This, then, is another important point of similarity between the Swedish and the British authors, and a crucial distinction between the two and Pelecanos, their American counterpart. As has already been seen in the previous chapter, Pelecanos' texts are full of instances of male bonding and strongly endorse the message that 'real' masculinity needs to be passed down from generation to generation. In Rankin and Mankell such a line of inheritance seems impossible at best and undesirable at worst.

Boundaries of Self/Borders of State

Tiina Mäntymäki has observed that Wallander is 'known for his generous embodiment' (2004: 125) and this section explores how the body of the detective serves as a synecdoche for that of the state in Mankell's fiction. The body's complexity as a site of cultural signification has provided the impetus for much critical study. In her essay 'Sorties', Hélène Cixous considers what Toril Moi has termed 'death-dealing binary thought' (Moi, 1989: 124) – the presence of 'dual,

hierarchical oppositions' that correspond to man/woman and privilege the male half of the binary over the female (Cixous, 1975: 64). To quote Elizabeth Grosz:

Dichotomous thinking necessarily hierarchizes and ranks the two polarized terms so that one becomes the privileged term and the other its suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart. (Grosz, 1994: 3)

Traditionally, in Western thought the body is identified with the female, while masculinity is predicated upon a disembodied rationality that devalues the corporeal.

In his book *Male Matters* (1996), Calvin Thomas describes:

the long-standing patriarchal ideology in which embodiment and femininity are equated, in which male bodies do not matter, in which only women are supposed to have bodies. (Thomas, 1996: 15)

Thomas argues that making the male body visible as a subject is 'an at least potentially transformative political intervention into the social reproduction of gender' (1996: 16). As Gill Plain notes, crime fiction has long been radical in this respect:

Although it [crime fiction] mobilises the dream of a man above men, capable of solving the crime and restoring social cohesion, or even just standing firm against the rising tide of urban corruption, it never suggests that the detective is a man above the body. (Plain, 2001: 13)

Male bodies have been on display in crime fiction since the days of Sherlock Holmes. The story 'The Reigate Squires', for example, begins with Watson urging Holmes to rest as his normally 'iron constitution' (Conan Doyle, 1893: 117) had suffered under the strain of a previous investigation. The 'corporeal landscape' of crime fiction (Plain, 2001: 5) is peppered with battered and broken male bodies that, most notably in the American hard-boiled tradition, are often down but never out. The question, therefore, is does Wallander simply take his place in this pantheon of the pulverised or does his vulnerability extend below the surface?

The male body as it appears in Mankell's work is primarily the site of trauma. In 1969, while still a new recruit to the Swedish police force, Wallander is stabbed and comes close to death: from the very beginning, then, his career threatens his bodily integrity. Despite this Wallander lives and breathes his job. In each novel his dedication to the case he is investigating is unstinting and his single-minded sense of purpose is emphasised by his total inability to take care of his own body. The life of a policeman is an uncompromising one and the costs are high. Wallander rarely appears to get enough sleep – in *One Step Behind* he is described as being 'so tired it was starting to feel like his natural state' (1997: 414) – and seems to be permanently on the brink of complete physical collapse. He experiences two significant health scares during the series. In *The Dogs of Riga* Wallander wakes during the night with chest pains (1992: 13ff.) and, assuming he is having a heart attack, seeks treatment at the hospital. The pains turn out not to be symptomatic of serious illness, but Wallander is still frightened by the episode and vows to make immediate adjustments: 'I've got to get my life sorted out. Soon. Now.' (1992: 25). Wallander utters similar sentiments with depressing regularity (see, for example, 1991: 27 and 1999: 266), yet in spite of his awareness of his need to initiate change, he seems incapable of actually doing so, as is demonstrated in *The White Lioness*:

I'll turn over a new leaf tomorrow, he thought, grimacing. He always put off the most important matters affecting his own life. When he was at work, on the other hand, he insisted on precisely the opposite approach. Always do the most important things first. He had a split personality. (1993: 181)

It is only when Mankell gives his character diabetes in *One Step Behind*, that Wallander actually manages to follow through on his good intentions, implementing a new regime of (relatively) healthy eating and moderate exercise; although he still permits his work commitments to interfere with a doctor's appointment (1997: 180).⁹

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Wallander's diabetes is the intense humiliation that characterises his reaction to his diagnosis. Wallander experiences his diabetes as 'something shameful' (1997: 30); it makes him feel like a failure and causes him self-disgust (1997: 34). The shame he associates with his illness is further emphasised by his unwillingness to tell anyone about it: the fact that he is a diabetic is 'his secret' (1997: 258). Wallander rarely comes across as being a particularly 'macho' character; indeed, he regularly admits to feeling scared and cries on numerous occasions. However, his silence and stoicism surrounding his illness are expressive of a well-established masculine sensibility that sees the body as something slightly distasteful, a thing to be conquered and dominated. To quote Jeff Hearn and Keith Pringle:

Evidence suggests that generally men neglect their health and that for some men at least their 'masculinity' is characterised by risk-taking, an ignorance of men's bodies, and reluctance to seek medical intervention for suspected health problems. (Hearn and Pringle, 2006: 48)

According to this way of thinking, concern for one's health is 'unmanly'. For Wallander it seems the central issue, again, is one of control: he simply cannot bring himself to confess to a weakness that he perceives as being his own fault. Wallander's diabetes is a source of vulnerability for him because it stems from his own body, of which he should really be the master. As Antony Easthope writes:

The masculine ego must master everything. If the physical world on the outside can be overcome as nature, on the inside it may be dominated as the body, and an idea of the body. (Easthope, 1986: 51)

Wallander's body, though, refuses to be dominated, clearly registering his psychic disintegration.

Wallander's reaction to his diabetes is not the only time he displays feelings of self-disgust. When he looks in the mirror he is often appalled by what he sees. In

Faceless Killers, horrified by the weight he has gained since his wife's departure, Wallander calls himself a 'flabby piece of shit' (1991: 27); while in *One Step Behind* 'the sight of his face ma[kes] him nauseated' (1997: 343). Wallander's mirrored image thus often serves as a focal point for his physical self-loathing. Mankell also uses Wallander's reflection, in a Lacanian sense, to draw attention to more serious problems with his identity. After Wallander shoots a suspect in the line of duty the trauma he experiences at the taking of a man's life is such that when he catches sight of his own reflection in a broken mirror he does not recognise himself (1993: 293). Instead of providing a sense of (albeit illusory) wholeness, the mirror, therefore, for Wallander becomes the locus of fragmentation and disruption. Rather than offering 'an anticipatory ideal of unity to which the ego will always aspire' (Grosz, 1994: 42), Wallander can barely identify his own reflected image. In the immediate aftermath of this failure to recognise himself, Wallander goes on to experience a complete mental and physical breakdown, the seriousness of which necessitates an extended leave of absence from policing. While on this leave of absence, Wallander visits the Caribbean and Thailand, where his body again becomes a site of compromising self-disgust as he revels in alcohol and casual sex. In Mankell's texts the male body is never figured as a source of (sexual) pleasure, as it is in Pelecanos' novels. Tiina Mäntymäki comments:

Both drinking and loose sexual relations are central vices in the traditional Nordic Lutheran imagery. Moreover, in these vices the body is closely involved. Thus, the body becomes the site of Wallander's moral collapse, a place that lives out and displays his crisis. (Mäntymäki, 2004: 266)

Mäntymäki sees significance in the fact that Wallander's 'moral collapse' occurs in a different symbolic landscape to that of Sweden, accusing the character of displaying a colonial attitude to the women with whom he has sex. She also finds evidence in the

texts to support a reading that Wallander engages in paedophilia (Mäntymäki, 2004: 267). However, this seems to be stretching the material, which states that Wallander used a succession of prostitutes, 'each one younger than the last' (1994: 10).¹⁰ More usefully, Andrew Nestingen regards the incident as a further example of Mankell's trademark equivocation, linking Wallander's sex tourism in *The Man Who Smiled* with the suicide that opens *Sidetracked*, the next novel in the series:

The connection between Wallander, the john, and the woman he sees immolate herself, a Caribbean prostitute, disrupts any uncomplicated notion that the vantage and proximity established through narrative monologue is a curative opportunity for identification with a good cop. Rather, we have ambivalence. (Nesting: 2008: 243-44)

Relating Wallander's private crises to wider structures of signification, Nestingen continues:

His [Wallander's] earnest struggles, burnout, and searching questions make him sympathetic, while his racist, sexist, and exploitative behaviours undermine that sympathy and elicit concern about what he represents as a public official. (Nesting, 2008: 250)

Again, then, this episode alerts the reader to the ambivalence in Wallander's representation and, coupled with other instances in the texts, such as his drink-driving, shows Wallander as more than just a simple, one-dimensionally heroic protagonist.

The novels are characterised by a blurring of boundaries, which also manifests itself in Wallander's relationship with the dead and the abject. Throughout the series Mankell places a constant stress on Wallander's loneliness and it is notable that he seems to spend more time in the company of the dead than the living. Wallander is shown to be aware of this, commenting in *Faceless Killers*, 'I'm searching for the slayers of the dead and can't even manage to pay attention to the living' (1991: 97). In *The White Lioness* Wallander describes his current case as having 'its own life, its

own energy' (1993: 81), while *The Fifth Woman* (1996) contains a reference to Wallander feeling 'as if he'd stabbed the investigation in the back' (1996: 214). Paradoxically, the investigation of death takes on a life of its own to the obsessive Wallander. Equally paradoxical is the fact that the death he investigates often gives him something to live for, as is exemplified in *One Step Behind* when the death of a colleague provides Wallander with the impetus he needs 'to start thinking about the future again' (1997: 21). In addition to his professional focus on the dead, Wallander's constant companion through the series is his deceased mentor Rydberg. As Gill Plain has observed, '[t]he ghostly haunting of the living by the dead is not an unfamiliar trope within crime fiction' (Plain, 2001: 99), and, once again, Mankell's work can be paralleled with that of Rankin, in which Rebus is regularly besieged by the spectral form of Jack Morton. Rydberg, whom Wallander refers to as 'the one who taught me everything I can claim to know' (1997: 19), dies of cancer sometime between the end of *Faceless Killers* and the start of *The Dogs of Riga* but his presence, or more accurately, absence, haunts the remaining novels. Wallander regularly appeals to the dead man for guidance and when this is not forthcoming is forced instead to rely upon wisdom passed onto him prior to Rydberg's demise (see for example 1992: 131, 163, 199 and 1998: 58, 188). Rydberg's influence is most noticeable in *The Dogs of Riga*, when Wallander almost seems to deify his former friend. Unwilling to believe that he alone can help Baiba Liepa to find her husband's killers, Wallander muses 'I'm just a simple police officer from Ystad...What you people need is a man like Rydberg' (1992: 182). Rydberg is thus characterised as much more than just a mentor: his words on policing are gospel to Wallander, and the fact that he is only physically present in one novel contributes greatly to his mythologisation by his protégé. In *The Man Who Smiled* Wallander fears that he will

eventually forget Rydberg, whom he considers 'the only real friend I've got. Dead or alive' (1994: 200).

Although this comment is indicative of the paucity of Wallander's social life, it is not exactly accurate. He does have a living, breathing friend – Sten Widén – although, in keeping with the one hundred percent mortality rate of Wallander's friends, Widén dies (again, of cancer) in *Before the Frost*. Wallander and Widén had been close friends in their youth, bound together by a mutual love of opera and shared dreams of pursuing this interest professionally. However, these dreams come to nothing and by the opening of *Faceless Killers* they have not seen each other in almost eleven years. Despite this gap Widén is happy to assist Wallander and his help also proves vital in *The White Lioness* and *The Man Who Smiled*. In keeping with his morbid sensibility Wallander, however, seems determined to consider the relationship as belonging to the past and dead, disregarding any evidence to the contrary. This suggests that Wallander's loneliness in terms of friendship is self-inflicted. Barriers of his own construction seem to stand in the way of any real sense of attachment – Widén is compartmentalised as belonging to the past, despite being an active part of Wallander's present and while Wallander admits that there is potential in his friendship with Ann-Britt Höglund, he is reluctant to rush into things (1997: 103, 137). He admits to experiencing some sense of camaraderie with the prosecutor, Per Åkeson, but, once again, this relationship is limited and qualified:

They had known each other for a long time, and over the years they had developed a relationship that went beyond the purely professional. Sometimes they would share confidences and seek each other's advice or help. Still, there was a boundary that they never overstepped. They would never really be close friends; they were not enough alike for that. (1996: 104)

The only person with whom Wallander enjoys an easy intimacy is Rydberg, yet this intimacy is only possible after his death and a remark at the start of *Faceless Killers* suggests that the relationship was not particularly close while Rydberg was alive. As Wallander surveys his fellow officers, Rydberg included, he thinks, '[a]ll of them were his colleagues. None of them was his close friend' (1991: 220). Despite this, Wallander still seems stubbornly unable to let the memory of the dead Rydberg go. In *Firewall* Mankell writes:

Almost every day he [Wallander] experienced a twinge of loss and sadness at Rydberg's absence. Those feelings would never leave him. (1998: 7-8)

Besides investigating murders and enjoying the company of a dead man, Wallander is repeatedly unable to prevent morbid thoughts about his work from pushing aside more pleasant personal considerations. His daydreaming about Baiba Liepa is never strong enough to withstand the assault of his work-related demons. In both *The White Lioness* and *Sidetracked* the imaginary Baiba is no match for the dead women Louise Åkerblom and Dolores Maria Santana:

He'd bought a CD of Puccini's Turandot. He put on the earphones, lay back on the sofa, and tried to think of Baiba Liepa. But instead, Louise Åkerblom's face kept filling his mind. (1993: 59)

He tried to push these thoughts away by remembering himself and Baiba in a hollow behind a dune at Skagen in Denmark. But the girl kept running through the field with her hair on fire. (1995: 75)

Just as he is haunted by the victims, Wallander also shares psychic space with those who commit crime; indeed this mental proximity between detective and felon is one of the reasons why he is so successful.¹¹ Throughout the series Wallander functions by imaginatively connecting with the killer he is seeking: he 'always created an image

of a criminal that he carried with him during an investigation' (1995: 144). Although this *modus operandi* does achieve results, it means that, to be effective, Wallander must enter into a close relationship with those he tracks. Indeed, the bond he forms with Yvonne Ander is so intense that years after Ander has committed suicide Linda accuses Wallander of being in love with her (2002: 44).¹²

According to Martin Swales, detectives 'exist in threatening proximity to the swamp of criminality and aberration' (Swales, 2000: xv). Wallander does more than just exist in proximity to Swales's contaminating swamp of criminality; he revels in it, actively embracing that which is abject. Elizabeth Grosz has stated that '[w]hile there is no escape...from mortality, from the corpse, these do not or need not impinge upon the everyday operations of the subject or body' (Grosz, 1994: 207). Yet for Wallander, corpses and mortality form the basis of his reality in a way that transcends the purely professional. Julia Kristeva defines the abject as that which 'does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite' and argues that it must be 'thrust aside in order to live' (Kristeva, 1980: 4 and 3). This is not the case for Wallander, who seems incapable of forming distinct boundaries between himself, his dead friend and the criminal element he pursues. Wallander is ineluctably drawn by the fascination of the abject, which 'simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject' (Kristeva, 1980: 5).

Mankell clearly links Wallander's inability to form coherent ego boundaries and the way in which his body verges upon collapse with the fate of the Swedish state itself. The Sweden that appears in Mankell's work is not the socially enlightened idyll of popular European (mis)conception; instead it is a country that seems to be teetering precariously on the edge of anarchy. Throughout the series Sweden is variously shown to be a territory ripe for exploitation by criminals from the former Soviet

Union; a centre for international terrorist conspiracies; and a country with an enormous immigration problem and a resulting escalation in racism and right-wing militias. This is in addition to home-grown serial killers and psychopaths. Mankell's depiction of Sweden is, therefore, strikingly at odds with the progressive, peaceful and prosperous nation most people imagine. From the very first pages of *Faceless Killers*, Mankell seems intent on destroying established notions of Sweden. When an elderly farmer wakes unexpectedly in the middle of the night he attempts to reassure himself that all is well: 'Everything is as it always is. After all, what could happen here?' (1991: 3) The farmer's belief in the inherent peacefulness of his surroundings is soon shattered – his neighbours have just been subjected to a horrific attack and it is the sound of one of them crying for help that originally disturbed his sleep. This episode sets the tone for the entire series, suggesting that Mankell's answer to the question 'what could happen here?' is an ominous 'anything'.

Throughout the novels Wallander is acutely aware of the dichotomy between Sweden's outward appearance and the reality that lies beneath. In *The Fifth Woman* he realises that:

The Sweden that was his, the country he had grown up in, that was built after the war, was not as solid as they had thought. Under the surface was quagmire. (1996: 174)

Nowhere is this disparity more obvious than in Wallander's own province, Skåne, in which the tranquil landscape is juxtaposed against the brutal reality of Wallander's professional experience:

The summer landscape seemed a surreal backdrop to his thoughts. Two men are axed to death and scalped, he thought. A young girl walks into a rape field and sets herself on fire. And all around me it's summertime. Skåne couldn't be more beautiful than this. There's a paradise hidden in every corner of this countryside. To find it all you have to do is keep your eyes open. But you might also glimpse hearses on the road. (1995: 172)

Wallander initially seems to be of the opinion that violent crime is something of a temporary aberration in his otherwise peaceful Skåne. To him, the province still speaks (literally) of mildness:

It was impossible to sound threatening with an accent like that, Wallander thought. He knew of no other dialect with so much gentleness built into it. (1992: 61)

Hints of this quieter Skåne are occasionally evident in the texts – in *The White Lioness* Wallander spends some time briefly investigating a case of horse rustling (1993: 250) – but, for the most part, Mankell depicts the province as being on the downward slope. Mankell's Skåne is increasingly home to the kinds of crime and violence once thought of as being an exclusively urban phenomenon. Provincialism, thus, seems to be no protection; in fact Skåne's geographical location at the southern tip of Sweden, bordering the Baltic Sea, plays a crucial part in facilitating the growth of crime rates. Bordered on three sides by water, Skåne's relative ease of access is why it appears as such alluring territory to foreign criminals. It also explains why the province has such an influx of immigrants. Skåne's lack of firm boundaries seems to have been something that appealed to Mankell when he began the series. In an interview with *The Guardian*, he commented that 'border areas have a dynamism all their own: they set off a reflex of unease' (Thomson, 2003: 21). Just as Skåne is geographically vulnerable, invisible boundaries, that Wallander seems to imagine as safely containing crime within an urban setting, are breached during the series. As Wallander observes in *Sidetracked*:

It was as though a dam inside him had burst, and he knew that there were no longer invisible lines dividing Sweden. The violence of the large cities had reached his own police district once and for all. The world had shrunk and expanded at the same time. (1995: 112-13)

As will be explored in more detail below, Mankell repeatedly invites his readers to question Wallander's perspective and judgement. Given this, the reader is forced to wonder how legitimate Wallander's concerns over the state of contemporary Sweden are. Wallander's vision of the nation is an apocalyptic one:

We ask ourselves what kind of world we live in, but it's too painful to face the truth. Maybe our worst fears have already been realised – maybe the justice system has collapsed. More and more people are feeling overlooked and superfluous, and that feeds the escalation of senseless violence we're seeing. Violence has become part of our daily reality. We complain about the way things are, but sometimes I think things are even worse than we're admitting. (1997: 398)

Communities are fragmented, young people are alienated and the police are incapable of making a lasting impact upon the situation. Against this nihilistic backdrop, Wallander eulogises the Sweden of the past, lamenting it as 'a lost paradise' (1991: 232). Interestingly, Wallander's rose-tinted rhetoric is given short shrift by his daughter when she joins the police force. Linda observes that constant complaining seems to be a key component of being a police officer:

She had never heard of a positive 'state of affairs', there was invariably something to lament. A shipment of sub-standard uniforms, detrimental changes in patrol cars or radio systems, a rise in crime statistics, poor recruitment levels and so on. In fact, this continuing discussion of the 'state of affairs', of how this era was different from the era before, seemed to be central to life on the force. (2002: 37)

As will be discussed later, Mankell invests Linda with more credibility than her father, who, by contrast to his grounded and sensible daughter, occasionally displays a naivety that is little short of breathtaking. In the short story 'The Pyramid', for example, he expresses complete shock that small aircraft are able to fly under the radar and bring drugs into Sweden from across the Baltic Sea. An incredulous

Wallander remarks 'I thought Swedish airspace was secure' (1999: 253), a comment which has come to sound even more hopelessly optimistic in a post 9/11 context.

