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1. Introduction

In Robert Louis Stevenson's famous novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* from 1886, Jekyll states that "all human beings [...] are commingled out of good and evil" (72). This may sound quite banal and one may think that there is nothing special about this observation, but in fact, it points to an essential characteristic of Scottish crime literature.

Scottish crime novels, to put it simply, portray the world in a way that comes closer to reality than the artificial enclosed setting of classic detective stories, where all the suspects assemble in the drawing room and the Great Detective reveals what he could read out of a treacherous set of clues. And similarly, in works of Scottish crime fiction there is not one villain who is thoroughly evil but everybody has a darker side, even the detective himself. However, one cannot assign the conventions of Scottish crime writing exclusively to an attitude of realism. As the analysis of three exemplary novels will show, Scottish crime fiction employs elements from American noir writing, in which nothing is ever only good or evil, and from the long tradition of the Gothic in Scottish writing. Therefore, it also draws on Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, which indeed was extraordinarily influential on the further development of Scottish writing in general and the crime genre in particular. In fact, one could say that this thesis is built on the triad of noir crime fiction, Scotland and the Gothic, and in a kind of balancing act explores the relationships between them.

Novels by three Scottish authors who are claimed to be writers of Tartan Noir will first be investigated as to their commonalities and differences with regard to the use of noir themes and stylistic features, and subsequently, they will be analysed in terms of their "Gothicity", i.e. their allusions to Gothic traditions in the choice of themes and locations. This is an issue which needs to be treated with special attention, since the setting in Scottish cityscapes is, one could argue, the link between noir and the Gothic.

It will be argued in this thesis that features of both traditions in Ian Rankin's *Fleshmarket Close*, Stuart MacBride's *Cold Granite* and Louise Welsh's *The Cutting Room* are used as strategies of viewing contemporary Scottish society

with all its possibilities and dangers for the future. Proceeding from the assumption that Scottish crime literature caters for more than mere entertainment, the three novels, chosen from a remarkable range of excellent Scottish crime novels, are attempt to prove that their authors draw on strategies of noir and Gothic writing in order to make a statement about their nation. As Rankin says about his detective figure, Inspector Rebus, “[h]e’s a useful prism through which you can show all the different aspects of human life. [...] It’s like putting together a jigsaw puzzle of modern Scotland.” (Wanner 8)

2. Part I: Scottish Crime Novels as Examples of Noir Fiction

2.1. Terminology: Noir Crime Fiction

Scottish authors of crime fiction have recently been classified and often praised by critics as writers of “Tartan Noir”. Tartan, of course, refers to the national dress of the Scottish people, the kilt, the woven woollen fabric of which is known as tartan. The checked-cloth tartan patterns are commonly associated with Scottish culture and tradition. It seems logical to label the works of Scottish authors of noir fiction with a term that is so inextricably connected to Scottish culture. The question whether there really exists an inherently Scottish way of writing crime novels is the concern of the following chapters. For now, the issue of discussion is the second part of the label “Tartan Noir”. Where does the term “noir” come from and what does it mean?

Usually, the noir thriller is linked to the image of the hard-boiled detective, a character who wanders alone the dark streets and alleyways of cities where danger and crime lurk around every corner. His mission is the punishment of villains, predominantly by taking the law into his own hands, which means the use of his gun or fists. Lee Horsley tries to widen this quite constricted view of the private eye as the only possible protagonist of noir thrillers. In her study *The Noir Thriller*, she identifies different types of characters that frequently turn up in the history of the genre; victims as well as delinquents, tough women, outsiders, strangers and mentally disturbed people also seem to be proper protagonists for a form of crime fiction that tends to show the bleakness and meaninglessness of life, the decay of society and the alienation of the individual in it (3). These terms, commonly also connected to modernism, play a big role in numerous examples of fictional texts from the 1920s onwards. In the early phase of noir crime fiction, the stories and books with such an attitude were mainly written and published in America, but the modernist influence came from Europe. It has been claimed that German Expressionist Cinema and French Poetic Realism played an important part in the development of the American noir style in literature and film. (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 3)

In the context of noir style, one cannot only focus on literary works. Independent cinematic productions as well as film adaptations of novels and short stories are of vital importance in the discussion of the characteristics of noir. The French film noir precedes American films of this kind (Durgnat 84), and it were also French critics who coined the term *film noir* in 1946, in order to describe “a kind of modernism in the popular cinema” (Naremore 38). At first glance, aesthetically sophisticated modernism seems to be very different from popular products such as Hollywood films and pulp fiction, but in fact they adopted various modernist techniques and themes that influenced the further development of literary noir, such as subjective narration and multiple points of view (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 3). The first book dealing with the subject was *Panorama du film noir américain* (1955) by Raymond Borde and Étienne Chaumeton. The term was taken from a French series of crime novels, “Série noire”, which primarily offered translations of American hard-boiled fiction. However, the phenomenon *film noir* was only recognised by American critics and film producers around 1970 (Rubin 90).

Indeed, it is better to think of it as a phenomenon and not as a genre, since Raymond Durgnat points out that “genre” is not an appropriate term when talking about film noir. He claims that it “is not a genre, as the Western or gangster film is, and takes us into the realms of classification by motif and tone” (84). Further points to be taken into consideration are “themes, mood, characterisation, point of view and narrative pattern” (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 7). These qualities can appear in very different forms, from the hard-boiled style of Dashiell Hammett to Patricia Highsmith, whose narrative style “is always in keeping with her protagonist’s [*The Talented Mr Ripley*’s] aspirations to poise and civility” (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 7). For James Naremore, “noir” is not a genre but serves an important function as a category and organising principle (276-7). The term has become widely known and used since its first appearance in the 1940s. Nowadays, it is applied “not only to films and novels but to television programmes, comics and video games” (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 6).

Many critics of film noir argue that the label can only be applied to a number of Hollywood films produced between 1941 and 1958, but it is even problematic to agree on a certain beginning and an end for this cycle (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 5).

In 1970, Durnat broadened this restricted view by including films from the time between the two World Wars (83-98). In the 1990s, more and more critics tended to follow his suggestion and even expanded the term to include recent films such as *L.A. Confidential* (1997). In *The Noir Thriller*, Lee Horsley even goes further than that and discusses a varied range of books from the 1920s to the 1990s with very different approaches to the representation of noir. She does not only include the traditional hard-boiled novel, but also explores texts that go into other directions but share some common features. They all can be summarised under the notion of the crime novel.

Julian Symons (162-3) distinguishes between the classical detective story and the crime novel. A crime novel does not need to have a detective, which means that also clues and forensic details may not play an important role. As a consequence of the detective not being the main character (or not even existing at all), other figures are provided with a closer psychological characterisation. Symons also mentions that in contrast to the detective story, the setting is “important to the tone and style of the story, and frequently an integral part of the crime itself, i.e., the pressures involved in a particular way of life lead to this especial crime” (163). Concerning the social attitude that is conveyed in the crime novel, he observes that society, justice in general and the legal system are often criticised (162-3). Especially the last two points are significant for the noir crime novel.

All the above mentioned characteristics are not only to be found in crime novels but also in thrillers. This is the reason why Horsley couples these two terms in her study. The similarities between them are obvious and they therefore can be used interchangeably but one should not forget that “thriller” “carries other connotations which perhaps make it the more apposite term” (8) for the discussion of noir crime fiction. In his definition of the basic concepts of the thriller, Martin Rubin states that one of its main functions is the evocation of feelings by creating atmosphere, suspense and action beyond measure which creates excitement, fright and exhilaration in the audience. The particularity of the thriller is that it does not just evoke these feelings excessively, but that it combines them. Rubin compares this to a roller coaster that “makes us laugh *and* scream” (6) at the same time. Similarly, the thriller creates feelings of

humour and suspense, fear and excitement, pleasure and pain at the same time. The pairing of these emotions also involves a certain degree of ambivalence: the viewer (or reader) wavers between conflicting feelings, suffers from a lack of emotional stability and as a result experiences a sensation of vulnerability (5-6). Horsley argues that this is closely linked to the concept of noir, if one thinks, for example, of how the protagonists' roles are destabilised and their weaknesses and limitations are inexorably revealed (8). Taking into account the existing similarities between the concepts, this paper will follow her suggestion and use "noir crime novel" and "noir thriller" synonymously.

2.2. The Beginnings of Noir Fiction

The American noir thriller began to flourish in the years between the two World Wars. It was a time of economic crises, with the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression, which had terrible world-wide effects. In America, Prohibition led to the rise of illegality and the connections between business, politics and crime became more obvious. People were anxious and faced an economically and otherwise uncertain future, especially with the prospect of another war that seemed probable with the downfall of democratic governments and the rise of dictatorships in Europe. (Horsley, 16-7)

It seems understandable that in this bleak period noir crime fiction rose in popularity. Its dark and bitter view on American society reflected people's feeling of impotence; they felt that they had lost control over their lives and were pawns in the hands of the powerful. Thrillers of the interwar years, such as Dashiell Hammet's *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), display the total disruption of ordinary lives. The characters in them realise that one must not rely on stability in life but has to recognise its arbitrariness and chaos (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 16). Often, their most strongly emphasized traits are weaknesses like being obsessed with success, telling lies and being aggressive, which in the end lead to a catastrophe (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 17).

Noir crime fiction of the interwar years, Horsley argues, is roughly realistic, but its focus on the socio-cultural and political problems of the time is frequently joined by symbolic intensification. The excessive occurrence of violence, for example, that manifests itself in "sometimes surreal descriptions of threatening

and oppressive scenes or of destruction and viciousness" (17), can be understood as criticism at the state of American society. Writers of noir thrillers had a disillusioned view of the world and "in breaking with the existing conventions of the detective novel [... they ...] confront[ed] the catastrophes brought about by the intrusion of violence, the betrayal of trust and the corrupt exercise of power" (19). But not all critics thought that noir crime fiction was really effective in levelling criticism at the current socio-political reality and found that the stories with their scenes full of violence, corruptness and depravity and their lack of morality gave people bad examples for their own lives. George Orwell, for example, was one of those who wrote that the loss of clear distinctions between right and wrong could have negative effects on the morality of the ordinary man (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 18).

Concerning the publication conditions of noir writing in the 1920s it is necessary to note that the prevailing format was short stories rather than novels. The most important medium was *Black Mask*, a pulp magazine that gave rise to the popularity of authors such as Hammett and Carroll John Daly (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 19). Magazines such as this one emerged during World War One and were called pulps because they were printed on cheap wood pulp paper. In the beginning, they contained traditional British-style detective stories (Symons 123), but the founding of *Black Mask* in 1920 by H.L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan marked the essential step in spreading a new and different kind of crime story. The owners sold the magazine only half a year later, but it was Captain Joseph T. Shaw, the editor who took over in 1926, who really defined the profile of *Black Mask* and in addition the main features of the hard-boiled style. "Shaw preached realism in action, convincing motivation, and **"simplicity for the sake of clarity, plausibility, and belief."**" (Robison; emphasis in original) The new style of crime fiction became more popular and the magazine's circulation increased. Not much later, other magazines were competing with the leader on the market, for example *Dime Detective*, *Detective Fiction Weekly* or *Black Aces* (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 19).

The proto-protagonist of noir fiction, especially in its early times, is the hard-boiled detective. The term "hard-boiled" has already been used in the above paragraphs, but now the point has arrived where a clarification becomes

necessary to avoid misconceptions. Quite often, “hard-boiled” is used synonymously with “noir”. Indeed, there is a considerable degree of overlap in meaning. Horsley claims that both labels deal with the use of crime fiction as indicator for deficiencies in socio-political and moral questions of a certain period in time and offer a critical look “at the illusions and hypocrisy, the rotten power structures and the brutal injustices of a superficially respectable society” (23). In fact, this quality is more relevant now than ever before and would explain the rising production and readership of noir fiction today.

Protagonists of both kinds of stories can be anything from predators to victims or also investigators. The thing they all share is their isolation – they lead an existence at the margins of society, which makes them outsiders. This circumstance allows them to look at society from a different angle, for example in a satirical way, argues Horsley (23). The best-known hard-boiled character certainly is the private eye, whose characteristics were mainly established in stories published in *Black Mask*. These tough narratives involve an investigator who is actively involved in the solution of a crime. What is different from the classic detective story is that suddenly the crime is not separated from the investigation any more. The hard-boiled detective slips from one dangerous event into the next and coincidences lead him the way until he finally apprehends the perpetrator. He is not detached from the crime like the classic detective but is in the thick of the action, but in the end, he is distanced from this world of crime by qualities that ultimately distinguish him from the villains (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 24).

There is a wide range of possible characteristics for the hard-boiled private eye. On the one end, Horsley sees Philip Marlowe, Raymond Chandler’s investigator “of unshakeable integrity” (25) and on the other, there is Hammett’s Continental Op, who does not always act chivalrously, together with Raoul Whitfield and Paul Cain’s ex-cons and thugs. And somewhere in the middle between these, there are the brave, independent and vigorous macho private eyes by authors such as Howard Browne, Carroll John Daly and George Harmon Coxe, who offer “a tough veneer either to fairly traditional detection or to high-spirited adventure tales” (25) rather than to gloomy and dubious noir narratives.

Some authors shift between different tones (from noir to nearly upbeat) in their stories, which results in works that seem to convey different views on morality and the state of society. Horsley names Carroll John Daly as one of these authors whose early texts are innovative in the respect that they are more violent and urban than the traditional detective story and furthermore, he creates the type of the hard-boiled hero and provides him with moral ambiguity (27). In the stories dealing with his most famous investigator, Race Williams, which were published in *Black Mask* between 1923 and 1924, the private eye is situated somewhere “between cops and crooks” (28). He is an action hero who uses his fists in his fights for justice – the implication is that only violence is a useful force against the corruptions in American society. Race Williams is not as interesting from the viewpoint of noir as another Daly character, Satan Hall, a policeman whose methods are not always on the legal side. In the Satan Hall stories, Daly tries to establish a stronger connection to reality than in the Race stories. The early 1930s were a time of strong public presence of gang warfare and corruption in the cities and Daly hinted at that: Satan has to deal with local crimes such as political corruption, i.e. topics of contemporary relevance, and his investigations are portrayed in an ironic and satiric way. This is already obvious in the protagonist’s name. Satan, “the fallen angel who is without the blessing of those who sit in judgement” (29), is the only force able to fight against the system and those who are in power, and he even does not recoil from murder.

Today more famous than Daly’s heroes are the hard-boiled protagonists created by Dashiell Hammett, for example the Continental Op, Sam Spade and Ned Beaumont. The reasons for his still existing fame probably lie in his hard and realistic representations of contemporary issues, mediated by “flawed, vulnerable narrators” (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 30). Hammett is the author whose style clearly marks him as a noir writer. Horsley identifies especially his ambiguity and complexity, his use of ironies and, perhaps most strikingly, the disintegration of opposites such as good and evil, order and disorder as well as the degree of unreliability and subjectivity in his stories as typical noir features. He creates ambivalence by using a certain scepticism that pervades not only his themes but also structure and narrative technique (30). The atmosphere Hammett’s novels mediate is one of a deceitful world in which power is abused,

greed and betrayal are the norm and violence is inescapable. These elements designate not only resemblances to one of the antecedents of noir fiction, Joseph Conrad, but also have led critics to call Hammett a modernist writer (30, 33).

Concerning the hard-boiled protagonists of Hammett's stories, one can observe that their most striking features are linked to flaws and weaknesses. None of the detectives is a shining hero, but they rather distrust themselves and know they often have to fight their own imperfections. The Continental Op is "fat and middle-aged" (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 31) and often drinks more than is good for him. Rita Elizabeth Rippetoe mentions his loss of mental and physical control over himself in *Red Harvest*, when he tries to get information from an informant by "outdrinking" (39) him. But this is not the only time he loses control over himself after consummation of alcohol (or drugs), or his duties, investigations or subordinates at the Continental Detective agency, respectively. His conscience tells him that he has violated his standards, which weighs heavily on him, as he knows "no higher motivation than dedication to his job" (Horsley, 31). Rippetoe points out that alcohol (and drug) abuse play a significant role in the development of the plot in *Red Harvest*, as it influences self-control and performance in many scenes of the novel (40). Alcohol seems to be a big topic for many hard-boiled detectives, as Rippetoe tries to prove in her study *Booze and the Private Eye*, in which she explores the role of alcohol in novels by Hammett, Chandler, Robert B. Parker and others. In a following chapter, this thesis will connect her findings to crime novels by Louise Welsh, Stuart MacBride and Ian Rankin, whose investigative figures are not adverse to alcohol either.

As the above paragraphs show, the detectives of early noir fiction are not flawless at all. If one bears in mind the themes of noir writing, it is not surprising that another type of protagonist used is the gangster. From the late 1920s onwards, they are not portrayed any more as evil monsters or idiots, argues Horsley. They are symbols of the hierarchy in society in which there is not only black and white but the differences between "apparently respectable businessmen and those whom society defines as criminals" (*Noir Thriller* 45) are tiny. For readers and cinema audiences, the gangster served as an

identification figure on the one hand because he showed that rebellion against the corrupt system was possible, and on the other hand he allowed the feeling of satisfaction when he was punished. As already mentioned, American gangsters of the period between 1920 and 1945 are usually seen as normal people and their careers therefore as critique of American society. The careers of gangster bosses function as parodies of the American dream of success; the irony lies in their illegal methods and their inevitable fall (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 47). The “small-time crook” (47) stands for the average man who muddles through life during the years of Depression. Horsley writes that the irony in investigative narratives mostly arises “from the contrast between appearance and reality discovered in supposedly respectable society”, but in addition to that, in gangster narratives there is also a discrepancy “between aspiration and reality” (49), which was of course a very current topic at that time.

A good example of noir novels with gangster protagonists is Paul Cain’s *Fast One* (1932), which is indeed written in such a fast manner that the reader has trouble following its rapid and action-packed scenes. The brutality and randomness of the killings in the novel make them seem bizarre, finds Horsley (*Noir Thriller* 55-6). The hard-boiled style in *Fast One* is very distinct, not only because of the inordinate violence in various scenes but also because the novel is full of false narratives that leave the reader in doubt about the characters’ reliability. The protagonist, Gerry Kells, is a man with a past of drug addiction and criminal convictions, whose story does not only offer the typical gangster narrative of rising to power, he is also an investigator who needs to find the truth behind the events of the story in order to survive. Moreover, Kells represents a third kind of protagonist typical of noir fiction of that period: he is (at least in part) a wrongly accused victim who is pursued by the police (Horsley, 56). The type of the victim protagonist will be explained in greater detail below. For now, it still is interesting to mention that Kells turns slightly mad in the course of the story if one thinks of his insane thirst for revenge. In the end, he is defeated by the powers he tried to fight so violently and suffers a painful and dark death. Horsley considers his end “one of the most pointedly grim of any noir protagonist, with the rain, the torn body and the broken earth suggesting that an elemental violence has claimed him” (56).

Kells embodies a character that is split between different roles, but there are protagonists who are victims more than anything else. In many noir thrillers of the 1930s, the main characters do not possess the investigative abilities of private eyes nor the shrewd cleverness of gangsters that helps to survive in the criminal spheres of society (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 67). The noir victim is a frequent character because he seems to impersonate several features of noir writing. Often, he is confronted with life's randomness and is accused of crimes he did not commit. Innocent but unable to control his fate, he flounders through a world of betrayal and corruption. Horsley further notes that the careers of gangster or detective protagonists are sometimes characterised by a certain upward development that moves the narrative away from noir in the narrow sense. Victims as protagonists, on the other hand, are so entangled in their own ineptitude and inertia that their stories move away from being thrillers (69). One example of this distinct sense of resignation is Horace McCoy's novel *I Should Have Stayed Home* (1938). The title alone reveals the protagonist's hopelessness and his inability to come to terms with what life confronts him with. Different from private eye and gangster protagonists, the victim serves less as obvious social criticism. The reason for this, argues Horsley, is that in this kind of noir fiction, the narrative is concerned with "individual struggles or sexual triangles" (69). However, they still provide critique either by using the victim as examples of the deficiencies of society or as a counterpart to corrupt structures. McCoy's victims can be named as perfect examples of the innocent person who simply is in search of a happy life but ultimately is destroyed by the harshness and brutality of society (70).

