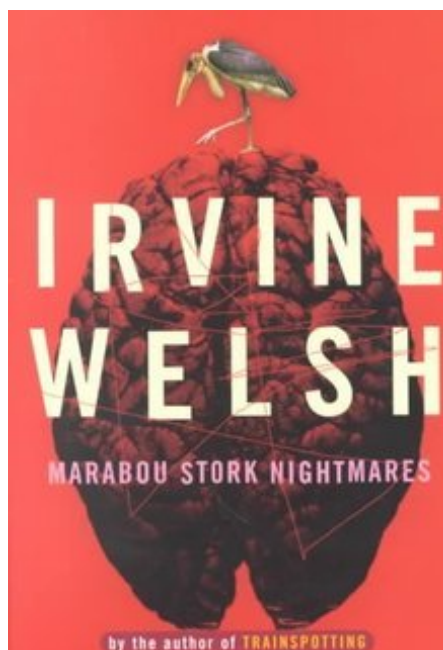




Marabou Stork Nightmares

Irvine Welsh

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Marabou Stork Nightmares Irvine Welsh

The acclaimed author of the cult classics *Trainspotting* and *The Acid House*, Irvine Welsh has been hailed as "the best thing that has happened to British writing in a decade" (London *Sunday Times*). This audacious novel is a brilliant (and literal) head trip of a book that brings us into the wildly active, albeit coma-beset, mind of Roy Strang, whose hallucinatory quest to eradicate the evil predator/scavenger marabou stork keeps being interrupted by grisly memories of the social and family dysfunction that brought him to this state. It is the sort of lethally funny cocktail of pathos, violence, and outrageous hilarity that only Irvine Welsh can pull off.

Marabou Stork Nightmares Details

Date : Published January 17th 1997 by W. W. Norton Company (first published 1995)

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From Reader Review Marabou Stork Nightmares for online ebook

MJ Nicholls says

Irvine Welsh was the literary hero among my generation of working-class Central Belt Scots for his graphic novels set in Edinburgh sink estates, riddled with sex, drugs, violence, and written in dextrously rendered phonetic dialect. I avoided reading Welsh, since a witless moron at my school rated *Trainspotting* his favourite book, and thereafter I associated him readers who would read his books to laugh at the banter of the characters, misunderstanding Welsh's more sober intentions to expose the shocking lives of fear and misery at the heart of places like the scheme in this novel, revelling instead in the casual hedonism aspect. Plus, I have never felt Scottish enough for Scots-centric books to speak to me. This, Welsh's overlooked second novel, is an interesting experiment in the old coma-patient narrative, weaving a surreal/metaphorical tale of African Marabou stork-hunting around the protagonist Roy Strang's upbringing in Edinburgh and South Africa, and his adult life as a football thug. A devastating gang rape forms the moral kernel of the novel and Welsh excels in particular in the scenes of tense horror and violence, and is less successful with the surreal humour. Smaller font size and various typographical quirks are employed to reasonable effect (with nods to Hubert Selby), although the overall product is somewhat muddled in its response to the rape (pushing into didactic repentance towards the novel's faux-shocking over-the-top finale).

Jason says

My first time through this book I thought Irvine Welsh had completely reinvented himself. The beginning of the novel left me thinking that the entirety was going to be some deranged acid trip of whirring images and slurred sounds. It doesn't take long for Welsh to slip into his familiar role of Edinburgh scheme documentarian, a role of which he is the master.

The reader travels between Roy Strang's African dreamland and his memory of growing up in the toughest part of Edinburgh. Gradually, you realize that the African element of the novel is the least important to informing the characters in this book. Through the scheme flashbacks the reader comes to sympathize with Roy despite his less than stellar moral fiber. In Roy Strang Welsh has built up a character so strong that you almost (ALMOST) feel sorry for what happens to him in the end.

This novel gets slagged because it apparently doesn't live up to *Trainspotting*, but Welsh has taken the best parts of that novel (the character development, the scheme imagery, etc.) and applied to one central character. At times you almost forget that Roy lies comatose in a hospital, but you will remember the images Welsh puts into your mind. Do yourself a favor and read this book.

Allan says

This book left me freaked out for weeks. It's told from the perspective of someone in a coma, drifting in and out of three levels of awareness: nearly aware of his real surroundings; remembering the events of his life that led him to be in this coma; and in a surreal fantasy African safari. Very well written, easy to follow despite the narrative tricks, and with a narrator that will draw you in somewhat against your will.

J.M. Hushour says

"Humans are into animals whose qualities they covet, and hate ones whose characteristics they vainly like to feel are not at all 'human'. The world we live in is not run by cuddly, strong bears, graceful sleek cats or loyal, friendly dogs. Marabou Storks run this place, and they are known as nasty bastards."

Roy Strang, coma patient, casually cashie, and half-hearted psychopath divides his time in-coma between fuddling over his shitty, shitty life and hunting the dreaded title bird in homoerotic Africa. Welsh ups his game with this hilarious and, let's be frank, extremely disturbing novel. The structure is fun and playful, as the very-aware Strang battles against what he can hear from the real world outside him by delving deeper into his hunt for the Stork.