Are Wallander's complaints, then, simply the ramblings of a petulant old man? Statistically speaking, modern Sweden still seems like an idyllic place to live. Life expectancy at birth is currently estimated at 80.51 years old per total population, higher than that of both the United Kingdom and America, while crime rates remain low. According to the Seventh U.N. Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (1998-2000, the same time-frame as most of the novels) Sweden does not even make it onto a list of the sixty countries with the highest totals of crime per capita, although both Britain and America do.¹³ And yet, Wallander's fears seem not only to have sounded a familiar note amongst Mankell's readers, but they also speak to something uncertain at the heart of Swedish society. Mankell is not the first Swedish crime writer to portray a nation in flux. His texts follow on from the tradition of bleak, socially-critical crime fiction established by Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö. Sjöwall and Wahlöö published ten Martin Beck novels between 1965 to 1975, all of which are shaped by a keen sense of political awareness. While much less radical than his predecessors, Mankell's texts share Sjöwall and Wahlöö's concerns over the state of modern Sweden, and the irascible, work-obsessed Beck provides a blueprint for Wallander's characterisation.

Although Sweden is widely regarded as a peaceable nation, recent years have witnessed the assassination of two of its leading political figures. On the 28th of February 1986 the then Prime Minister Olof Palme was shot and killed while walking home from the cinema with his wife. Palme's death, and the resulting failure of the police to catch the person or persons responsible, had a huge impact on the Swedish national psyche. The assassination seems to have engendered something of a loss of

innocence in contemporary Sweden, forcing its citizens to contemplate both their own vulnerability and the fragility of their society for the first time. Indeed, so extensive were the repercussions of the assassination that its significance has been compared to that of the murder of John F. Kennedy in 1963.¹⁴ Swedish society was further destabilized by another political assassination on the 11th of September 2003 when its foreign minister, Anna Lindh, was stabbed to death while shopping in central Stockholm. A recent account of racism in Sweden by the sociologist Allan Pred also lends credence to Wallander's fears. Like Wallander, Pred undermines the established image of Sweden:

In hidden or less apparent forms, as well as in blatantly open forms, racisms are currently flourishing *even* in Sweden, a country long stereotyped by Western intellectuals and progressives as a paradise of social enlightenment, as an international champion of social justice, as the very model of solidarity and equality, as the world's capital of good intentions and civilized behavior toward others. (Pred, 2000: 6, italics his)

Pred, too, sees Sweden as being in the grip of crisis and positions issues of identity at the crux of this crisis, stating that, in recent times, '[t]he very nature of the Swedish state, and what it means to be a Swede, was thrown up for grabs, cast into personal and collective confusion...' (Pred, 2000: 15). In the epigraph to this chapter, Pred suggests that changing socio-economic and political circumstances have led, inexorably, to ontological crises both at state and individual level. Mankell's fiction carries a similarly pessimistic message, explicated through the figure of a detective who can recognise neither himself nor the country he lives in. Both Wallander's body and that of the nation are presented as sites of contamination and fragmentation.

Emotional Policing

Kurt Wallander epitomizes the type of man whose most consuming relationship is with his job, and, in a curious inversion, while he is able to use his emotions to facilitate detection, his approach to his private life is principally based upon rationality. Towards the start of *Faceless Killers* Wallander, in a moment of interesting self-referentiality, makes a depressing observation about police and their personal lives:

He wondered why almost every policeman was divorced. Why their wives left them. Sometimes, when he read a crime novel, he discovered with a sigh that things were just as bad in fiction. Policemen were divorced. That's all there was to it. (1991: 27)

Commenting on American police procedurals, Panek states that '[p]olice work exempts officers from the pleasures of common humanity – friends, family, sleep, relaxation' (Panek, 2003: 164). That police work necessarily equates with domestic misery is borne out by the example of Wallander. He is forty-two years old when the reader first meets him and has just been left by his wife, Mona. Although, in an early instance of his characteristic emotional myopia, he professes to be surprised at Mona's departure he also concedes that he was aware of problems in the relationship but chose to ignore them (1991: 44). The fact that his primary allegiance was not to his family is later emphasised in *Firewall*:

Once, when he was still married to Mona and Linda was a young child, Mona had turned up at his office, seriously cross, and told him he had to make a choice between his family and his work. That time he had immediately gone home with her. But there had been many times he had chosen to stay on and work. (1998: 208)

In the (self-inflicted) absence of an emotionally sustaining private life, Wallander's work is all he has and, accordingly, as has been shown above, his entire sense of self

is contingent upon his identity as a policeman. He may answer his office phone in *Faceless Killers* with the words 'This is Papa' (1991: 19) – he had just been speaking to his daughter, Linda – but such a slip is rare: Wallander is a policeman above all else. His mentality is resolutely shaped by his job and he approaches his personal life in a more rigidly rational way even than he approaches his cases. To Wallander, human relationships are problems to be figured out by use of his policeman's logic. As Linda observes of her father in *Before the Frost*:

From his perspective, life was nothing but a heap of dense problems, the ones in his private life, unsolvable, all to be addressed with the force and fury of a ravenous bear in his work. (2002: 26)

Despite the dominance of his professional identity, phrases such as 'he turned into a policeman again' (1995: 316 and 1996: 138) pepper the novels and create a false dichotomy between Wallander the man and Wallander the detective. These references usually occur when Wallander has been considering some personal problem and suggest that work functions for him as a form of emotional self defence. In the absence of any obvious solution to the ongoing problems he experiences with his elderly father, Wallander takes refuge in the routine nature of his job. In *The White Lioness* he realises that his work commitments can be utilised as an effective excuse for evading his filial responsibilities (1993: 185), while in *The Fifth Woman* work distracts him from his grief following his father's death:

A brief feeling of homelessness came over Wallander as he thought about Rome and his father. But he pushed the thoughts aside. He was a policeman. He would grieve later, not now. (1996: 157)

By comparison to his troubled home-life, his job as a detective seems much less complicated and also affords the opportunity for him to be decisively in charge. In *Faceless Killers* Mankell writes:

Now he was in motion. He was a policeman again. His anxiety about his daughter and his wife would have to wait. Right now he had to begin the arduous hunt for a murderer. (1991: 21)

The phrase 'in motion' contrasts with the passive position Wallander finds himself in as regards his family:

I've got to accept that my wife has *left me*. I've got to admit that *all I can do is wait* for Linda to contact me herself. I've got to take life as it comes. (1991: 30, italics mine)

Wallander here clearly perceives himself to be at the mercy of the women in his life. When it comes to his personal affairs, Wallander is never in control: Mona leaves him; he sees and speaks to Linda when she can accommodate him in her schedule and even when he meets Baiba Liepa in *The Dogs of Riga* he is still in a dependent position, waiting for her to decide whether or not she wants the relationship to proceed. Work, by contrast, provides Wallander with a much needed source of agency. It is, therefore, unsurprising that Wallander tends to conflate his professional and domestic concerns. Contemplating a matter to do with his daughter, father or ex-wife often leads him back onto the safer territory of his professional responsibilities. In *The Fifth Woman* Wallander experiences a feeling of intense powerlessness in the wake of his father's death. This feeling only dissipates when a suspect refuses to answer his questions, prompting Wallander to get out his badge and assert his legal authority (1996: 226 and 229). When faced with the complexities of his relationship with his daughter, Wallander again uses his job as a source of recompense. Instead of

dwelling on the gulf between them, he turns to the less vexatious issue of the murder he is currently investigating:

I want to see my daughter, he thought. I miss her so much at times it hurts. I have to find a black man missing a finger, especially if he's the one who killed Louise Åkerblom. I need to know: *why* did you kill her? (1993: 94, italics Mankell's)

In *Faceless Killers* Wallander once more seems to be defeated by personal issues, the intricacy of which dwarfs his police work. A personal 'to do' list ends with an incongruous reference to his current case:

I've got to talk to Mona, he thought. I've got to talk to her after all that's happened. And I've got to talk to my daughter. I have to visit my father and see what I can do for him. On top of all that I really ought to catch the murderers... (1991: 80)

This inclusion of the fact that he must apprehend two brutal killers almost as a throwaway remark at the end of such a list is a clear indication of how difficult Wallander perceives emotional interaction with members of his family to be. Michael Kaufman has stated that 'masculinity has become a form of alienation' (1994: 150), and the character of Wallander typifies the kind of man who cannot vocalise his need for emotional interaction. While his job never seems easy, he displays a competency in his investigative work that is absent from other facets of his life. Although Wallander regularly despairs of ever understanding contemporary Sweden and the mentality of those who perpetrate crime, it still seems he is more comfortable trying to comprehend the issues associated with his job than he is attempting to unravel the mysteries of personal relations. As Wallander comments:

I devote myself to trying to catch and then put away criminals guilty of various crimes. Sometimes I succeed, often I don't. But when one of these

days I pass away, I'll have failed in the biggest investigation of all. Life will still be an insoluble riddle. (1993: 94)

This quotation epitomizes the stark juxtaposition of professional success (albeit qualified) against private failure that characterises Wallander's life. Work, for him, is a coping mechanism, which provides an explanation for why he is repeatedly unable to give up his job despite the gruelling toll it exacts upon him.

Wallander's professional reliance on his almost uncanny power of presentiment stands in contrast to his very rational approach to relationships. The key to Wallander's brilliance as a policeman is his intuition. Although he asserts that relying upon unproven feelings is 'an extremely unreliable trait in a policeman' (1991: 188), he almost always gives credence to the irrational thoughts that enter his mind and he is usually right to do so. Wallander's willingness to privilege intuition over reason is clearly demonstrated at the conclusion of *The Fifth Woman*, when he thwarts the serial killer Yvonne Ander's attempt to claim another victim:

Wallander was never sure whether he consciously understood the situation, but he reacted as though everything was perfectly clear...Wallander saw the woman grab the man from behind. She almost lifted him off the ground. Wallander sensed more than understood that she intended to throw him in front of the train coming in on the other track. (1996: 413)

While the reliance of male detectives upon intuitive capacities is by no means uncommon in crime fiction, such ability usually takes the form of hunches or gut instinct. Here, Mankell is stretching the form, endowing his detective with an almost feminised instinct that defies rational explanation. Wallander is further distanced from the model of phallic masculinity by virtue of his well-developed capacity for empathy. In several of his cases Wallander develops a particularly close rapport with young people he encounters through his work: Stefan Fredman, the murderer in

Sidetracked, for example, or Isa Edengren, a key witness in *One Step Behind*. Wallander's desire to understand and help these adolescent characters makes him function in an almost paternal way towards them, which is ironic given his fraught and occasionally neglectful relationship with his biological daughter.

The Autistic Detective

In a compelling article Berthold Schoene has recently argued that many of the behaviours once valorised as being characteristic of traditional masculinity are now regarded as potentially pathological. Schoene states:

Many characteristic male traits, which used to constitute the gender's strength and thus legitimize its hegemonic status, tend now to be recognized as symptoms of a variety of psychopathologies, mental disorders and cognitive impairments, most notably Asperger's Syndrome or high-functioning autism. (Schoene, 2008: 378)

While Schoene is by no means suggesting that all men are autistic, he argues that it is:

...useful to apprehend the system of patriarchal masculinity as an ideological apparatus that, by recruiting men to identify against the feminine, molds them into emotionally and cognitively impaired monads. (Schoene, 2008: 379)

Schoene uses Bret Easton Ellis's novel *American Psycho* to illustrate his argument but his thesis can readily be applied to Mankell's work – it seems no great stretch to apply the label 'emotionally and cognitively impaired monad' to Wallander, or, indeed, to other contemporary Euro-cops.¹⁵ Indeed, there is a strong case to be made for including many of the genre's most influential characters – Sherlock Holmes, for example, or Poe's Auguste Dupin, both of whom are characterised by an obsessive

personality in regard to their work and a singular sense of detachment when it comes to more or less everything else – on the autistic spectrum.

Although the above section has just dealt with the way in which Wallander utilises an emotion-based approach to his work, this need not preclude a reading of his character as borderline autistic. Rather, the fact that Wallander can be both intuitive and, to some degree, autistic is yet another example of his trademark ambivalence (and, indeed, this intuitive potential does not carry over into his personal relationships). Wallander revels in the routine nature of his work, enjoying the opportunity to be systematic and precise, and he seems most at ease when he is contemplating a case, armed with his notebook and pen. For Wallander there is comfort to be found in the mental discipline required to sift through data:

Wallander felt a great sense of security in this methodical and meticulous scrutiny of details. To an outside observer such work would probably seem unbearably tedious. But that was not the case for the three police officers. The solution and the truth might be found through the combination of the most inconsequential information. (1991: 220)

Wallander is a man routinely defeated by the minutiae of everyday life. His inability to perform emotionally in the domestic sphere is matched by his constant struggle to complete even the most basic of practical household chores, such as doing the laundry (1997: 35). Yet the professional Wallander is surprisingly organized and efficient. It is only when she too joins the Ystad Police Force that Linda Wallander fully comes to appreciate her father's aptitude for his position:

She had always been under the impression that he was good at his job, a skilful investigator, but today she realised he had talents she hadn't even imagined. Among other things she was impressed by his ability to keep so many facts in his head, scrupulously arranged according to time and place. (2002: 261)

Wallander's singularity of focus and isolation are both suggestive of some form of psychopathology, which, although useful in his career, complicates his personal life.

Mankell further undermines Wallander's mental stability by endowing him with a problematic relationship with his father. In keeping with Mankell's pessimistic attitude towards relationships between men of different generations, that between Wallander and his father is presented as complex and unsatisfying. Throughout the texts, the contact between Wallander and his unnamed father is characterised by a strong degree of mutual antagonism, most of which stems from the elder Wallander's open hostility towards his son's job. Thanks to this refusal to approve of his son's choice of career and validate his sense of adult masculinity, Wallander's character displays patterns of behaviour that are indicative of unresolved Oedipal issues. Throughout the series, he is repeatedly represented as childish. From Wallander's tantrum throwing to his general emotional immaturity, Mankell creates the impression of a character whose psychological development has been in some way arrested. Given that his relationship with his father is predicated upon insecurity, it is unsurprising that Wallander is presented as being unable to establish mutually supportive emotional bonds with Martinsson, his surrogate son. This aspect of the Wallander novels provides an obvious point of contrast with Pelecanos' texts, in which the approval offered by Darius Strange of his son's work and life choices provides Derek with a stable and robust sense of self. In turn, Derek expends much energy attempting to bolster the self-esteem of the boys on his community baseball team. Such a trajectory of male ego validation by other men is absent from Mankell's fiction.

Mankell's Narrative Strategies

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines autism as 'a condition in which a person is morbidly self-absorbed and *out of contact with reality*.'¹⁶ Given that Wallander can be read as an autistic character it therefore seems prudent to question just how reliable he is as a series focaliser. While the device of an unreliable narrator is not without precedent in crime fiction – one immediately thinks of Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) – Mankell goes further than this, basing an entire series upon the perspective of a man whose judgement becomes increasingly questionable. Not only does this strategy reflect how Mankell pushes the boundaries of the form, but it also provides a point of marked contrast between his work and that of Pelecanos and Rankin. Like Mankell, neither Pelecanos nor Rankin employs first-person narration, preferring instead to write mostly from the point of view of their detectives, but not to be exclusively limited to it. However, neither gives the reader any major cause to doubt the veracity of Strange or Rebus' thoughts and opinions. As a result of this ambiguity, Wallander comes across as a more compelling and complex character than either Strange or Rebus – one whom the reader can never quite be sure about.

One of the incidents that most obviously calls Wallander's judgement into question occurs in *Firewall*, when he is shocked to discover that Martinsson, far from being a loyal foot soldier and potential protégée figure, is actually 'going after the throne' (1998: 383), conspiring against Wallander in a bid to succeed him. To Wallander this act of betrayal is almost impossible to believe, despite the fact that Mankell subtly sows its seeds from early in the series. From the very beginning of

their working relationship Wallander is aware of Martinsson's drive, which he initially sees as a positive characteristic:

As a police officer, Martinsson was impulsive and sometimes careless, but he often had good ideas and his ambition meant that he worked tirelessly when he thought he could see a solution to a problem. (1992: 15)

Martinsson's clear desire for professional advancement, coupled with his proficiency in the areas of modern policing in which Wallander is deficient, combine to make him an all-too-obvious threat. Yet Wallander is oblivious to danger. When he does consider who amongst his colleagues might be after his position his suspicion falls upon Ove Hansson, the station's inveterate gambler and a man who cannot handle any form of responsibility (1994: 261). In fact, Wallander does not realise the potential challenge posed by Martinsson until Ann-Britt Höglund explicitly alerts him to the situation. With more perception than that displayed by her boss, Höglund tells Wallander:

Sometimes you really surprise me...You see and hear everything. You're a great policeman and you know how to keep your investigative team motivated. But at the same time it's as if you see nothing that's going on around you. (1998: 382)

With typical guilelessness Wallander interprets Höglund's interference here as an attempt to help him, whereas Linda, in *Before the Frost*, takes a much less generous view of Höglund, seeing her as a cunning manipulator who is herself looking forward to Wallander's retirement and is hopeful that she might succeed him.