In this chapter, the focus was mainly put on the figure of the hard-boiled detective because this is the most important character in the three contemporary crime novels that will be analysed in the practical part of this thesis. In the novels in question, gangsters and victims are not the centre around which the narrative develops but it is the investigator whom the reader does follow.

2.3. Later Developments in Noir Fiction

The years following World War II were an important phase in the definition and popularisation of noir crime fiction and films in the USA and Europe. It has been mentioned before that the term “noir” was not coined until 1946, and even then, it was only applied in European criticism. It still took about three decades until the term was recognised by a wider audience in America. But even when there was no unifying label for film and literary works available, the production of dark narratives was going strong.

According to Horsley, the introduction of the paperback marked an essential step in America, where the publication numbers of softcover books tripled from 1945 to the following year. Crime writers and publishers saw the possibilities in the new format and paperbacks soon replaced pulp magazines. Authors such as Jim Thompson, Mickey Spillane, Charles Williams, David Goodis and Gil Brewer published paperback originals and not only fostered the growth of the paperback industry but also fed their stories to Hollywood, where numerous films were produced that were later all put under the label of “noir” (*Noir Thriller* 90-1). Before Nino Frank’s term “film noir” was fully accepted, American critics tried to find other suitable phrases such as “hard-boiled, kick-em-in-the-teeth-murder cycle”, “brass-knuckled thriller” or “murder melodrama” (Naremore 17). These descriptions show that noir films were thought to be rooted in hard-boiled investigative writing and this was indeed true for early examples; Hammett’s *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Glass Key*, and Chandler’s *Farewell, My Lovely* and *The Big Sleep*, writes Horsley, were films in which the private eye was established as an iconic figure (and as a result Humphrey Bogart, who played Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon* and Marlowe in *The Big Sleep*, became the private eye par excellence) (*Noir Thriller* 92).

In later film adaptations of noir stories, i.e. from the late forties onwards, the private eye had to make way for other kinds of noir protagonists. If investigators still were the protagonists, they became more vulnerable and erroneous. The authors whose works were asked for in Hollywood were W.R. Burnett, Dorothy Hughes and Horace McCoy, to name only a few, and the protagonists of their novels mostly were “violent, self-deceived men, criminals, crooked cops, killers, psychotics” (Horsley 92). There was a perceptible discrepancy between these

characters and the typical hard-boiled detective. Another author whose works have been made into films is Cornell Woolrich. His writing differs greatly from the hard-boiled tradition as well but is closely related to noir style, which becomes clear when one considers his protagonists, for example a hypnotised man who thinks he is a murderer (in *Fear in the Night*), “alcoholics, amnesiacs, hunted men and fall guys” (92). All these characters can of course be associated with the noir sense of disorientation and paranoia.

Vital influence on noir writing was coming from France. One should mention that at this stage Britain, another country one would probably assume to be influential in the refinement of crime stories, was not really important in terms of noir fiction. Although there were several attempts by British thriller authors to imitate the tone of American noir, they were not very successful in most cases. Peter Cheyney’s stories, for example, are too “light-hearted” (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 93) in order to be taken seriously as noir and demonstrate an exaggerated hard-boiled tone that implies parody more than noir qualities. Not only did British authors try to imitate the American way of writing but they also used typical plots that had been devoured by American readers, for example the amateur crook who gets involved with the big fish of the underworld or “wrong-man narratives” (*Noir Thriller* 100). The authors focused on the variation of key themes of American noir thrillers but in most cases they did not include issues of socio-political concern. Exceptions were rare and less widely known (e.g. Gerald Butler, Maurice Procter or John Lodwick) (100).

The French, however, seemed to be tuned with the Americans on the level of noir writing and there was an exchange of ideas going on between French intellectuals and American writers. Naremore argues that French critics who claimed interest in the American noir were influenced by existentialism and considered post-war thrillers to be “protoabsurdist” (22). They were attracted to film noir because of its depiction of darkness and mystery. He further contends that the period after World War II showed certain similarities in the socio-political climate of the USA and France. In America, there was the fear of communism, the Korean War and economic prosperity; for France, “it was the period of colonial rebellion and parliamentary confusion leading up to the Charles de Gaulle government” (23). French artists, who felt they had to choose

between capitalism and Stalinism, considered American novels from the interwar period to offer models of resistance. Naremore quotes Sartre, who wrote in 1947 that he recognised similarities between the Americans in noir fiction and his French countrymen, “who tried, without traditions, with the means available, to render their stupor and forlornness in the midst of incomprehensible events” (24). French existentialists were impressed by American films noir because they were often based on the works of venerable writers and “offered a labyrinthine, enclosed mise-en-scène peopled with alienated characters” (25).

The Americans, on their part, were equally impressed by the French world view; in the post-war years, the works of French existentialists spread in the United States and were received as an expression of the absurdity of modern life and American authors were feeling an urge to provide their characters with the experience of estrangement and disorientation which resulted in socially isolated anti-heroes (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 94). The reason for this development was the aforementioned socio-political situation that encouraged a fearful and paranoid mood in many people. The dominant picture of 1950s America as a society of consensus and conformity was not shared by everybody, writes Horsley. People felt powerless because of the prevailing pressure against communism on the one hand and those who were seen as subversive of the American way of living on the other. Writers of noir fiction exposed these oppressive forces, “debunking the dominant myth of a unified, happily conformist America” (95). It seems peculiar to literary noir that prevalent notions are not tacitly accepted but that they are challenged and questioned. Similar to the 1930s, the portrayal of vulnerable, chaotic protagonists who stumble through life without a sense of orientation can be seen as a response to the state of society in the 1950s. Noir crime fiction obviously gains popularity at times when there is a need for somebody to speak the truth that politicians and others in power do not dare to speak. When looking at the history of noir writing, it is therefore not surprising that contemporary authors such as Ian Rankin use their books to shed light on problematic issues of current relevance. The employment of noir features seems to be an ideal means for the subversion of prevailing opinions, but this is going to be elaborated on in another chapter of this thesis.

Until this point, only the 1950s have been mentioned, but how did the noir thriller develop in the sixties? Horsley claims that in preceding studies of noir writing, this decade is often separated from the fifties, but she does not agree, as there was “no radical break” (*Noir Thriller* 96) to observe. The zenith of paperback originals was transgressed by the early sixties, but the most successful writers were producing novels until the late sixties and early seventies, for example Goodis, Thompson, Peter Rabe or John D. MacDonald. Other writers who never redeployed their production of crime fiction to paperbacks, such as William McGivern, Stanley Ellin, Patricia Highsmith and Helen Nielsen, kept on producing hardcover books.

Noir writing of this period also saw a change of protagonist types in comparison to stories from before the war. It was not the hard-boiled detective anymore who was the main character in a great number of noir works, but there were other types of figures on the fore. Horsley names three kinds of characters that become increasingly important from 1945 on. What they have in common is their capacity to subvert the conformity of that time. Firstly, there is the protagonist killer who seeks revenge and during that process undermines social order. The avenger cleanses society by setting wrong things right again. Quite often, the killer tries to achieve upward mobility, to enhance his personal economic or social circumstances. Figures such as these can function as representations of capitalist greed.

Secondly, the femme fatale, who could basically be “any woman whose presence reveals the vulnerability of a man to sexual charm and thereby threatens the stability of his world” (Reilly 155), gained attention in noir novels and films alike. Publishers and film producers recognised that sex sells and as a consequence, fatal women started to appear much more frequently in works of noir. In literary noir, the plots around femmes fatales became diversified and less predictable than in films because Hollywood producers “were forced to make concessions to conventional morality” (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 98) more than writers. Strong women were usually punished or excluded by society in films noir of that time, whereas there was a greater chance of some kind of rebellion against social expectations in novels, although one must admit that the cover art of paperbacks did not subvert the stereotypical presentation of women

at all. A number of books from this period deal with the deconstruction of gender stereotypes by the creation of female protagonists that take over the functions usually fulfilled by men, for example as investigators or protagonist killers. In these novels (e.g. by John Franklin Bardin and Margaret Millar), Horsley argues, women's "actions are an implicit criticism of the male world that shaped them" (98). Other writers, such as Thompson, Williams and Brewer satirise the way women are commonly viewed by man.

The third essential character type of the years until 1970 is the stranger or outcast who lives at the margins of society and is unable to return to a safe place like home. At times, these characters have experienced war and are now unable to re-integrate into society, but more often they suffer from alienation in a wider sense, as Horsley writes. She finds that it is again the issue of conformity – which is especially important in the McCarthy era – that automatically marks people who do not conform to dominant values as outsiders. They are fugitives, displaced by their past, and their exclusion is not reversible in most cases. An often used plot is that of the wrong man who is innocently persecuted by those driven by prejudice. More often than not he serves as a scapegoat whose guilt reveals the faults of the community. One of the most influential narratives concerned with the wrong man plot is Camus' *L'Étranger* from 1957, representative of European existentialism. The consciousness of life's absurdity, the "existential awareness, loneliness and dread" (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 154) depicted in the novel is very close to noir narratives with a stranger or outcast protagonist.

In the context of marginality, it was a timely issue in America to include racial exclusion. Indeed, one would consider it quite obvious to write about black protagonists in the 1950s, a time of racial conflicts, when "the viewpoint of the outsider [could be used] as a way of exposing the failures of the dominant society" (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 154). Although there were not so many books with protagonists belonging to an ethnic minority, one can say that in the forties, race began to displace class as the most important problem of American life. Similar to the depiction of the femme fatale character, racial and ethnic otherness was explored with greater variety and fewer concessions to conventions were made in books than in films (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 155). There

were white as well as black authors who used noir features in order to satirise the existing racial boundaries in society. Chester Himes, Charles Perry and Herbert Simmons, to name just a few, were black authors who “made powerful use of the noir sense of otherness and marginality as an equivalent for racial exclusion” (156), but were not always accepted by publishers and film producers because of their skin colour.

From the 1970s on, the term “noir” began to be applied by many critics, especially for films. Naremore writes that “[w]hether classic noir ever existed, by 1974 a great many people believed in it” (37). The genre seemed to gain popularity as the “boundaries between high, vernacular, and commercial art” (38) started to disappear. Cinematic adaptations of earlier noir novels (e.g. *The Long Goodbye*, 1973; *Farewell, My Lovely*, 1975) and neo-noir films (e.g. *Taxi Driver*, 1976; *Chinatown*, 1974) became numerous and literary noir revived traditional patterns and themes. It can be claimed that these features have survived until today.

Finally, for the period of 1970 to 2000, Lee Horsley was able to identify a certain British form of noir crime writing. In recent times, basic noir plots were increasingly used to address political issues. Historical conflicts were, for example, portrayed in British noir fiction in Philip Kerr’s *Berlin Noir Trilogy* (1989-1991) or Ian McEwan’s *The Innocent* (1990). Horsley argues that examples such as these show that British literary noir was able to establish itself as a distinctive phenomenon that is appealing to a wide range of readers (*Noir Thriller* 187). One can also speak of the emersion of a particular British hard-boiled style in the 1980s, contributors to which were Julian Barnes, Mark Timlin and Robin Cook, who all created series of crime novels with fixed investigators as protagonists. Overall, a certain trend towards serialisation is noticeable also in American fiction.

Many of the detectives of the last decades were distanced from the “crusader-knight of the means streets” (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 188) and noir authors broke with the Chandlerian type of the “lone white male” (188) by characterising their protagonists differently, for example as black, homosexual or part of a mixed group of people. Detectives who are part of a series are particularly prone to share these characteristics which make them less noir. Horsley suggests that

such traits as “integrity, loyalty and compassion” (189) make characters more likeable and positive for the reader but at the same time, they lose their noir self-sufficiency. If the characterisation is not focused on hard-boiled qualities only, it allows noir writers to create a greater variety of narrative resolutions.

The major focus in this introductory chapter was on American noir writing which of course pushed the development of the noir style more than writers from any other country. For the last decades, however, one can observe an increase in British writers who contribute to noir fiction. In order to establish a balanced view on noir writing that includes literature from both sides of the Atlantic, and also because of this paper’s first and foremost concern with Scottish crime fiction, the attention of the final part of this theory chapter is to be concentrated on British authors in the field of noir.

The eighties, the era of Margaret Thatcher, led to the constitution of the consumer society we know today. Horsley states that Britain became more American then, not only because of consumerism but also because of the growing emphasis on “presentation, performance, [and] celebrity culture” (191). British authors of noir thrillers have tried to expose the problems of a society that is completely dependent on consumerism. After fifteen years of Conservative government, writers began to criticise the political efforts to assimilate Britain to the market-oriented economy of the United States. They supported views such as Will Hutton’s, who claimed in his bestseller *The State We’re In* that the Thatcherite era brought nothing but “inequality” and “social distress” (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 223).

Although British crime writers of the eighties and nineties share many themes with contemporary American writers, they are distinctive in “tone, style and setting” (223), unlike earlier times, when they tried to imitate American pulp fiction. They seriously criticise British society and politics and construct satirical views “of a society in which material success, desirable goods and attractive surfaces are all founded on crime of one sort or another” (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 224). Important names in this respect are Jeremy Cameron, David Huggins and Ken Bruen. The latter’s *Her Last Call to Louis MacNeice* (1998) is blackly comic and the narrator’s fate deeply noir. Cooper, a yuppie with criminal affinities, defines himself through his possessions and leads an otherwise shallow life. His

casual narrative style “makes no distinctions between hard-boiled violence and loving consumerism” (Horsley, *Noir Thriller* 225). Bruen portrays the nineties as the perfect time for ruthless and greedy people to enrich themselves at the expense of others.

Two other authors who deal with the dirtiness of British society after Thatcher are Christopher Brookmyre and Ian Banks. Both were born in Glasgow and set their novels in a society in which one cannot find a trace of business ethics or morals. Banks’s *Complicity* (1993) is quite openly moral and political, more than one would expect a piece of genre fiction to be, finds Horsley (*Noir Thriller* 226). It includes passages where democracy, politics and the law are bluntly discussed and features a murderer whose deeds are justified by his belonging to a society in which moral values do not count any more. Banks uses the psychopath as a “metaphor for and a critic of a sick society” (227); in a similar way psychopaths have been used in traditional noir thrillers of earlier decades.

This example makes it clear that noir writing is still able to address contemporary issues as it did in the 1920s or thirties. The time of noir is not over and from the current perspective, it does not appear as if noir fiction would soon be out-of-date.

2.4. Rebus, Rilke and McRae – Three Hard-boiled Detectives?

This chapter is going to deal with John Rebus, Logan McRae and Rilke, the protagonists of *Fleshmarket Close*, *Cold Granite* and *The Cutting Room*. Certain characteristics and functions of the investigators that associate them with the bleak and dangerous worlds of noir will be explored. In these dark worlds it does not suffice to combine evidence in a clever way in order to solve a murder case and otherwise to be above it all; it is necessary to be different. The greatest distinction between them and the Great Detectives of former times is the ambivalence of their characters. They are not perfectly moral investigators anymore, who always make law-abiding decisions that lead to the perpetrator's conviction, and as a consequence are assigned the status of true heroes. In noir crime fiction and film, the characters often have doubtful traits. The supposed hero, trying to solve a crime, might be a veritable anti-hero without the qualities of a superman – he probably is as fallible as the rest of us.

2.4.1. Their Way of Life

The novels' investigators are very distinct persons, autonomous and self-reliant individualists whose traits set them apart from the people around them but if one compares Rebus, Rilke and McRae, they do not seem to be so different from each other at all. What they have in common is, above all, their way of living. They do not share their daily private life with beloved ones, with partners or a family. Past experience seems to tell them that family life simply does not work for them. Rebus, for example, is known to have a daughter, Sammy (Rankin, *Rebus's Scotland* 42), but is not very successful in love matters. In the course of time – the Inspector Rebus novels span a time of about eighteen years – the reader learns about several relationships to women, but they are short-lived. Once, he kisses his colleague Siobhan, a person he has a congenial relationship with, but the romantic incident passes and they both remain silent about it afterwards (Rankin, *Fleshmarket Close* 204). It seems that it is impossible for him to open himself and talk about how he really feels. So he goes home at night to an empty flat with nobody to talk to: "All his years in this city, doing the job he did, and what was waiting for him back home? Ghosts.

Vigils at his window, staring past his reflection.” (Rankin, *Fleshmarket* 205) Although Rankin admits that for Rebus relationships to women were always somewhat difficult (Rankin, *Scotland* 39), this might not only have to do with his character but also with his profession. As a police man, one cannot return home in the evening and talk about the “day’s quota of assaults, overdoses and misery” (39) over dinner. As a consequence, things are bottled up. The only ones a member of the police force can talk to are fellow police officers, who are able to grasp the emotions of their colleagues and respond to them in the right way.

This may also be the reason why Logan McRae lives alone. Although he is not quite as withdrawn as Rebus and the reader learns at the beginning of the novel that he still has not come to terms with his past relationship to Isobel MacAlister, a pathologist. The narrative allows us to look inside Logan’s mind and it becomes clear that he is more capable of allowing himself to feel and reflect on his emotions than Rebus.

Logan looked down on the top of Isobel’s head, thinking of all the things he’d planned to say the first time he saw her again. To make it all right again. To fix what fell apart the day Angus Robertson got sent down for thirty to life. But whenever Logan pictured this moment there wasn’t a murdered three-year-old lying on the ground between them. It kind of put a damper on things. (MacBride 6)

This extract demonstrates that Logan is the focaliser here, from whose point of view we see the story. His intentions concerning Isobel are revealed, which clearly indicate that he still has feelings for her, but there is also another reference to the past which has to do with Logan’s professional career. Apparently, Angus Robertson had been his last case before he had to leave the police force and he also was the reason for this unintentional break: he brutally stabbed Logan in the stomach so that he hovered between life and death. The complete story around Robertson is not explained in *Cold Granite* because it is not essential for the plot, but it shows that Logan is a haunted man. The past affects the present, not only because the protagonist’s thoughts revolve around Angus Robertson but also because his wounds still cause pain and he only survives the first days back at work with more pain killers than are good for him.

Logan is not the only of the three detectives who is haunted by his past in one or the other way. Rebus, for example, sometimes makes the impression that he felt much more comfortable in the past than he does in the present. It is not so much his own past than the past of his environment, of Edinburgh, that he does not want to let go. He remembers how the city looked years ago but is not so much up-to-date when it comes to newer developments. When he asks Siobhan whether the registry office is opposite “Thin’s Bookshop”, she answers, “Been a while since you bought any books, Inspector? Thin’s went bust; it’s run by Blackwell’s now.” (*Fleshmarket* 339)

Siobhan sometimes seems to find her uninformed colleague strange in certain respects, and Rebus himself is certainly aware of his otherness, but in this regard, he is similar to Rilke. The third investigator appears to think of himself as an extraordinary person whose lifestyle therefore cannot be ordinary either: “I tried to imagine myself working in an office, traveling home to a warm hearth, children, a salary at the end of the month, pension for old age. It was too difficult; the image refused to appear.” (Welsh 201) Actually, it is quite understandable that the narrator thinks of himself that way. He is an auctioneer who indulges in casual homosexual adventures, drugs and alcohol and does not seem to have many close relationships with the exception of his boss, Rose.

Rilke is not a member of the police force, quite the opposite, but his voluntary engagement with the revelation of a crime sets him apart from the people around him. He tries to keep his investigations secret and does not want to show the gruesome photographs he discovered to anybody, which again separates him from the society around him. He appears to be a lonely man whose job does not allow him to open his heart to anyone. This fate he shares with Rebus and McRae, who only have their colleagues to talk about their investigations but have to keep their thoughts from outsiders who would not understand.

One could call them “lone wolves”, figures quite common in noir writing. They walk down the mean streets of Scottish cities with nobody to rely on except themselves. Certainly, this assertion is exaggerated, as the authors have equipped their protagonists with helpers who are at their side whenever a situation gets tricky. The role of these female sidekicks is going to be discussed

below. But all in all, they alone have to bear responsibility for their actions, for example when facing their bosses or at the direct confrontation with villains.