Probably not for the faint-hearted or easily-offended, but a ballsy harrowing into one radge's hell.

Xandra says

It's about a coma patient who calls everyone a cunt as he's chasing a big stork through South Africa.

F says

Need to read again soon

Lindsay says

Mind. Blown.

The angle of this story is incredible to begin with; a coma patient tell his story.

Sometimes, he (Roy) slips close to the surface and hears conversations or music around him, a level below that he recounts actual memories from his life, and even deeper, he hunts the metaphorical stork with his friend and companion, footballer Sandy Jameison. He feels that he will be ready to resurface and wake up when he finally kills the stork, which he believes encompasses everything negative and harmful that he's experienced in his life.

A lot of what Roy recounts from his childhood is sad and pathetic, while much of his adulthood memories are disgusting and violent. Many different mature themes are discussed, such as the drinking of alcohol, taking of illegal drugs, physical violence, rape... this is not a book for the faint of heart.

When I finished it, I just sort of sat there, staring blankly ahead of me, my mind racing with what had just been revealed. It's that sort of book.

If you're not afraid of violent cursing as well as the aforementioned themes, then go ahead and read this fantastic book. Modern Scottish literature at its finest...

Very. Good. Stuff.

Matt says

In many ways, this book was brilliant: the structure of flitting between his coma state, memories of his childhood, and an African hunting fantasy. Also, the way he physically structures words on the page really conveys the polyphonic stream of consciousness of a person in a coma. And the Scottish phonetic spellings are just plain fun. That said, this book disturbed me as no other book has done--and not in a good way. I genuinely feel traumatized by it. It is not so much the fact that violent things happen (I mean, that is life for some folks) but that it is almost naturalized through the narrative voice which so consistently embodies an incredibly hateful misogyny, homophobia, racism, etc. I mean, sometimes you can't even come up for air, and women are never referred to in anything approaching a humanizing way, always instead as crass sexual objects. Rape, torture, incest, animal torture, sexual abuse, physical abuse, meaningless sex--it's all in here. Lovely.

Karl says

Still think this is his best book.

Paul Bryant says

Turns out that Irvine Welsh is not a one-trick pony, he's a one and a half trick pony. He wowed us all with his filthy funny tales of Scottish smackheads in Trainspotting, one of the ALL time black comedies, they don't come any blacker or funnier, and then it was kind of - follow that. So this one does involve similar young Scottish druggies, but it has a plot, which emerges in a similar manner to the spring in Monty Python's Spring Surprise from the Crunchy Frog sketch :

Health inspector: What's this one, 'spring surprise'?

Mr Milton the confectioner: Ah - now, that's our speciality - covered with darkest creamy chocolate. When you pop it in your mouth steel bolts spring out and plunge straight through-both cheeks.

Health inspector: Well where's the pleasure in that?

So Marabou Stork Nightmares is recommended for those who like their fiction to pierce both cheeks.

Ashley says

I realize I haven't read Trainspotting, or even a great deal of Irvine Welsh's work, but let me go out on a limb here and say that this is my favorite.

The characters, especially the main character, are all deliciously real. Characteristic of Welsh, in my experience, is the atmosphere of darkness and desperation interjected with some even blacker humor. His ability to get me to sympathize with the main character, even after I'd read the end, was pretty remarkable.

And not in the way you like Alex from A Clockwork Orange BECAUSE he's evil.

And the nightmares, well...I won't say the nightmares are the best part because that would be misleading and also advocates a simplistic relationship with this book. But they are fantastic.

Ubik 2.0 says

Il cielo sopra Edimburgo

Nella lettura di (quasi) tutte le opere di Welsh mi era rimasto indietro, non so perchè (forse inconsciamente respinto dall'immagine poco accattivante del marabù in copertina) questo Tolleranza Zero. Grave lacuna! mi hanno ammonito gli amici anobiiani welshiani. E avevano ragione...

Si tratta infatti di uno dei migliori esempi di quell'inimitabile stile, cinico, crudele e violento, che negli anni 90 l'autore sapeva utilizzare con maestria direi molto superiore a quanto ci sta offrendo nelle sue ultime prove un po' asfittiche. In Tolleranza zero i personaggi, le situazioni, i dialoghi, l'ambientazione edinburghese sono quelli suoi tipici, ma qui il racconto è ben strutturato ed ancorato in modo solido a un soggetto forte, dove Welsh si permette addirittura geniali virtuosismi di scrittura, come il periodico affollarsi dei diversi livelli di coscienza del protagonista, espressi tramite variazioni (direi quasi fibrillazioni) dei caratteri di stampa.

Spicca come sempre la profonda amoralità dei personaggi, senza alcuna eccezione, siano essi bulletti da pub o da curva Nord oppure i componenti di una delle famiglie più distoniche della narrativa contemporanea, amoralità che Welsh condivide con altri scrittori altrettanto "cattivi" sebbene profondamente diversi (Ellis? Houellebecq?).

Essa si estrinseca qui in comportamenti di crescente brutalità, verbale e materiale, verso i deboli (donne, bambini, animali) fino a ritorcersi contro gli autori stessi della violenza, con l'entrata in gioco di un elemento ancor più crudele e sarcastico di loro: il destino...