Wallander's fallibility as focaliser is thrown into sharpest relief when Linda moves to the centre of the narrative.¹⁷ At the conclusion of *Firewall* Linda announces her intention to become a police officer to her somewhat amazed father. The surprise with which Wallander greets the news itself calls into question his observational

powers, given that Linda's career choice is hinted at as early as *The Fifth Woman* (1996: 138 and 223). Despite his shock, Wallander is enthusiastic, telling her 'I think you'll be just the kind of police officer we're going to need in the future' (1998: 533). As well as feeling pleased, Wallander also experiences a sense of personal vindication at Linda's news, interpreting her decision to follow in his footsteps as an endorsement of his own choice of career – whereas in the past his job has kept him from his family, work now unites him and his daughter. Where father and daughter immediately diverge, however, is their attitude to Ann-Britt. Höglund makes her first appearance in *The Man Who Smiled*. Introduced as 'an unusually promising police officer' (1994: 45), her youth, talent and gender immediately ruffle the feathers of Ystad's male detectives. Wallander is initially uncomfortable with Höglund's attempts to cast him as a mentor figure; yet he slowly warms to the role and realises that he too can learn from her, benefiting from talking work through with someone capable of offering a fresh perspective. It is Wallander's confidence in Höglund that legitimizes her presence on the team and gradually the two develop a close rapport; indeed in *Before the Frost* Linda notes with distaste that Höglund is always at her father's side (2002: 105). Seeing Wallander and Höglund through Linda's eyes is an interesting and informative experience for the reader. In the novel Wallander seems heavily reliant upon Ann-Britt, specifically requesting her presence at a crime scene (2002: 120), while for her part, Höglund appears confident and self-assured, untroubled by the antipathy that characterises her interaction with Wallander Junior. At one point in the novel Linda suggests that things between Höglund and her father were once more than platonic. 'I still wonder what my father saw in you when he courted you a few years ago', she thinks to herself (2002: 239), offering a tantalising glimpse of a relationship Mankell otherwise chooses not to detail (although, in *The Man Who*

Smiled, Wallander does note that Höglund is attractive [1994: 87 and 173]). Mankell similarly chooses not to explain the origins of Höglund and Linda's very obvious mutual dislike. The two barely speak in *Before the Frost*. Höglund tends to ignore Linda's presence (2002: 166 and 260), while Linda takes refuge in a series of (unspoken) bitchy observations about Höglund's weight and heavy use of make-up (120, 239). Clearly Linda is jealous of the bond between Höglund and her father, which does lend credence to the idea that they may at one time have been romantically involved and also contributes to the unhealthy, almost incestuous closeness that exists between father and daughter. Linda's antipathy towards Höglund could, of course, prejudice her judgement. However, as will be shown more fully below, Mankell depicts Linda as a much more stable and mature character than her father, which suggests trustworthiness and perception.

When she accuses him of seeing 'nothing that's going on around you' (1998: 382), Höglund implies that Wallander's myopia is restricted to interaction with other people, and, as has already been demonstrated, the texts are replete with examples of him conspicuously failing to read emotional and social situations correctly. Professionally speaking, though, Wallander usually seems to be astute. However, on occasion Mankell does suggest that his perspicacity may not be all it seems. Upon returning from Latvia in *The Dogs of Riga*, Wallander makes reference to his own lack of awareness regarding the situation in the former Soviet Union:

He knew that he was not the kind of man who consciously surrounded himself with lies, but he had begun to ask himself whether his ignorance of what the world actually looked like was in itself a sort of lie, even though it was founded in naivety rather than a conscious effort to cut himself off. (1992: 321)

Again, the impression given is one of damaging tunnel vision and an important issue raises its head – for if Wallander is genuinely ignorant of ‘what the world actually looked like’, how can the reader trust his assessments of Sweden? Once one starts looking, other small inconsistencies appear in the texts. Although Wallander constantly strives for understanding of the world in which he lives, Mankell creates the impression that his protagonist is hopelessly out of touch with the zeitgeist. Even as a young man, in the short story ‘Wallander’s First Case’, surrounded by long-haired hippies and peace protesters in 1969, the neatly-presented and straight-laced Wallander can only think of his career with the police. In *Before the Frost* Wallander says, by way of reaction to the killing of Birgitta Medberg, ‘I can’t see that you’d get murdered for knocking on the wrong door’ (2002: 118). Yet this is exactly what happened in one of his earlier cases. In *The White Lioness* the estate agent Louise Åkerblom becomes lost and stops at a house occupied by the killer Anatoli Konovalenko to ask for directions: ‘I can always knock, she thought. That doesn’t cost anything’ (1993: 8). Konovalenko shoots her in the head. While Mankell has admitted to the presence of textual discrepancies throughout the series (1999: 1), it is impossible to know when and where these mistakes are deliberate and are supposed to be on the part of Wallander rather than his creator. The fact, however, that Mankell deploys various strategies to undercut his leading man clearly indicates a degree of intentionality. Not only is the reader invited to doubt Wallander through the interjections of Höglund and Linda, but Mankell himself occasionally uses a tone of gentle mockery towards Wallander. In *The Dogs of Riga*, for example, Wallander is lost when attempting to negotiate an investigative procedure without a handy Rydberg-ism appropriate to the situation:

He ransacked his memory to try to recall any words of wisdom from Rydberg about the difficulties of tailing people, but was forced to conclude he had not expressed any views on the art of shadowing. (1992: 169)

When Mankell writes in *One Step Behind* that, after three years of working closely together, Wallander thinks that Höglund might be 'on her way to becoming his new partner' (1997: 137) it again seems as if he is inviting (an albeit small) laugh at his detective's expense. The way in which Mankell uses fog, which, as Andrew Nestingen has observed 'figures prominently as a symbol throughout the series' (2008: 237), is also relevant here. In many of the novels Wallander's sight is literally obscured by fog and other instances of inclement weather (2008: 238). It does not seem unreasonable, therefore, to question the clarity of Wallander's wider vision.

By subtly undercutting Wallander's judgement, seriousness and vision, Mankell again presents him as a relatively unheroic hero – Wallander is not a super-cop and his occasional tendency to read a situation incorrectly emphasises that he is flawed and fallible. However, once Mankell starts to question Wallander it is difficult to decide where to stop. Commenting on Agatha Christie's use of the murderous Dr. Shepherd as the narrator of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, Martin Priestman states:

...the novel works interestingly as a critique of the narrative function in fiction more generally: with the collapse of the 'reliable narrator', other assumptions about literature as a mouthpiece of univocal authority can also be felt to crumble. (Priestman, 1998: 21)

The quotation can aptly be applied to the Wallander novels, in which the compromised position of the guiding, male authority figure makes perfect sense against the semi-apocalyptic backdrop Mankell presents. Once again, we are reminded of Thomas Byers' theorising of the contemporary era as one in which 'the general collapse of master narratives' is occurring (1995: 6). In Mankell's fiction not

only are master narratives collapsing, but those who narrate them are in a similarly precarious position.

Inheriting the Mantle: Linda Wallander

In the first few novels of the series Linda Wallander, who is at this point in her twenties, is very much a minor character, occupying a peripheral space in the narrative. When Linda is mentioned in these early texts she is usually referred to simply as 'Wallander's daughter'; Mankell's choice not to use her first name rendering her as little more than problematic emotional baggage for her father rather than a character in her own right. Throughout the novels Linda remains very much an unknown quantity to Wallander, which is ironic given the insight she provides to him. Emotionally estranged since Linda's attempted suicide at the age of fifteen, the series is a tale of rapprochement between father and daughter; but as the two become closer the relationship between them reverses, with Linda increasingly taking on the parental role to Wallander's child-like figure.

Mankell's depiction of Linda suggests that she possesses an emotional well-roundedness that her father conspicuously lacks, and her (painful) awareness that Wallander prioritised work over his family implies that she is unlikely to make the same mistake of over-investing in her job at the expense of everything else in her life. Hence the reader is perhaps more inclined to trust her judgement. Of the two Wallanders it is she who is the more mature and balanced. Following Wallander's breakdown in *The Man Who Smiled* Linda provides the curative female company he

desperately seeks, restoring her father's mental and physical health.¹⁸ Here it appears that the roles of parent and child have been reversed.

There are several child-like aspects to Wallander's character. As has already been mentioned, he is short-tempered, with a propensity towards tantrums. Mankell also creates a sense that Wallander is, professionally, up against horrors of his own over-active imagination. Throughout the series monstrous criminals hide in dark places and although this vagueness is meant to contribute to atmosphere, it also makes Wallander appear scared of bogeymen lurking in the shadows, which again undercuts the validity of his perspective.¹⁹ When Wallander is afraid, it is Linda who provides a stable source of unconditional love and support for her troubled and emotionally needy father. Wallander displays candid enthusiasm when Linda contacts him, which is noted and appreciated by his daughter, who tells him, '[t]hat's the best thing about you...you're always so glad to see me' (1995: 142). Wallander sleeps better when Linda stays with him in his flat (1992: 225 and 1995: 267) and she also energises him (1995: 142 and 256). As Mankell writes in *Sidetracked*, '[h]e was rested, his fatigue was gone and his thoughts rose easily and soared on the updraughts inside him' (1995: 270). Wallander only seems to abandon his trademark dour pessimism when Linda is around. Most tellingly of all, in *The White Lioness*, Mankell writes that Wallander 'felt more secure with her' (200). While the closeness between father and daughter is clearly a positive thing, Mankell, in keeping with his tone of ambivalence, does suggest that there is a downside to such intense emotional reliance on one's children. As a consequence of his dependency upon Linda, Wallander is left devastated when she returns to her normal life after visiting Ystad. After putting her on a train back to Stockholm, Mankell writes that for Wallander:

The station seemed terribly desolate. For a moment he felt like someone who was lost or abandoned, utterly powerless. He wondered how he could go on. (1996: 226)

Linda's depiction shows she is well aware of the possible dangers of being stifled by her father's affections:

Linda wondered if following in his footsteps and becoming a police officer was going to be the greatest mistake of her life. Why did I do it? she asked herself. He's going to crush me with all the kindness, understanding and love – even jealousy – he should really be giving to another woman and not to his own daughter. (2002: 223)

The relationship between father and daughter here takes on an almost incestuous intensity that is borne out of the fact that Linda is the only outlet Wallander has for his emotions. An earlier incident, in *Firewall*, when Wallander experiences 'a pinch of irritation and jealousy' at the thought of Linda with a boyfriend (1998: 53), also suggests something potentially unhealthy in Wallander's interaction with his daughter, which is in turn matched by Linda's jealousy of Höglund. However, in keeping with the theme of Linda being more mature than her father, she seems to have a better idea about what Wallander needs than he himself does. While Wallander has little or no insight into his daughter's private life, he acknowledges, 'she sees right through me...I'm an open book' (1998: 52). While Linda provides reassurance and security for her father, he is, by contrast, a source of concern for her. Linda frequently worries about her father's loneliness (2002: 17 and 106), even going so far as to berate him for his non-existent sex life (2002: 228).

Despite their differences, Linda and Kurt Wallander also have much in common. Even from her early infrequent appearances, Mankell emphasises the parallels that exist between father and daughter. In *The Dogs of Riga* he writes:

It dawned on him [Wallander] that Linda was very much like her father. He couldn't put his finger on it, but he had the feeling he could hear his own voice as he listened to her. History was repeating itself: he recognised his own complicated relationship with his father echoed in his conversation with his daughter. (1992: 104)

It is in *Before the Frost* that Linda's similarities with her father become most striking. In terms of temperament the two are so alike that living together quickly becomes a strain – following one particularly intense confrontation Linda tells a friend, '[m]y father and I are like two fighting cocks' (2002: 220). Yet the two seem to be evenly matched. When Wallander disparagingly compares Linda's presence to 'having a ball constantly bouncing up and down by my side', Linda sharply retorts 'At least I can still bounce. More than some people I know' (2002: 258-59). Both Wallanders are irritable and impatient and both demonstrate (or are suggested to have demonstrated) a propensity towards violence. When her father makes her cry, a frustrated Linda throws an ashtray at him, hitting him on the head and drawing blood (2002: 344). Throughout the series, the issue of Wallander's own domestic violence toward his ex-wife Mona is ambiguously rendered. Both *Faceless Killers* and *Sidetracked* imply that while Wallander may have harboured violent feelings during his marriage, he did not give rein to them. However, in *The Fifth Woman*, Wallander admits to having struck Mona, causing her to fall and hit her head on the doorframe (1996: 193). Here, context seems crucial: *The Fifth Woman* is a novel about unpunished male aggression. It features a serial killer, Yvonne Ander, who establishes herself as judge, jury and executioner towards men who have abused their partners. It seems fitting, therefore, that Mankell would choose this novel in which to reveal more about Wallander's own marital violence.

Fortunately for Linda she also takes after her father in other, less negative ways. The timing of Linda's announcement that she will be joining the police is

significant, coming as it does at the end of *Firewall*, a novel in which the issue of Wallander's heir is addressed. This suggests to the reader that, despite Martinsson's intrigues and the steady progression of Höglund, it will be Linda who assumes Wallander's spiritual mantle once he retires. In *Before the Frost*, Linda the newly qualified cadet displays many of the attributes that have made her father such a success. Like Wallander, Linda has a keenly developed intuition (2002: 71 and 301) and she shares his sharp powers of observation (2002: 150). She also demonstrates a disregard for proper procedure, breaking and entering on two separate occasions, and a tendency to be too self-reliant: at three points during the novel she puts herself in danger by acting alone (2002: 183, 216 and 346), much to her father's chagrin. Linda notes with admiration her father's ability to handle information (2002: 261) and she, too, seems to possess this gift of being able to unpack the often complicated details of a case. Employing a turn of phrase that could be equally well applied to her father, Mankell writes that, 'Linda picked up her story with both hands and unfolded it as carefully as she was able; all in the right order' (2002: 121). Linda inherits many of her father's personality traits but rather than just straightforwardly replicating self-destructive patterns of behaviour she is characterised by a Butlerian sense of possibility. In *Gender Trouble* Judith Butler argues that gender is a performance we are each compelled to repeat. Butler states that 'all signification takes place within the orbit of a compulsion to repeat; "agency", then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition' (Butler, 1990: 185). Within this framework, Linda's potential is clear. Rather than offering a male successor who simply replicates Wallander's damaging example, Mankell eschews masculinity, turning instead to a female inheritor, whose variations in reiterative practice offer a space for

'reconfiguration and redeployment' (1990: 185). Slavoj Žižek also notes the potential implicit in Mankell's use of Linda:

This appears to be something new in the history of detective fiction: a series of novels that take place in the same locale, but in which the principal investigator, the focus of the reader's identification, shifts from father to daughter, then to another colleague [Stefan Lindman in *The Return of the Dancing Master*]. The effect is again that of parallax: the perspective shifts, and in being deprived of a single point of view, the reader gains a whole family, a collective identification bound together by a dual sense of vulnerability and solidarity. (Žižek, 2003: 24)

Žižek's words remind the reader of how Mankell works against generic norms in his novels. He deprives his audience of easy certainties and, by doing so, destabilises masculine authority in his texts, while also mapping out new ground for series fiction, which, in his hands, has the capacity to evolve into something unexpected and potentially radical.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that, although Mankell may initially appear much less concerned with issues of masculinity than George Pelecanos, male identity is, in fact, at the heart of the fiction. Where Pelecanos is a prescriptive writer, offering a clear model of how a man should behave, Mankell avoids such didacticism: 'the Wallander novels do not posit a rosy social democratic solution to the problems they narrate' (Nestingen, 2008: 249). Instead, Mankell's work is defined by an ambivalent sensibility that skilfully reflects not only the divisions within contemporary Swedish society, but also the postmodern erosion of the self. Like Pelecanos, therefore, Mankell documents crisis. The distinction between the two is that in Mankell's work

this crisis tends to register below surface level. Mankell represents Wallander as a character riven by psychological conflict and bodily trauma, the figure of the detective acting as an extended metaphor for the Swedish state itself. Mankell has described the series as '[n]ovels about the Swedish [a]nxiety' (Mankell, 1999: 1); but no less than this they are novels about male anxiety in the face of this transformation of the known world. The texts show Wallander attempting to negotiate this new territory, 'rethink[ing] what it means to be a police officer because the parameters have changed' (1997: 43). Although Wallander consciously and conscientiously strives to understand the society he polices, he finds himself increasingly baffled and unable to offer answers. Yet Andrew Nestingen sees this confusion as part of Wallander's appeal to readers, stating that '[i]f Holmes's magisterial reasoning epitomized the Victorian ego's self-regard, Wallander is the detective for the "era of the ego's exhaustion"' (Nesting, 2008: 225). Nestingen's words here echo Thomas Byers' observations about 'the general collapse of master narratives' (Byers, 1995: 6) and it is the fact that Mankell is so successful at portraying this collapse that indicates the severity of crisis in his novels. For all the violence and nihilism of Pelecanos' texts, Derek Strange navigates his way through a world that he can at least understand, whereas this understanding is absent from Mankell's novels. Pelecanos' texts offer a solution of some kind to the problems facing American men. However, Mankell does not posit a nationally specific salve for the ills of contemporary Sweden. As will be seen in the next chapter, this reluctance, or incapacity, to provide answers to the rhetoric of crisis employed in their texts is an important point of comparison between the work of Mankell and Rankin. While remaining mindful that '[t]here is no one Europe' (Hearn and Pringle, 2006: 12) and that there are important distinctions between the two writers, the novels of Mankell and Rankin have much in

common, as is most obviously represented in their depiction of competing modes of masculinity and in the masochistic lineage that exists between Wallander and Rebus. This masochistic masculinity will be more fully mapped out in the next chapter.

Notes

¹ Quotation from 'The Literator' (no author), *The Independent*, 11/11/05, <<http://enjoyment.co.uk/books/features/article326186.ece>>, accessed 12/11/05.

² Interestingly, Martin Priestman interprets this 'narcissistic experience' of cultural mirroring as being potentially subversive. Commenting on Freeling's Van der Valk series he states:

Perhaps because of his 'foreignness', rather than in spite of it, Van der Valk's adventures give a satisfying sense of moving into uncharted yet disturbingly credible areas of modern life. The image of the outwardly placid and affluent modern state as concealing various kinds of festering malaise, with a not-always scrupulous career policeman as its necessary defender, may have been easier to accept in a foreign rather than a British context... (Priestman, 2003: 176)

To Priestman's mind, then, the use of a foreign location by a British writer can be a smokescreen for unpalatable home truths, affording greater freedom for indirect socio-political criticism.

³ Both Laurie Thompson's and Adriana Hunter's remarks are taken from 'Foreign Crime Fiction: The Translators Unedited', compiled by Bob Cornwell, <www.crimetime.co.uk/make_page.php?id=526>, accessed 13/02/06.

⁴ It should be mentioned that this was by no means an exhaustive survey of Mankell's reviews, but was, rather, based upon what could be found on the Internet. The sources, which were all accessed on the 25/07/06, were as follows – <<http://www.books.guardian.co.uk>>, <<http://www.boston.com>>, <<http://www.amazon.co.uk>>, <<http://www.observer.guardian.co.uk>>, <<http://www.timesonline.co.uk>>, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk>>, <<http://www.enjoyment.independent.co.uk/books>>, <<http://www.nytimes.com>>, <<http://www.sundayherald.com>>, and <<http://www.newstatesman.com>>.

⁵ Mankell's comments were made during an interview with Bob Cornwell, 'The Mirror of Crime', <www.twbooks.co.uk/crimescene/hmankellintvbc.html>, accessed 06/07/06.

⁶ A real police murder investigation would be impossible (or at least, highly confusing) to represent in fiction, given the number of people involved in such processes.

⁷ The Calvinist streak Wallander displays here serves as another parallel between himself and John Rebus, and the masochistic relationship both men have with their work will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁸ See, for example 1991: 11; 1992: 11, 240 and 294; 1993: 93; 1994: 107 and 1998: 227.

⁹ Coincidentally, Morse also develops diabetes in *Death Is Now My Neighbour* (1996).