In situations like these, their hard-boiled characteristics become most striking. They are determined to bring justice to a corrupt society, no matter what it costs. Logan is the best example of this; the references to Angus Robertson demonstrate his dedication to a life in search of truth, but so does the plot in *Cold Granite*, where he does not hesitate to risk his life in order to save a little child and his colleague Watson, and ultimately, to apprehend the murderer. But also Rilke brings himself into precarious situations because of his urge to find out the truth about the pictures, which clearly assigns him one of the qualities of a hard-boiled detective: the valour to risk one's own life to solve a case.

But hard-boiled investigators do not only risk their health on the job, they also share habits that inevitably must lead to the decline of one's life expectancy. It is quite astonishing how often the protagonists can be observed smoking and drinking. But this behaviour seems to be typical of hard-boiled protagonists as examples from the early days of noir fiction show. In the works of Hammett and Chandler, alcohol was an important issue. Their detectives, such as the Continental Op, Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe, were concerned with alcohol consumption in various ways. Firstly, on the personal level, as their drinking serves as a means of characterisation, but also on the plot level, because the novels were written at the time of Prohibition (Rippetoe 26). Chandler, for example, constructs plots that revolve around the rise of gangsters who came into power thanks to Prohibition and profit from illegal drugs. Rippetoe further argues that Chandler assigns various roles to alcohol. "It can be a social lubricant, an emotional or physical comfort, or a symbol of a certain style of living. It can also be a symbol of corruption, personal or social." Additionally, alcohol consumption can be an indicator of strengths and weaknesses in individual characters (26). In his entry on "Alcohol and Alcoholism" in the *Oxford Companion*, Wedge identifies several other functions as well:

Alcohol itself may be depicted as a vehicle for poison, as a beverage that lends sophistication to an occasion, or as a drink that may conveniently either loosen up or cloud the recollections of witnesses. It is also used as a means of freeing the thought processed of some sleuths. The disease of alcoholism tends to be used more thematically, although the struggle

to conquer the affliction of alcoholism may serve as a fine indicator of character. (10)

If one considers this large number of different ways of alcohol use in crime fiction, it is hardly surprising that it is a topic used in many novels of the genre, but particularly often in hard-boiled writing. This may have to do with the fact that authors of hard-boiled stories have a certain proclivity to realism, i.e. they portray contemporary society with all its flaws, the wealthy hypocrites in power and those at the margins who lead a life in criminality or danger. Rippetoe writes that, commonly, hard-boiled crime fiction is therefore considered to be more realistic than classic detective fiction, where there is a solution to every problem; the culprits are found and finally punished. These satisfactory outcomes are the majority in hard-boiled novels – actually, the detective's investigations may unveil more depravity and crime than was visible at the beginning (9). In a world like this, which resembles the reader's reality certainly more than the re-established order and justice of traditional detective fiction, the use and abuse of alcohol does not come unexpectedly.

Hard-boiled crime writing is traditionally associated with the United States, and probably most often with the famous early works of the 1930s. But since noir fiction is always linked to the time and place of its origin, the functions of alcohol change just as the readers' (and, therefore, also society's) attitude towards it. Even nowadays, for example, the mores concerning alcohol consumption are a lot stricter in America than in Europe. A British detective "may drink several beers in the course of a day's investigation without occasioning more than the exasperation of his Sergeant, whereas his American counterpart would be subject to discipline or referrals for counselling for the same habit." (Rippetoe 25)

From this perspective, John Rebus can consider himself lucky to be situated in Scotland, a country where alcohol is the order of the day. Where, as Rankin puts it in *Rebus's Scotland*, people are not content until one "indulges, like them, in alcohol. This goes deep into the psyche of the Scot. We bond in drink, throw off our customary reticence, and are suspicious of non-subscribers." (80) It seems to be inherently Scottish to drink in company, and sometimes also when one is alone. One could compare the pub, *the* place to have a drink at in

Scotland, to the Austrian coffee house: “It’s a place to meet people, or to be alone; a place of vivid conversation or silent reflection.” (84) Rankin’s claims are not just true for pubs but also for Viennese cafés, with the exception that there is not so much alcohol involved in the latter.

Rebus enjoys drinking particularly at his favourite pub, the Oxford Bar, but his “serious drinking” (Rankin, *Rebus’s Scotland* 89) is not restricted to company. In fact, he does not appreciate human company so much and prefers being alone, or rather in his thoughts, even if he is surrounded by people. So he is not a social drinker but drinks in order to cope with his problems and to be relieved of the burden of his past that always wanders through his head and never gives him rest. Rankin quotes a passage from *Let It Bleed*, one of the earlier Rebus novels, which perfectly sums up his attitude towards alcohol:

One of the reasons Rebus drank was to put him to sleep.

He had trouble sleeping when sober. He’d stare into the darkness, willing it to form shapes so that he might better understand it. He’d try to make sense of life – his early disastrous Army years; his failed marriage; his failings as father, friend, lover – and end up in tears. And if he did eventually stumble into sober sleep, there would be troubled dreams, dreams about ageing and dying, decay and blight...Drunk, his sleep was dreamless, or seemed that way on waking. (*Rebus’s Scotland* 89)

These insights into Rebus’s psyche stress again that he is a haunted man, haunted by his own past and unable to deal with it without alcohol, which brings him dangerously near to the classification of an alcoholic. Passages like “Just the four bottles of IPA to wash it all down” (Rankin *Fleshmarket* 317), or “He’d be far more likely to piss it all away [i.e. all the money]” (*Fleshmarket* 318) support this supposition. For Rebus, it seems, it is not wrong to assume that he drinks because of his encumbering job but despite of it (*Rebus’s Scotland* 89). It is not his work at the police force that makes him drink but his private life; his job brings structure into his life and occupies his thoughts, deterring him from brooding over the ghosts in his head.

Rebus is not what one would consider a sociable person, but nonetheless he does not appear unlikeable to the reader. It is his integrity and the moral values he vindicates which make him an impressive character despite of all his flaws. What Cawelti writes about the qualities of hard-boiled detectives fits Rebus very

well. He is, one could say, like a knight: “an instinctive protector of the weak, a defender of the innocent, an avenger of the wronged, the one loyal, honest, truly moral man in a corrupt and ambiguous world” (151). It might be these features that make Rebus a hero in the eye of the reader although he is a grumpy, cynical middle-aged drunkard.

Logan McRae shares the just mentioned hard-boiled features as well, but all in all, he is a more approachable person than Rebus. This manifests itself also in his drinking habits. Logan is a sociable drinker who enjoys the casual beer, or rather beers, with his colleagues from the police force in a bar called Archibald Simpson’s, a place that is popular among the officers because of its proximity to the police headquarters. For him, drinking alcohol is a way of relaxing with people he values and likes, and whom he can talk to about the day’s troubles – information outsiders such as family are not supposed to hear about: “They’d spent the first third of the evening talking in serious tones about the dead and missing children. [...] And the last third getting seriously drunk.” (MacBride 113-4)

Logan usually does not drink when on duty but he is not immune to all vices. Firstly, he is a heavy smoker, as thoughts like the following demonstrate: “Christ, he could kill for a cigarette” (MacBride 4). In another scene, he watches people stuck in a traffic jam smoking in their cars. They were “[l]etting the smoke out and the drizzle in. Logan watched them with envy.” (135) His reaction clearly shows that he is a nicotine addict. Secondly, from the beginning of the story, Logan repeatedly takes pain killers because of his stomach wounds that still prove to be a source of pain, especially after he gets punched in the stomach by an upset man whose grandchild has been murdered. Although he knows that the pills are “[n]ot to be taken with alcohol” (46), he throws them in a couple of times a day, whenever he feels like it, whether there is alcohol involved or not. Once, this results in a terrible hangover with a complete blackout of the night before, but his unheeding handling of the pain killer is unabated.

To a certain extent, the issue of the pain killers indicate Logan’s recklessness concerning his own health. He is younger than Rebus, not as haunted by the ghosts of his past and also much more sociable, but all the same, his private life

seems to be hardly existent. He lives for his job and all the important relationships the reader gets to know are somehow connected to the police, for example his ex-girlfriend Isobel or his colleague Jackie Watson, whom he obviously is interested in in a sexual way. The removal of boundaries between private and professional life together with his audacity regarding his own life and health make Logan a perfect example of an investigator of the hard-boiled school.

Rilke surpasses Logan's carelessness in the use of drugs by far. He indulges in alcohol consumption whenever he feels like it, smokes cigarettes and joints, but also has experience with other drugs such as cocaine. This is due to the company he keeps. Among his friends are people who are deep into the drug business and know where to get them. Therefore, they also have connections to other illegal activities. In the course of his investigations, Rilke makes use of his friends' knowledge, especially Leslie's. When the reader encounters Les for the first time, he is "sitting on the edge of a displaced couch, dressed in a black pleated skirt and polo-neck jumper, dragging on a roll-up." (Welsh 51) For Les, "living life to the full [...] means dressing as he likes and a regular high." (106) One of the most striking scenes in the novel in which otherwise concealed parts of society are put on display is when Rilke and his boss and friend Rose go out at night. In the club, they meet Les, who is there with a group of transvestites who are having a great time. The reason for this is not only that they can really be themselves but also the large amounts of alcohol that are flowing. As Rose puts it, "[p]ub measures are a waste of time" (101), and as if this was everyone's credo, they all get quite inebriate. For Rilke, of course, this is not so unusual, as he is a man used to drinking, be it the casual bottle of wine with Rose in the office or a sip of whisky in the attic of the McKindless house, where he previously discovered the box of atrocious photos.

He actually blames the alcohol for his findings: "It was the whisky that drew me back. [...] I should know myself: that bottle was too full and I was too empty." (20) It appears as if it had some kind of power over him. Interestingly, Rilke describes the bottle of Lagavulin malt whisky as "Dead man's drink" (18), and this certainly refers not exclusively to the fact that the actual owner of the bottle is dead (or rather, supposed to be dead), but in connection to the other quotes

means that it gives him a bad feeling. One could think that Rilke believes the whisky to be jinxed, that it will lead him into terrible dangers but he is unable to escape its attractive force. The bottle can be seen as a reference to traditional hard-boiled writing as well. In crime stories of the early days, the detective with a bottle of whisky in the desk drawer was a common thing but “had already become a cliché by the time of Chandler” (Rippetoe 23). One could argue that Welsh alludes to this very cliché by starting Rilke’s career as an investigator in a deserted office equipped with a bottle of good single malt.

If the whisky really was to blame for the troubles Rilke goes through in the course of the novel, the blame for every dangerous situation could certainly not be put on whisky consumption. Quite often, it is his sexual frivolity that brings him into difficulties, for example in a chapter where he is looking for male prostitutes in a nocturnal park, and he definitely knows his way round: “If you like a bit of rough and have drowned your fear and your conscience, this is the place to come.” (Welsh 27) While Rilke is apparently conscious of the fact that his intentions could easily lead to trouble (and they do, in this case), the thrill and sexual satisfaction are so overwhelming that he takes the risk. He gets pleasure out of the search for a sex partner as well; he describes the young man he is going to have oral intercourse with shortly as “quarry” (28), which leaves Rilke himself to be a hunter. Indeed, his sexual adventures seem to be not much more than a sport for him. He craves the hunting process – his favourite prey is beautiful young men – but loses interest immediately after his lust has been satisfied. The sexual act is described in vivid detail, not only once but in several scenes, which shows that Rilke, as first person narrator, places importance on them. After the intercourse, he does not even want to lose a word too much, so he thinks, for example, that “I’d done with him. The only cheeky banter I engage in comes before the act.” (106) This statement lets Rilke appear in an unfavourable light, but it certainly supports his view of himself as leading an unusual life.

What the analysis has shown is that all three detectives have put their jobs into the centre of their lives. Being an investigator entails risks, regardless of whether one is a member of the police or not. Being a hard-boiled investigator

entails even more risks, because it means that one is reckless enough to destroy oneself slowly but efficiently by forming certain habits.

2.4.2. Their Attitudes

This section is mainly going to deal with the most remarkable character traits of the protagonists and their attitudes towards life, or in other words, their philosophies of life. As Cawelti puts it, hard-boiled detectives usually represent ethics and modes of judgement that are often associated with “the chivalric code of the feudal past” (151). He is a man who has learned to accept the world he lives in as being hostile, violent and corrupt, and therefore has adopted a moral code that is distinguished from “the ordinary social and ethical pities” (150). In other words, one could simply call the hard-boiled detective a man of honour.

If one thinks about Rilke, one would not believe his moral code to be that of the majority of people belonging to twenty-first century Western societies. Most people tend to be more conservative than he, at least in public. With his dissolute lifestyle, he certainly sticks out of the masses, but it does not mean that at the same time, he is an immoral person. Rilke certainly adheres to his principles; they are just different from those of others. Being an auctioneer, he is a man very educated in the arts, music, literature and history. Therefore, one finds various references to these topics throughout the novel, which is, of course, reinforced by the fact that it is from Rilke’s point of view the story is narrated. He certainly demands high standards of the people he engages closely with – if he is not interested in a topic, i.e. if a conversation does not comply with his standards, he is likely to stop talking to a person right away. Being such a cultured person makes him again aloof from most people around him, for example in a situation when Rilke thinks Rose is referring to Greece, the country, when she is actually talking about *Grease*, the musical. She then asks their opposite to “[e]xcuse him, he’s got no culture.” (Welsh 109) Rilke is the last person for whom this is true. He refers to old Hollywood stars like Joan Crawford (113) and “Caravaggio’s young Bacchus” (100) but simply is not interested in popular culture.

Indeed, it seems that Rilke's topmost priority in life is to make it as pleasant as possible; he does whatever pleases him, for example sexual adventures with attractive partners, and avoids things that bore him and seem unnecessary, like conversing about dull topics or doing excessive small-talk after having sex. His strong personality makes him a loner who may seem egocentric to those he finds bluntly boring, but if one manages to arouse his interest and he starts to appreciate a person, he develops a sense of responsibility for him or her. In *Cutting Room*, this is the case with Rose and Anne-Marie. They occupy a place in Rilke's life that people rarely are able to fill. As he admits himself when he reflects on the old photos, he does not usually care about people: "I thought about people I know. Strange to feel more for the dead than for the living. But then the dead stayed the same, the dead didn't judge. They loved you through eternity, even though they couldn't put their arms round you and heaven didn't exist." (Welsh 195)

The quote gives insight into his attitude towards religion and shows that he does not believe in God. Later in the book, he "wish[es] there was someone to pray to" (293), which again shows that he does not believe in the existence of a higher power. He feels that humans are autonomous beings who should not and cannot rely on anybody, but he tries to make the best of this unpleasant fact. Bearing in mind all of Rilke's characteristics, one could call him a hedonist, although he acts against his own rules by starting his investigations which bring him more pain and trouble than anything else.

"I've no idea who she was – just a lassie – but she was somebody and I can't leave her there." (49) This statement seals Rilke's obsessive search for truth about the shocking pictures of sadistic scenes in which naked women are obviously being tortured by Mr McKindless, the owner of the photos. He feels an inexplicable urge to reveal the truth about the origin of the photographs and the fate of the girls in the picture, and despite all warnings, he keeps on rummaging in the swamp of crime he discovers. Les even tells him to "drop the Philip Marlowe impersonation" (104) – an allusion to the beginnings of noir fiction – but he is not willing to listen. In the end, he has to give up on his search, which makes him grow desperate, but it appears to be hopeless.

‘I cared,’ I whispered. ‘I cared enough to try. I’m sorry I never knew your name.’

And I found I wasn’t crying for the girl in the photograph. I was crying for other victims, present and future. I looked once more at the images, then took out my lighter, touched flame to paper, dropped it on the earth floor, watched it curl into ash, then stamped on the embers. (293)

The “other victims” he refers to could be those whose fate his investigations brought to light. In the course of the plot, Rilke reveals the dark deeds of criminals like Trapp, who is not a small-time villain but, in Leslie’s words, a “fucking international flesh bandit” (112) and has a hand in human trafficking. In this respect, *The Cutting Room* truly is a noir crime novel, as the protagonist uncovers more depravity and criminality than he could ever have imagined in the beginning. His curiousness and eagerness to reveal the secret behind the photographs are certainly caused by his personal principle to help those in danger (even if they are dead, or possibly just because of that), even if he is not consciously aware of it.

Rebus and McRae are more straightforward characters in many ways. Their position as men of honour simply stems from the morality they incorporate in an unjust and corrupt world. In traditional hard-boiled writing, the investigator most often was not a police man but a private eye, and for this reason, “his relationship to the police is inevitably competitive and hostile.” (Cawelti 153) His aims are different to those of the police. Where “[h]e seeks justice[, t]he police, by insisting on the tortuous routines of legality, cannot achieve justice in a society pervaded by evil.” (153) These claims are not necessarily true for Rebus and Logan who, of course, are not working against their principal responsibility as representatives of the legal system, but one must admit that they undermine the orders of their superiors, whenever they go against their instincts and attitudes. Once, when Rebus needs information about a young woman from Africa who is apparently studying at Edinburgh University and the lady at the registry office refuses to give him the data, she reminds him that certain “procedures” have to be taken, “as laid down by *law*” (Rankin *Fleshmarket* 341). Rebus, who finds official rules and procedures to be hindering from time to time, simply overrides them when they obstruct his investigations. His redeployment to another police station where he does not even have a desk of his own might be due to this kind of disobedience.

As far as Rebus is concerned, he is quite traditional in many ways. He was born shortly after the end of World War II (Rankin *Rebus's Scotland* 31) and his age may be a reason for his persistence at ignoring changes. He feels much more comfortable in the Edinburgh of the old days and does not appreciate new developments in the city scape so much, for example when he misses the record shops he used to go to for his supply of music; one has to add here that he is a veritable rock music enthusiast.

Bedlam Theatre stood at the junction of two diagonals – Forrest Road and Bristo Place – and facing the wider expanse of George IV Bridge. Years back, this had been Rebus's favourite part of town, with its weird bookshops and second-hand market. Now Subway and Starbucks had moved in and the record market was a theme bar. (453)

Rebus regrets the changes Edinburgh has experienced as a city of tourism and he wishes the old times back. Rankin implies in *Rebus's Scotland* that in this respect, his detective is not so different from many other Scots who disregard change – “as has always been the case” (45). Logan McRae is less conservative than Rebus, maybe because he is younger and not as opposed to changes in country and society. Moreover, it seems that although Logan is a self-reliant person as well, this trait is even more distinctive in Rebus and makes him more of a loner than Logan. Very suitable to this image of the “lonesome rider” (if one thinks of Western films) is Rankin's statement that “Rebus is an Old Testament sort of guy” who “sees the world in terms of white and black, good and evil” (Wanner 20). The force that manages to rein him is Siobhan, who often points out to her stubborn colleague that “there are shades of grey in the middle” (20). It seems that Siobhan knows better than Rebus about the world they live in, which is a complex noir world where nobody is completely evil and nobody perfectly good either.

Possibly Rebus is not able to understand this world around him because of this otherness he likes to stress. This certainly constitutes a similarity to Rilke; both do not *want* to fully immerse in society and are quite happy with their roles as outsiders who are not liked and understood by everybody. Both Rilke and Rebus are primarily called by their last names. Rilke first name does not appear in *Cutting Room* at all, Rebus's first name, John, is used by some characters in the story but not by the narrator. For the narrative voice he is always Rebus,

which makes him somewhat aloof and less personal. In *Fleshmarket Close*, Siobhan reflects about the use of nick names among their colleagues. She is called “Shiv” by nearly everyone although she would prefer to hear her full name, but appears to be customary to use nick names in the police force. “But John Rebus...for as long as she’d known him, he’d been ‘John’: not Jock or Johnny. It was as if people knew, just by looking at him, that he wasn’t the sort to endure a nickname. Nicknames made you seem friendly, more approachable, more likely to play along.” (*Fleshmarket* 21) Obviously, the impression he leaves is not a very amicable one and people feel that they should keep a distance.

Logan is not only called by his first name by the narrator, which contributes to his being more likable than Rebus, but in the course of the novel, he is assigned a nickname that is meant to be admiring, but nonetheless it is hated by Logan, a humble character. The two men working in the reception area of the police headquarters apparently seem to remember and appreciate Logan from the time before the serious attack by Angus Robertson and think that he is “like that bloke that comes back from the dead. Whatsisname, you know, the one from the bible? [...] Lazarus McRae, that’s what we’ll call you.” (MacBride 109) The comparison to biblical Lazarus annoys Logan, who does not like too much attention. To make matters worse, his heroic nickname is adopted by the local press.