Ed è nella fantasia che i meno bestiali di questi scoppiati edinburghesi, come il protagonista di Tolleranza Zero, cercano di fuggire dalla realtà immergendosi negli strati più profondi della propria coscienza ma imbattendosi in sogni che presto diventano incubi, concretizzati dalla demoniaca figura del marabù vera rappresentazione dell'ineluttabilità del male.

Stargazer says

the usual stomach-churning stuff, compelling as ever, and love the style it's written in but not one of my favourites.

Greg says

Stylistically this is Welsh's best work. Along with *Glue* it's the books of his that show him to be a really great writer who has much more up his sleeve than just drugs and violence (although he writes about these things so well, that it's not a bad thing when I say that). Why this book isn't one of those books people come in to

the store looking for all the time is beyond me.

Ciarán West says

I think my own books are probably mostly influenced by King and Koontz (in a non-horror way), but if ever I need to justify the dialect (in *Boys of Summer*) or the graphic nature (in *Girl Afraid*), I turn to Irvine or to Chuck. When people say 'Oh, readers will find it hard to understand what your characters are saying', I point at *Trainspotting*, *Filth*, or this one, and go 'NUH-HUH!'.

The people have a point, of course. Not everyone can read an Irvine Welsh book. But there is a sense of smug satisfaction if you can, and happen to *Not Be Scottish* into the bargain.

This book is in Scottish. And it's fucking horrific. I was taken to school by this novel, in terms of how depraved and vomit-inducing a book can be in its descriptions, and in the general thoughts and behaviour of its characters. And I liked it. Don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with an author like Alice Sebold, who can tell you a horrific tale, without giving you the gory details. In fact, like swearing in stand-up comedy, there is a skill and an art to making the reader uncomfortable without showing them the pus and the bile upfront. Equally though, there is a skill in being able to show it all, and not come off reading like a hack.

Some of the worst self-published books out there are a product of No Editor, No Regulation, and, as well as the awful prose, their biggest flaws often involve an inability to tone down the unpalatable. In *Girl Afraid*, I toned down pretty much everything, but the horror still exists in the reader's mind. That alone might make them not want to carry on reading. I get that, but it's a chance I have to take.

In this book, Welsh gives a unique viewpoint and narrative, the like of which I hadn't seen before, or haven't seen since. The story is told backwards, and there is a creeping sensation that the narrator's recollection of events might be opinion-based rather than fact. It's gripping, all the way through; and, like any of his books, the lack of a sympathetic protagonist stops being an issue once you are ensconced in the tale. You find yourself identifying with people regardless. It's a skill Welsh has, and I envy it.

Will you like this book? It depends. Did you like any of his others? Do you have a strong stomach? Do you like to be put through an emotional wringer? Yes, yes, and yes? Then you'll love it. And you'll probably love my books too. Go read the sample of them on here, because Irvine Welsh already has enough money, and I need new Hush Puppies.

Nate D says

Harsh, inventive, horrifying, and desperately sad. Lacks the glorious sprawl of *Trainspotting*, which directly preceded it, opting instead for what may be Welsh's most tightly-coiled plotting to date. And his greatest sense of conscience, his strongest turn as a social reformer. The ending, through an appropriate scrim of sensationalism, actually manages to be both heart-rending and insightful, in a manner that Welsh rarely manages.

Jena says

Possibly the most disturbing book I have ever read. After I finished the last page I felt like I had been run over by a truck.

Keri says

Irvine Welsh is sometimes hard for me to read; his characters are the kind of people you know exist in the world, but you wish they didn't. There are no heroes (well, sometimes there's an antihero), and the protagonist is usually the character you come to hate the most. That being said, however, his books are always powerful, always disturbing, and always very well written. If you can't handle gratuitous violence, these are not the books for you. If you sometimes like a book that makes you want to scream and laugh at the same time, you might like these. I still haven't read Trainspotting, although I enjoyed the movie... maybe I'll get up the nerve sometime.

Jfed55 says

I was always drunk on stolen Vodka when I read this, so my appraisal would not necessarily be reliable....Or maybe it would be much more so than normal.

Guy Portman says

3.5 *

Roy Strang narrates this story from the hospital in which he is lying in a coma. It begins in South Africa, where he and his friend Sandy Jamieson are hunting the environmental havoc-wreaking, scavenger/predator marabou stork. The account soon shifts to Roy's working-class upbringing in Scotland and South Africa; an upbringing marred by a dysfunctional family and abuse. We follow Roy through to early adulthood. Along the way are escapades, brutality, bullying, girls, drinking, bird watching, 'fitba' violence and a horrific crime that will have far-reaching ramifications.

This is an inventive book, boasting parallel stories and different levels of awareness. It is peppered with stylistic idiosyncrasies. These include the utilisation in places of a smaller font size, as well as passages in which the text is presented diagonally.

The early chapters of this bleak and at times harrowing work are eminently readable. However, the story loses direction somewhat and there is a lot of glossing over in the latter stages. Marabou Stork Nightmares is far from Irvine Welsh's best.