¹⁰ This seems to be a difference of interpretation, rather than the source material differing from the translated version. Mäntymäki makes her own translation of the lines in question from the original Swedish version of *The Man Who Smiled* and it is almost identical to the one made by Laurie Thompson. Again, then, Mankell's texts are a site of ambiguity.

¹¹ This proximity between hunter and killer is a common feature of serial killer fictions, and, for all their procedural focus, Mankell's novels share many key concepts with this sub-genre. Mankell's tendency to embrace this form places him at odds with Pelecanos, who, as cited in the previous chapter, claims his motivations for writing are more grounded in the 'real' world.

¹² It is interesting to note that the name 'Yvonne Ander' is a semi-homonym for 'Irene Adler', the anti-heroine of Conan Doyle's 'A Scandal in Bohemia' (1892). Adler, who possesses 'the face of the most beautiful of women, and the mind of the most resolute of men' (1892: 14), attempts to blackmail the King of Bohemia and claims the rare distinction of defeating Holmes. However, this does not embitter Holmes; rather, Adler captivates him. As Dr. Watson states at the start of the story, '[t]o Sherlock Holmes she is always the woman...[i]n his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex' (1892: 5). Ander exerts a similar fascination over Wallander, and, like Adler who manages to pass for a man when she meets Holmes in the street, Ander too blurs gender boundaries. She is that rarest of things – a female serial killer – and for most of the novel Wallander is convinced that he is hunting a man.

¹³ Britain and America come in at numbers six and eight respectively with results of 85.5517 and 80.0645 per 1,000 people. See <<http://nationmaster.com>> for more details on this survey (accessed 18/06/06).

¹⁴ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olaf_Palme>, accessed 25/02/06.

¹⁵ Expanding Schoene's ideas, one wonders what the implications might be for particular national masculinities that are predicated upon a more than typical degree of emotional repression. If all hegemonic masculinities encourage characteristics that exert 'a pathologically deformative impact on the male psyche' (Schoene, 2008: 392), then is British masculinity, which traditionally valorises silence and stoicism, even more damaging? Can this be extended to Swedish men, who although presented in national discourse as progressive and liberal, are also typified as cold and unfeeling? Is American masculinity, with its notional commitment, at least in some forms, to emotional expression, in a better position?

¹⁶ <<http://OED.com>>, accessed 25/05/09, italics mine.

¹⁷ Mankell's technique of employing shifting perspectives is not restricted to the use of Linda Wallander in *Before the Frost*. In 2000, he published *The Return of the Dancing Master*, a crime novel set in the north of Sweden, featuring another policeman protagonist, Stefan Lindman. Although much younger than Kurt Wallander, Lindman's character shares many personality traits with his Scånian counterpart, not least an abiding concern with the state of the contemporary Swedish nation. Lindman and Wallander have a similarly pessimistic view of their country, and the mental proximity between the two is translated into literal closeness when Lindman relocates to Ystad in *Before the Frost*, embarking on a career in Wallander's own detective squad and beginning a relationship with Linda. With the

presence of both Linda and Stefan Lindman in Ystad, Mankell appears to have laid the groundwork for further series fiction set there and involving these characters.

¹⁸ There is an interesting contrast between the way in which Mankell and Pelecanos depict the domestic in their texts. While Strange has to be given an ultimatum before he will abandon his bachelor lifestyle and commit to Janine, Wallander craves the comforts of home and family. He regularly expresses the intention to find a wife, buy a dog and move to the country, yet is invariably sidetracked by work. Pelecanos is, of course, working within a more traditionally masculinist framework than Mankell. Strange is a more conventionally hard-boiled hero than Wallander, who is characterised as being softer and less compromised by his professed willingness to embrace domesticity. That said, Wallander never actually succeeds in turning his dreams into reality and remains isolated.

¹⁹ References to monsters appear in *The Man Who Smiled* (1994: 236); *Sidetracked* (1995: 264 and 265), and *The Fifth Woman* (1996: 243 and 430). There are 'dark forces' at work in *Firewall* (1998: 349) and shadowy, anonymous villains abound in *The White Lioness* (1993: 104-5).

Chapter IV

'Voluntary Bondage': The Masochistic Masculinity of John Rebus

I want to die because I am a man and that's what men do; they crumble, decay, disappear! (Toltz, 2008: 156)

Introduction

In 2005, the novelist Irvine Welsh published an article in *The Guardian* newspaper, exploring the reasons behind the rise of violent crime in his native Scotland. The figures cited by Welsh make shocking reading:

The University of California claims that Scotland's murder rate now exceeds the United States' and Israel's. The WHO study says that you're three times more likely to meet violent death north of the border than you are in England and Wales. Furthermore, a separate United Nations report has described Scotland as 'the most violent country in the developed world', with more than 2,000 people subjected to serious assault every week. (Welsh, 2005: 10)

Welsh concluded that the key factors contributing to Scotland's exploding crime rates were a culture of binge drinking and knife crime, combined with the increasing marginality of young, working-class men, who have been left facing long-term unemployment following the collapse of Scotland's traditional industries. This economic downturn has had major implications for the way in which Scottish masculinity constructs itself. To quote John Caughie:

...when masculinity can no longer define itself in 'hard work' it increasingly identifies itself with the 'hard man' for whom anguish, cynicism and violence are the only ways to recover the last dignity of labour. (cited by Petrie, 2004: 19)

Given that violence appears to be endemic in modern Scotland it is perhaps unsurprising that Scottish crime fiction, dubbed 'Tartan Noir', has recently come to prominence in the UK market. At the vanguard of this generic movement is Ian Rankin, the so-called 'King of Tartan Noir'.¹ Between 1987 and 2007 Rankin published seventeen novels and two short story collections featuring the Edinburgh-based policeman John Rebus. Although initially unhappy to be labelled a crime writer (Barber, 2007), Rankin has since developed into one of the genre's leading figures, enjoying both huge sales and a high public profile. His novels have been translated into twenty-two languages and across the world his books have sold more than six million copies; in Britain it is estimated that Rankin's novels account for an incredible ten percent of all crime fiction sold.² In addition, Rankin holds five honorary degrees (including one from the University of St Andrews, conferred in 2000) and was made an OBE for services to literature in 2003. He has also been showered with accolades from his home city: not only is he deputy lieutenant of Edinburgh, but in February 2008 a flagstone embossed with Rankin's handprints was unveiled on the city's Royal Mile, commemorating his winning of the inaugural Edinburgh Award. Rankin's peers have also been quick to recognise his success. In 2005 he became the recipient of the Crime Writers' Association's lifetime achievement award, the Diamond Dagger, to complement the earlier Gold Dagger for novel of the year which he won for *Black and Blue* in 1997. A number of the Rebus novels have also been successfully adapted for television, with John Hannah and latterly, Ken Stott, portraying the titular hero.

While it is clear that Rankin is one of the dominant forces in contemporary British crime writing, his influence extends outwith the confines of genre, granting him a presence as a respected cultural commentator not usually bestowed upon authors of crime fiction. Rankin is a regular contributor to the BBC 2 arts programme

Newsnight Review, has appeared on Radio 4's *Any Questions* and has also been profiled on ITV's prestigious *South Bank Show*. Perhaps more than any other contemporary British crime writer, Rankin has managed to escape ghettoization, as was recently illustrated by his inclusion on the cover of *The Guardian's* G2 section as part of a photo montage posing the question 'Who is the greatest living British author?'.³ To quote Nicholas Wroe:

...Rankin has also been widely credited with establishing the now commonly held notion of the literary crime novel and providing the genre in Britain with much of its credibility. (Wroe, 2005: 20)

Rankin himself has acknowledged a more serious agenda behind his use of genre:

I think what I wanted to do was write something that was on the surface a crime novel that was going to sell loads of copies, but which would be accepted by my peers in academia as being serious Scottish fiction. (Plain, 2002: 11)

While it is undoubtedly true that Rankin has gained some level of acceptance from those who police the invisible divide between high and low culture, he still remains a writer whose work has, for the most part, been critically ignored. Despite his ubiquity, Rankin is frequently omitted from studies of 'serious Scottish fiction' and only one book length study of his work exists, *Ian Rankin's Black and Blue: A Reader's Guide* (2002) by Gill Plain.⁴ Yet from the standpoint of masculinity studies, Rankin's fiction is among the most interesting currently being produced in the UK, and is deserving of closer critical analysis.

In many ways Rebus is the archetypal Scottish male: he drinks to excess, seems to subsist entirely on a diet of cigarettes and filled rolls, takes little exercise and is emotionally inarticulate. He is, by his own admission, 'a dinosaur' (Rankin, 1999a: 332 and 2007: 22). However, Rebus is a more complex and nuanced figure than his

hard man exterior may initially suggest. Far from revelling in his penchant for alcohol and violence, Rebus is depicted as being self-aware enough to know that he is damaged goods; a man who channels his obsessive personality into his job in an attempt to distract himself from the fact that his life is empty of meaningful human interaction:

And he realised that he had reduced his life to a mere shell in recognition that he had completely failed at the important things: love, relationships, family life. He'd been accused of being in thrall to his career, but that had never been the case. His work sustained him only because it was an easy option. He dealt every day with strangers, with people who didn't mean anything to him in the wider scheme. He could enter their lives, and leave again just as easily. He got to live other people's lives, or at least portions of them, experiencing things at one remove, which wasn't nearly as challenging as the real thing. [...] Obsession came easy – especially to men – because it was a cheap way of achieving *control*, albeit control over something practically worthless. (1998: 372)

With the character of Rebus, Ian Rankin takes the stereotype of the Scottish hard man and systematically destroys it, revealing weakness behind the façade of strength and a masculine identity that is forged under siege from factors outside his protagonist's control. This chapter begins by examining how Rankin employs characteristics of both the hard man and the hard-boiled hero in Rebus' construction, while also considering how he deviates from these traditional models. It then moves on to an analysis of Rebus' masochism, positing that suffering is fundamental to Rebus' subjectivity. Next it considers alternative masculinities present in Rankin's fiction. Borrowing the term from Michael Kimmel, Gill Plain has redeployed the concept 'Marketplace Man' to describe the kind of corporate, polished, career-conscious men who represent the antithesis of everything Rebus stands for (Plain, 2003a: 60-61). In the world of Rankin's fiction, these men are in the ascendant. Yet with their sharp tailoring, fashionable haircuts and preference for desk jobs, they are feminised figures,

men of well-chosen words, rather than action. Masculinity in Rankin's fiction, therefore, seems either to be inherently self-destructive or in some way compromised. Hence it is unsurprising that, as Rebus bows out in *Exit Music* (2007), his fictional heir is a woman – Siobhan Clarke. The chapter will conclude by looking at how Rankin, like Mankell, appears to establish a male protégé for Rebus, with the character of Brian Holmes, but then dismisses him, disavowing cadet masculinity in favour of a female successor.

The Novels

Ian Rankin has stated that he originally had no intention of using Rebus as a serial protagonist.⁵ Yet by using the same character for twenty years and subjecting him to the process of ageing in real time, Rankin has created a protagonist whose 'fragmentary biography' is amongst the most compelling in contemporary crime writing.⁶ John Rebus makes his first appearance in *Knots and Crosses* (1987). He is a Detective Sergeant in Lothian and Borders CID, based in Edinburgh. Rebus is forty-one years old and lives alone following the collapse of his marriage, the ending of which he attributes to his job as a policeman:

John Rebus had too many things to chase up, and that had been the position during all of his fifteen years on the force. Fifteen years, and all he had to show were an amount of self-pity and a busted marriage with an innocent daughter hanging between them. It was more disgusting than sad. (Rankin, 1987: 5)

Rebus' only living relative is his younger brother, Michael, although the relationship between the two is not a close one.⁷ Immediately, then, the similarities between

Rebus' character and that of Wallander become obvious, with both being established as isolated figures from their inception. The parallel is further underlined by the fact that Rebus, like Wallander, has a daughter from whom he is estranged. Although not as central to the series as Linda Wallander, Samantha Rebus makes fleeting appearances during the course of the seventeen novels and is principally used by Rankin as a means of exacerbating Rebus' emotional distress. The kind of redemptive femininity embodied by Linda Wallander and the possibilities for rapprochement that Mankell depicts are absent from the relationship between Rebus and his biological daughter; although, as will be seen below, he has another 'spiritual' daughter in the form of Siobhan Clarke.

The early Rebus novels are short, straightforward reads, in which criminal activity is usually perpetrated by an individual. Yet, as the series progresses Rankin's plotting becomes more intricate, each novel taking seemingly disparate narrative strands and knitting them together in a way that seems to give credence to Rebus' grand conspiracy theories. The novels become increasingly issue-led, turning their attention to topics such as corporate criminality, devolution, immigration and the campaign to eradicate world poverty. Rankin, who defines himself as a 'political writer', sees this engagement with the real world as one of crime fiction's strengths.

In *The Edinburgh Review* he states that:

...the crime novel can be a perfect tool for the dissection of society. In spite of all its exaggerations and heightened effects, crime fiction often tells us more about the world around us than does 'realistic', 'mainstream' or 'literary' fiction. Crime fiction is capable of tackling the bigger contemporary issues in Great Britain – corruption; exploitation; child abuse; violence and the fear of violence – and in using these for its plots and themes, crime fiction offers commentary on them. It makes the reader *think*. (Rankin, 1999b: 13, italics Rankin's)

Like Pelecanos and Mankell, Rankin identifies himself as a socially aware writer and he uses his texts to address issues he believes to be at the heart of modern Scottish life. As such, the novels become increasingly serious and darker in tone, their subject matter matched by Rebus' downward psychological spiral. This culminates in the three core texts of the series: *Black and Blue* (1997), *The Hanging Garden* (1998) and *Dead Souls* (1999). The Rebus of these novels is a tortured man. In *Black and Blue* his obsession with a case is so all-encompassing it leads to him being considered a possible murder suspect. Rebus spends the novel perilously close to breakdown and is only sustained by the support of his friend and colleague, DI Jack Morton. Morton's death in *The Hanging Garden*, combined with a near fatal accident involving his daughter, almost propels Rebus over the edge. By *Dead Souls* he is drinking heavily, spending his time in the company of Morton's ghost and reconsidering his position as a policeman. *Set in Darkness* (2000) is Rebus' rehabilitation text and sees Rankin relaxing the pressure on his leading man. As Rankin has commented, this move towards a more stable Rebus was necessary if he wanted to maintain some semblance of realism in his fiction – a policeman perpetually on the verge of a nervous breakdown might make for exciting reading, but it requires a major suspension of disbelief to accept that such a man would be allowed to remain in his job (Plain, 2003b: 132). By way of taking the pressure off Rebus, Rankin makes more use of the procedural format, expanding his focus on other characters and allowing Siobhan Clarke in particular to come to the fore. As Clarke makes the transition from Rebus' colleague to his friend she is given increasing narrative space and her presence offers the reader a different perspective on Rebus' character. This process is not an unqualified success, however. As will be discussed below, Rankin is not always capable of writing convincing female characters, which does not augur well if, in the

future, he chooses to focus exclusively on Siobhan.⁸ Rebus, having reached mandatory retirement age, is pensioned off in 2007's *Exit Music*, but, given that Rankin is under contract to write a further two novels for his current publisher, the way is open for Siobhan to succeed her mentor. The ending of *Exit Music* presents few clues as to what direction Rankin might choose to follow. Marketed as an end of series novel, it offers little by way of resolution or tying up of loose ends, which is unsurprising given that ambiguity is one of the key-notes of Rankin's style. Rankin has never been a writer who offers clear-cut endings, in which resolution is achieved and order restored. *Let It Bleed* (1995), for example, concludes with Rebus taking evidence of high-level corruption to a meeting with the Secretary of State for Scotland, but the outcome of this meeting is not revealed. *Black and Blue* ends with an obsessed Rebus *not* getting his man; while in *Fleshmarket Close* (2004) a schoolboy killer is likely to evade justice because his father is a prominent politician. To Rankin's mind this shift away from the stock generic 'happy' ending is a necessary component of his realistic technique. He argues:

What crime fiction needs is a sense of the incomplete, of life's messy complexity. The reader should go to crime fiction to learn about the real world, not to retreat from it with comfortable reassurances and assumptions. (Rankin, 1999b: 12-13)

Rankin sees an embracing of ambiguity as fundamental to the genre's quest to be taken seriously. However, Rankin's lack of closure has not been universally popular, and it has been suggested that this is one of the reasons why he has failed to match his domestic success in the American market.⁹

The Hard Man Deconstructed

In 1998 the critic Christopher Whyte noted with dismay that the figure of the hard man seemed to be returning to prominence in contemporary Scottish fiction. In language that echoes the issues some feminists have had with the Men's Studies movement (i.e. that claims of victimhood and gender invisibility are just an excuse to shift the post-feminist spotlight back on to white, heterosexual masculinity), he writes:

It is not an edifying spectacle to watch them [the authors Alasdair Gray, Irvine Welsh and Alan Warner] struggling to re-establish authority in a world which will no longer attribute it unquestioningly to them on the basis of their gender and their empowered position in society. (Whyte, 1998: 284)

Whyte, therefore, is pessimistic about the hard man's return, claiming that it is a retrogressive step. However, Gill Plain sees possibilities within Rankin's use of this figure, arguing that Rankin does more than just re-write old narratives. She states that 'Rebus does not represent an idealization of traditional Scottish masculinity; rather he represents that model in crisis' (Plain, 2003a: 59). Rankin is not positing the hard man exemplar as a viable masculine identity; instead, through Rebus, he shows the damage such a mode of being can inflict.

There is ample textual evidence to support the reading of Rebus' character as a typical hard man. As he gets into his car in *Black and Blue*, Rebus notices that his backseat is scattered with confectionary wrappers and empty juice cartons. This detritus represents '[t]he heart of the Scottish diet: sugar and salt. Add alcohol and you had heart *and* soul' (Rankin, 1997: 10, italics Rankin's). As a man who favours the 'breakfast of coronaries' – coffee and a Mars Bar (Rankin, 1999a: 378) – Rebus encapsulates the kind of cavalier attitude towards healthy living that is commonly

associated with the Scottish male. Toasted cheese is Rebus' idea of a warm meal on a cold night (2000: 292); he is given to making statements such as 'Christ, I love smoking' (1999a: 28); while getting beaten up is the closest he comes to taking exercise. Occasionally, Rebus does express dissatisfaction with his physical appearance (1987: 84; 1990: 178; 1992a: 109; 2001a: 8), but his only concession towards changing his ways is the purchase of a sports bag in *Strip Jack* (1992b: 110), which quickly becomes redundant, and the consumption of a banana in *The Naming of the Dead* (2006: 49). Rebus is a (barely) living exemplar of the fact that '...“traditional masculinity” can be...hazardous to health' (Hearn and Pringle, 2006: 69) and his inability or disinclination to take care of himself forms another parallel with Kurt Wallander.