What it takes to overcome enervating situations such as these is a good portion of humour. This should not be too hard for all of the three investigators. The characters themselves as well as the narrators fill the texts with witty comments. In *Cutting Room*, the positions of narrator and protagonist coincide; Rilke is a homodiegetic narrator. In fact, he even is an autodiegetic narrator, because he narrates his own story in which he is the protagonist (Jahn N3.1.5.). In the other two novels, the narrative mostly follows Rebus or McRae, respectively, and from time to time, one can recognise that the focalisation switches towards Siobhan, Jackie Watson or other characters of importance. During these short instances, when the focaliser is another character than the detective, the reader is sometimes able to catch a glimpse of him from another perspective than his

own. An example of this is the already quoted passage in which Siobhan thinks about Rebus's non-existing nicknames.

However, what is more important in this regard is that the three crime novels are full of humorous comments despite of their serious and gruesome topics. Where does this witty attitude come from? Is it the detectives themselves who are being characterised as being quick at repartee, is it the novels' placing in the tradition of hard-boiled writing, or is it the authors' Scottishness that is integrated in their works? Probably, the answer to all questions is "yes".

Firstly, the second assumption is going to be examined more closely: hard-boiled detectives are quick-witted because it is a kind of defence mechanism for them. One could argue that humour enables them to cope with the bleakness and unbelievable corruption that surrounds them. Moreover, a certain cynicism has been found to be part of hard-boiled noir fiction from its early days on. Thus, it is not surprising that all three novels, which definitely include several noir features, also express a view of the world that is best dealt with in a humorous manner. But maybe this is not only true for noir writing, for Rankin writes: "Another Scottish ploy: retreating into humour when a situation starts to become uncomfortably serious." (*Rebus's Scotland* 42) His Inspector Rebus is indeed somebody who always seems to have an ironic or cynical comment at the ready, which makes him not easy to handle for his opponents. When entering Whitemire for the first time, a detention centre for asylum seekers, he is told that "this isn't a prison camp" and that there are "TVs and a cafeteria, table-tennis and snack machines", Rebus answers, "And which of those don't you get in a prison?" (*Fleshmarket* 138) Rather at the beginning of the book, when Rebus and Siobhan are called to Fleshmarket Close where two skeletons have been walled in in a cellar, Rebus is as cynical as ever but his younger colleague sees through his façade.

'It couldn't be a set-up, could it? [...] Maybe the concrete's not as old as anyone says.'

Rebus stared at her. 'Been reading any good conspiracy thrillers lately? The Royals bumping off Princess Di? The mafia and JFK...?'

'Who let Mr Grumpy out to play?' (*Fleshmarket* 32)

Rebus's character is well known to Siobhan and she knows that he can sometimes be exhausting with his sarcastic comments, but he is not the only detective who is like that. Logan is quite a witty person himself, as thoughts like the following show. In a scene where his furious boss instructs him to tell his ex-girlfriend Isobel, the pathologist, to hurry with the post mortem of the latest murder victim, he thinks, "In her current mood she was more likely to do a post mortem on him." (MacBride 82) Generally, Logan wisecracks less often than Rebus, at least openly, especially in front of his boss, DI Insch, a hot-tempered man who is not to be trifled with. Although Logan always acts to his best knowledge and belief, he respects Insch's authority because he knows that his boss is a very capable and good-hearted man despite his hard outside.

So in *Cold Granite*, one could say that the connection between humour and the plot is stronger with respect to the narrator than to the detective himself. It is more the underlying witty tone that pervades the story which makes the at times shocking and horrendous plot easier to absorb. The humorous comments nonetheless contribute to the grim atmosphere of the book, for example in the following passage, where the narrator gives an account of Aberdonians in wintertime: "Everyone looked murderous and inbred. When the sun shone they would cast off their thick woollens, unscrew their faces, and smile. But in winter the whole city looked like a casting call for *Deliverance*." (MacBride 42) If one has watched the movie, it becomes obvious that this is not a compliment. To sum this up, it could be argued that in MacBride's novel, humour is mainly used in order to enhance the hard-boiled qualities of the text.

In *Cutting Room*, it seems to be more the protagonist who is responsible for humorous comments. This may also be due to the fact that the protagonist is the narrator, so these two roles cannot be separated in the novel. Rilke has a quite dark and morbid sense of humour that he never loses even in situations of great danger and that is very much influenced by his obsession with death. The following example serves as illustration: "I stretched back into the shadows and watched the driver watching Rose, his eyes glancing between her reflection in the rear-view mirror and the heavy city traffic. Willing to risk a crash, blood and carnage and the death of us all, for a glimpse of her trembling cleavage." (Welsh 99) Quite typical of Rilke, he imagines the most terrible thing that could

happen, but in this case, the ironic undertone of his statement is a source of amusement for the reader. Rilke's witty but sometimes unusual style of narration is most probably due to his being a hard-boiled detective, but one cannot deny that there is also a certain Scottishness inherent to him that makes him so darkly funny. Furthermore, Louise Welsh plays with references to the Gothic, of which there is a long tradition in Scottish writing. As is to be argued in part two of this thesis, Scotland, the Gothic, and crime fiction share certain similarities in stylistic terms but also a past together.

The issue most difficult to discern is whether the authors focused on witty commentaries because they are Scottish themselves. One could argue that they want to integrate the particularities of their country and its people in their novels, in this context of humour especially to not take life seriously in order to facilitate it. Indeed, one can say that the authors' approach to the Scottishness of their plots and characters is a unifying issue of the three novels, and one can possibly define this as a feature of Tartan Noir, if this sub-genre of noir fiction really exists. But this is a question to be hopefully answered in an insightful way in a separate section of this paper.

2.4.3. Their Female Sidekicks

It is interesting to notice that Rebus, Rilke and McRae all have women at their side who play a crucial part in the development of the plot. They are more or less closely associated with the detectives in different ways. Firstly, there is Siobhan Clarke who is an essential component of the later Inspector Rebus novels. In *Fleshmarket Close*, she has to solve a case of her own that turns out to be connected to Rebus's murder case. Then, there is WPC Jackie Watson, subordinate in rank to Logan, but an energetic companion throughout the novel. Lastly, there is Rose, Rilke's boss and close friend, and owner of Bowery Auctions. She is not very active in the actual investigations but functions as mental support and integral communication partner.

Concerning the general functions of a sidekick, Dana Bisbee writes that a "trusted sidekick [...] may become so crucial to the development of the detective as a character that the detective becomes paired in readers' minds with the helper" (412), and indeed, the existence of the female associates gives the

reader the opportunity to get to know the detectives better. Another function Bisbee identifies is that the assistant detective “can provide comic relief or increase the tension” (413). Furthermore, he or she takes on the role of the reader, in that the sidekick asks questions about the case and admires the detective. These features mostly refer to classical stories about Great Detectives such as Sherlock Holmes, whose Watson is the perfect example of a traditional sidekick. The prototypical hard-boiled detective is a loner or even outsider, as already discussed, and hence, he seldom works together with an assistant and if he does, it is not in the same way as in classical detective stories. In Hammett’s *Maltese Falcon*, for example, the only function of Sam Spade’s partner “is to get himself killed immediately.” (413)

In more recent crime fiction (since the 1990s), Bisbee argues, the tendency is to make a team of equal importance out of the detective and his sidekick, i.e. to portray them as partners rather than as one dominant and one subordinate character. One could describe the affiliation between the three detectives and their female sidekicks as a partnership rather than a boss-underling-relationship. In this respect, it may seem odd to refer to the three women as “sidekicks”, but on the other hand they still fulfil certain functions that associate them with the traditional sidekick; they are modernised versions of Sherlock’s Watson.

Very fittingly, Stuart MacBride named Logan’s helper Jackie Watson, who shares her name giver’s classic sidekick qualities: she is “brave, capable, observant, and faithful.” (Bisbee 413) While Holmes’s sidekick did his master’s footwork, Watson does even more. She drives Logan when he is too hung-over to be at the wheel himself, she has a ready tongue when it comes to conceited men who reduce her to her sex and ready fighting skills where words do not suffice. Among her colleagues, she is known as “Ball Breaker” (23) for a reason. On duty, she appears to be quite unwomanly in her police uniform, with her hair fixed in a tight bun, and of course the mental and physical strength she displays – she is in no way inferior to her male colleagues. Indeed, the plot shows that she is sometimes even tougher than the men around her. It might very well be possible that she has to demonstrate her strength again and again and not show any signs of weakness in order to be fully accepted as a police woman

among her male colleagues and superiors. She certainly feels that she can earn their respect by displaying toughness, and as her nickname shows, her strategy proved to be right.

Logan starts to see Watson's feminine side only when he encounters her in his flat after a drunken night. Unfortunately, he cannot remember whether Watson and he had sex, but when he sees her clad only in one of his T-shirts, he takes to the sight. "Her hair, released from its tight regulation bun, fell over her shoulders in dark brown curls. A pair of bare legs stuck out of the bottom of the T-shirt and they were very nice legs indeed." (MacBride 118) Considering this fact, Logan is happy about the outcome of the night before, but on the other hand he is afraid of how these events could affect their professional relationship. After all, "[h]e was a DS and she was a WPC. [...] He was her superior officer!" (119) The issue of rank plays an important role for Logan because he fears DI Insch's reaction if he started an affair with one of Insch's WPCs. The situation gets particularly tricky for him because he is obviously also afraid of his colleague. "WPC Watson was smart, attractive...And she could beat the shit out of anyone who used her as a one night stand." (120) Logan fears that a sexual relationship could destroy their good cooperation but his worries prove to be unfounded as they do not talk about what happened that night for a long time and only towards the end of the story, they try to approach each other in a private manner, which proves to be difficult due to a misunderstanding and a certain shyness. Their possible love story is a plot line that could well be developed further in MacBride's next book about DS Logan McRae.

Watson plays the greatest role in the development of the plot when it comes to the big showdown that sheds light upon the serial killer who stalks Aberdeen. Here, at the latest, it becomes clear that she is more to the story than only Logan's assistant for rough situations or romance. She is stationed at the house of the suspect with another PC and they are ordered to await the return of the alleged child murderer when he finally comes home and puts them out of action. Watson finds herself pinioned and taken hostage. Obviously, Logan is not on site, so the action revolves around her in these scenes; Watson is the focaliser until she manages to call Logan on his mobile phone in her distress, who

understands that something bad must have happened and races to the murderer's house. From this point on, the narrative again centres on Logan and one again follows his actions, thoughts and emotions. Anyhow, the thrilling events of the encounter with the killer are told from Watson's perspective, which shows that she is more than merely a prop.

Siobhan, Rebus's co-investigator, might be more important to the development of the plot in *Fleshmarket Close* than Jackie Watson is in *Cold Granite*. As a permanent component of the later novels by Ian Rankin, she has grown to be a quite distinct and full-blown character who functions apart from Rebus and often represents a contrast to his wry personality. The narration switches from Rebus to Siobhan and back again, therefore the reader sees the story from different perspectives. In *Fleshmarket Close*, she has her own case to solve, although, of course, she still works together with Rebus as well. The author himself identifies Siobhan's qualities as a character mainly as being an outsider (*Rebus's Scotland* 35). On the one hand, she is much younger than Rebus, has a college education and her political views are left-leaning, all issues that make her different from Rebus. On the other hand, she also stands out from Scottish society because her parents are English and she speaks with an English accent. Thus, it is simple for her to comment on Scottish society from the outside; things attract her eye that would not be seen by many Scots themselves. Bearing in mind Siobhan's importance to the book as co-protagonist, investigator and commentator, it is actually insufficient to name her sidekick.

Rose, the last of the female sidekicks, probably plays the least important role of the three women. She is merely involved in Rilke's investigations, which is of course also due to his not being a professional detective but an amateur and Rose not having the status of a colleague. She is "only" his friend who knows him very well – they share their secrets with each other and sometimes also a bottle of red wine – and his boss. Her insistence on the continuation of the McKindless sale despite of the death of old Miss McKindless, which is illegal but promises to be the "Sale of the Century" (Welsh 255) contributes to the solution of the mystery around Mr McKindless's dark deeds, but otherwise, Rose is not

really essential to the investigations. What makes her more interesting as a character in a noir novel is her characterisation as a femme fatale.

If Maria Callas and Paloma Picasso had married and had a daughter she would look like Rose. Black hair scraped back from her face, pale skin, lips painted torture red. She smokes Dunhill, drinks at least one bottle of red wine a night, wears black and has never married. [...] They call her the Whip; you might think she likes the name, she encourages it so. (Welsh 11)

Her nickname shows that Rose is a hard-bitten businesswoman, who made the auction house her father bequeathed her to the best in Glasgow. She is not only strong in business matters but also in her private life. Maybe she never married because she likes it best to be on her own; certainly the reason is not that she never found a man who would have liked to marry her. She is aware of her appeal to men and enjoys playing with them by showing her feminine charms, for example in the following scene, where “[t]he taxi driver kept sneaking looks at Rose in his rear-view mirror. [...] Sure enough, she had crossed her legs high on the thigh, showing a glimpse of white flesh at the top of her lacy hold-ups.” Rilke blames her for “distracting the man from his job”, but she just says, “Stop being such a spoilsport. It’s the only fun taxi drivers get, looking up women’s skirts” (Welsh 98).

Like so many aspects in *The Cutting Room*, Rose appears as if she belonged to other, bygone times. When watching her getting ready for a night out, sitting in front of her dressing table, Rilke finds that she looks like an “artist’s model/whore from Montmartre, one hundred years ago.” (96) Impressions like these are of course influenced by the autodiegetic narrator, who often seems to be living in the past (not only because of his professional interest in historical objects), which is to be considered more closely in part two. At any rate, the narrative makes Rose appear like the perfect femme fatale who can twist men around her little finger and this can again be seen as a connection to noir writing.

Siobhan, Rose and Jackie are all strong women who do not really see the male protagonists as their masters and unquestionable heroes, but they are independent and determined to do what they think best. Unlike the traditional sidekick whose primary concern was to meet their detectives with admiration

and trust for their qualities as sleuths and to support him wherever he can, the three women are modernised versions of this figure in the detective story and can only be seen as sidekicks in a wider sense. Last, but not least, it is interesting to consider why these modern sidekicks are women, not men. Possibly, female characters are more attractive for authors because they can help to establish certain dynamics, i.e. they provide a foil for the hard-boiled male investigator.

2.5. Tartan Noir – More Than Just a Label?

Whereas in the early times of noir writing, it had been denoted as an American phenomenon, the term has been extended to British fiction in the last decades. But beyond that, recently there have been discussions about the existence of a distinct Scottish variety of noir writing, Tartan Noir. Its first public use was on the dust jacket of Ian Rankin's *Let It Bleed* in 1995, where one could read James Ellroy's now famous designation of Rankin as "the progenitor – and king – of tartan noir" (Bell 62). From then on, critics seemed to have fallen in love with the term and it became popular to refer to a new Scottish author of crime fiction as "the next king of Tartan Noir". But there are also more sceptical voices, for example Charles Taylor, who writes in his review of Rankin's *A Question of Blood* that Tartan Noir has a "condescending tinge" to it; "It's a touristy phrase, suggesting that there's something quaint about hard-boiled crime fiction that comes from the land of kilts and haggis." (1)

The term, actually an oxymoron because "[t]artan can't just be black because otherwise it's not a tartan" (Wanner 3), was in reality coined by Rankin himself as he states in an interview with Len Wanner. He used it at a crime fiction convention many years ago in order to explain to James Ellroy the topics and style he used. The expression came to his mind because he wanted to convey that his crime novels dealt with "Edinburgh and the darker side of Scottish life" (3). This is of course an insufficient explanation of a term that has spread like wildfire and gained so much popularity. The question that arises in connection to Tartan Noir is whether it can be defined at all. What does a text need to possess in order to be called a work of Tartan Noir? Is this text then different

from others that are viewed as examples of Scottish crime fiction or is Tartan Noir simply another, more catchy term for the same thing?

To complicate things even more, it seems to be difficult to produce a clear definition of Scottish crime fiction at all. Rankin, himself a former postgraduate student of Scottish literature at Edinburgh University, believes that there is “no tradition of crime fiction in Scotland but there is a great tradition of quite dark, psychological, Gothic horror stories.” (Wanner 3) He is certainly right in this respect, and part two of this thesis is going to discuss the Gothic tradition in which contemporary crime novels are set. At this stage, it is more relevant to focus on the first part of his statement. Gill Plain argues that Scottish crime fiction is a “hybrid” (Plain, *Corruption* 132) of American and English culture but is more influenced by American writing that typically portrays an “urban, dysfunctional” environment and less by the “rural, almost pastoral” (Plain, *Introduction* 6) atmosphere of traditional English detective stories. This contrast, as well as the contrastive character of the hard-boiled detective, depicts a binary opposition that Plain considers to be “an ideal template for the fiction of pre-devolution Scotland” (*Corruption* 133). What she tries to express here is that before 1997, hard-boiled Scottish crime narratives that usually portrayed “identities forged in opposition” served as a means to represent the “fraught history” of Scotland and England (*Introduction* 6). In the years after devolution, one can detect a change in some novels, away from the “centrifugal pull of anti-Conservatism” (*Corruption* 140) and political issues towards smaller personal affairs. This is for example observable in the crime novels by Alexander McCall Smith, but there is also a continuum of analyses of what lies behind the upright veneer of society; a representative of this faction is Rankin, who keeps bringing up issues of general concern and criticises the state of Scotland in his later novels as well. In this regard, one could again talk about the duality that appears to be in some way inherent to Scottish crime fiction (*Corruption* 140). One should add that Plain’s theory is only one of several that could help to explain why one needs to identify a specific Scottish kind of crime writing but it seems to be the most useful one for the line of argument that will be followed here.

If one considers the huge variety of Scottish approaches to crime writing, from Paul Johnston's novels set in a futuristic, twenty-first century Edinburgh to the comic crime fiction of Christopher Brookmyre or Alanna Knight's historical crime novels (Wanner 4), it is hardly surprising that there is no comprehensive answer to the definition of a national Scottish crime fiction. Plain suggests quite convincingly

[...] that a working hypothesis would be to categorize Scottish crime fiction as writing by Scottish authors that explicitly or implicitly articulates ideas or attitudes pertinent to Scottish culture and society. Because the nature of Scottish culture and society is itself subject to change and far from homogenous, its "national" crime fiction will inevitably be multifaceted (*Introduction* 7)

The impossibility to define Scottish crime fiction in an all-embracing way that remains valid at all times does not necessarily imply that one cannot determine what Tartan Noir is. The reason is that Tartan Noir cannot be used equivalently to Scottish crime fiction but it is rather a sub-genre of it. Authors such as those mentioned in the above paragraph are not inevitably writers of noir although they are writers of Scottish crime fiction. Therefore, one cannot use Tartan Noir as an umbrella term for Scottish crime fiction as naturally not all crime novels written by Scottish authors include noir features – but interestingly, quite a number of them do.

This has to do with the placement of Scottish crime fiction in the wider tradition of Scottish literature. "[D]uality, deceit, repression and hypocrisy" (*Corruption* 133), topics appearing again and again in contemporary crime fiction, have been part of Scottish literature for centuries, for example in James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) and R.L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. These influential works are also examples of the Gothic tradition of Scottish literature.

A further reason for the recurrence of noir motifs in Scottish crime novels might be "thrawnitude" (Wanner 57), a quality to be found in the Scottish people and culture. To be thrawn means that "if you tell us to do something we will do exactly the opposite, given the opportunity." (Wanner 55) Together with a "healthy disrespect for authority" and "a black sense of humour [...]" – possibly to do with the weather" (55), Stuart MacBride, author of *Cold Granite*, sees these

aspects as key parts of the Scottish psyche. He sees them as a common denominator for the incredible variety of Scottish crime fiction and therefore believes that “Tartan Noir doesn’t exist” (55). MacBride argues that one cannot talk about novels so different from each other and call them Tartan Noir. In his eyes, the term is just practical for marketing crime fiction written in Scotland under an umbrella. What he forgets is that Tartan Noir does not need to describe all crime novels written by Scottish authors, but it could simply be used to denote a certain kind of crime writing that shares features with traditional American noir. Books of this kind, among which one can also count *Fleshmarket Close*, *Cold Granite* and *The Cutting Room*, are certainly different in many ways from other approaches to crime fiction, for example in their attitude towards societal criticism.