Rebus' self-destructive lifestyle is further compounded by his reliance on alcohol. From *Mortal Causes* (1994) onwards Rebus' drinking comes to the fore, as he increasingly uses alcohol as an anaesthetic and a coping mechanism. For a borderline alcoholic, Rebus appears highly functional: 'He knew his drinking was a problem these days precisely because he'd learned self-control. As a result, few people noticed that he *had* a problem' (1995: 14, italics Rankin's). But by *Black and Blue* this 'problem' is threatening to spiral out of control. Rebus hides 43% malt in an innocuous Lucozade bottle in his desk drawer and has his first drink of the day in an early-opening pub at 6am (1997: 9 and 122). Although Rebus ends the novel on the wagon, thanks to the support of Jack Morton, himself a recovering alcoholic, his period of sobriety is a brief one. After a hit and run accident leaves Sammy paralysed in *The Hanging Garden*, Rebus is unable to resist the 'little suicide bomb', a bottle of whisky, that he carries with him in his pocket (1998:13 and 21). As the series continues Rebus seems to regain some control over his drinking, or at least he loses

the compulsion to quit. Throughout the novels one of Rebus' most enduring and affectionate relationships is with the Oxford Bar. On one of the rare nights on which he chooses not to extend his patronage to the Ox, Rebus blows it a kiss as he walks on by (2007: 216). 'Not tonight, my love', he says, as if talking to a spurned lover rather than a slightly run-down drinking establishment. The Ox represents Rebus' comfort zone and, following his relocation to the cramped quarters of Gayfield Square in *Fleshmarket Close*, the pub increasingly becomes used as Rebus' informal office space (2007: 43). In addition to offering him liquid therapy, the Ox also facilitates virtually all of Rebus' social interaction. Outwith the police force, Rebus has few friends. In *Knots and Crosses*, Rankin states that Rebus dislikes parties because 'he resented having to play the part of a normal human being' (1987: 39), while in *Dead Souls* Rebus' ex-wife, Rhona, observes 'as far as I'm aware you haven't *made* any friends since school' (1999a: 292, italics Rankin's). Still, despite this professed anti-sociability, Rebus is, appropriately enough, a man in his element within the confines of the pub, a space that has been defined as 'an important cultural arena for the expression and reinforcement of traditional masculinities' (Willet and Griffin, 1996: 83). A skilled practitioner of that lynchpin of male bonding – banter – Rebus finds it easy to master casual interaction in this homosocial environment (1987: 109).¹⁰ This proficiency does not, however, seriously undermine Rebus' loner status. For the most part, male bonding in the Ox is an empty ritual, offering the illusion of friendship but no real substance underneath, and even amongst this low-key intimacy Rebus is, as one of his drinking buddies at the Ox puts it, 'an irregular regular' (Rankin, 1999a: 135).¹¹

Just as he keeps his homosocial relationships at surface level, Rebus, too, has problems attaining intimacy with women. In *Black and Blue* Rebus admits to finding

relationships difficult (1997: 189), while later in the same novel he draws attention to his lack of potential as a partner: 'I'm an alcoholic, a fuck-up, I'm no good for any other human being' (1997: 191). Very much the emotionally-repressed hard man when it comes to his interaction with women, Rebus is capable of forming relationships but not sustaining them. Throughout the series he has three major love affairs. The first, which takes place in *Knots and Crosses*, is with Gill Templer, an ambitious fellow police officer. Although their relationship is brief its implications are long-lasting as Gill eventually becomes Rebus' boss. Rebus' other affairs are with civilians – Dr. Patience Aitken and Jean Burchill, a curator at the Museum of Scotland. Rebus' relationship with the aptly named Patience is his most serious, culminating in a period of uneasy cohabitation. Despite living with Patience, though, Rebus is still unable to fully commit to her and soon falls into the pattern of using her home 'as a public amenity, somewhere to have a shower, a shave, a shit, and, on occasions, a shag' (1992b: 220). Patience is keen to domesticate Rebus, something that Rebus, by contrast to Wallander who is depicted as craving the comforts of home and family, firmly resists:

She was trying to civilise him. Not that she'd admit it. What she said instead was that it would be nice if they liked the same things. It would give them things to talk about. So she gave him books of poetry, and played classical music at him, bought them tickets for ballet and modern dance. Rebus had been there before, other times, other women. Asking for something more, for commitment beyond the commitment. He didn't like it. He enjoyed the basic, the feral. Cafferty had once accused him of liking cruelty, of being attracted to it: his natural right as a Celt. (1994: 81)

Hard man masculinity is contingent upon escaping the domestic, a fact of which Rebus' nemesis, and fellow hard man, Morris 'Big Ger' Cafferty is all too aware. Cafferty knows Rebus better than Patience does, which is hardly surprising given Rebus' disinclination to open up to either Patience or Jean (see, for example, 2001b:

373). The complex bond between Rebus and Cafferty, and strange understanding that arises between them, will be more fully explored below. Rebus is equally emotionally inarticulate when it comes to his daughter, Sammy. In *Let it Bleed* he finds himself unable to say the words 'I love you' to her face (1995: 38). Throughout the novel, in which Sammy returns to Edinburgh to work for an organisation that offers rehabilitation to ex-prisoners, Rebus seems unable to engage in any kind of meaningful communication with his daughter, preferring instead to mask his affection for her behind a front of antagonism for what she does (1995: 110).¹²

Rebus excuses this inability to express his feelings by drawing on national stereotypes:

We Scots, Rebus thought, we're not very good at going public. We store up our true feelings like fuel for long winter nights of whisky and recrimination. So little of us ever reaches the surface, it's a wonder we exist at all. (1994: 193).

Real Scottish men accept taciturnity as their birth-right. As Patience observes when Rebus refuses to confide in her about his work and his feelings following Sammy's accident, 'behold the Scottish male, at his happiest when in denial' (1998: 275). Rebus' reticent nature extends beyond the confines of his relationships with women. At the start of *Knots and Crosses* Rebus visits the grave of his father, but finds himself unable to cry (1987: 3). Later, in *Black and Blue*, he has a similarly stilted reaction to the death of his mentor, 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. (1997: 45)

Rebus' emotional reserve is once again posited as a very Scottish attribute and is a disability that seems to span the generations; at Michael Rebus' funeral in *The*

Naming of the Dead (2006) his son, too, is unable to grieve openly. Rebus meanwhile is advised by his boss, DCI Macrae, to cope with the loss of his brother by getting 'slaughtered' – drunken oblivion being 'the Scotsman's way of dealing with death' (2006: 17). Rebus is not, however, always able to keep his emotions in check. The series' most notable instance of this is when Rebus suffers a breakdown following his physical fight with Jack Morton in *Black and Blue* (1997: 324-25). Male bodies, especially those of hard men, are not supposed to do this kind of thing: as Antony Easthope writes, 'a hard body will ensure that there are no leakages across the edges between inner and outer worlds' (1986: 52). In the text, however, Rebus experiences weeping as catharsis, finding relief in the temporary loss of control over his body. As he tells Jack once he regains his composure, 'Christ...I needed that' (1997: 325). Sally Robinson has stated that '...male power is secured by inexpressivity, even as inexpressivity damages the male psyche and the male body' (2001: 134). Rebus is a clear example of the damage that inexpressivity can do to the male subject. As Rankin presents it, Scottish masculinity is synonymous with Robinson's 'toxic' masculinity, which is predicated upon the blockage of emotions (2001: 135). Invariably, however, this blockage must find an outlet and typically does so through bodily trauma.¹³

Given Rebus' inability to form sustaining personal relationships, it is little wonder that, like Wallander, he over-invests in his job as a policeman. Although the series begins after the end of his marriage, flashback scenes indicate that this privileging of work over the domestic sphere was established as a pattern early in his relationship with Rhona. *Black and Blue* includes a line that is telling of Rebus' priorities. As Rebus reminisces back to the start of his career in the police force, Rankin writes that, jostling for attention against the demands of his new job, 'a wife

and infant daughter [were] trying to be his life' (1997: 35). Rankin's choice of words here suggests passivity on Rebus' behalf, as if he himself has no role to play in making his family a part of his life; rather, the onus is on them to make themselves matter to Rebus as much as his career does. Juxtaposed against Rebus' half-hearted commitment to his family life is his passion for his work:

He thought about the job too much as it was, gave himself to it the way he had never given himself to any *person* in his life. Not his ex-wife, not his daughter, not Patience, not Michael. (1993: 93, italics Rankin's. See 2004: 263 for a similar statement)

In 1971 S.M. Jourard coined the term 'dispiritisation' to describe how modern men sometimes find it difficult to locate meaning in their lives.¹⁴ Instead of basing their identity on their relationships, Jourard argues, men are increasingly turning to their jobs to provide them with a sense of who they are. To use the title of this chapter, Rebus' relationship with his job is one of 'voluntary bondage'. In addition to providing a framework for his entire existence, work also constrains Rebus, preventing him from surrendering to the darker side of his nature. In *Let it Bleed*, Rankin states:

...police routine gave his daily life its only shape and substance; it gave him a schedule to work to, a reason to get up in the morning. He loathed his free time, dreaded Sundays off. He lived to work, and in a very real sense he worked to live, too: the much-maligned Protestant work-ethic. Subtract work from the equation, and the day became flabby, like releasing jelly from its mould. Besides, without work, what reason had he not to drink? (1995: 121-22)

As well as giving his life meaning and context, Rebus uses his job as a means of distracting himself from his failure in other areas. When he finds himself thinking about his marriage in *Knots and Crosses*, Rebus purposefully turns his mind to work:

He tried ticking off in his mind the definite chores of the next seven or eight hours. He had to tidy up a case of burglary and serious assault. A nasty one that. (1987: 12)

Police work here is framed in domestic language, which is ironic given that Rebus is using it to escape from thoughts of home and family. Rebus later thinks about how his profession offers him the opportunity to focus on the lives of others, rather than dwelling on his own:

When he spoke, he was always afraid his voice would betray his passion for the job. He might be dubious about methods and eventual outcomes, but he still got a thrill from the work itself. Someone like Jean Burchill, he felt, could peer beneath the surface of this and watch other things swim into focus. She would realise that his enjoyment of the job was essentially voyeuristic and cowardly. *He concentrated on the minutiae of other people's lives, other people's problems, to stop him examining his own frailties and failings.* (2001a): 111, italics mine.)

Rebus' job therefore becomes a form of escapism, serious crime, ironically, providing him with a fixed point of reference and a sense of reassurance. It is interestingly self-referential that while Rankin makes it a series-wide objective to sidestep the formulaic reassurances usually found in crime fiction, his protagonist is depicted as depending upon these structures and conventions. Rebus needs the resolution of crime solving and the fact that he relies on the certainties provided by his work is central to his characterisation. As will be seen below, strategies of displacement appear at various points in Rankin's fiction. Not only does Rebus have a tendency to live through his job, but he also places a vicarious investment in the victims of crime.

The similarities between Rankin's and Mankell's detectives are most obvious in the way in which the two characters are represented as relating to their jobs. Just as it does for Wallander, being a policeman offers Rebus a chance to experience agency: it is one area of his life of which he can be in control. Rebus realises this in *Tooth and*

Nail (1992) when faced with the fact that his daughter is dating a boy of whom he disapproves:

Forget it, John. You don't control that part of your life any more. He had to smile at this: what part of his life did he control? His work gave his life what meaning it had. He should admit defeat, tell Flight he could be of no help and return to Edinburgh, where he could be sure of his villains and his crimes: drug pedlars, protection racketeers, domestic violence, fraud. (1992a: 94)

While it might be true that serving the forces of law and order is not a vocation for Rebus in the same sense that it is for Mankell's Wallander, his job is still very much the cornerstone of his identity, as is exemplified by his increasing worries about what he will do once he reaches retirement age. In *The Falls* (2001), Rebus, inspired by the recent departure of his boss, Chief Superintendent 'Farmer' Watson, muses on the end of his own career: 'Soon, whether he liked it or not, it would be his turn. He didn't think he'd go quietly. They'd have to pull him screaming and kicking' (2001a: 127). By *Exit Music* Rebus is no more resigned to the prospect of leaving the police force, worrying about what the lack of a firm routine will do to him:

Monday morning, his alarm clock would be redundant. He could spend all day over breakfast, stick his suit back in the wardrobe, to be pulled out again only for funerals. He knew all the scare stories – people who left work one week and were in a wooden box by the next, loss of work equalling loss of purpose in the great scheme of things. (2007: 363-64. See also 2007: 12-13 and 357).

Using one's job as the lynchpin of one's subjectivity is, obviously, only going to be an efficient strategy as long as there is a job to be done.

Rebus and Wallander both share an obsessive approach to their work that is fundamental to their success. Rebus, like Wallander, is consumed by his job: as Rankin writes in *The Hanging Garden*, 'he didn't want anyone else taking his work. It was *his*. He owned it; it owned him' (1998: 146, italics Rankin's). A key distinction

between the two characters is that, while Wallander is depicted as worrying about the damage his tunnel vision approach to his career inflicts upon other aspects of his life, Rebus, in keeping with his hard man persona, is too cynical to care. Chapter III outlined the ways in which Mankell employs hard-boiled conventions in his representation of Wallander, and Rankin, too, draws on these generic types. There is an obvious overlap between the figure of the Scottish hard man and the American hard-boiled hero as both are built around the twin tropes of sustained drinking and a penchant for casual violence. Gill Plain has observed that the dominance of the hard-boiled model in Scottish crime writing is based upon the desire to construct a national version of the form in opposition to the 'Golden Age' model primarily associated with England (Plain, 2003a: 57-58). Thus, both Scottish crime fiction generally, and Rankin in particular, borrow heavily from American crime writing. While this can most obviously be seen in Rankin's characterisation of Rebus (as will be developed below), Rankin's depiction of the metropolitan environment inhabited by Rebus also places him within the hard-boiled tradition. As Ralph Willet has stated, 'the character of the city as portrayed in crime fiction is dangerous, violent and squalid' (Willet, 1996: 4). While Edinburgh less obviously fits this description than the city-scapes of Chandler and Hammett, it is still represented by Rankin as exerting a contaminating affect upon his detective. Žižek, too, has highlighted the polluting potential of the urban setting. Commenting on Philip Marlowe, he writes, 'he [Marlowe] becomes an active hero confronted with a chaotic, corrupt world, the more he intervenes in it, the more involved in its wicked ways he becomes' (Žižek, 1991: 60). His words can equally be applied to Rebus, who, at various points in the series believes himself to be tarnished by his work. In an apparent attempt to rid himself of this taint, Rebus bathes compulsively (1997: 13 and 2006: 292). However, Rankin suggests that the

contamination has permeated both his character's body and mind. In *Hide and Seek*, Rebus feels 'soiled in the pit of his gut, as though the city had scraped away a layer of its surface grime and force-fed him the lot' (1990: 135). More explicitly, Mairie Henderson tells him, in *Dead Souls*, 'I think something's gone bad inside you' (1999a: 54). This presentation of the milieu of the city as hostile and threatening links the novels of Rankin with those of Pelecanos. Mankell's texts, too, although set in a small town, address the encroaching threat of crime, which cannot be contained within a specific, urban locale.

Although nominally part of a rigidly defined hierarchical structure, Rebus manages to function as a more or less autonomous unit within the police force. He is reluctant to delegate anything but the most mundane of tasks to any of his fellow officers and also displays a tendency to keep what he is working on to himself, which becomes a bone of contention with both his protégé figures, Brian Holmes and Siobhan Clarke. Rebus' solitary nature is very much at odds with the team ethos on which policing is supposed to be based, a fact of which he is well aware:

Rebus took a stroll around the room. He was reminded again just why he didn't fit, why he was so unsuited to the career life had chosen for him. The Murder Room was like a production line. You had your own little task, and you did it. Maybe someone else would follow up any lead you found, and then someone else after that might do the questioning of a suspect or potential witness. You were a small part of a very large team. It wasn't Rebus's way. He wanted to follow up every lead personally, cross referencing them all, taking them through from first principle to final reckoning. He'd been described, not unkindly, as a terrier, locking on with his jaws and not letting go. Some dogs, you had to break the jaw to get them off. (1994: 117)

From *Set in Darkness* onwards Rankin places more of an emphasis on the importance of team work (see 2000: 359, 374 and 431). However, even here Rebus is not operating within conventional structures. For the purposes of his investigation he assembles a 'private little police force' (2000: 308) of officers he trusts and instead of

working out of a station they base themselves in the Ox. Still, Rebus only ever seems to be giving lip service to the idea of a more collaborative approach to the job, preferring to keep his leads to himself and, when the time comes, make an arrest on his own.

As the self-confessed 'L[othian] & B[orders] bad apple' (1997: 115), Rebus displays a healthy disrespect for both authority and standard police procedure, and, unlike Wallander, the fact that he is successful does nothing to challenge his marginal status within the police force. Given that he frequently views the law that he represents and enforces as being unable to provide meaningful justice, Rebus is principally motivated by his own concepts of right and wrong. As Superintendent Watson observes in *Let it Bleed*, '[a]s long as your own personal morality is satisfied, that's all that counts. Sod everybody else, isn't that right?' (1995: 269. See also 1999a: 237 for a similar statement). Rebus displays a tendency towards insubordination that results in suspension in seven of the novels.¹⁵ However, given how little attention he pays to the dictates of his superiors, getting suspended rarely impedes his ability to keep on investigating. In fact, Rebus seems to thrive on the independence that comes with being officially removed from duty:

Now Rebus was a free agent, or at least a loose one. He couldn't get anyone into trouble but himself, and that was fine with him. (1995: 121)

Rebus is not the only one to see possible advantages to his outsider status. Although always careful to maintain the appearance of reproach for Rebus and his methods, Superintendent Watson does occasionally admit the benefits of having a rogue operative on his hands and offers tacit approval. In 'Facing the Music', a story from the collection *A Good Hanging* (1992), Rankin writes:

He [Rebus] had no proof, no evidence of any kind. Certainly nothing that would gain him a search warrant, as the Chief Super had been good enough to confirm, knowing damn well that Rebus would take it further anyway. Not that this concerned the Chief Super, so long as Rebus worked alone, and didn't tell his superiors what he was up to. That way, it was Rebus's neck in the noose, Rebus's pension on the line. (1992c: 67)

There is an air of the sacrificial lamb in Rebus' presentation here, and the fact that he willingly embraces such a role will be discussed below as part of his masochistic masculinity.

In addition to being suspended, Rebus also manages to be suspected of murder twice (in relation to the Bible John/Johnny Bible case in *Black and Blue* and in *A Question of Blood* (2003) following the death of Martin Fairstone) and to come under suspicion of attacking a fellow officer, DI Derek Linford, in *Set in Darkness*. Although exonerated of involvement in any of these crimes, Rebus does not hesitate to break the law if it suits his purpose. He employs a burglar whom he has got to know in his professional capacity to break into the house of a city councillor in *Let it Bleed* (1995: 136-37), and derives a rare instance of uncomplicated job satisfaction – 'He didn't always like himself or his job. But some bits were okay' (1993: 80) – when he harasses the paedophile Andrew McPhail in *The Black Book*.¹⁶ He is also complicit in framing Lenny Spaven in *Black and Blue*, while in *Exit Music* he confesses to Siobhan Clarke that planting evidence in order to secure a conviction used to be part and parcel of policing (2007: 378). Rebus is nonchalant about the necessity for such action:

Always it came to this, he tried to do things by the books and ended up cooking them instead. It was easier, that was all. Where would the crime detection rates be without a few shortcuts? (1994: 215)

Rebus most obviously blurs the line between criminal and policeman in his relationship with Cafferty. Although Rebus professes to despise Cafferty – he refers to him as a 'disease' (1993: 192) – he is not above asking for his help and as a consequence of this, running the risk of becoming compromised by being in Cafferty's pocket. He approaches Cafferty for assistance while on his quest for Bible John in *Black and Blue* (1997: 86), and in *The Hanging Garden* makes what he terms 'a contract with the devil' when he agrees to be Cafferty's 'man' in return for the person responsible for causing Sammy's accident (1998: 203 and 177).