To return to this chapter’s leading question, one could argue that Tartan Noir does exist and is indeed a label, but a label that designates a certain kind of Scottish crime fiction among a large variety of crime novels. Of course, every author and even every book has its own topics and stylistic features and, fortunately, none of them is exactly like the other, but there are some similarities such as their origin in Scottish Gothic novels and American hard-boiled fiction that cannot be denied. While it is impossible to define what the vast corpus of Scottish crime fiction really is, it is slightly easier to determine the smaller unit of Tartan Noir. Because of its catchy connotation, the term may tend to be used too often and in unsuitable contexts, but it is nonetheless quite convenient. The greatest difficulty with Tartan Noir might be to define its boundaries. Where does the realm of noir end? When are the noir references too nondescript to attract attention in a way that justifies a novel being labelled Tartan Noir? As one can see when considering the three primary texts of this paper, each of them is noir to a certain degree but there are considerable differences in their “noirishness” and none of them is exactly like a prototypical crime novel by the masters of early noir. This is of course impossible, since noir writing has developed further since the 1930s and found new interpretations. The decision to call a novel Tartan Noir has to be made by the reader him/herself, but unfortunately, in many cases this decision has been taken already by the critic whose commentary ends up on the cover of a new publication. One should not rely on the judgement of critics because after all, as a reader one should always

rely on one's own sagacity and decide for oneself whether to call a Scottish crime novel "noir" or not.

3. Part II: Scotland, Crime and the Gothic

3.1. Haunted by History: The Tradition of the Gothic in Scottish (Crime) Fiction

This section will shed light upon the literary historical links between the Gothic and crime fiction. “Gothic” has been a term used in various contexts and throughout a long span of time, which already implies that a wide range of meanings has been assigned to it. In a more restricted literary sense, the term is usually applied to a number of novels written between the 1760s and the 1820s by authors such as Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis and Mary Shelley (Punter 1). Although there are significant differences between these novels, they have been grouped together as Gothic novels in literary history. In the last 200 years, the term has also been used for various other, later works of literature and thus has come to denote very different themes and stylistic features. And indeed, in the context of this thesis, Gothic fiction cannot be restricted to being a historically limited genre but a persistent and wide-ranging tendency within fiction.

Typical features of Gothic are archaic settings, the portrayal of terrifying and thrilling events, and the supernatural. From this perspective, “‘Gothic’ fiction is the fiction of the haunted castle, of heroines preyed on by unspeakable terrors, of the blackly lowering villain, of ghosts, vampires, monsters and werewolves.” (Punter, *Terror* 1) However, because Gothic fiction underwent developments of all kinds, it is impossible to speak of a fixed Gothic formula. The term itself was subject to changes in meaning: originally, it referred to the northern tribe of the Goths, who were believed to have brought down the Roman empire, although for writers in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the term had a more general meaning and was used as a synonym for “Teutonic” or “Germanic”, but still bore the connotation of barbarity. In the later eighteenth century, Gothic began to be understood in a more historical sense and basically described everything from before the middle of the seventeenth century, because few facts were known about the Middle Ages and what succeeded them. As the term was connected to the Dark Ages and barbarity, it could be seen as an

opposition to “classical”; whereas “classical” stood for simplicity and purity, Gothic was chaotic and uncivilised and represented exaggeration and excess (Punter, *Terror* 5-6). But then the value of these attributes changed and they were seen more positively, as authors felt that the Gothic “possessed a fire, a vigour, a sense of grandeur which was sorely needed in English culture.” (Punter, *Terror* 6) Furthermore, they were increasingly interested in the past and their own cultural history, issues that had been largely ignored until the middle of the eighteenth century.

As a matter of fact, the occupation with the past became one of the recurrent themes of Gothic fiction. Many novels were set in the past, although this could appear to be quite forced at times, and many of the novels used old castles, ruins or monasteries as settings. Many books of the heyday of Gothic writing portrayed wild and barbaric landscapes and characters which readers of that time took a liking to. (Punter, *Terror* 8-9) One should add here that at the peak of their popularity, i.e. between 1788 and 1807, Gothic novels had a market share of about 30 per cent of all novel production (Spooner, *Crime* 245) and were devoured by the middle class.

But a bigger part of these novels also included other features that were less obviously connected to the Gothic, such as the depiction of extreme situations, excess, transgression, terror and the supernatural. Punter mentions that critics of that time delivered a damning indictment of Gothic novels, as they found them to be “crude, exploitative, even sadistic” (*Terror* 9), but nonetheless, authors seemed to meet the expectations of their audience.

In reference to the just mentioned features Fred Botting argues that “Gothic signifies a writing of excess” (1). This is true not only for the first phase of Gothic literature but also for works of the Victorian era and the twentieth century. Throughout the centuries, Gothic writing has been concerned with objects and practices that are constructed as irrational, immoral and fantastic and are seen as threats for our reasonable, secular society. From the beginnings of Gothic fiction until today, its fascination with “supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption” (2) has proven to be permanent. Cultural anxieties may change due to the influence of,

for example, industrialisation, urbanisation, shifting gender roles or new scientific insights, but they are always present in Gothic fiction. Botting suggests that the ambivalence of Gothic writing can be seen as a result of fear and anxiety, as an attempt to come to terms with the uncertainty of the shifts in life and society. He argues further that the preoccupation with the past “offered a permanence and unity in excess of the limits of rational and moral order.” (23)

This excess of cultural boundaries was mainly conveyed through powerful representations of sensation, terror or the supernatural, which evoked emotions of awe and fear in the reader. Since the aesthetic excesses of Gothic fiction were thought to be to a certain extent unnatural because they exceeded the realms of reality and possibility and thus entered dark and obscure areas, it was believed to encourage readers’ depravity, at least in the eighteenth century. The stories of betrayal, intrigue and murder seemed to celebrate criminal and dissolute behaviour, to stimulate excitement and pleasure, but on the other hand, their Gothic ambivalence meant that they also evoked terror by their endangering of the stability of virtue, honour and social order. Regarded in this way, the terrors of transgression in Gothic fiction even reinforced the rules and boundaries of society. In fact, quite often in this period of Gothic writing, transgressions portrayed an antithesis by re-establishing proper limits at the end of a narrative – virtue ultimately triumphs over vice. Botting concludes that “[i]mages of light and dark focus, in their duality, the acceptable and unacceptable sides of the limits that regulate social distinctions.” (8) Duality is a truly prevailing issue in Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, one of the most famous Gothic novellas of the Victorian era and a classical Scottish crime narrative at the same time.

Whereas in the eighteenth century order used to be restored in the end, Gothic fiction of the nineteenth century increased the uncertainty of recurrent social, political or aesthetic stability. Moreover, the status of the villains, ghosts, and castles of eighteenth century Gothic fiction dwindled to mere clichés; they did not provide sources of horror any more. External threats ceased to be fear-provoking, but the Gothic interest in internal anxieties grew and the Romantic ideals of imaginative freedom and individuality were addressed in excessive ways. (Botting 11) The internal world proved to be as horrifying as external

sources, as it dealt with archaic emotions such as guilt, despair and sexual desire. These internal movements became visible to the outside by forms of psychological disturbance, for example madness or hallucinations. The states of the psyche, however, did not only point to the disintegration of the individual, as Botting states, but they also destabilised the boundaries between psyche and reality, which meant that the differences between fantasy and real life become blurred. (11-12) Devices such as mirrors, doubles, alter egos and vivid descriptions of disturbing issues of human identity were frequently used in order to convey the decomposition of the contrast of individual and society.

In the twentieth century, many of the Gothic elements of the nineteenth century re-emerged, but they showed a greater diversity regarding their appearance. Subject to different genres, the terror and horror of Gothic were now being generated by scientific, futuristic and intergalactic realities, by fantasy worlds, psychiatric hospitals and the portrayal of criminal subcultures. It is not surprising that these locations were associated mainly with popular culture and literature, with science fiction, horror writing or the adventure novel. Spooner writes that commonly, Gothic is viewed as being hostile to modernism with “its emphasis on the contemporary world and high value on accurately recreating interior consciousness” (*Gothic* 38) and therefore, writers were not interested in Gothic tropes and themes in the first half of the century. With the rise of postmodernism in the second half of the century, Gothic came back into use, which is due to postmodernism’s preoccupation with genre fiction, pastiche and sensationalism. Yet Spooner adds that the relationship between Gothic and modernism or postmodernism, respectively, is not as simple and straightforward as it may seem, as both tendencies have a complex and mutual relationship to Gothic traditions. (*Gothic* 39)

Indeed, traces of Gothic can be found in the most famous examples of modernist literature such as James Joyce’s *Dubliners* (1914), Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899) or T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922), where Gothic elements are only one way among others to illustrate the interior terrors of the human psyche. It is less difficult to prove the common ground between postmodernism and the Gothic, because they share several concerns such as the affinity to history and nostalgia, the fascination by science and technology,

criminality, excess and the unspeakable, and finally their use of pastiche and reflexivity (Spooner, *Gothic* 43).

This short outline demonstrates that it does not suffice to perceive Gothic as a countermovement to high literature that is exclusively made use of in popular culture, on the contrary: "Gothic has become one of the most crucial and widely used modes in contemporary fiction" (Spooner, *Gothic* 46) and obviously, it has also found its way into contemporary Scottish crime fiction, as will be shown by the analyses of the novels by MacBride, Rankin and Welsh.

In order to explain the boom of Scottish Gothic novels in the last years one has to reflect about the historical reasons for Scottish authors to adopt Gothic aesthetics in their writing in the first place. The most relevant events for the Scottish nation in the eighteenth century were the Union of the parliaments of England and Scotland in 1707 and the following Jacobite Risings of 1715 and 1745/6. Naturally, these crises proved to be a significant cut in the creation of a coherent Scottish identity because the country was virtually divided into the proponents of the Union, those who sided with the Jacobites and a group that remained undecided. Current discussions in Scottish politics show that the question of whether Scotland should be an independent nation is still prevailing in people's minds.

Angela Wright argues that the best-known authors of the nineteenth century, Walter Scott, James Hogg and Robert Louis Stevenson, used Gothic tropes in order to portray and analyse Scotland's fragmentation. She even adds that their analyses are "only *made possible* by their use of the Gothic" (73, emphasis added). Ellis supports this view by stating that the Gothic is "a mode for the apprehension and consumption of history" (11), which he does not relate to Scotland in particular but is quite expedient in this context. This notion could also indicate the vicinity of historical and Gothic novel. Walter Scott as a writer of historical novels cannot be seen separated from his use of Gothic elements – history and Gothic are inextricably linked in Scottish fiction. Alan Bold writes of "the ghostly persistence of the frequently disastrous Scottish past. The Scottish house of fiction is haunted, which explains the abundance of grotesque characters and Gothic events" (164). It is hardly surprising that Scott's first novel, *Waverley, or 'tis Sixty Years Since* (1814), deals with exactly those

events that were able to traumatise the nation for the next several hundred years. It is the story of an Englishman who becomes entangled in the turmoil of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 and as a consequence is “imprisoned, attacked and robbed of his identity whilst in Scotland” (Wright 75).

James Hogg depicts Scotland as a similarly hostile territory in his masterpiece *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). The novel is structured as a double narrative, with the “confessions” of the sinner in the centre and the investigations of the editor as a frame narrative. In the course of his search for the truth about the sinner’s memoirs, he encounters the self-portrait of James Hogg, a surly, suspicious shepherd who refuses to share his knowledge and discoveries about the sinner’s grave with strangers, i.e. the editor who asked him to lead him there. The shepherd seems to be the “embodiment of the provocative Scottish caricatures offered in earlier Scottish fiction” (Wright 75) and in a wider sense, the Scottish nation itself is presented as being Gothic and hostile towards outsiders.

Wright claims that at close examination, Scott and Hogg’s portrayal of the Scottish inhospitality “remains a superficial trope in their works” (75). Compared to the much more relevant issue of the “excavation of Scotland’s past” (76), the representation of wild nature and unfriendly inhabitants is only a minor matter. Like all Gothic fiction, Scottish Gothic as a special variety of Gothic writing is concerned with “the process of telling a tale” (76). It devotes very much attention to the objects which give rise to narration, or, in other words, the process of uncovering stories and histories. An example for such an object could be the manuscript of the sinner’s confessions in Hogg’s famous novel. This focus demonstrates the importance of uncovering histories in Scottish Gothic. Wright argues further that the Scottish form of Gothic writing is always very much “concerned with distilling the right narrative from any story” (76) and in this process, equal attention is paid to everybody’s narration, regardless of their social standing or their position in the narrative. In Hogg’s *Confessions*, for example, the stories of the shepherd are given as much space as the editor’s, who is one of the “self-appointed narrators of the nation” (76).

In addition to the excavation of the past, the persistent fragmentation of the Scottish identity, which of course had its reasons in historical events, was

equally evident in the works of Gothic authors. In *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, the editor's narrative prompts the question of the sinner's reliability. He appears to have either been led into his murderous deeds by a mysterious figure, Gil-Martin, or to have a split personality. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Robert Louis Stevenson, very much impressed by Hogg's depiction of a schizophrenic character, although one must add that the novel defies a concrete resolution of Gil-Martin as being either a supernatural phenomenon or a psychological symptom (MacLachlan 20), explored the issue of dual identities in many of his works. Examples are the novel *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), in short "a tale of brotherly rivalry and madness similar to Hogg's *Confessions*" (Wright 81), the short story *Markheim*, and of course, most famously, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

These classics of Scottish Gothic literature do not seek to simply portray Scotland as a wild and hostile country or to rationalise the inconsistencies of its history, but they try to "exhume Scotland's past with care to both local and national contexts." Furthermore, Wright calls Scott, Hogg and Stevenson "exacting curators of their nation's particularities and inconsistencies" who ensure that "artefacts be honestly represented, that its 'hereditary possessions' are correctly transmitted to posterity, and that its protagonists are dissected with care and attention." Conclusively, she states that "Scottish Gothic is concerned with correcting misguided and superficial judgements of its history, geography and people" (Wright 81).

From this perspective, these most influential writers of Scottish Gothic embarked on a great mission in the nineteenth century, but their journey is not over yet. Fiction of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is still dealing with Scotland's past and the effects it has on contemporary society and culture and on the self-perception of the Scottish people. Alan Bold does not agree that today's writers are still able to comment on the state of the nation in such a powerful way as their literary forebears did, as his provocative article from 1994 in the *Glasgow Herald* shows:

The crisis in modern Scottish fiction is a crisis of creative courage, not cultural continuity. Some of our writers are too diffident to be true to Scottish subjects, others are too smug to be taken so seriously. All our novelists should think again and stop confusing Scotland with

sentimentality, spurious novelty for innovation. Modern Scottish fiction should deal more decisively with the facts of modern Scottish life. [...] Diffident modern Scottish novelists should look back in admiration at Scott and attempt to emulate his courage in confronting a troubled country. Overhyped modern Scottish novelists should try to justify the publicity they generate and strive to be as visionary of [sic!] Scott. All should do justice to Scotland by writing Scott-ish novels in a modern mode. We need more Scott-ish heroism, less Scottish hype. (Bold, "Sequel" 1)

His devastating assessment of the state of contemporary Scottish fiction alongside the frequent references to Walter Scott seem to completely neglect the diverse range of publications in the last decades that employ Gothic features in order to reflect on the state of the nation, which is, in fact, a stateless nation. For David Punter, this "is, by definition, a 'state of crisis'" (*Heart Lands* 101) and his observation seems to be shared by many contemporary Scottish authors who are aware of the divisiveness of the country and also make clear allusions to it in their books.

The typical Gothic involvement with the past is certainly still an important issue, for example in Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993), a narrative of addiction which "point[s] to the broken self inside the sick body of an alienated national culture in search of itself" (Germanà 5-6). The following quotation shows quite clearly that the dissolving self has to be perceived as being connected to the nation's "feudal heritage" (Punter, *Heart Lands* 106):

Ah don't hate the English. They're just wankers. We are colonised by wankers. We can't even pick a decent, vibrant, healthy culture to be colonised by. No. We're ruled by effete arseholes. What does that make us? The lowest of the fuckin low, the scum of the earth. The most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that was ever shat intae creation. Ah don't hate the English. They just git oan wi the shite thuv goat. Ah hate the Scots. (Welsh 78)

The despair in Renton's view of his own culture and people ties in with Germanà's observation that "[h]istory is revenant because it comes back to haunt the present with the burden of unsolved business and uncomfortable knowledge" (4), which is a symptom of modern Scottish identity and heavily influences the contemporary Scottish Gothic. Various novelists such as Iain Banks, A.L. Kennedy, Alasdair Gray, Kate Atkinson and also Louise Welsh have portrayed dissolved characters who are afraid in one way or another that

they get lost in indistinction. Germanà relates this to what she identifies as a quality of Scottish Gothic: “coming to terms with *the fear of not knowing what one is.*” (5, emphasis in original) This fear may be especially relevant in contemporary Gothic fiction because of the setting in a global age in which obscure and often contradictory forces influence national identities. The greatest obstacles for the establishment of a coherent Scottish identity in times like these possibly are “the simultaneous threats of parochial insularity and global dilution” (Germanà 5); they make it difficult to be sure of one’s distinctive values.

In the nineteenth century as well as in today’s Gothic fiction, mentally unstable personalities are a convenient possibility for authors to portray the fragile and fragmented Scottish psyche, regardless of whether their characters’ mental particularities can be traced back to supernatural phenomena, to drug abuse or whether they can be explained in a psychoanalytical way. Scott Brewster reads one of the classic Scottish Gothic novels, Hogg’s *Confessions*, as well as a recent publication, John Burnside’s *The Locust Room* (2001) which deals with a serial rapist in 1970s Cambridge, in the light of Julia Kristeva’s concept of the “borderline” experience. The borderline discourse is “a conceptual category that enables us to read how Gothic stages madness from the inside and the outside, in terms of a split between metalanguage and performance, conviction and uncertainty, remoteness and proximity.” (Brewster 79) Presentations of borderline conditions in texts propose the “investigation of split subjectivities and ambiguous textual and psychoanalytical responses” (Germanà 5). Therefore, when reading contemporary Scottish novels, one can identify “the borderline condition as a pronounced feature of Scottish Gothic: we can immediately think of the combination of isolation and conviction, particularly when mediated through madness, criminality and the sociopathic.” (Brewster 84)

In 1999, Punter defined the thematic core of the Scottish Gothic as “consciousness forced apart” (*Heart Lands* 104) He applied the Scottish categories of trauma, abuse and nightmare in order to explore the national distinctiveness, and in this process found that “we may surely see a set of dealings with an unaccommodated past, a fragmentation of memory and myth

mirrored on the body and in the mind” (104-5) that shows itself in novels from Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting* to Louise Welsh’s *The Cutting Room*. Referring to Alan Bold’s diatribe on the alleged crisis of contemporary Scottish fiction, Punter suggests reading contemporary novels as “codes” that serve as a means to investigate and interpret a cultural condition instead of seeing them as “unpalatable evasions” of an ideal text that is never to come. (116) Faced with the great variety of contemporary Scottish novels that have been published in the last twenty years, one can definitely not speak about a crisis, especially when one considers their literary quality, or to put it differently, their use of features that put them in a remarkable literary tradition, as successors of great writers such as Scott, Hogg, and Stevenson. What Alan Bold should bear in mind is that the popularity of these contemporary authors in the eyes of critics and readers implies that their style as well as their stories are appealing to today’s audience but this is not a bad thing – it simply shows that they have their finger on the pulse of time.

3.1.1. Noir Fiction and the Gothic: An Irresolvable Relationship

In the previous chapter, Scottish novels have been treated as parts of a long tradition of Gothic writing that seems to run like a golden thread through Scottish literary history, from Scott to novelists of the twenty-first century. However, what many of the most famous works share is that crime plays a great role in their plots and thus, they can be also approached as examples of crime novels. Gothic as well as crime novels deal with vestiges of the past; they may be scandalous, appalling or in some way incredible to the reader. Mighall writes that “[w]here the ‘vestigial’ is found (in monasteries, prisons, lunatic asylums, the urban slums, or even the bodies, minds, or psyches of criminals, deviants or relatively ‘normal’ subjects) depends upon historical circumstances” (*Geography* 26). The focus on bodies and minds of criminals and deviants implies the interconnectedness of Gothic and crime fiction and, having in mind typical features of Gothic, one could probably not ignore the similarities it shares with crime fiction and noir writing in particular. Spooner states that even the earliest authors of detective fiction such as Edgar Allan Poe, Wilkie Collins and Arthur Conan Doyle can be seen as writers of Gothic. “There are traces of Gothic in most crime narratives, just as there are crimes in most Gothic novels.” (*Crime* 246)

As the following discussion of the similarities between the two genres will demonstrate, Spooner is definitely right to write about the inextricable bonds between them. Nevertheless, in the early twentieth century, critics argued for a separation of Gothic and crime fiction. Since Gothic writing was an unfashionable and almost despised literary tendency at the time of modernism, it was attempted to clean detective stories from their Gothic associations. In late twentieth century criticism, however, these were restored again. (Spooner, *Crime* 246-7) With regard to their connectedness, it is in fact quite interesting to trace how Gothic and crime writing were viewed at different points in history. At the beginning of the twentieth century, for example, Gothic was perceived as “irrational”, as a contrast to detective fiction, which was seen as a purely logical puzzle that always ended in the “triumph of rationalism” (*Crime* 246). In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic literature, on the other hand, rational

forces are nearly always favoured over the forces of darkness and confusion that oppose rationality. (*Crime* 247)

Referring to an analysis of Agatha Christie's *Peril at End House* (1932), Lee Horsley claims that although "traditional detective fiction ultimately acts as a repudiation of the gothic (eschewing supernatural explanations, throwing light into dark recesses)," it may also "play extensively with it" (*Twentieth Century* 48). Spooner suggests an extension of this notion by stating that bringing light into the darkness is "fundamental" to Gothic writing, and many classic Gothic novels avoid giving supernatural explanations for eerie events (*Crime* 248). The artificial separation of crime and Gothic fiction in the early twentieth century cannot be explained by the texts' actual properties but rather by the modernist need for isolation from the conventions of the preceding century.

In the previous section of this thesis, the focus was mainly placed on the importance of the past in Gothic writing, and especially in Scottish Gothic. In fact, Gothic fiction shares its "preoccupation with the return of past upon present" (Spooner, *Crime* 248) with crime fiction. Detective or crime fiction and Gothic fiction

share common assumptions: that there is an undisclosed event, a secret from the past; that the secret represents an occurrence or desire antithetical to the principles and position of the house (or family); that to know the secret is to understand the inexplicable and seemingly irrational events that occur in the present. Both forms bring hidden experiences from shadow to light. (Skenazy 114, quoted in Spooner, *Crime* 248)

The detective's function to shed light on the events of the past in order to restore the order of the present is not only valid in the classic detective stories of the Golden Age but also in the hard-boiled narratives of the heyday of noir writing and even in today's crime fiction. *The Cutting Room* is the ideal example of this assertion: Rilke's attempts to reveal the secrets of the past, i.e. the fate of the young women on the photographs, lead him deeper and deeper into a maze of disturbing and violent events in the present.

Another feature that was usually named in order to emphasise the differences between Gothic and crime writing is the influence of the supernatural. While crime novels are traditionally seen as thoroughly realistic, the Gothic is often perceived as the realm of supernatural occurrences. But this is not necessarily

true for all Gothic fiction, as from Poe and the nineteenth century onwards, they were in many cases either devoid of the supernatural or used it only as a means of pointing out psychological disturbances (*Crime* 249). Spooner mentions Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories as examples of narratives in which the supernatural is always exposed in the end as explicable by rational causes. The famous *Hound of the Baskervilles*, to name only one, is unmasked as a criminal who exploits the fear of the local population that is evoked by the eponymous legend (*Crime* 249). Regarding the last decades, Lee Horsley, however, identified the phenomenon of "fantastic noir", a mixture of

the stylistic and iconic aspects of non-fantastic literary noir (the tough style, the hard-boiled investigator, the gagster and the small-time crook, the femme fatale) [...] with literary forms in which there is a higher level of permissible fantasy, whether that fantasy is given a plausible scientific basis or involves blurring the distinctions between natural and supernatural. (*Noir Thriller* 230)

Examples of novels written in the fantastic noir mode are William Hjortsberg's *Falling Angel* (1978) or Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* (1985), a story in which the twentieth-century detective is haunted by his mysterious ghostly double from around 1800. This doppelgänger phenomenon shows, of course, the similarities the book shares with Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*. Horsley claims that fantastic noir includes the intensification of two of the most central themes of noir writing, "the destabilising of identity and the inescapable presence of the past" (*Noir Thriller* 230), which are preoccupations shared by Gothic writing at the same time. Apart from the fantastic aspect of duality, *Jekyll and Hyde* could be regarded as a regular noir novel as well, with ingredients such as fragmentation of the narrative, fear-provoking locations, an atmosphere of darkness and decay and "suggestions of psychological monstrosity and regression to barbarity" (*Noir Thriller* 230).

Stevenson's novella is only one example of what is likely to be the case when Gothic and crime fiction coincide. Quite often, the protagonist's psyche is unstable in one way or the other. He/she may then be beset with "guilt, obsession, paranoia, or other psychological disturbances, or his or her identity is misplayed or disguised" (Spooner, *Crime* 250). Botting found protagonists to be even more fragile, stating that "Gothic subjects were alienated, divided from themselves" (12) in the nineteenth century, and this remains valid even for

Gothic fiction today. Hjortsberg's *Falling Angel* is a book in which this issue of the division from oneself is very pronounced: the detective, Angel, is engaged by a client to find a missing crooner, Johnny Favorite. His investigations are complicated by the fact that everybody connected to the murder is brutally murdered, but in the end he finds out that he is Johnny Favorite himself and his repressed second self has committed all the crimes. (Spooner, *Crime* 251)

In a way, *Falling Angel* also displays excess, another commonality between crime fiction and Gothic literature, on the one hand because of the cruelty and brutality that is depicted in the story, on the other hand because of the narrative focus on "spectacle and performance", e.g. in the depiction of New York as a lurid fair full of freak shows, belly dancers and blues clubs (Spooner, *Crime* 252). The connection concerning excess in Gothic and crime fiction is most obvious in transgressor-centred narratives. According to Lee Horsley, narratives of this kind became especially popular in the second half of the twentieth century and the focus of many novels was more on serial killers than on the investigative process (*Twentieth Century* 114). Actually, one can say that the "Gothic excess of the killer and the rationalism of the detective plot are played off one another, often to the complete exclusion of the latter" (Spooner, *Crime* 254). Horsley argues that through the concentration on the murderous or monstrous side of crime fiction, the genre shifts so far towards its Gothic side that the rational aspects can be completely undermined (*Twentieth Century* 141). In the last decades, one could also notice that excess was reached by body horror and the play of surfaces, which means that the reader was increasingly confronted with the opening of bodies and minds – issues that can be shocking, gruesome or daunting, as they give insight into the inside of the human body or the disturbed mind of a criminal (Horsley, *Twentieth Century* 112). The opening of bodies and minds blurs the boundaries between inside and outside, between villains and victims.

And indeed, borders seem to be blurred and oppositions barely existent, as Botting writes that "Gothic is an inscription neither of darkness nor of light, a delineation neither of reason and morality nor of superstition and corruption, neither good nor evil, but both at the same time" and for him, it is this play of antitheses which "produces the ambivalent and excessive effects and reception

of Gothic writing.” (9) The more excessive a text is, the more Gothic it appears to be, and the more Gothic it is, “the more unsettling it is to our facile moral assumptions” (Horsley 141).

The last few pages have shown that Gothic and crime fiction, and here the sub-genre noir fiction in particular, cannot be clearly distinguished from each other although there have been attempts in criticism to do so. They both are driven by crime and from their early days on, they have shared certain themes such as the returning past, the mentally unstable protagonist, or the celebration of excess. These themes seem to increasingly gain the attention of authors of noir crime fiction of the twenty-first century. The next chapter will explore the Gothic of *Fleshmarket Close*, *Cold Granite* and *The Cutting Room* and give an account of the effects of their “Gothicity”.

3.1.2. Gothic Elements in the Three Novels, with a Focus on Welsh’s *The Cutting Room*

As the last two sections have shown, crime literature and especially noir crime fiction are likely to also include the Gothic mode. The themes of noir crime fiction and Gothic writing are quite similar and therefore are present in most texts that can, at first glance, either be primarily assigned to one or the other mode of writing. That they can be attributed to both noir and Gothic writing will be argued in the discussion of three already familiar Scottish novels, of which *The Cutting Room* definitely is the most Gothic one.

Louise Welsh’s debut novel can indeed already be identified as Gothic when just looking at the surface because it is full of references to the Victorian era, which of course were days of great popularity for Gothic literature. Many of the classics of Gothic literature were written in the Victorian age, among others Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), Sheridan LeFanu’s *Uncle Silas* (1864) and, of course, Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). Several times, Welsh refers directly to the Victorian age, for example by stating that

The Royal Infirmary is a typical Victorian hospital. Seven glowering, soot-blasted storeys, criss-crossed by perilous fire escapes. [...] Attempts had been made to make the interior of the hospital look cheerful. The walls of the public area were lined with bright wallpaper, floral patterns; yellow

daisies on blue stripes, blue irises against yellow gingham, topped, tailed and bisected by decorative borders. The paper wasn't bearing up well: it edged away from the walls, curling in the heat. The old hospital was breaking through. Asserting its dark self, pushing away this unsuccessful graft. (Welsh 196-7)

Rilke here explicitly refers to the Glasgow Royal Infirmary as a "Victorian" hospital. This cannot only be ascribed to his knowledge about the arts and of history but rather to the author's strategy to emphasise Glasgow's appearance as a city of Victorianism in order to adapt the setting to the novel's focus on the Gothic.

Welsh always focuses on the dark and deadly side of things. In the quoted passage, the hospital is personified and seems to have a dark side that is hidden beneath a nice, respectable-looking appearance, the floral wallpaper. The other half of the split infirmary which has its roots in a gloomy past manages to burst its bonds and break free into the light, possibly menacing the patients. Quite naturally, the atmosphere of a hospital mostly is not too cheery for either patient or visitor, but the Royal Infirmary seems to be a special case, as people walk around with their "eyes lowered, afraid that in this building of hard truths and fluorescence too much might be revealed." (198) In short, the climate appears to be extremely uncomfortable and chilly. Short extracts from the novel like this demonstrate Louise Welsh's constant efforts to establish a Gothic setting either by the reference to buildings, places or people which can easily associated with Victorian times, or by the employment of typical Gothic themes such as duality, here in the case of the hospital, which is an unusual approach.

But this is not the only time Welsh interweaves duality in *The Cutting Room*, as she brings in the theme also in relation to John and Steenie Stevenson, a pair of brothers "one of whom is a pornographer and the other an evangelical Christian." (Plain, *Corruption* 133) The huge gap in moral questions between John and Steenie Stevenson has led to their inevitable drifting apart. By assigning them these names, the author of course refers back to Stevenson, whose novel had seminal character for Scottish Gothic writing and laid the foundation of the recurrence of duality. But "Steenie" is also a figure in Walter Scott's novel *Redgauntlet* (1824), or, more precisely, in a story within the novel,

Wandering Willie's Tale, and the name therefore also relates to another of the forefathers of Scottish Gothic fiction. But there is a reference to Hogg's influential *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* in Welsh novel as well, since she names "Gilmartin's", a "renovated working-man's pub packed with hideously mismatched antiques" (Plain, *Corruption* 133) after the mysterious demon Gil-Martin, who incites the unreliable narrator, Wringhim, a man who loses his memory and suffers from blackouts, to murder. Gil-Martin is revealed to be the devil, but from a modern point of view, one would consider the narrator's moral and mental disintegration to be caused by a psychological disorder (Spooner, *Crime* 250). Nearly as much doubling as there can be found the Hogg's *Confessions* can be detected in *Cutting Room*. In Hogg's novel, for example, the frame narrative of the first-person confessions is written by an unreliable editor and furthermore, Gil-Martin changes his appearance to characters apart from Wringhim. Plain argues that "the pervasiveness of dualism" is an issue in "nearly every self-respecting crime novel" and the "haunting of Scottish crime fiction by the ghost of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* thus continues into the twenty-first century, suggesting its ongoing relevance as a trope of national identity." (*Corruption* 133)

Another theme Welsh uses in various instances throughout the book is death. It may not come unexpected to mention death in the context of a hospital: Rilke sees "a porter and a man in a wheelchair. The man looked like death." But what follows seems to be more shocking: "He looked like me." (198) What the reader learns about the protagonist's looks in the course of the story is mostly rather exceptional. At the beginning of the story, he informs the reader that "[t]hey call me Rilke to my face, behind my back the Cadaver, Corpse, Walking Dead. Aye, well, I may be gaunt of face and long of limb but I don't smell and I never expect anything." (2) This description awakens associations with one of the most famous Gothic figures, Count Dracula. In fact, his resemblance to the most famous vampire of all times is so pronounced that Derek, an aspiring young director of horror movies, asks him whether he wants to play

Nos-fer-a-tu. F.W. Murnau had Max Schreck, Werner Herzog had Klaus Kinski. I'm going to make my own version and you would be perfect for the title role. The ancient vampire, end of his line, left to moulder, alone and friendless. The bemused monster who has lived too long" (241)

Considering the appalling performances of Schreck and Kinski, it is a backhanded compliment to be compared to them but apart from that, Derek's idea is of course a clear indicator of Rilke's Gothic qualities. He does not only resemble Dracula in terms of appearance, but similarly prefers being alone and avoiding too much contact with other people. However, the reader does not learn about any potential preferences for the blood of young women; he prefers young men, but does not crave for their blood in particular.

A further Gothic feature of Rilke, a fully-fledged Gothic character, he seems to be developing "a mad look [...] around the eyes" (200). He feels himself that the day when he found the photographs in Mr McKindless' attic was his "last sane day" (201). Madness or psychological instability is, as already mentioned, a very common theme in Gothic writing. Welsh consciously employs the theme of the "madwoman in the attic", a reference to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), by letting Rilke find the mysterious photos in the attic of the McKindless house, where they had been concealed from the eyes of visitors. His office in the attic had been the hiding place for Mr McKindless weird passions, for his old pictures as well as rare books with lewd contents and the business card with a cryptic inscription that led Rilke to the Camera Club. Everything that is not intended for the public to know is stashed in the attic of the old ghostly house. "Here was the private man. The personality I had missed below stairs, confined to the attic like a mad Victorian relative." (20) The rest of the house is bare of personal belongings and Rilke notices a certain "sterility" about it that does say "*I am a very rich man; nothing more.*" (9, emphasis in original)

The protagonist's obsessive need to reveal the secret behind the photographs has already been elaborated on in the section about his status as hard-boiled investigator, but it is interesting to look at this subject also from the viewpoint of the Gothic. Rilke's obsession is not restricted to the photos, but he shows signs of obsession with alcohol, sex and, above all, with death. His thoughts seem to constantly revolve around pessimistic issues, around illness, pain and demise. For example, when he watches a photographer cutting a sheet of glass with a scalpel, he "thought of an Arctic vessel creeping slowly under dark skies, skirting icebergs, destined to sink" (45). In another scene, "[a]head of me an old man crept a creaking wheelbarrow along the pavement. [...] I drew level, took in

the rusted cart, his dusty suit, the stoop of his back, and felt the man with the scythe at my elbow. Maybe I wanted to dismiss Death. I should have known better.” (64) Rilke’s fascination with death is evidently a variety of Gothic excess. Aside from Rilke’s character, there are other elements of excess in the novel, from the alcohol-soaked transvestite party to the close description of Rilke’s sexual encounters and pornography that seems to be lurking behind every corner.

Louise Welsh herself states that in *Cutting Room*, she wanted to draw on the Gothic tradition which has always been connected with crime, and what fascinated her most was the portrayal of the victim in crime novels. She wanted to explore the use of naked female bodies “to turn the plot” (Wanner 215), because she felt a certain lack of respect for the victims who are simply being gazed at. Very often, she says, the female body is sexualised in photography, film and literature, which she attributes to the “attraction of the woman once she’s quiet” and the “connection of Eros and Thanatos” she considers to be inherent in human nature; “and what could be more quiet than being dead?” (Wanner 216) The incorporation of the “violence of Eros” (Katzensteiner 89) in *Cutting Room* is the netsuke Rilke discovers in McKindless’ attic. The valuable, carved Japanese sculpture shows two women and a man entangled in an intricate sexual position. The man’s face displays a “leer [...] that drew attention to the dagger in his hand, for as he penetrated one girl with his cock, he stabbed the other through the heart.” (Welsh 17) The netsuke is a symbol of the tightrope walk “between lust and sheer violence” (Katzensteiner 89) in the novel. Welsh wanted the reader to see the female body in a de-sexualised way, which might be easier from the perspective of a homosexual male narrator like Rilke. She wanted her readers to be shocked or maybe disgusted by the violence that is inflicted on women, but not to perceive them as sexual objects, for example in passages like this:

The same girl, still naked, lies on a wooden pallet. Hanging on the wall behind her is a hessian sheet. It has been put there to act as a backdrop, but falls short of the edge of the frame, exposing a rough brick wall. I stare at the wall for quite a while. The woman has been cruelly treated. There are the raised marks of a whipping on her stomach and thighs. Her ankles, calves and knees are bound with bristly rope which digs into her flesh. Her hands are tight behind her back, presumably secured. [...] Her

breasts have been roughly bound, the rope twisted three times round them, distorting their shape, crushing them to her. [...] Pupils unfocused and far back in her head, a mouth that ended with a scream. (Welsh 35-6)

The way Rilke renders the photographs is descriptive and factual, which enforces feelings of dread and horror in the reader but the depiction's emphasis on torture and pain probably stifles all sexual connotations that would probably come into mind when reading about a naked female body. The image Welsh produces here is certainly one of excess, if one relates it to the novel's Gothic qualities. Len Wanner calls Welsh's novels "sideways reflections on extremes" (218) and he is certainly right to do so, particularly when looking at her artful and innovative use of Gothic elements in order to comment on a contemporary topic such as the exploitation of women. "Using Rilke as the narrator and protagonist enables Welsh to look at pornography and female prostitution with a detachment that a male heterosexual or a woman wouldn't have. And that detachment enables him finally to see, with enormous clarity, the depth of the depravity at the heart of the sex industry." (Kirkus) In the end, Rilke's investigations lead to the exposure of a large-scale affair of human trafficking and sexual exploitation and prostitution. The author's general concern with women as exhibits of sexual desires is then put into a realistic context which culminates in the account of a victim of human trafficking in form of a transcript.

The most impressive passage concerning the connection of the female body and the Gothic in *Cutting Room* certainly is the following, which gives the reader insight into the narrator's encounter with Mr McKindless' books. Rilke identifies the old man as someone for whom the mere sight of a woman is not enough but he wants to "get closer, ever closer, until he took the object of his desire apart, breaking it" (Welsh 228). Maybe the author wanted to imply that women cannot endure their exposed position, but sooner or later they break down under the sexualised gaze of society.

I turned to the other books. Death reached out from their pages. Death was a woman, and women were dead. She hid her skull face behind a dainty mask, danced jigs with skirts raised high and wormy thighs exposed. She leant over the old, the young, embracing them like a mother. Mother Death. Dead Mother. Death stalked with a dissecting-bisecting knife, cutting woman from sternum to pubis, unfolding her skin, raising it reverently like the most fragile of altar cloths, revealing organs

glazed with blood, exquisitely curled intestines, ovaries branching heroically from uterus cradled over bladder, a miracle of engineering revealed. Death splayed across the pages in white-faced charades. [...] Death whispered in monochrome, screamed in Technicolor. (Welsh 228)

For Rilke, it seems, “[r]epresentation itself has become death” (Sage 73). The quoted passage elaborates on the theme of female exhibition by stating that women, captured on pictures and in films, stared at by men who see them as sex objects, are actually dead because they are unable to fight against their exploitation. By drawing the image of “Mother Death” cutting open the female torso, revealing even its last secrets, Welsh employs the Gothic transgression of boundaries between inside and outside, between body and soul. It seems to be impossible to keep to one’s own limits when being put on display like this. Anne-Marie, who says of herself that she is always in control of the situation when posing in front of male photographers in the “Camera Club”, gets confused and nearly forgets her own rules when she is alone with McKindless. “[H]is gaze pierced me,” she says, and “[f]or a second I felt that if he touched me, old as he was, much as he disgusted me, I wouldn’t resist.” (Welsh 219) For a short moment, she is even tempted to let him cut her when he asks her (220) but her defence falters only for a second. Even a self-confident young woman who usually manages to use her sexual attraction for business is unable to fully resist the powerful male gaze that tries to invade her.