Rebus thus emerges as a man who exists on the periphery of the police force and is happy to do so. As he tells Mairie Henderson, 'I do my best work on the margins' (2006: 166). Rebus' masculine identity is contingent upon a sense of himself as a rebel male, an outsider who is paradoxically part of the system but who also manages to separate himself from it, as and when it suits him. Despite being located within the framework of a police procedural, Rebus comfortably fits Dennis Porter's definition of the hard-boiled detective as 'a disabused, anti-authoritarian, muckraking hero' (Porter, 2003: 96). Stephen Knight has also noted the similarities between Rankin's work and that of his American counterparts:

I think one reason why Rankin has been so successful is that he was the first person to successfully transplant into Britain the mood and the feel of the great American private eye tradition. (cited by Wroe, 2005: 20)

With his isolated status and tendency to adhere to the sanctions of his own moral code, Rebus functions like a P.I., self-sufficient and aloof, yet still managing to take full advantage of his official status. To quote Gill Plain:

He acts, in effect, as a private eye within the police force, enabling Rankin to have his cake and eat it too – preserving the myth of the heroic individual in

the midst of the more 'realistic' police narrative of the co-operative investigation. (Plain, 2002: 38)

Frank Barrett has stated that '[t]he hegemonic ideal of masculinity in current Western culture is a man who is independent, risk-taking, aggressive, heterosexual, and rational' (Barrett, 2001: 79). Although Rebus' masculinity is not constructed as hegemonic, this quotation does illustrate some of the potential contradictions implicit in this blending of the police procedural format with the figure of a recognisably hard-boiled detective; for it is independence that is crucial to the hard-boiled model and, although Rankin does a good job of illustrating how Rebus maintains autonomy, he is still a paid representative of state authority and not, fully, his own man. Barrett's essay, from which the quotation above is taken, addresses masculinity in the US Navy. In such a setting the ability to function as part of a clearly demarcated chain of command is crucial; yet, initiative is also valued. The tensions created here can also be seen in crime writing, where the detective's personal autonomy often clashes with his position as part of a structured organisation.

So far this section has outlined the ways in which Rebus conforms to the hard man and hard-boiled scripts; however, his characterisation also disrupts these conventions. The Rebus of the first few novels conspicuously over-performs hard man masculinity. A good example of this can be found in *Tooth and Nail* (1992):

Rebus put down the telephone and felt an immense weariness take control of him, weighting his legs and arms and head. He took several deep breaths and rose to his feet, then walked to the sink and splashed water on his face, rubbing a wet hand around his neck and throat. He looked up, hardly recognising himself in the wall-mounted mirror, sighed and spread his hands either side of his face, the way he'd seen Roy Scheider do once in a film. 'It's showtime.' (1992a: 129)

In this quotation Rebus comes across as a slightly ridiculous figure, a caricature of a tough guy, rather than the real thing. Rankin's writing is laced with irony and Rebus, therefore, is constructed at self-referential distance from generic clichés. Rebus' name also seems significant here. Rankin took the name of his protagonist from a picture puzzle feature in a Scottish newspaper, which suggests a more nuanced and complex characterisation that one might expect from either Hammett's Sam Spade or Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer.

Despite the emotional reticence outlined above, Rebus is by no means an unreconstructed hard man. He finds himself unable to become inured to the sight of dead bodies (1997: 26); does not enjoy the high-speed car chase that Lauderdale takes him on (1995: 4-6); is contrasted against the 'laddish' cops who come to Edinburgh to help police the Make Poverty History march (2006: 192) and repeatedly becomes caught up in his cases, despite his best efforts to the contrary:

Never get personally involved: it was *the* golden rule. And practically every case he worked, Rebus broke it. He sometimes felt that the reason he became so involved in his cases was that he had no life of his own. He could only live *through* other people. (1998: 135, italics Rankin's)

Rebus, like Wallander, is particularly vulnerable to over-involvement when his work brings him into contact with young people.¹⁷ He seems to be the only person who cares about Ronnie, the dead junky, in *Hide and Seek* (1990: 146); he touches the hair of the youth found executed under Edinburgh's streets in *Mortal Causes*, even though such behaviour is a breach of scene of crime protocol (1994: 10) and in *Let it Bleed* his investigation is motivated chiefly by compassion for the two young men, William Coyle and James 'Dixie' Taylor, who die at the start of the novel. Rebus also has a tendency to develop relationships with characters who function as substitutes for his daughter, Sammy. For example, Tracy in *Hide and Seek*, Kirstie Kennedy in *Let it*

Bleed, Miss Teri in *A Question of Blood* and, most obviously, Candice in *The Hanging Garden*. Candice not only physically resembles Sammy (see 1998: 46, 73 and 86) but her clear need for Rebus, whom she refers to as 'her protector' (1998: 41), affords Rebus the opportunity to atone for some of his paternal failings.

Rebus is also representationally at odds with the kind of right-wing parochialism one might expect from a contemporary Scottish hard man. While the police procedural format does serve to encourage a degree of, perhaps, unrealistic variety in its depiction of the forces of law and order – one immediately thinks of P.D. James' poetry-writing Inspector Dagleish – liberalism is not an unequivocal feature of this strand of the genre. Both Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse and Reginald Hill's Superintendent Dalziel, for example, are bigoted, sexist and authoritarian. Rebus is, however, characterised by an unusually well developed sense of political awareness, and, as the series progresses and is increasingly shaped by Rankin's social concerns, Rebus' rebelliousness begins to transform into something more ethically minded. This is particularly evident in *Fleshmarket Close*, which is based around the issue of asylum. Moved by their plight, Rebus buys toys for the children of a refugee and is genuinely upset by what he sees at Whitemire Detention Centre. In *The Naming of the Dead*, Mairie Henderson, a long-time journalist acquaintance of Rebus', notes that he is not on 'The Man's' side (2006: 166), despite his (nominal) position as a sworn upholder of patriarchal authority. If the hard man is a form of 'phallic masculinity', as defined by Arthur Flannigan-Saint-Aubin, then Rebus' softer side can perhaps be read as a move towards 'testicular masculinity', a mode of being which, metaphorically at least, offers the potential for male identity to embrace attributes more typically associated with femininity. As has already been discussed, Flannigan-Saint-Aubin theorises testicular masculinity as that which includes the capacity to be

'nurturing, incubating, containing and protecting. The testicular masculine is characterized by patience, stability, and endurance' (1994: 250). Although notably lacking in patience and stability, Rebus does demonstrate care and compassion when dealing with the victims of crime. Empathising with dead teenagers is perhaps not embracing the full gamut of emotions, but it does show that Rebus is not desensitised by his work and is capable of feeling, even if he lacks the capacity to openly display his sentiments.

'How rough do you want it?' 'As rough as it gets': John Rebus' Masochistic Masculinity

Male masochism has always been an important component of crime fiction. From Sherlock Holmes pushing himself to the limits of his cocaine-fuelled endurance to Sam Spade being knocked out with a frequency that defies medical science, the genre is one in which the detective repeatedly forces his own body to suffer. Rebus is no exception to this rule. However, he exists at the very extreme of the genre's high pain threshold, embracing not only masochism but also a martyrdom complex that finds him ready and willing to sacrifice his physical self to satisfy the machinations of his conscience.

The term 'masochism' was originally coined by the sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing in 1886, based on the surname of Leopold Ritter von Sacher-Masoch, the author of *Venus in Furs* (1870). In his work on the topic, Freud distinguishes three types of masochism: the erotogenic, the feminine and moral masochism (1924: 161). The first of these is simply defined as finding pleasure in pain; while feminine

masochism is described by Freud as being a form in which the subject is placed 'in a characteristically female situation...signify[ing]...being castrated, or copulated with, or giving birth to a baby' (1924: 162). It is the third form, moral masochism, that seems most appropriate to Rebus' representation. According to Freud, the moral masochist experiences an unconscious sense of guilt which he attempts to expiate through suffering. Moral masochism is 'chiefly remarkable for having loosened its connection with what we recognize as sexuality' (1924: 165). It is, he argues, largely irrelevant who inflicts the suffering upon the moral masochist:

The suffering itself is what matters: whether it is decreed by someone who is loved or by someone who is indifferent is of no importance. It may even be caused by impersonal powers or circumstances; *the true masochist always turns his cheek whenever he has a chance of receiving a blow*. (Freud, 1924: 165, italics mine)

Rankin's texts are replete with instances of Rebus facilitating his own punishment, and like Wallander, the detective's relationship with his job is fundamentally a masochistic one. While Rebus maintains that work stops him from giving full reign to his darker impulses, it also causes him acute guilt, physical distress, mental trauma and almost culminates in a complete psychological breakdown. Work has been theorised as providing a palliative dimension. For some it offers:

... a haven from pain. Work provides a meaningful way of being-in-the-world...Work is both a mode of self-realization and an occasion for the purposive control over the intrusiveness of pain, psychical and psychological, into the day-to-day world. (DelVecchio Good et al, 1992: 16)

Although cognisant to some degree of the costs of his choice of career – he contemplates resigning as early as *Hide and Seek* (1990), the second novel in the series – Rebus is characterised by an insistence that his job functions in a similarly

analgesic way. However, Rankin undermines this, showing instead the toll exerted by Rebus' total reliance on his work for a sense of self-actualisation.

As has already been mentioned, Rebus' body is experienced primarily as a site of self-abuse, but it also receives punishment at the hands of others. Rebus is not averse to experiencing intense physical discomfort; in fact he places himself in harm's way far more often than is strictly necessary. When he finds himself hanging suspended from a hook towards the conclusion of *Black and Blue* he even attempts to talk himself into enjoying the pain (1997: 443). Here the influence of Rebus' hard-boiled masochistic precursors can clearly be discerned. There is an obvious parallel with Ned Beaumont, the protagonist of Dashiell Hammett's *The Glass Key* (1931), who, at one point in the narrative is told, 'I never seen a guy that liked being hit so much or that I liked hitting so much' (1931: 662). Such behaviour is, of course, what one would expect of a masochist, but Rebus also uses pain as a means of exerting control over his body. To quote Antony Easthope:

Masochism, the pleasure of being hurt, perfectly combines with the narcissism of the masculine ego. If I can hurt my body freely, by an act of my own will, then my mind is proved to be master of my body. (Easthope, 1986: 53)

The ability to endure pain without complaint has long been valorised as a key component of masculinity – as R.W. Connell has stated '[t]he body is virtually assaulted in the name of masculinity' (Connell, 1995: 58) – and as Rebus' mental health becomes ever more perilous he increasingly subjects himself to violence as a means of maintaining some form of control over himself. This is particularly noticeable in *Black and Blue* and *The Hanging Garden*. In the former, Rebus is badly beaten several times (1997: 234 and 437-45), while in the latter Rebus, ridden with guilt at Sammy's accident, is suitably punished by means of electrocution (1998: 360).

It is this element of guilt that flags Rebus as a moral masochist: he is not interested in pain for pain's sake but instead craves physical castigation, punishment for his sins.

In her book *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (1992) Kaja Silverman writes of the Christian masochist, a figure she takes from Theodor Reik's elaboration of the Freudian moral masochist. According to Silverman, the surrendering of the self to suffering:

...pits the Christian masochist against the society in which he or she lives, makes of that figure a rebel, or even a revolutionary of sorts. In this particular subspecies of moral masochism there would thus seem to be a strong heterocosmic impulse – the desire to remake the world in another image altogether, to forge a different cultural order. The exemplary Christian masochist also seeks to remake him or herself according to the model of the suffering Christ, the very picture of earthly divestiture and loss. Insofar as such an identification implies the complete and utter negation of all phallic values, Christian masochism has radically emasculating implications, and is in its purest forms intrinsically incompatible with the pretensions of masculinity. (Silverman, 1992: 197-98)

Silverman's formulation of the Christian masochist has interesting implications when applied to the character of Rebus.¹⁸ As already mentioned above, Rankin casts Rebus as a rebel male, which corresponds with how Silverman views the figure of Christian masochist. Rebus is also presented in the texts as a willing sacrificial victim. When the 'High Heidyins' have to be appeased, it is Rebus who offers himself up. As he himself says, 'someone needs to be punished [...] For the sake of the team' (2001a: 382). Such submission fits Rebus' own masochistic agenda, while also finding rare, and relative, favour with his superiors. Throughout the series, Rebus as 'rogue male' is constituted in opposition to patriarchal authority, both within and without the police force.¹⁹ It makes sense within this schema that Rebus should also think God, the ultimate Patriarch, is out to get him. Rebus starts the series as a Christian, albeit one who expresses contempt for organised religion. Although his faith ebbs as the novels

progress, he is still given to contemplating his relationship with God. The God of Rebus' imagination is very much an Old Testament sadist. Rebus interprets Cafferty's return in *Set in Darkness* as God having a cruel laugh at his expense (2000: 294), while in *Knots and Crosses* he seems to be expecting to be struck down imminently by God's wrath:

He was not afraid now though. Let it come if it would, let everything come. He had no resilience left. *He was passive to the will of his malevolent creator.* (1987: 149, italics mine)

In keeping with Rankin's use of Christian terminology, Rebus is depicted as embracing the worst his job can throw at him, viewing it as a form of penance (see 1993: 7; 1994: 3, and 2000: 11). Explicit parallels to Jesus can be found in the references to crucifixion that pepper the texts (see 1995: 342 and 2000: 447). This aspect of Rebus' characterisation forms a representational bridge with how Mankell constructs Wallander's masochism. In *The White Lioness* Mankell writes:

He [Wallander] was taking the role of sacrificial lamb. He doubted whether Konovalenko [a Russian assassin] could be arrested without officers being injured or killed. Therefore he would sacrifice himself. The thought terrified him, but he could not run away. He had to achieve what he had set out to do, regardless of the consequences. (1993: 304-5)

The image of an almost Messianic Wallander, eager to have his cup of suffering taken away from him but unable to shirk his duty, is underlined by the fact that the chapter in which this quotation appears opens with Wallander dreaming of himself walking on water (1993: 304).

There is clearly something feminine in Rebus' willingness to submit to the rack. To return to Silverman, she sees 'radically emasculating' potential in the figure of the Christian masochist (1992: 198) and in marginal male subjectivities more

generally. While Rankin uses Rebus' masochism to subvert the hard man type, both Sally Robinson and David Savran caution against an excessively optimistic reading of texts in which phallic allegiances are supposedly side-stepped in favour of an alternative positioning. To quote Savran:

...masochism functions precisely as a kind of decoy and...the cultural texts constructing masochistic masculinities characteristically conclude with an almost magical restitution of phallic power. (Savran, 1998: 37)

Savran's point is undoubtedly a valid one, and while Rankin's texts do not posit a 'restitution of phallic power', the end of the series does fail to reimagine a viable alternative, a point that will be more fully addressed below.

While Rebus does have at least a debatable element of the feminine in his passivity, he is also represented by Rankin as an active masochist, a character who is not content to just wait for pain and suffering to come his way but who aggressively seeks them out. This is most evident in his relationship with Morris Cafferty, Rebus' 'own personal devil' (2006: 208). Cafferty, a career criminal, is Rebus' nemesis, but their relationship is more complex than this. Cafferty is closer to Rebus than his own family, which is admittedly no great achievement given Rebus' isolation, but is still indicative of the Manichaeian dualism that characterises their bond. Such a dynamic is often found in crime fiction – most obviously with Sherlock Holmes and Professor Moriarty – and the interaction between Rankin's policeman and villain is again reminiscent of American forms in which 'the hard-boiled detective remains unfulfilled until he has taken a personal moral stance toward the criminal' (Cawelti, 1976: 143). The idea of good and evil doubles is also a recurring trope in the history of Scottish literature and the influence of Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) in particular can be discerned throughout the Rebus

series. Despite their mutual hatred (the provenance of which is never fully disclosed, leaving the way open for a possible prequel to the series), Cafferty and Rebus have much in common. They share a taste for fine whisky, and, as the series progresses, both come to worry about their ageing and the inevitable retirement that awaits. In ways that echo Wallander's fascination with the criminal element he pursues, Rebus is both repelled and attracted to Cafferty. The irresistible allure of the Kristevan abject is at work in Rankin's texts, as well as in Mankell's. The relationship between Rebus and Cafferty appears almost as an improbable romance. This is most clear when the two discuss Siobhan Clarke in *The Naming of the Dead* and sound more like dual parents than sworn enemies (2006: 206). The uncanny proximity between the two men facilitates their mutual understanding. As such Cafferty sees Rebus for the masochist he is:

But we're a cruel people, Strawman. All of us, you and me. And we're ghouls.' His face was very close to Rebus's, both of them bent over. Rebus kept his eyes on the grass below him. 'When they killed the grave-robber Burke, they made souvenirs from his skin. I've got one in the house, I'll show it to you.' The voice might have been inside Rebus's own head. 'We *like* to watch, and that's the truth. I bet even you've got a taste for pain, Strawman. You're hurting all over, but you ran with me, you didn't give up. Why? Because you *like* the pain. It's what makes you a Calvinist.' (1993: 191, italics Rankin's)

Cafferty facilitates Rebus' masochism, not just by having him physically hurt, but because Rebus' loathing of Cafferty is the outward manifestation of his own self-hatred – by hurting Cafferty he is hurting himself.

Throughout the series Rankin problematises the construction of Rebus' identity. Detached from his policing context, Rebus seems to have no real sense of self: 'Without the job, he almost ceased to exist' (2006: 51). He attempts to rationalize

his obsession with his work by portraying it as a kind of necessary voyeurism, his interest in other people compensating for a void at the centre of his own identity:

There were lights on across the way and he concentrated on them. 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* which went beyond voyeurism. It was a drug. And the thing was, when he had all this knowledge, he then had to use booze to blank it out. He saw his reflection in the window, two-dimensional, ghostly. I'm almost not here at all, he thought. (1997: 329, italics Rankin's)

The last few words of this quotation, 'I'm almost not here at all', echo an earlier line from the series in which Rebus ruminates '[s]o little of us [Scottish men] ever reaches the surface, it's a wonder we exist at all' (1994: 193). This absence at the heart of Rebus' construction, and in Scottish masculinity more widely, raises interesting implications, especially when considered alongside Rebus' masochism. Is Rebus' masochism simply an attempt to fill a sensational void or is his character emblematic of the hard man pushed to his representational limits? If, as Freud posits, the masochist '...must act against his own interests, must ruin the prospects which open out to him in the real world and must, perhaps, destroy his own real existence' (Freud, 1924: 169-70), then what is left? Given the annihilatory tone of both this observation and the quotations cited above it is, perhaps, unsurprising that Rankin turns to Siobhan Clarke in an attempt to conceive of an alternative to this self-destructive masculinity.