From the more covert Gothic ingredients in *The Cutting Room*, the focus shall be shifted to the surface again. It has become obvious that Welsh really deals with Gothic themes and references in a playful way. Apart from the creatively designed allusions on the plot level, there are also references to Gothic writing on the structural level of the novel. At the beginning of many of the chapters, Welsh places an epigraph, a piece of poetry, or sometimes an extract from a prose text. What they have in common is that they all have been written by artists of the nineteenth century many of whom can be said to be writers of Gothic. There are quotes by, for example, the English Romanticists John Keats and William Wordsworth, by American poets such as E.A. Poe and Emily Dickinson, and by French lyricists such as Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine. Lastly, a quote from Stevenson’s *Jekyll and Hyde* must not be missing in the

row of nineteenth century authors who employed Gothic elements. Sage argues that the chapter epigraphs and quotations in the text

function, like those of Ann Radcliffe in *Udolpho* (1794) or like Angela Carter's allusions to French Decadence and pornography in 'The Bloody Chamber' (1979), as a tissue of allusions to the perversities of the Romantic Agony, an encyclopaedia of late Victorian and *fin de siècle* erotic and mortuary taste, which puts the Glasgow *demi-monde* of auctioneers' rooms, porn-shops and brothels on the European cultural map. (Sage 73)

Aside from the extracts of poetry and prose at the beginning of chapters, there is a reference to another important poet in the protagonist's name: Rainer Maria Rilke, a German poet who is considered an important representative of the symbolist movement, of which Verlaine and Rimbaud were influential precursors. Rilke re-enacts the life of his eponym by going to Paris at the end of the novel. Welsh included all these references to authors of the nineteenth century in order to accentuate the novel's relation to the Gothic even more.

The status of Rankin and MacBride's novels as noir crime fiction virtually predestines their affinity to the Gothic, even if it is not so much in the foreground as in Welsh's novel. Gothic elements in *Fleshmarket Close* and *Cold Granite* rather seem to emphasise the noir mood that is inherent to them and do not consciously stress the Gothic tradition linked to Scottish crime writing. Most of the Gothic features in the two novels relate to the depiction of the setting, i.e. Edinburgh and Aberdeen, which is of course connected to the urban Gothic, but the dark and unwelcoming atmosphere that the cities exude is the subject of the next chapter.

There is another essential Gothic feature which pervades both novels: excess. In *Fleshmarket Close*, this quality is primarily detectable in the figure of the detective, John Rebus. As has been already discussed, one could almost call him an alcoholic. Addiction, a very prominent feature in Scottish fiction – one just needs to bear in mind *Trainspotting* – is naturally linked to excess and therefore can be seen as a Gothic element. Rebus is not alone in his role as addict, Logan McRae shows addictive behaviour as well, however his vice is not alcohol but cigarettes. The most striking portrayal of excess though is conveyed by the meticulous descriptions of violent, shocking and simply disgusting issues.

In *Cutting Room*, there are the sadistic images that Rilke found on the old photographs, but *Cold Granite* is even more appalling with its scrupulously precise descriptions of rotting carcasses and murdered little children. To make it even less digestible, the post-mortems of the victims are vividly described as well, as in the following extract.

Isobel ran the scalpel blade from behind one ear, all the way across the top of the head to the other, slicing through the skin. Without even flinching, she dug her fingers into the wound and pulled, peeling the scalp forward like a sock. Logan closed his eyes, trying not to hear the sounds as the skin separated from the underlying muscle structure: like breaking up a head of lettuce. Exposing the skull. The teeth-rattling shriek of the bone-saw echoed around the tiled room and Logan's stomach lurched. (MacBride 105-6)

This could be a recent tendency in crime fiction to show its "readers the physical opening of bodies" (Horsley, *Twentieth Century* 112). The author's play with "body horror" (142) has to do with the disintegration of boundaries between inside and outside and the Gothic fascination with death and decay. In summary, excess can be said to be the most outstanding Gothic element in Rankin and MacBride's writing, except for the focus on the location of their plots. The function of this emphasis is explored in the next chapter.

3.2. Rebus's Edinburgh, Rilke's Glasgow, McRae's Aberdeen: Cityscapes in Noir Fiction

The road had started life as a bypass, but the city had suffered from middle-aged spread and oozed out to fill in the gaps with cold grey granite buildings so that it was more of a belt, stretched across the city and groaning at the seams. It was a nightmare during rush hour. The rain was still hammering down and the people of Aberdeen had reacted in their usual way. A minority drudged along, wrapped up in waterproof jackets, hoods up, umbrellas clutched tight against the icy wind. The rest just stomped along getting soaked to the skin. Everyone looked murderous and inbred. (MacBride 42)

Judging from the quote, visitors of Aberdeen must perceive the city as an unpleasant, and veritably hostile place where one needs to brace oneself for incessant rain, piercing cold and horrifying creatures who are stalking the streets, especially in winter. Although one must admit that Scotland's reputation

as bad weather country has its reasons – in fact, a long-term average of 185.8 days of rainfall per year was calculated (Met Office) – Stuart MacBride’s portrayal of Aberdeen as a city that only rarely sees the sun seems to serve the purpose of creating a certain atmosphere rather than describing its actual weather conditions.

Atmosphere is indeed an essential feature of Gothic writing and in the context of setting one can take the term literally. The depiction of grim and fear-provoking landscapes was part of the Gothic from its start. If one refers to the first phase of Gothic writing at the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century, one would think of the deep forests and alpine regions of Germany or the jagged regions of southern France, Spain or Italy as typical sceneries. In the course of the nineteenth century, however, the preferred location for Gothic novels came to be the metropolis. (Mighall, *Cities* 54) Cities were no longer the place of civilisation and order, a contrast to the wilderness and danger lurking in the province, but the divisions between city and countryside collapsed. Cities in general but above all “the very epicentre of the civilised world” (Mighall, *Cities* 54), London, became dark places where terrors emerge from obscure, foggy quarters where one encounters the outcasts of society. Aristocratic villains were no longer the source of horror but were replaced by corrupt and cunning criminals. Even Charles Dickens made frequent use of Gothic devices, so for example in *Bleak House* (1853), where he portrays a grimly darkened London, or in *Oliver Twist* (1838), where he shows the hidden violent and cruel sides of superficially so respectable Victorian society. In *Hard Times* (1854), he presents the inhumanity and intricacies of the industrial age which he links to “a realisation of a distorted and reductive rationalism” that is represented by the tyranny of number and facts in Gradgrind’s school. (Botting 125-6).

Thus, the concept of the “urban Gothic” can only be said to exist from this phase of Gothic writing onwards, and in the following centuries, it is still used. As the quote from *Cold Granite* has already demonstrated, urban locations are still going strong in Gothic literature, and thinking of *Cutting Room* and *Fleshmarket Close*, the situation is similar. For Ian Rankin’s readership, his descriptions of Edinburgh are his signature feature. As the *Times Literary Supplement* proclaims on the cover of *Fleshmarket Close*, Rankin’s

“imagination peoples Edinburgh the way Balzac’s fantasy did Paris”, and his readers particularly love him for that. Although he reveals many of the city’s secrets that normally better stay concealed from tourists, i.e. the dark, underworldly side of Edinburgh, his books attract many readers to visit the city and explore the streets where Inspector Rebus pursues criminals themselves. There is even a smart phone application which offers guided tours through Edinburgh which help readers to follow their hero’s tracks (Google Play). Concerning developments such as these, one could ask what actually arouses interest in a crime novel’s location. Why do crime authors even put so much effort into the description of their novels’ locations? And why are Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow in the three novels which are subject of this thesis full of references to the Gothic?

The answer to the last question at least may lie in their affinity to noir. As has been explained at an earlier stage, Scottish crime fiction is heavily influenced by the American hard-boiled tradition which shares some common features with the Gothic. Firstly, inherent to noir as well as to Gothic writing is the blurring of boundaries between guilt and innocence, good and evil. Nothing is just black or white; wherever there is light, there must be shadow. In connection to the dissolution of otherwise strict limits, one has to add that even characters in noir and Gothic stories are not spared disintegration. They either suffer from alienation from society or themselves and often one can observe the dissolution of boundaries between body and psyche. Secondly, they share the choice of topics, that is their focus on plots revolving around crime, the violation of moral norms, or more general, transgression of the boundaries of reason and law, which is also connected to the already mentioned issue of excess. The last major commonality between noir and Gothic is concerned with their location. It has been already discussed in the introductory chapters of this thesis that noir literature is in most cases set in urban environments, and this is of course similar to the conventions of Gothic, if not of the first phase of Gothic writing then from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. Despite the shared roots of crime and Gothic fiction, the latter lost much of its power when detective-centred narratives flourished, i.e. from the late nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth. Gothic elements in crime fiction were then “overshadowed by the rationalist act of detection” (Horsley, *Twentieth Century*

4). Concerning this issue, Stephen Knight asserts that the “real threat is not in fact the supernatural but the dark desires of apparently respectable people” (61). However, his statement cannot be taken as evidence of the disempowerment of the Gothic in the early twentieth century but does in fact simply report about the transition from Romantic Gothic conventions to the urban Gothic.

Noir fiction and the hard-boiled style came into being in a time when American society was in a crisis, when cities became centres of crime and people were powerless against the evil forces that were mostly located further up in the hierarchy. Noir authors responded to the political realities, “a world in crisis, destabilized by international war, urban crime, and the corrupt exercise of power”, by “presenting a solidly realized but metaphorically heightened cityscape, with violence itself often taking on symbolic force in scenes of grotesque, sometimes surreal destruction and viciousness.” (Horsley, *Twentieth Century* 70) It is astonishing how similar today’s political realities are to those of seventy years ago. Wars are still being fought around the globe and the world is shaken by a financial crisis caused by irresponsible gambling on the stock markets, as well as by the greed and corruption of powerful politicians, while at the bottom end of society unemployment rates are rising, the gap of incomes is becoming wider and the poor are getting poorer. It is hardly surprising that the city as metaphor for these dire conditions is still used in contemporary fiction.

In noir fiction, the city as location does never support the solution of crimes or the re-establishment of order. As much as the social labyrinth in which the detective tries to distinguish between villains and innocent people, the city is a maze and not a tidy collection of clues, as it is Sherlock Holmes’ London, for example. Horsley suggests that it rather is an “intractable, uncontainable, ultimately unknowable terrain, to be grasped only in a fragmentary way.” (*Twentieth Century* 71) This confusing place threatens the investigator’s physical safety, but also his powers to keep track of things and “discrete self” (71). In *Fleshmarket Close*, *Cold Granite* and *Cutting Room*, the metaphor of the city as a maze is used and shows Edinburgh, Aberdeen or Glasgow, respectively, as Gothic cities in which the past still haunts the present and nobody is safe, neither physically nor mentally. The detectives have to

investigate cases which turn out to be more intricate than expected. Only shortly after the beginning of the story, they lose track of things in the face of more and more murder victims and even more clues that seem to lead nowhere. In *Cold Granite*, there are always more reports of children gone missing and, as a sad consequence, dead boys and girls found, and this only in the course of a number of days. The bodies are found widely scattered across Aberdeen and it is not surprising that Logan and his colleagues helplessly start to feel that the case is too much for them. Although the killer sends them across Aberdeen's most inhospitable areas – the bodies are, for example, found in a dumping ground, a muddy ditch down a riverbank, a public toilet in a park and in a steading filled with decaying carcasses – Logan manages to find the way out of this maze in the end and identifies the murderer.

In Welsh and Rankin's novels, one can find underground mazes which demonstrate the cities' labyrinthine structure on a smaller scale. When Rebus and Siobhan recognise that Stuart Bullen, owner of a dance bar in Edinburgh's red-light district, the "pubic triangle", is also the mastermind behind the exploitation of illegal immigrants, they immediately pay him a visit at his bar. But Bullen flees from them by withdrawing into a tunnel beneath the bar. Rebus follows him into the mysterious dark underworld of Edinburgh.

He could make out the damp earthen floor, the curved walls and sloping ceiling. Probably man-made, going back centuries: the Old Town was a warren of tunnels and catacombs, mostly unexplored. They had sheltered the inhabitants from invasion, made assignations and plots possible. Smugglers might have used them. In more recent times, people had tried growing everything from mushrooms to cannabis in them. A few had been opened as tourist attractions, but the bulk were like this: cramped and unloved and filled with stale air. (Rankin, *Fleshmarket* 366)

This passage illustrates Edinburgh's medieval past in contrast to its new developments as a city of tourism. The old streets in the city centre may be full of coffee and souvenir shops but the Edinburgh of earlier times still exists, trapped in the underground, and it continues to be a source of noir fears and confusion. Rankin writes that the "tensions which exist in Scotland, especially between progress and heritage, are found most readily in Edinburgh, a city sustained by tourism but for too long trapped in the past as a result." For this

reason, he argues, Edinburgh can also easily be used “as a microcosm of Scotland as a whole.” (*Rebus’s Scotland* 178)

From time to time, Edinburgh’s “underworld”, for which the medieval tunnel system could be a symbol, breaks out into the open. In his novels, Ian Rankin likes to contrast the hidden, dangerous aspects of Edinburgh with the friendly tourist city, but this is going to be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. A similar picture of a maze is created in *The Cutting Room*, when Rilke follows Steenie into the deep underground realm of his bookshop. Rilke feels uncomfortable when the cold in the basement

crept through my boots and settled like fear in my belly. [...] The light flickered on and off like an impatient wrecker’s signal. At first I thought this must be the end of our journey. [...] But Steenie went on, leading me along thin paths, walled either side by books and boxes, sometimes having to turn sideways to squeeze through, sometimes having to haul ourselves over tumbled avalanches of splayed volumes. We travelled through rooms each less finished than the last, until they were no longer graced with doors and locks, just simple rough-hewn openings in the basement’s stone walls. We seemed to be descending; there was a methane taint to the air and I wondered if we were beneath the river. (Welsh 171)

Rilke is not mistaken by the uncanny feeling in his stomach and their journey’s Gothic atmosphere; it indeed ends with Steenie’s attempt upon the detective’s life. The spine-tingling descent into the underground maze heralds a violent act which ultimately threatens Rilke’s physical health. Regardless of whether one refers to the whole city as a labyrinth or takes into account only smaller parts of these Gothic locations, they prove to be a source of danger to body and mind. In her article about the re-imagination of the cityscape in contemporary Scottish literature, Pittin-Hédon writes that the “city is a death-wielding machine” which “offers the insect-like individual trapped within neither possible explanation nor means of succour.” (256) Although she refers to Scottish fiction in general, her observation fits noir novels like those in discussion very well. The noir protagonists of the novels try to fight against crime and corruption but, eventually, they are too weak and small to cope with the overwhelming forces that permeate the city. According to Pittin-Hédon, these forces take on new distinctive forms in novels of the last twenty years and the Scottish city is increasingly being described as “sprawling, fast-moving, economically

determined monster” which, as she believes, refers back to a tradition of writing ranging “from Dickens to Kafka, including such American urban crime-fiction landmarks as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler” (253).

Glasgow is the city that fits the description as ever-mutating monster best, at least when considering Louise Welsh’s narrative. In fact, Alan Bissett writes in his article about the twenty-first century Glasgow novel that the city changed very significantly in the last years. It is subject to “slick rebranding” (59), away from its former status as “inward-looking, post-industrial slump, to a confident, outward-looking, economically regenerated destination” (Glasgow City Council). Apparently, the city’s self-image has changed towards consumer society and tourism, but this is not only attributable to the decline in the manufacturing industry but also to other developments such as “devolution, the founding of New Labour, the ‘war on terror’ and American imperialism, corporate globalisation, and a widespread political consensus ‘exemplified in neo-liberalism’” (Bissett 60). Welsh takes note of these developments in *The Cutting Room* and portrays the city as being transformed; it is not an industrial centre anymore but characterised by the growing significance of the tertiary sector.

The industrial age had given way to a white-collar revolution and the sons and daughters of shipyard toilers now tapped keyboards and answered telephones in wipe-clean sweatshops. They shuffled invisible paper and sped communications through electronic magic. Dark suits trampled along Bath Street, past the storm-blasted spire of Renfield St Stephen’s, home to prepare for another day like the last and another after that. Cars crept at a sluggish pace towards curving slip roads and the motorway miles below, where three lanes of paralysed traffic shimmered in a heat haze. Buses forced their way to obedient queues of defeated commuters [...] Elevator buildings that inspired the Chicago skyline disgorged men and women crumpled by the day [...] And all around me mobile phones. People talk, talk, talking to a distant party while the world marched by. (Welsh 65)

In this contemporary image that Welsh describes, Glasgow’s traditional blue-collar worker has been replaced by people spending half of their dissatisfying lives in office buildings and the other half commuting to and fro. Her view of the current state of Glasgow is a rather negative one, with its inhabitants suffering from “alienation, commuting, computing, stress and long hours” (Bissett 60) and the city does not even sleep at night:

We slipped through a fluorescent white tunnel, then climbed high over the city on the curving expressway; the River Clyde oil-black and still beneath us, a backdrop to the reflected lights of the city; the white squares of late-night office work; traffic signals drifting red, amber, green, necklaces of car headlights halting then moving in their sway [...] scarlet neon sign of the *Daily Record* offices suspended in the dark sky to our right. (Welsh 98-9)

Welsh describes an image of restlessness, in Bissett's words, a "postmodern panorama of neon light" (61). She criticises consumerism, which has taken hold of Glasgow on a twenty-four hour basis. In connection to the exposure of capitalism, Bissett observes that "every relationship in the novel is mediated through the exchange of money. Photographs, information, antiques, art objects and even flesh pass between men in a seemingly endless cash nexus which stretches throughout the city." (62) Even sexuality is portrayed as a consumer good. Rilke states that love and attraction "can be folded and put into your wallet" (Welsh 100). The author offers a quite pessimistic view concerning capitalism and the "new, rebranded" Glasgow. Also apart from her comments on consumerism, Welsh portrays Glasgow rather negatively as a decomposing city.

I turned my back on the fountain, walked past the kids' playground and towards the duckpond. Litter lined its border, shreds of the day. Crisp packets, juice bottles and no doubt a few condoms. *Everywhere I could sense decay*. The pigeons were roosting on a skeletal willow poised above the water. Grey, tattered feathers fluffed out to protect them from the rain. Winged rats. (Welsh 28, emphasis added)

It is conspicuous in which devastating terms Glasgow is viewed throughout the book. The notion of "decay" and death seems to surround Rilke everywhere and overshadows all his thoughts and actions. In *Fleshmarket Close* and *Cold Granite*, social criticism is not so much linked to the description of Edinburgh and Aberdeen per se as it is the case with Welsh's Glasgow, but nonetheless there are various passages in the two novels which give rather bleak and gloomy accounts of the cities. In MacBride's *Cold Granite*, it is primarily the weather, the play of light and shadow in the sky and the inhospitable architecture which creates the Granite City's dark atmosphere. In nearly every chapter, there are references to buildings that appear to be architectural crimes rather than urban beautification, for example: "It was a low, two-storey concrete-and-glass monstrosity just off the Lang Stracht, squatting behind a high,

chainlink fence like a sulking Rottweiler.” (MacBride 30) It seems that many of Aberdeen’s buildings leave a similar impression and therefore, the cityscape of MacBride’s Granite City cannot be considered very attractive. As already mentioned, references to lighting conditions can create a certain atmosphere, too, especially in combination with the weather: “Four high-powered spotlights sizzled in the torrential downpour, bathing the area around the tent with harsh white light while the generators chugged away in a haze of blue diesel smoke. Cold rain hissing on the hot metal. Outside that circle of light it was pitch black.” (MacBride 7) Although the spotlights bring light into the darkness, their effect is not pleasant but cruel.

Rankin’s *Fleshmarket Close* does not put so much emphasis on the creation of atmosphere by reference to weather, although it is often raining in a typically Scottish manner; here the importance is rather placed on Edinburgh as a historical city, a combination of old and new influences on contemporary life. But since this is closely linked to Rankin’s social criticism, it will be the subject of the next chapter.

3.3. Scottish Crime Novels as Socio-political Critique

Crime fiction is a genre which, according to Horsley, contains certain characteristics which lend themselves to critical and oppositional purposes. She claims that crime and detective literature can be combined with the satirical mode because both deal with “crimes”, or, to use another term, with transgressions. These transgressions can either be concerned with people who threaten “established values” and norms by their “otherness”, or with the “corruption and misconduct” of establishment members themselves (*Twentieth Century* 159). The works of satirists are always linked to the crimes of their own age, and similarly do the themes of “socially and politically alert crime writers” (159) change with time. By definition of the genre, authors belonging to the hard-boiled tradition and literary noir are very likely to comment on socio-political problems of their time. Since the early developments in this branch of crime fiction, noir writers brought forward topicalities such as “class prejudice and exploitation, commercial greed and the plundering of the environment, consumerism and the politics of economic self-interest” (159). In a broader

sense, these topics are still relevant in today's crime fiction. The very nature of the crimes and prejudices may be subject to change in the course of the decades but essentially, society's problems are still of the same kind as in the 1920s.

Lee Horsley detects a shift towards the preoccupation with consumerism and commercialisation in contemporary crime fiction, while social exclusion as a topic has been rather displaced. Protagonists of these novels are often endangered by the seductive forces of commodity culture, in which complicity and assimilation prove to be sources of fear and terror (*Twentieth Century* 161). Rilke in *The Cutting Room* lives, as already discussed in the previous chapter, in a society which has completely fallen prey to consumerism. Bearing in mind Horsley's observations, Welsh seems to have had her finger on the pulse of time with her first novel. In Britain, there is an increasing tendency towards criticism of the effects of the Thatcher years, which results in crime novels dealing with economic and political crimes, self-enrichment and addiction to the pleasures of consumer society. Not only British but also American authors satirise contemporary society and its power to "consume" people, repeatedly by using characters "whose psychopathic and satirically presented excesses embody the all-devouring nature of consumerism" (Horsley, *Twentieth Century* 184), as, for example, Patrick Bateman in Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, a crime novel that, by the way, draws substantially on Gothic conventions.

The Cutting Room, *Cold Granite* and *Fleshmarket Close* are all novels which can be said to contain socio-political critique, since the cases that the detectives have to solve are not merely crimes that are important on an individual level but they reveal crimes on a much greater scale, for example on the level of politics and organised crime. In their novels, the authors focus very decidedly on the current situation in Scotland. According to Eleanor Bell, Ian Rankin's works reflect the duty of crime novelists to "invoke a self-conscious interrogation of the dark underside of society" in their readers, which helps them to reflect on the "complexities of modern identity and belonging" (53). In comparison to Welsh and MacBride, Rankin probably is one who most consciously and intentionally uses his crime novels to draw attention to deficiencies in politics and society.

Although his crime novels all revolve around murder cases, they do not only tell the reader about Scotland's bloody side but produce an image of the whole of Scottish society. Rankin finds that the answer to the question "can crime fiction ever give a true and all-embracing account of a nation [...] should be a resounding 'Yes!'" (*Rebus's Scotland* 174). This determined answer is of course questionable, and Bell refers to sceptical critics such as Ernest Mandel, a Marxist theorist who believes that "crime fiction in fact only functions as a form of escapism, presenting a perpetuation of the status quo rather than a means of societal or ideological critique" (55). Proponents of this and similar opinions virtually deny that crime literature is more than just entertainment, that it is literature not more valuable than any random paperback novel one would read at the beach or on the train. But as the analysis of three exemplary Scottish crime novels will continue to prove, high-quality crime fiction can certainly function as a means of awareness-raising.

As has already been explained, the location that authors choose for their crime novels can be very influential in terms of establishing a certain atmosphere. Quite often, of course, this atmosphere then can be one element to portray a country, parts of society, or how the powerful interact with the normal citizens, for example through political decisions. How the setting of a novel is being described has therefore inevitably to do with the issue of socio-political criticism. Even if an author is not reflecting on society intentionally, he or she cannot avoid giving insight into the life of humans in a certain place and time. Rankin, Welsh and, to a certain extent also MacBride, comment on Scotland in an intentional way by putting emphasis on the description of their settings.

Ian Rankin, as has been already mentioned several times, depicts Edinburgh as a city which has two contrary sides, the one that is visible for tourists and the other one that better stays hidden in the areas where no tourist would ever go, such as housing schemes at the outskirts which are crowded with the outsiders of society. In a way, Rankin's descriptions are similar to American writers of noir, for example James Ellroy and Raymond Chandler, who are concerned with the portrayal of Los Angeles as a city that is divided between Hollywood glamour and the downside of affluence: murder, corruption, pornography and urban decay (Kelly 42). Louise Welsh's Glasgow is similarly described as a

multi-faceted city; the reader learns to know its different sides, the Glasgow of auction houses, commercial Glasgow, post-industrial Glasgow, but also the city's criminal, pornographic and inhuman sides, which are actually much more foregrounded than the upright, respectable areas. MacBride's Aberdeen does not seem to have any positive sides at all, as the narrative solely follows the police investigations in a murder series and does not digress in order to allow the reader to see the more pleasant places of Aberdeen.

Aaron Kelly argues that crime fiction of the kind that is written by contemporary Scottish authors such as Paul Johnston, and, more importantly for this thesis, Ian Rankin, views crime as a systemic problem. Unlike classic detective stories, crime fiction inspired by the hard-boiled tradition does not portray individuals to be the aberrant factors in society, but crime pervades the social network as a whole. Therefore, order and justice cannot be simply re-established by the punishment of an individual who has committed a crime (Kelly 46). Following Walter Benjamin, Kelly further writes that factors such as the "dislocations of modernity, the convulsions of industrial capitalism and the dominant socioeconomic logic of society" (46) are to be blamed for criminality and disorder. He claims that crime fiction can support the mapping of society and produce a "diagnostic grasp of society's totality of institutions, basic structures and power relations" (46). For Kelly, Paul Johnston's dystopian novels about a future Edinburgh, *Body Politic* (1997) and *The Bone Yard* (1998), seek to map and connect the city as a "totality of social relations" (49), and one could extend his suggestion by attributing the same intention to Rankin's novels.

The murder at the fictional housing scheme Knoxland in *Fleshmarket Close* is indeed triggered by the intricate and precarious relationships between different parts of society. The victim, Stef Yurgii, was a Kurdish asylum seeker and journalist who revolted against the slave-like conditions under which immigrants are being held at the detention centre in Whitemire and Knoxland, where they are penned up, cut off from the rest of society and intimidated by corrupt and criminal connections of underworld bosses and greedy immigration officials. The asylum seekers, not accepted by official Scotland due to tightened immigration regulations, are forced to work for a pittance, picking cockles at the coast. His desperate decision to try to blackmail the slavers in order to free his

family from Whitemire finally cost Stef Yurgii his life. By the portrayal of the scandalous exploitation of people who had to leave their home countries for political or religious reasons and have come to Scotland in search for a better life, Rankin reveals the flaws of twenty-first century Scottish society.

Throughout the novel, one can find several comments on the deteriorating situation of asylum seekers in Scotland. For example, Caro Quinn, a human rights activist who is especially concerned with the way immigrants are treated and spends day after day protesting at the gates of Whitemire, states that “a few years back, they had a good chance of being allowed to stay, but the restrictions now are crippling [...] and now we’ve got politicians arguing that the country’s already too diverse” (Rankin, *Fleshmarket* 281-2). Later she says that “Britain takes more refugees than anywhere else [...] but what’s more important is the number who are allowed to stay.” The effect of the rising number of asylum seekers, argues Caro, is “[m]ore racism.” (282) This development is especially alarming when Rebus himself claims that “[w]e’re a mongrel nation, always have been. Settled by the Irish, raped and pillaged by the Vikings. When I was a kid, all the chop shops seemed to be run by Italians. Classmates with Polish and Russian surnames ... [...] I don’t remember anyone getting stabbed because of it.” (Rankin, *Fleshmarket* 148) Even Rebus has a migrational background since his grandfather came to Scotland from Poland.

The socio-critical aspect in *Fleshmarket Close* is in fact not the author’s creation but draws on a true, racially-motivated murder which happened in 2001, when a young Turkish Kurd was stabbed in a Glasgow housing estate (Hill 1). The killing obviously drew Rankin’s attention to a problem which contemporary Scottish cities increasingly have: their structure and housing situation is not able to deal with the diversity of Scottish society in a satisfying way. Migrants and natives, or, to put it more generally, diverging social groups, have to live in an environment with neither encouragement nor room for development, which inevitably leads to conflicts.

In the past, it [Knoxland] had been used as a dumping ground for tenants the council found hard to house elsewhere: addicts and the unhinged. More recently, immigrants had been catapulted into its dankest, least welcoming corners. Asylum seekers, refugees. People nobody really wanted to think about or have to deal with. Looking around, Rebus

realised that the poor bastards must be feeling like mice in a maze. The difference being that in laboratories, there were few predators, while out here in the real world, they were everywhere. (Rankin, *Fleshmarket* 5-6)

This extract shows how bleak life must be for the inhabitants of architectural crimes like this, but of course it is not only urban planning but also political decisions that are to blame for the current state of crisis in Scottish housing schemes. The portrayal of flawed urban developments such as fictional but nonetheless true-to-life Knoxland is very distinctive in Scottish crime fiction, argues Clandfield in his article on “Denise Mina, Ian Rankin, Paul Johnston, and the Architectural Crime Novel”. He states that the “connection between dysfunctional social systems and menacing urban environments is a foundational convention of crime fiction.” (80) Ben Highmore observes that the urban realism of Chandler is still of vital importance in contemporary noir crime fiction because “hard-boiled detective literature provides one of the most robust genres for attending to the complexity of the contemporary city” (93). For him, the detective’s ability to read the streets and the “interiors of the city” (93) is a feature of urban noir. As has been claimed before in this paper, noir writing usually deals with chaos and disorder in urban environments. According to Clandfield, one can claim the following about Scottish crime fiction:

[T]he order that urban planning and municipal government are, theoretically, supposed to construct and maintain [are] being semipermanently threatened and destabilized precisely by the moral and intellectual shortcomings, and often the criminal corruption, of those in positions of responsibility and influence. (80)

In Rankin’s writing, this assertion is proven not only by the description of housing schemes but primarily the focus on the situation of asylum seekers who are being exploited and almost held like cattle by representatives of the authorities. The setting of *Fleshmarket Close* is not a mere requisite but supports Rankin’s aim to not only entertain his readers but to also make them aware of social problems. Clandfield even argues that Knoxland “stands metonymically both for the social problems of contemporary Scotland and also, arguably, for all flawed attempts at accommodating the homeless and engineering social harmony.” (86) For him, the novel shows how Scottish crime fiction can be “both locally distinctive and internationally pertinent in its depiction of dysfunctional urban geographies.” (86) Therefore, *Fleshmarket Close* is an

example of crime novels that make a statement about general questions which possess relevance in an international context and not only on a local level.

Apart from the architectural aspects and the setting of the novel, the plot itself with its concern with issues such as migration, racism, the problems of asylum seekers and the exploitation of the disempowered is socio-critical in a general way. Even the novel's title points to the critical side of it: *Fleshmarket Close* could be argued to refer to the novel's theme. In fact, the author himself reinforces this assumption in a video, where he talks about his book. He says that "what I was talking about was a market in human flesh. It was human beings treated like so much meat, and so *Fleshmarket Close* was the only possible title." ("Ian Rankin on *Fleshmarket Close*") Indeed, one could add a similar notion to the title of Welsh's novel *Cutting Room*, in which people are used in order to serve those who are more powerful as commodities. Their bodies are seen as mere goods the function of which is to please others. Moreover, there are various references to dead bodies and their being cut open in the novel, which adds a similarly gruesome tinge to the title as does the reference to a flesh market.

The socio-political issues with which Rankin and Welsh are concerned are of a similar kind. In both books, the detective's investigations lead to the discovery of larger forces of the underworld which are sadly connected to the people who should be incorruptible and as they are responsible for other humans' lives and well-being. The resolution of the murder case in *Fleshmarket Close* shows that Rebus is right when he says that "We spend most of our time chasing something called "the underworld", but it's the *overworld* we should really be keeping an eye on." (Rankin, *Fleshmarket* 142; emphasis in original) It is typical of noir crime fiction not to offer the re-establishment of social order and harmony at the end of a story and so Welsh does not give the reader the satisfaction of knowing the culprit behind closed doors. Although Trapp is identified as being the "kingpin in the trafficking of young men and women into the city for the purposes of prostitution" (Welsh 283), he cannot be captured. Anderson, Rilke's old acquaintance in the police force, tells him: "We'll circulate what we have to other forces in Europe, but Trapp will probably start somewhere else." Hereon Rilke answers in a resigning manner: "And

meanwhile there'll be someone who takes note of Trapp's absence, and slips from the gutter into his shoes, ready to start all over again.'" (Welsh 283) This statement offers a quite pessimistic view on the state of the country. In *Cutting Room* it seems that Glasgow is not able to punish villains in a satisfactory way and that the city's criminal agents are so reproductive and powerful that the forces of law and order are unable to contain or extinguish them.

Bearing in mind also Welsh's rather critical view of Glasgow at the beginning of the twenty-first century and her bleak outlook on a future in which crime is going to thrive, one can argue that Scottish crime novelists comment on the current state of their country in social and political terms, but they do even more than that – they also offer thoughts about where Scotland is going in the future.

Conclusively, the following quote illustrates the key terms in contemporary Scottish fiction, "disaffection, alienation, dispossession and isolation" (Pittin-Hédon 256), which are all linked to the portrayal of Scottish society and are vital features in the works of numerous writers such as Rankin. In connection to migration, he has his Inspector Rebus reflect on the state of the nation, referring also to the ever-present issue of devolution that inextricably links Scotland to its past, and his diagnosis of contemporary society does not indicate a too bright future:

'What in Christ's name is happening here?' he found himself asking. The world passed by, determined not to notice: cars grinding homewards; pedestrians making eye contact only with the pavement ahead of them, because what you didn't see couldn't hurt you. A fine, brave world awaiting the new parliament. An ageing country dispatching its talents to the four corners of the globe ... unwelcoming to visitor and migrant alike. (Rankin, *Fleshmarket* 204)

4. Conclusion

In 1935, the Scottish writer and critic Edwin Muir stated in his *Scottish Journey* that Edinburgh “is a city of extraordinary and sordid contrasts” (9). At that time already, he observed that Scotland’s capital is marked by the sharp division between the tourist town on the one hand, which was inhabited by the bourgeoisie, and the Edinburgh of poor people on the other. The working class was banished from the urban idyll of the historical centre and did not have access to the tea rooms of the upper class; the gap between social groups was enormous and the poor were marginalised. Marginalisation is, as has been argued in this thesis, also a feature inherent in Scottish literature, which owes many of its characteristics, including the portrayal of existences at the margins of society, to Gothic and noir writing. Muir found the subject of division that pervades Scottish writing to be running through Edinburgh society as a whole. The contrast between rich and poor, between old and new, was significant. For him, Edinburgh seems to have lost its essential Scottishness and he senses a disruption in its history:

[A]lthough Edinburgh is Scottish in itself, one cannot feel that the people who live in it are Scottish in any radical sense [...] they look like visitors who have stayed there for a long time. One imagines that not very long ago the real population must have been driven out, and that the people one sees walking about came to stay in the town simply because the houses happened to be empty. In other words, one cannot look at Edinburgh without being conscious of a *visible crack in historical continuity*. The actual town, the houses, streets, churches, rocks, gardens, are there still; but these exist wholly in the past. That past is a national past; the present, which is made up of the thoughts and feelings and prejudices of the inhabitants, their way of life in general, is as cosmopolitan as the cinema. (Muir 23; emphasis added)

Old Edinburgh is still visible in the twenty-first century, but it is always clearly separated from the present. In *Fleshmarket Close*, Rankin refers to the contrast between “old and new Edinburgh” several times, for example when Rebus sees a bookmaker’s next to a shop selling dream-catchers (*Fleshmarket* 23), or when his conversation is being watched by “[t]wo elderly women”. “Their faces powdered, coats still buttoned almost to the chin. Edinburgh ladies, who

probably had never known any life but this: the taking of tea, and a serving of gossip on the side.” (*Fleshmarket* 457-8)

The depiction of locations divided between past and present is symptomatic of Scottish crime fiction in general, whether set in the country’s capital or elsewhere. Edinburgh and other Scottish cities such as Welsh’s Glasgow and to a lesser extent also MacBride’s Aberdeen, serve as a microcosm for the nation, or even western societies as a whole. The socio-critical aspects of these and other Scottish novels can be seen as widely valid since problems such as migration or racism are also understood and experienced by members of other societies than the Scottish.

What is probably more distinctly Scottish than socio-political issues are the topics of alienation, transgression of boundaries, defragmentation, excess, and, above all, the preoccupation with the nation’s past. The importance of all these issues in the three novels has been established, but *Fleshmarket Close*, *The Cutting Room* and *Cold Granite* are of course only selected examples from a wide range of contemporary Scottish fiction, which means that there are other novels which possibly stress different themes. The chosen texts link thrill and entertainment with realism and critique. They draw on age-old traditions and modes of writing but manage to combine them with topics of contemporary relevance. Thereby, they attempt to raise readers’ awareness concerning the state of the nation, its socio-political problems and the future that is going to become reality if nothing changes. With their novels, Scottish authors show that the commonly underestimated genre of crime fiction can deal with more profound issues than blood and violence; and even if gory scenes can be found in abundance in crime novels of the hard-boiled school, one should not forget that there is more to them than the mere satisfaction of blood lust.

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7. German Abstract

Schottische Kriminalliteratur steht in enger Verbindung zur amerikanischen Tradition des Noir Thrillers und wird deshalb auch häufig als „Tartan Noir“ bezeichnet. Diese Variante der Kriminalliteratur entwickelte sich in den 1930er Jahren als Gegenströmung zur traditionellen Detektivgeschichte und stellte meist einen hartgesottenen Detektiv in den Mittelpunkt des Handlungsgeschehens. Schottische Autoren übernahmen wichtige Merkmale ihrer amerikanischen Vorbilder, wie den Typ des harten, von Lastern geplagten Detektivs, großstädtische Handlungsorte, die Schilderung gewaltvoller und brutaler Szenen und einen gesellschaftskritischen Anspruch. Doch schottische Kriminalliteratur des 21. Jahrhunderts wird nicht nur durch den Noir Thriller beeinflusst, sondern ebenso durch die Schauerliteratur, die in der Geschichte der schottischen Literatur schon immer eine große Rolle spielte. Zeitgenössische Krimiautoren verwenden Themen der Schauerliteratur, wie beispielsweise Exzess, Verbrechen, Dualität, sowie psychische und physische Gespaltenheit und die Beschäftigung mit der Geschichte des eigenen Volkes. Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht drei Kriminalromane, Ian Rankins *Fleshmarket Close*, Louise Welshs *The Cutting Room* und Stuart MacBrides *Cold Granite*, auf thematische und motivische Gemeinsamkeiten und versucht festzustellen, welche Themen, Motive und Strukturen bezeichnend für Kriminalromane schottischer Autoren im 21. Jahrhundert sind. Es wird außerdem erläutert, ob „Tartan Noir“ einen sinnvollen Sammelbegriff für schottische Kriminalliteratur darstellt.

8. Curriculum Vitae

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Name	Claudia Müller
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Ausbildung

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1995-1999	Besuch der Volksschule Josefinum, 1140 Wien

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2005-2009	Private Nachhilfelehrerin für Englisch, Deutsch und Latein