'I've got a touch of a hangover, bureaucrat. Don't push me': Marketplace Masculinity and the Problem of Inheritance

In *Strip Jack* Rebus takes the uncharacteristic step of berating himself for being a professional failure:

'What have you done with your life, John Rebus?' The answer was: Not much. Gregor Jack was younger than him, and more successful. Barney Byars was younger than him, and more successful. Who did he know who was *older* than him and *less* successful? Not a single soul, discounting the beggars in the city centre, the ones he'd spent the afternoon with – without a result, but with a certain uncomfortable sense of belonging...(1992b: 94, italics Rankin's)

This singular incident of career angst is probably the closest Rebus gets to displaying anything like ambition; his standard attitude to promotion is that it would entail more responsibility, hassle and compromise than it is worth (2001b: 3, 2004: 164). Having attained the rank of Detective Inspector in the second novel in the series, *Hide and Seek* (1990), Rebus progresses no further up the career ladder in his remaining years on the force. Far from being a blot on his professional record, this lack of advancement is an endorsement of Rebus' capabilities; after all 'only the incompetent were promoted. It shuffled them out of the way' (1993: 248). This is not to say that Rebus lacks chances to further his career. When, in *Let it Bleed*, Rebus uncovers high-level complicity in dubious business dealings, promotion to the rank of Chief Inspector is offered in return for his silence (1995: 345). Rebus, the perennial outsider, is briefly tempted by the prospect of inclusion:

Scotland was a machine, a big machine if you looked at it from the outside. But from the inside, it assumed a new form – small, intimate, not that many moving parts, and all of them interconnected quite intricately. Rebus knew he was still outside the machine, but he knew now that one reason why he'd been invited to the shooting party was that Sir Iain Hunter was inviting him *in*. They could make him part of the machine, a chip on the motherboard. All it took was friends in the right places. (1995: 258)

However, he turns the offer down, thus sustaining his hard-boiled representation as 'a hero who not only acted outside the law to bring about true justice, but had turned his

back on the ideal of success' (Cawelti, 1976: 77). While Rebus is thus untainted by association with ambition, this is not the case with most of his male colleagues, nearly all of whom are viewed by Rebus as compromised by the way in which they have isolated themselves from honest-to-goodness old fashioned police work. As has already been demonstrated, Rebus cuts an isolated figure in the Lothian and Borders CID squad, where modern policing has come to seem more like a business transaction, as is exemplified by DI Derek Starr, who looks 'more like a salesman than a detective' (2007: 235). Throughout the novels Rebus comes up against men whose ambition and desire to please the 'High Heidyins' far outweighs either their actual abilities as police officers or their concern to see justice done. Skilled networkers and media manipulators, these political men represent all that Rebus thinks is wrong with contemporary policing and their prominence helps to explain why Rebus is so keen to distance himself from official structures.

As the capitalist marketplace has transformed from one based upon manual labour to one in which white collar industries are in the ascendant, a different set of principles have come to be valorised from those traditionally endorsed. Instead of prioritising obvious independence, the modern corporate work environment is nominally a place of co-operation and mutual dependence, both of which are values more typically prescribed as 'feminine'. However, as can clearly be seen in Rankin's fiction, there is a discrepancy between the image being promoted and the, often cut-throat, reality underneath. The capitalist marketplace is defined by competition and a desire to rise up the hierarchy. At its centre is a paradox between the lip-service paid to 'feminine' attributes and the fact that it encourages, and rewards, blatant displays of masculine aggression. Rather, therefore, than representing a more evolved

masculine sensibility, the corporate male is really something of a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Michael Kimmel's work on competing modes of masculine identity and its relevance to contemporary, male-authored crime fiction has already been outlined in the previous chapter. Just as in Mankell's fiction, Rankin's texts are full of Kimmel's 'Marketplace Men', while Gill Plain views Rebus himself as an incarnation of the 'Heroic Artisan' (Plain, 2003a: 59-60), a skilled and independent worker increasingly side-lined by this new mode of masculinity. The work of Thomas Byers (1995) can usefully be applied to Rankin's texts to try to understand the threat that Marketplace Men pose to Rebus.²⁰ In a fascinating discussion, Byers argues that patriarchal masculinity is under assault from postmodern forms of male identity, which resist easy definitions and cannot be pinned down. Byers illustrates his point by reference to James Cameron's film *Terminator 2*, in which the old-model T-101 comes up against the new and improved T-1000. According to Byers, the T-101 is '...reassuringly graspable, solid, and consistent: the hard-body exterior covers an interior that is equally solid, equally clearly demarcated, and equally grounded in (human) nature' (Byers, 1995: 9). Against this reassuring rigidity, he contrasts the fluid form of the T-1000, which is made of liquid metal and, as such, can reconstitute itself as shape it chooses. Byers writes:

...it is a shape-shifter: it can take over the form of almost anything it touches, from a tiled floor to a foster mother. Hence it is extremely hard to locate, fix, contain, pin down, or damage. It blurs boundaries not only between apparently solid objects, but even between the exterior and the interior of the body; indeed in a sense it has no interior... (Byers, 1995: 9)

In Rankin's fiction, Rebus, the hard man, finds himself juxtaposed against this more mutable foe, whose lack of substance he can only experience as threatening.

Rankin's Marketplace Men are most easily distinguishable from 'real coppers' by virtue of their appearance, with a feminising emphasis placed upon their clothes and personal grooming. For example, DI Alister Flower is described as looking 'like he was on his way to a fashion shoot for one of the stores on Princes Street' (1995: 42); the ACC Colin Carswell is 'all haircut and eau de Cologne' (2003: 254); while James Corbyn, the Chief Constable, is noted for his 'smart uniform, shiny cap, and black leather gloves' (2007: 226). Marketplace Masculinity is a triumph of style over substance, naked ambition dressed in a well-tailored suit. The fact that something unpleasant could be lurking just below the surface is emphasised in *Mortal Causes*:

Chief Inspector Lauderdale was standing behind him. Rebus knew this because Lauderdale brought a smell with him. Not everyone could distinguish it, but Rebus could. It was as if talcum powder had been used in a bathroom to cover some less acceptable aroma. (1994: 62)

Interestingly, Rankin has a tendency to note a character's physical appearance only if they seem like the type of person for whom such things matter. Little information is ever given on Rebus' dress, except to note that it is usually shabby. He is also characterised by his persistent untidiness, whereas Marketplace Men like things spick and span: James Corbyn, for example, resides behind 'an unfeasibly tidy desk' (2007: 185). In addition to their physical appearance, Marketplace Men are further demarcated by their ineffectiveness outside the safe confines of the office. They are not men of action but instead are characterised as little more than administrators, deprived of any real agency (as least, as defined within terms that Rebus would recognise). While Rebus is in his element out on the street (see 1995: 69), Lauderdale is made to sound like a glorified secretary. He is 'as ever efficient behind a desk', but 'take him out onto the streets, Rebus knew, and he was about as efficient as pepper on a vindaloo' (1993: 49). Rebus' flexibility, by contrast, is emphasised a few pages

earlier in the same novel when he tells Dr. Curt, the pathologist, '[i]t doesn't matter to me where they put me' (1993: 46).

Chief among Rebus' Marketplace foes is DI Derek Linford. Introduced in *Set in Darkness*, Linford is already marked for promotion:

Linford was Fettes fast-stream, headed for big things at Lothian and Borders Police HQ. Late twenties, practically deskbound, and glowing from a love of the job. Already there were CID officers – mostly older than him – who were saying it didn't do to get on the wrong side of Derek Linford. Maybe he'd have a long memory; maybe one day he'd be looking down on them all from Room 279 in the Big House. (2000: 4)

Typically, Linford, whom Rebus describes as being 'like one of those office managers who worries about paperclips when the case-files are ten feet high on everybody's desk' (2000: 87), is a bureaucrat, more concerned with paperwork than actual policing. He also displays little imagination or flair for his job, preferring to do things resolutely by the book, sticking 'to the main road, following the signposts marked Investigative Procedure' (2000, 296). Marketplace Martinsson, from the Wallander novels, is similarly concerned with doing things the proper way. Unlike Rebus, who seems to view getting on the wrong side of important and influential figures as a recreational activity, Linford is a practised sycophant, able to adapt his personality to suit whomever he is trying to impress (2000: 49).²¹ His obsequiousness is such that he will even drink Superintendent Watson's legendarily awful coffee, a fact that convinces Rebus that Linford will go far (2000: 79). Linford's materialism is another point of contrast with Rebus. Kimmel states 'Marketplace Manhood was a manhood that required proof, and that required the acquisition of tangible goods as evidence of success' (2001: 270). While Linford drives a fancy car, Rebus is firmly attached to his 'wheezing' Saab (2006: 5). As mentioned above, one of the hallmarks of Marketplace Masculinity is that it exists in a homosocial environment and, although the

homosocial world can be a mutually supportive one for men, it is also characterised by competition and antagonism, particularly in relation to work and career advancement. According to Lynne Segal, a lack of harmony between different masculinities is unavoidable:

Inevitably, they must confront and attempt to undermine each other. For 'masculinity' ...gains its symbolic force and familiar status, not from any fixed meanings, but rather from a series of hierarchical relations to what it can subordinate. (Segal, 1993: 634-35)

As Segal reminds us, conflict and insecurity are inseparable from the construction of male subjectivity.

Commenting on the juxtaposition of Rebus against men such as Derek Linford, Duncan Petrie states:

In true Rankin style, this clash between competing modes of masculinity is not presented in any simplistic framework of right and wrong, good or bad. (Petrie, 2004: 154)

Petrie's words are true to an extent. Rankin does avoid employing a strict moral dichotomy between Rebus' masculinity and that of other men in the novels, and he certainly does not endorse Rebus' mode of masculine subjectivity, emphasising his masochism and penchant for self-inflicted suffering. However, he does grant Rebus a sense of integrity that is very much absent from Marketplace Masculinity. Beyond this, he occasionally allows Marketplace Men to surprise Rebus. Despite his good suit and by the book attitude Chick Ancram in *Black and Blue* turns out to be a decent copper. Linford, too, goes up (briefly) in Rebus' estimation when he expresses appreciation for good whisky. Although Linford is emphatically much more a part of the system, playing by its rules and embracing its values, than Rebus, he, too, experiences a sense of himself as marginal:

He was an outsider in this place, same as in St Leonard's. When you worked as hard as he did, that was what happened: you got promotions, but lost the intimacy. People steered a course past you, either out of fear or jealousy. (2000: 134).

Linford's position here is not dissimilar to Rebus'; which suggests that success in any form in the police force is predicated upon isolation in some respect; while also, again, emphasising that masculine subjectivity is damned to insecurity.

One of the key features of Kimmel's 'Heroic Artisan' figure is that he passes his skills onto the next generation. As Kimmel writes, '[a]lso a devoted father, the Heroic Artisan taught his son his craft, bringing him through ritual apprenticeship to status as a master craftsman' (2001: 270). This is one sense in which Rebus does not fit into the 'Heroic Artisan' model. Brian Holmes is introduced to the series in *Hide and Seek*, ostensibly as a sidekick and potential protégé figure for Rebus. His first appearance, in which Rebus phones him and gets him to do a lot of his thankless leg work (1990: 71-73), sets the tone for the professional relationship that develops between the two men – as Rebus puts it, 'I'm the one with the brains, Brian. You're the one with the shoeleather' (1990: 96). Although Holmes does become a good detective and proves himself to be more than just an efficient errand boy, he remains resentful about Rebus' tendency to exclude him and is never really given the opportunity to come into his own. The action of *The Black Book* (1993) is, for example, based around a notebook of information compiled by Holmes regarding a crime from the Lothian and Border archives. However, Holmes is hospitalised early in the novel, leaving Rebus to follow his clues and solve the case. Holmes's hostility towards Rebus is alluded to in the novels, but is given greater prominence in the short story collection, *A Good Hanging* (1992). Here Rankin articulates the frustration facing Holmes as Rebus persistently keeps information to himself:

Holmes hated the way his superior worked, like a greedy if talented footballer hogging the ball, dribbling past man after man, getting himself trapped beside the by-line but still refusing to pass the ball. Holmes had known a boy at school like that. One day, fed up, Holmes had scythed the smart-arse down, even though they'd been on the same side... (1992c: 62)

This is not to say that Rebus and Holmes have a completely bad relationship: the two men socialise together outside work and enjoy a good line in banter. However, Holmes does seem to view Rebus as an impediment to advancement:

How was he expected to shine, to be noticed, to push forwards towards promotion, when it was always Rebus who, two steps ahead, came up with the answers? (1992c: 134)

It seems as if the only way for Holmes' cadet masculinity to accede to a position of power is by scything down Rebus, the man who twice refers to Holmes as 'son' in *Black and Blue* (1997: 237 and 493). In order to progress he must overthrow his father-figure, but given that Rebus is the hero of the story this is obviously not going to happen. Holmes, therefore, is written out of the series, doing that which countless of fictional detectives before him have failed or refused to do, and sacrificing his career in an attempt to save his marriage.

If Rebus fails to pass on his artisan skills to his metaphorical son, he does a better job with his metaphorical daughter, Siobhan Clarke. Clarke first appears in *The Black Book* and from the outset she appears to be more on Rebus' wave-length than Holmes. Unlike Holmes, Clarke appears to relish the unique challenges of working with Rebus:

Never be nosy, and always keep your head down: somehow Siobhan Clarke hadn't yet learned those two golden rules of the easy life. Not that anything was easy when John Rebus was in the office. Which was precisely why she liked working near him. (1993: 241)

She immediately grasps his thought processes and, more impressively, gets his jokes. As with Holmes, Rebus employs a mentoring technique with Clarke that can best be described as 'tough love'. The first reference Rebus makes to Clarke emphasises this:

He was waiting for her to put a foot wrong. It wasn't because she was English, or a graduate, or had wealthy parents who'd bought her a flat in the New Town. It wasn't because she was a she. It was just Rebus's way of dealing with young officers. (1993: 22)

Rebus is patronising, demanding and with-holds praise, even when it is merited (see 1993: 24 and 71). However, instead of becoming petulant, Clarke knuckles down. Given that Clarke is a woman, and as such has had to face many more obstacles in her career than Holmes, it is perhaps easier for her to accept the 'feminized' role of the mentee. Characterised by a similarity to Rebus that gets stronger as the series progresses, the main difference between Siobhan and the older officer is that she is career minded. Clarke is ambitious, a characteristic that is not necessarily depicted by Rankin in negative terms when it is displayed by women. Rebus certainly seems to take no issue with Clarke's desire for advancement, although Clarke herself struggles with the issue of how far she is prepared to go in order to achieve success. Clarke's professional identity has more in common with Rebus' brand of policing than with the desk bound, paper pushing of men such as Linford: she herself admits to preferring 'the maverick approach' (2000: 171). Like Rebus, Clarke is a 'natural' at the job: hard-working, obsessive and with a tendency to go it alone in the pursuit of results.²² However, she lacks Rebus' inherent rebelliousness and is torn between following his example and risking career suicide, or adopting the more politic Gill Templer as her role-model. Clarke is aware that if she decides to emulate Templer, success is more or less guaranteed:

...she'd follow orders, back her boss up, never take risks. And she would be safe, would continue to rise through the ranks...Detective Inspector, then maybe DCI by the time she was forty. (2001a: 171)

Clarke's position is an uncomfortable one, predicated as it is on the need to choose between one form of policing or the other. On the one hand, Clarke has seen at close quarters the damage Rebus' self-destructive internalising of the job has done, but on the other, she suspects that Templer has been in some way fundamentally corrupted by her willingness to play the game:

Gill had succeeded only by becoming more like the male officers around her, people like ACC Carswell. She probably thought she'd played the system, but Siobhan suspected that it was the system which had played *her*, moulding her, changing her, making sure she would fit in. It meant putting up barriers, keeping your distance. (2001a: 231, italics Rankin's)

Here the irony is clear that although the modern police force may have been more superficially feminised, women still need to act masculine in order to succeed. Connell's formulation of hegemonic masculinity can usefully be applied here, for as he is keen to stress, masculinity is intrinsically linked to context. The hegemonic modality is, therefore, subject to change: the only thing constant about it is that it 'embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy' (Connell, 1995: 77). It is, therefore, perfectly possible for hegemonic masculinity to adapt itself in a more 'feminine' way, without this necessarily opening up space inside its structures for women. Gill Plain states the police environment 'has become a sphere of constraint and limitation from which the truly masculine detective must flee. Siobhan, as a woman, can safely negotiate this space' (Plain, 2002: 50). She can; she just cannot act like a woman while she is there. Templer, for example, is characterised in strident terms and her firmness is repeatedly stressed. She is tough with Rebus 'because she couldn't afford to be soft' (1995: 99); promotion 'hardens'

her (2001a: 58) and she possesses a 'laser glare' and an 'iron' voice (2001b, 33 and 35). Rankin often introduces Templer by the sound of this iron voice entering a room, lending her a strange presence as a disembodied authority figure in a very patriarchal world (2001b: 281). Just as Templer has been changed by climbing the career ladder, there is a suggestion that Clarke will have to do the same. Throughout the novels there is a mutability to Clarke's character that she uses to her advantage. She has a chameleonic ability to adapt to whatever circumstances she finds herself in. Not only does her accent vary depending on whom she is talking to (2000: 132) but she is also able to shift from being a fast-rising member of CID to just one of the girls on a rare night out with Lothian and Borders' WPCs (2001a: 232). Even Rebus himself is surprised and, given his status as 'the perennial outsider' (1998: 7), slightly jealous of Clarke's capacity to blend in. Plain reads Clarke's 'shapeshifting' as a survival strategy and posits that it is not 'a viable long-term option for the female detective' (2007: 137). If Clarke wants to go far it seems that this will necessarily entail some kind of fragmentation of her identity – a stable subjectivity and a successful police career seem, in Rankin's world, to be mutually exclusive. Clarke's options are therefore limited. There is clearly potential for her to inherit Rebus' mantle but it is far from clear that she will be able to do anything of significance with it. Plain concludes:

Rankin, then, seems pessimistic about imagining alternative modes of investigation, suggesting that women's entry into patriarchal structures can only end in corruption or marginalisation. (2007: 137)

Duncan Petrie, however, interprets the novels as providing a 'positive trajectory':

The series plays out a kind of family saga in which Rebus' failure as a father to Sammy is ultimately compensated by the emergence of his surrogate daughter Siobhan Clarke. The fact that Siobhan is also a professional, who

understands and shares her mentor's identification with the job, erases the gulf between the professional and domestic spheres that Rebus, like many other fictional policemen, has conspicuously failed to reconcile. (Petrie, 2004: 158)

Petrie is correct to draw attention to the fact that Clarke does function as a surrogate child for Rebus. This is particularly obvious in *Exit Music*, which reads almost like an Oedipal crisis novel with Siobhan cast as the frustrated son, not daughter, ready to accede to patriarchal authority, but unable to while the father remains on the scene. Despite being more than ready to step 'out from her mentor's shadow' (2007: 11), Clarke is infantilised by Rebus' presence, craving validation and approval (see 2007: 195, 337). However, it is hard to accept Petrie's suggestion that Clarke reconciles the domestic and the professional. Like Rebus, Clarke has let work dominate her life to the detriment of everything else. There does not seem to be much that is positive in the fact that Rebus has made Siobhan Clarke in his own emotionally stunted, self-abusive, work obsessed image.

The possibilities embodied by Clarke are also rendered less palatable in light of her increasing characterisation as a female version of Rebus. Although Rankin is initially keen to draw a clear distinction between the two officers – when visiting Siobhan's flat in *Set in Darkness*, Rebus notes that they are 'chalk and cheese' (2000: 300) – the differences between them start to erode as the series winds towards a conclusion. While Rankin is no doubt trying to underline the point that Clarke is Rebus' successor, he hammers this home at the expense of consistent characterisation. Siobhan's willingness to embrace vigilante justice courtesy of Cafferty in the aftermath of the attack on her mother in *The Naming of the Dead* seems more like an attempt to put her through a similar experience to the one Rebus had with Cafferty in *The Hanging Garden* than something the 'real' Clarke would actually involve herself in. By *Exit Music*, Siobhan is Rebus in drag: she uses his jokes; has the same surly

attitude to junior officers and a flare for Rebus-like intimidation of witnesses (2007: 157, 182 and 120). Rankin has spoken of how he feels he has made a success out of Siobhan, bucking the trend that dictates that male authors cannot write convincing female characters (O'Connor, 2006a: 33). However, Lynn Barber disagrees, arguing that 'Siobhan is barely feminine – she could easily be a man' (Barber, 2007). There is something clichéd and lazy about Rankin's attempts to feminise Clarke, especially his insistence that any problem a woman might face can be solved with the liberal consumption of chocolate:

She wondered if the petrol station at Canonmills would be open...maybe the chip shop on Broughton Street. Yes, that was it...she could see the answer to her problems! She slipped her shoes and coat on, made sure she had keys and money. When she went out, she checked that the door had locked behind her. Down the stairs and out into the night, searching for the one ally she could depend on, no matter what. Chocolate. (2001a: 250)

Sloppy characterisation aside, there is a more fundamental problem facing any attempt to move Siobhan to the foreground of the series; namely Rankin's inability to conceive of a female subjectivity that is not in some way 'masculine'. As has already been shown, the two major female characters present in the narrative each correspond neatly with the two types of contrasting masculinity depicted – Templer is Marketplace (Wo)Man, while Clarke fits the Heroic Artisan/Rogue Male type established by Rebus. While it is interesting that Rankin moves away from a male hero, the transition to a female one is meaningless if there is no genuine attempt to construct an alternative subjectivity. The fact that Henning Mankell has created a more convincing female protagonist does suggest that Rankin's gender inversion need not be a necessary prerequisite of the genre; but, then again, Linda Wallander has only been a leading character in one novel – who knows what kind of representational future lies in store for her?

Conclusion

Given the contradictions implicit in Rebus' character – he is a hard man capable of shedding tears, a representative of law and order who cannot stand authority figures – it is little wonder that he is depicted as a man in crisis. Rebus' masculinity is constructed as oppositional to almost everything, leaving him stranded well outside the conventional structures of family, friends and work. There is an air of siege masculinity about Rebus. He seems vulnerable to attack on all sides and as a result has to batten down and isolate himself in order to survive. Rankin emphasises this by making Rebus' Arden Street abode almost sacrosanct, a rare place of shelter and comfort in Rebus' otherwise brutal world (see, for example, 1990: 59; 2001a: 82 and 99). Rebus is surrounded by potential corruption, both in terms of the crimes he investigates and in the new direction being taken by policing. To save himself he has to stand alone, although this separation of himself from society also has detrimental effects on his psychological well-being. Rebus' behaviour is paradoxically self-preserving and self-destructive. He is, to quote, Jack Morton, 'the world's longest surviving suicide victim' (1997: 310). Identity in the Rebus novels is posited as something inherently unstable. Rebus seems to be on the point of disintegration without his job to hold on to and it will be interesting to see how he copes with retirement if Rankin decides to resurrect his character. But Rebus is not the only one whose existence is predicated upon instability – both Siobhan Clarke and Gill Templer have to mould their personalities to fit their jobs, while even Derek Linnard, who seems so at home within the corporate world of the modern police force, still feels himself to be something of an outsider. Policing, therefore, is posited as

something almost soul destroying in the Rankin novels, resulting in an inevitable breakdown in subjectivity, no matter how it is approached.

By contrast to Pelecanos' 'nostalgic formulation' of masculinity, Rankin's texts have more in common with Mankell's in the way in which they refuse to look backwards to proffer a solution to contemporary ills. Whereas Pelecanos' texts endorse a certain form of masculinity – one that is solidly rooted in a community – as a useful social commodity and seek to rehabilitate the archetype of the responsible bread-winning male, Rankin, and indeed Mankell, do not attempt to depict their protagonists as aspirational figures. Instead they represent their heroes as broken figures and shift the focus onto literal and symbolic daughters.

Notes

The phrase 'Voluntary Bondage' is a quotation from *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Tales* by Robert Louis Stevenson (1886: 29).

The quotation that prefaces Section 2 is taken from *Black and Blue* (1997: 184)

The quotation that prefaces Section 3 is taken from the film *McLintock!* (1963, dir. Andrew V. McLaglen)

¹ Rankin was given this appellation by James Ellroy, himself a notable influence on Rankin's work. (O'Connor, 2006 (b): 50).

² Statistics taken from Barber, 2007 and Wroe, 2005: 20.

³ However, it is worth noting that none of the respondents featured cited Rankin as a possible contender, opting instead for more obviously 'literary' figures (Moss, 2007).

⁴ For example, Rankin is barely mentioned in Cairns Craig's *The Modern Scottish Novel* (1999).

⁵ Speaking at the Crime Fiction Master Class, University of St Andrews, March 2007.

⁶ In his essay 'The Hippocratic Smile', Glenn W. Most, writes that:

...detective stories are, for many readers, instalments in the fragmentary biographies of their heroes, each displaying his familiar virtues under a new and surprising light. (1983: 345)

⁷ *Knots and Crosses* begins with Rebus visiting the grave of his father, who died five years before the start of the novel. His mother is rarely mentioned in the novels. However in 'Seeing Things', a story

taken from the collection *A Good Hanging* (1992), Rankin reveals both that she died young and that she was a religious woman (88).

⁸ Discussing this possibility in an interview with Lynn Barber, Rankin declares:

Nothing is set in stone, but she's my insurance policy in that she's in her early thirties and therefore has a long career ahead of her. I do find her a very interesting character and I think she could carry a series. (Barber, 2007)

⁹ Rankin has himself commented on the impact he believes his ambiguous conclusions have had on his American sales. In an interview with Gill Plain, he says:

I like loose endings...Crime readers don't always like that, I must admit, especially in some places like the States, they like a sense of closure. Or at least more of a sense of closure than I sometimes give. I think this is one of the problems that the crime novel finds itself in as being accepted as a literary genre. But if you try and loosen it up a little bit, abandon the sense of closure, then you lose a lot of readers who come to the form because there is a certain comfort in knowing that at the end all their questions will have been answered, all their worries about the characters will have been resolved, order will have been re-established in the world, the status quo will resume. (Plain, 2003b: 128)

Henning Mankell, too, has failed to 'break' the US market, a fact that one of his translators, Stephen T. Murray, has attributed to the lack of violence in the Wallander novels. However, following Rankin's logic, Mankell's persistent ambivalence may also have rendered his books unpalatable to American tastes.

¹⁰ Rankin has commented that the kind of easy intimacy that springs up between drinking buddies is much less work than developing proper relationships (Plain, 1998: 116).

¹¹ Despite Rebus' general air of anti-sociability, Siobhan Clarke, as has already been mentioned, does manage to build a genuine friendship with her boss, and, at one point in the series their friendship turns, briefly, to romance, when Rebus kisses an astonished Clarke in *A Question of Blood* (2003: 434). However, Rankin does not further develop this dimension of their relationship.

¹² There is an interesting scene in *Let it Bleed* in which Rebus watches Sammy arrive at Edinburgh's Waverly Station (1995: 109). He is full of admiration for how grown-up she seems but cannot approach her. A similar episode occurs in one of Mankell's novels (1991: 136), when Wallander accidentally catches sight of his daughter, Linda, at a train station, but like Rebus chooses to watch her from a distance, rather than make her aware of his presence. Both men seem to experience problems adjusting to the fact that their daughters have grown into women, although Wallander is ultimately much more successful than Rebus in renegotiating a relationship with his adult daughter.

¹³ It is worth noting that Rebus is prone to fits of weeping in *Knots and Crosses*, the first novel in the series. However, the character is not fully formed in this text, and Rankin goes on to make emotional repression a lynch pin of Rebus' representation. The fact that Rebus does cry so frequently in *Knots and Crosses* corresponds with Robinson's template of emotional blockage, given that the impetus for his outbursts is provided by return of his former army colleague, Gordon Reeve. Both Reeve and Rebus

endured traumatic experiences during their SAS training and neither man is presented by Rankin as having adequately processed this trauma.

¹⁴ Jourard's work is cited by Helgeson (1995: 68-104).

¹⁵ Rebus is suspended in *The Black Book*, *Let it Bleed* (although in this instance his suspension is disguised as a 'holiday', 1995: 121), *Resurrection Men* (again this is not an official suspension but comes as part of an undercover operation in which Rebus is required to pose as a copper in need of rehabilitation; a role which does not exactly tax him), *The Falls*, *A Question of Blood*, *The Naming of the Dead* and *Exit Music*. It is worth noting that in *Exit Music* Rebus does not actually make it to his official retirement date – instead Chief Constable Corbyn dismisses him from the police force with three days left to run on his contract (2007: 185).

¹⁶ In *Dead Souls* Rebus crosses paths with another paedophile, Darren Rough, and once again he abuses his position, choosing to leak information about Rough's residency on an Edinburgh housing estate to the media. However, when Rough becomes the victim of vigilante violence Rebus regrets his actions and attempts to help him.

¹⁷ This aspect of over-involvement with young people and emotional vulnerability where they are concerned can also be seen in the character of Derek Strange. However, Pelecanos depicts this sense of responsibility in a different way than either Rankin or Mankell, making it something that his protagonist actively seeks out, rather than just the by-product of his work.

¹⁸ Gill Plain connects Silverman's theorising with Rankin's work, although does not explicitly identify Rebus as a Christian masochist. See Plain, 2003a: 67.

¹⁹ Although Rebus is successfully depicted as an outsider figure, he is part of a patriarchal structure, and, as demonstrated in this section, his rebelliousness can be exploited by figures of hegemonic authority for their own ends. Whether he likes it or not, Rebus is caught in the patriarchal economy, contributing to wider networks of male dominance even as Rankin undermines the character's own masculinity. As R.W. Connell has theorised, non-hegemonic masculinities, despite their subordination are still negotiated within a 'relationship of complicity with the hegemonic project' (Connell, 1995: 79).

²⁰ In her essay 'Hard Nuts to Crack: Devolving Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', Plain also connects Byers' work with that of Rankin. See Plain 2003a: 63-66.

²¹ The list of all those who Rebus annoys with his steely determination to find the truth, no matter how compromising, is a long one that includes the MSP Jack Bell in *A Question of Blood*; Commander Steelforth, Chief Constable Corbyn, the industrialist Richard Penman, and an African diplomat in *The Naming of the Dead* and the banker Sir Michael Addison and the staff of the Russian consulate in *Exit Music*.

²² Rebus is quick to note Clarke's aptitude for the job. Early in *The Black Book* Rebus opines that Siobhan will:

...do well in the police, despite people like him. Women did have to work harder in the force to progress at the same pace as their male colleagues: everyone knew it. But Siobhan worked hard enough, and by Christ did she have a memory. A month from now, he could ask her about the note on his desk, and she'd remember the telephone conversation word for word. It was scary. (1993: 53-54)

By *Mortal Causes*, Rebus is concerned about Holmes' future in the force, but is confident of Clarke:

She was past her probation, and was going to be a good detective. She was quick, clever and keen. Police officers were seldom all three. Rebus himself might pitch for thirty percent on a good day. (1994: 32)

Conclusion

No man, he thought, had any right to be so vulnerable. He was letting the side down. All males have a right to a certain brutality, a certain insensibility. Without this...[they] can be charged with anything. (Murdoch, 1956: 33-34)

...masculinity has been a prime victim of the disturbing fragmentation of the social and cultural environment (Frosch, 1994: 91-92)

Rather than attempting to resolve some of the tensions that the previous close reading chapters have drawn attention to, I wish to simply end by restating what this thesis has revealed about the work of George Pelecanos, Henning Mankell and Ian Rankin, without necessarily making any broad conclusive statements.

This thesis has sought to demonstrate that issues of masculinity and identity are crucial to an understanding of the texts of George Pelecanos, Henning Mankell and Ian Rankin. Of the three authors, it is Pelecanos who most obviously addresses the topic of masculinity with a specific agenda in mind. Without wishing to oversimplify his work, Pelecanos' novels exhibit a tendency to posit questions for which he already has answers: he sees clear problems facing modern American men and equally clear ways of circumventing these problems. In Pelecanos' texts men are represented as being in crisis due to a changing socio-economic climate which has invalidated the male role as provider. His novels depict young, urban, black men, who, when left with no socially-sanctioned means of demonstrating their masculinity, increasingly turn to crime and violence as a way of proving their manhood. As a positive contrast to this deficit model of masculinity, Pelecanos offers the textual example of Derek Strange, a man defined by his ability to sustain employment and the contribution he makes to his local community. Although flawed, most notably in his

dealings with women, Strange is presented by his creator as something of a role model, a character who exemplifies and perpetuates Pelecanos' resistance masculinity.

Like the work of George Pelecanos, Henning Mankell's texts can be interpreted as a 'valuable barometer of the society's ideological norms', to quote Dennis Porter's observation on the potential insights offered by popular fiction (Porter, 1981: 1). In Mankell's fiction, too, masculinity is a complex and problematic issue. Mankell's texts are riddled with ambivalence and fragmentation; they are about boundaries being crossed and borders going unrespected, and within Mankell's textual environment there exists a strong synecdochic relationship between the body of the detective and that of the state, both of which appear to be permanently on the edge of disintegration and destruction. In terms of generic innovation, Mankell defies convention by characterising his policeman hero as marginal, following the model of the isolated private investigator. To quote Stephen Knight, writing on Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe:

Separated by choice from the prizes of normal bourgeois life, he [Marlowe] finds no significance in his own activity, but perseveres in it, alienated from external meaning as well as integration. (Knight, 1980, 160)

Mankell's characterisation of Wallander is typical of a move in contemporary crime writing towards representing the detective as seriously, not just superficially, flawed. To quote Lee Horsley, modern investigative figures are 'so lost, floundering, marginalized, guilt-ridden, alcoholic, or just generally defective that no one could mistake them for masculine role models' (Horsley, 2005: 98). This is a clear departure from the untainted version of the detective offered by Cawelti:

The hard-boiled detective has a few scratches, but no deep wounds spoil his function as a fantasy hero. He is the man who has been able to say to hell with it and yet to retain the world's most important benefits – self-esteem, popularity, and respect. (Cawelti, 1976: 161)

Ian Rankin's exploration of male identity in contemporary Scotland also hinges upon themes of isolation, emotional repression and fractured subjectivity. The character of John Rebus is consumed by self-loathing and exists precariously on the cusp of self-annihilation through his adherence to a masochistic masculinity. Rankin, too, employs elements of the hard-boiled type in his characterisation of Rebus – the tough guy with the soft centre – but, like Mankell and Pelecanos, he does more than simply just replicating old forms. This willingness to move away from convention is a key similarity between the writers considered in this thesis, and this parallel is, perhaps, more significant than the degree to which each writer is successful with his formal innovation.

While both Mankell and Rankin successfully portray characters in the throes of existential crisis, neither author makes any sustained attempt within their texts to articulate a genuine version of non-traditional masculinity. The alternative mode of male subjectivity that appears in the work of both authors – Marketplace Masculinity – is just as phallic as its hard-boiled and hard-bodied, hard man predecessor. What Mankell and Rankin do accomplish, however, is not the consideration of new masculine paradigms but a continued assault on the normative mode, which is shown to be pathologically damaging in both their texts. Elisabeth Badinter has stated, with regard to the production of male subjectivity that '[w]hat has been constructed can therefore be deconstructed in order to be reconstructed anew' (Badinter, 1992: 27). No such reconstruction is either offered or attempted by Mankell or Rankin – but this absence is, in itself, a challenge. In her discussion of the crime fictions of Dick

Francis and Joseph Hansen, Gill Plain argues that neither author makes good on the apparent potential for the dissolution of phallic masculinity that seemingly lies within their texts (for a more substantial discussion of these novels see Plain, 2001: 96–140). Francis' disabled protagonist, Sid Halley, and Hansen's homosexual detective, Dave Brandstetter, consolidate patriarchal masculinity rather than subverting it. Plain states that '[t]o achieve this end, both writers begin their projects by using loss as a means to disable, and thereafter reconstruct, the hero' (Plain, 2001: 121). This is where Mankell and Rankin are potentially radical: by refusing a reconstruction of the detective along established lines they seem to be treading promising new territory for the genre. It remains to be seen whether or not crime fiction can accommodate a genuinely revisionist masculinity, or if such a representation would be inevitably be hindered by formal constraints. However, within the framework Mankell and Rankin have each chosen – the representation of white middle-aged, working to middle class men – their work seems as innovative as it can realistically be.

While this thesis aims to go some way towards addressing the absence of critical studies on masculine representation, it is necessarily limited, and there is great potential for further research on the topic. It would be interesting and useful to analyse the way in which masculinity is depicted in crime texts by female, and feminist, authors who employ male protagonists. One thinks, for example, of Fred Vargas and her series featuring the French police officer, Commissaire Jean-Baptiste Adamsberg, or Val McDermid and her novels focusing upon the clinical psychologist Dr. Tony Hill. Equally, there is scope for work on the representation of female masculinity within the genre. Although much has been written on the reinterpretations of hard-boiled forms attempted by American authors, little attention has been paid to how female masculinity appears in texts by European writers such as Pernille Rygg.

By way of a closing coda I want to turn to Dennis Porter, who addresses the issue of national crime fictions in his influential study of the genre, *The Pursuit of Crime* (1981). Porter states:

Detective novels provide reassurance, then, not only because they deal in identifiable good and evil and end up punishing the latter but also because they propose a world of fixed cultural quantities. They effectively suppress the historical reality that they seem to represent and draw for solutions to the problems posed on cherished, but frequently anachronistic, cultural values. In one way or another a mythic national past is made to appear adequate to the difficulties faced by the national community in the present. (Porter, 1981: 218)

This quotation is a useful illustration of how the genre has evolved. The novels of George Pelecanos, Henning Mankell and Ian Rankin are, by no means, texts of reassurance. Rather, they present the ‘mythic national past’ as being unable to stabilise the contemporary national community. Although Pelecanos’ texts draw on Western archetypes and 1950s ideology, there are still contradictions present in his work that these nostalgic versions of masculinity cannot resolve. Similarly, Wallander may reminisce about the idyllic Sweden of the past but his clarity of vision is repeatedly undercut by Mankell. Likewise, Rankin is ruthlessly efficient in dispatching the trope of the Scottish hard man. Antony Easthope has stated that ‘...nationalism fits perfectly with the masculine ego and the masculine body, so that each overlaps and confirms the other’ (Easthope, 1986: 56). His words emphasise how discourses of national identity and masculinity are invariably implicated within one another, ideally reinforcing a strong nation state and an impermeable male body. But, again, this reassuring symbiosis of masculinity and nationality is missing in the work of Pelecanos, Mankell and Rankin, who instead problematise male identity. Although the degree to which they challenge traditional, phallic masculinity differs, all three writers employ the genre as a site of conjecture, rather than one of surety.

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